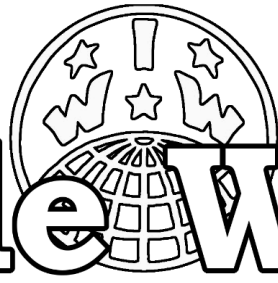


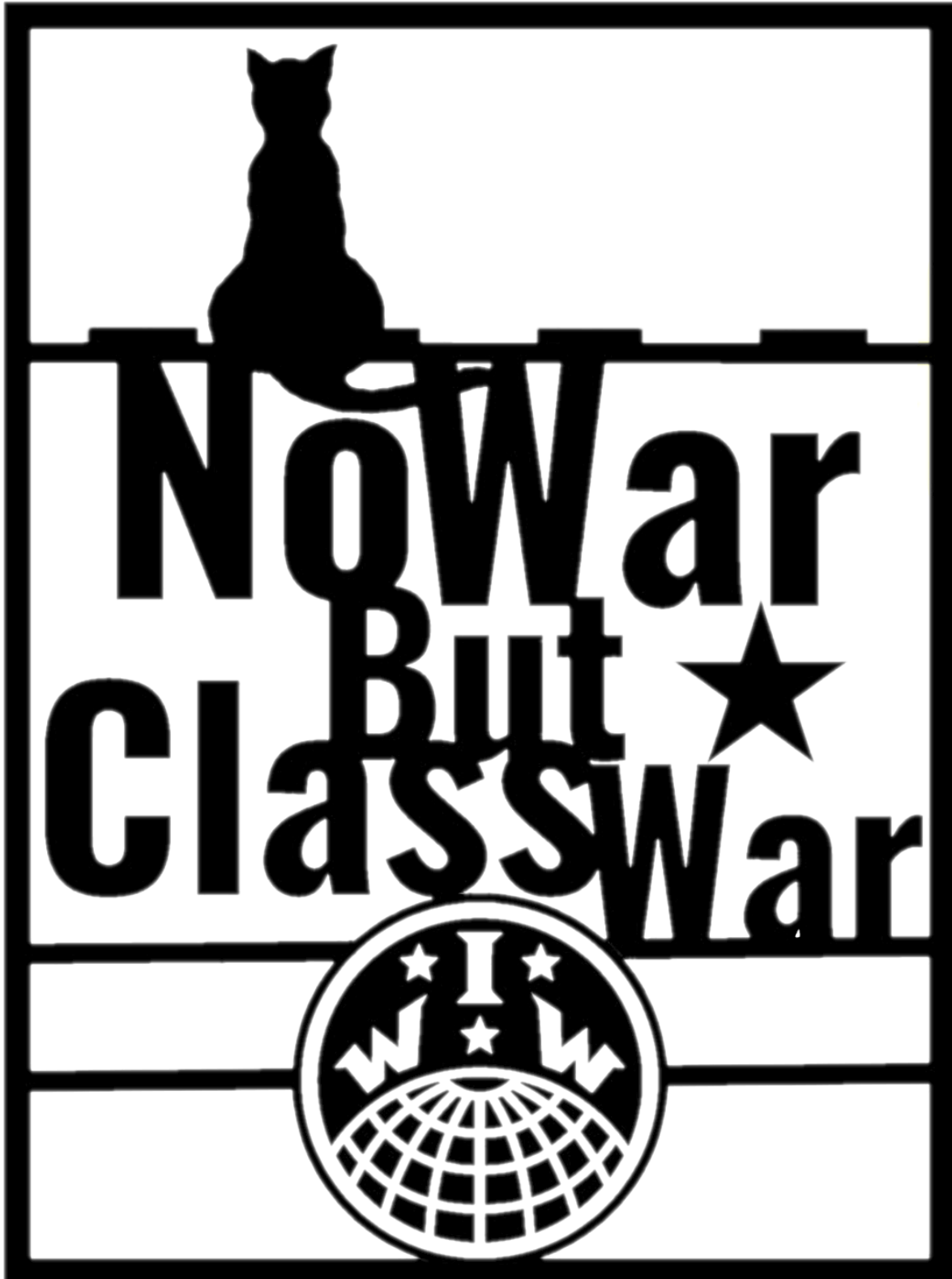
Official publication of the
Seattle IWW

Price: free for all workers



Seattle Worker

May-June 2026 Vol. 9, Iss. 3



Editorial Committee:

Chair: FW Phil

Editor: FW John

Layout: FW Kristin

Acquisitions Director: FW Donovan

FW Steph

FW Red

FW Kristin

FW D.C.

FW Cedar

FW J.D.

FW Noah

Email: seattleiww@gmail.com

Social: facebook.com/seattleiww

twitter.com/seattleiww

Phone: 206.429.5285

Mail: 301 Union St. #1772

Seattle, WA 98111

Website: seattleiww.org

Instagram: [@raincityiww](https://www.instagram.com/raincityiww)

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 and Tacoma branches of the 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

Cover image: Artist Unknown

Stickers, Posters, Graffiti, & Public Murals (& Other Art For Uplifting Gormandizers)

The One Big Union has undeniably influenced the labor movement's aesthetics, including untold scores of sticky-backed 'silent agitators'. In forthcoming issues of the *Seattle Worker*, we'd like to recognize the creatively minded workers still silently fanning the flames of discontent all around us.

Stumble upon top-tier stickers, posters, graffiti, murals, or any other agitating art while out in the weeds or about the 'tall grass'?

Whether it's a quality quip or astounding artwork (or peeped in perplexing-to-put places)—take a photo and send it our way! We'll print a new SPGP & OAFUG section featuring the Committee's favorite silent agitators from those received between issues.

Entries aren't geographically restricted to being around Puget Sound, but they must be:

- 1) *Captured with camera or phone photography (by whoever shares it)*
- 2) *Easily discovered or positioned for public (or 'public enough') consumption*



This is Not a Protest:

Minneapolis shows us why we should organize at work

by Tegan M.

Reprinted with permission from Industrial Worker March 12th, 2026

My first protest as an adult was part of the wave of anti-Iraq War protests across the US in 2003. I was part of a crowd of over 100,000. It felt good to know there were so many of us, that I wasn't alone in my anger with what my government was doing. George W. Bush had just been inaugurated as the president and I didn't know a single person who had voted for him.

The war went on just like it would have if we hadn't done a thing.

After that, I rarely went to protests. If such a massive group of actions hadn't changed anything, why would the small rally organized by local activists be any different? I wanted so many changes in the world, but I didn't see a point in fighting, because there was no way to make a difference.

Then Trump was elected president for the first time. I worked in Big

Tech, and suddenly, other workers in my professional networks were asking: what can we do if he asks our employer to build the "Muslim registry" he's been talking about? We could all see the courts failing to stand up to the administration, and from inside, we were suddenly aware of our power. To most people, the biggest tech companies were like the government was to me: huge organizations that we have no power over, that we try to protest and vote out and boycott and see no change. But us workers in the industry understood that a few thousand people, or sometimes as few as hundreds, could do what millions couldn't, if they were the workers who built the cloud and the social media platforms.

Getting a thousand people moving in the same direction is still a huge task. When I joined an [IWW organizer training](#) for the first time in 2018, I finally learned how to do it. I saw how organizing on a small scale could transform people's lives. How even though I still might not be able to change what a politician did, I could have power over the place I spent 40 hours a week.



Members from the community march north on Central Avenue Northeast in Minneapolis. The march was organized by the Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Committee (MIRAC) to protest ICE enforcement. - Carly Danek for MPR News

Before getting involved in workplace organizing, I wasn't a centrist. I didn't know what to call myself, because I wasn't sure what should come after capitalism, but I was pretty sure I thought there needed to be an "after." But I didn't see much of a point in reading political theory or talking to my friends about those ideas, since I couldn't do anything about them.

I see my experience echoed in the stories I'm hearing from Minneapolis. After the surge of federal police snatching people off the street, from workplaces, schools, and homes, there have been an explosion of reports from locals about how politically inactive people have been getting involved. Bluesky user Nick Bednar [shared](#) an archetypal example of these stories: "Someone in their mid-50s today told me that this is the first time he had thought about or been affected by politics. And that guy is actively guarding buildings and his coworkers from ICE."

There are protests across the US against ICE and at ICE facilities, but the response to the surge in Minneapolis is something different: everyday people organizing rapid response networks, bringing food to neighbors who are afraid to leave their homes, searching for and following ICE in their vehicles, blowing whistles and setting off car alarms to alert neighbors, and even surrounding officers and physically obstructing arrests. These are not protests, they are direct action. And although they have little hope of forcing the occupation of Minneapolis to end, they are making a much more tangible difference. Every hour of officers' time spent evading or harassing observers is an hour they're not tracking or kidnapping people. Every interruption of an action has a chance of letting someone escape arrest, imprisonment, deportation.

So what's the difference between a protest and this kind of direct action? The difference isn't whether people believe these things are right or wrong, or even whether they see the government as unjust. The difference is in whether they think their actions can meaningfully change the situation. The difference is in whether they think they can win. As Alyssa Battistoni wrote in their powerful piece "[Spadework](#)" on union organizing as a student worker:

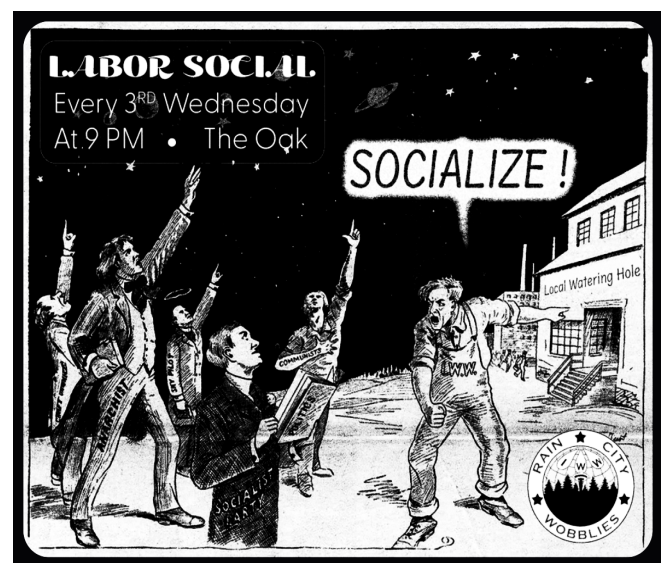
"Your job as an organizer was to find out what it was that people wanted to be different in their lives, and then to persuade people that it mattered whether they decided to do something about it. This is not the same thing as persuading people that the thing itself matters: they usually know it does. The task is to persuade people that they matter: they know they usually don't."

One thing I've learned through workplace organizing and talking to others about organizing is that people often seem apathetic because they have no hope. A coworker once told me they were concerned about something happening to other workers at our employer, but "what's the point, because no one else here cares

about this." I had just talked to another coworker who told me they cared about the same issue! When the issue is that someone else is being harmed, the shutdown can go even further. We are made complicit in the harm our employer is doing at work and the harm our government is doing in general. We feel on some level that we benefit from this harm. "I get a wage, don't I?" "I'm lucky to be a citizen when so many people are sacrificing everything to move here." But when we don't feel we can do anything about it, all we can do is not think about it. To forget we care about it.

What happens when we're offered an opportunity to do something about it? Whether that's standing up for our coworkers or alerting our neighbors to ICE's presence, it breaks through that apathy and fear and shame. It engages people who have never been "political" before. It's bringing hope. And it turns out that people will risk a lot once they have that hope. People who have never in their lives showed up to the most mild, permitted protest are risking theirs to confront armed police who have already murdered two white citizens just for getting in their way. They may not be abolishing ICE, but the real possibility of saving one of their neighbors is enough.

What about those of us who don't live in Minnesota? ICE isn't going to do this everywhere, and it would be terrible to wish they do it anywhere else. But most adults in North America do have jobs. Organizing our coworkers to confront management together doesn't even come with a risk of getting sprayed with chemical weapons. I'm sure many IWW members are inspired by the bravery of the people in Twin Cities standing up to power, and thinking about how best to continue their work elsewhere. Our first instinct might be to protest, but I think the best way to honor the lessons and the fight is to take it to work. To bring hope, one person at a time, that we can change our lives and stand up to power when we do it together. That we *matter*.



Boycott of Windmill Farms Mushrooms Continues, Gaining More Momentum in Western WA

— Seattle Worker Staff

Sunnyside, WA's farm workers and the United Farm Workers (UFW) continue their boycott of Windmill Farms—formerly Ostrom Mushroom Farms—renewing calls for solidarity among Western Washingtonians. Although the boycott approaches its 18th month, the UFW is still finding Windmill Farms mushrooms on store shelves throughout the Pacific Northwest.

As previously reported by the NW Labor Press, the Yakima Herald, and other outlets, farm workers employed by the Sunnyside operation voted to unionize in 2022 due to inhumane labor practices. Among other grievances, the workers demand the end of beyond-excessive quotas—50 lbs. per hour—that create dangerous conditions.

Owners and management refused to negotiate or recognize the workers' decision to unionize with the UFW—beginning a campaign of retaliation, intimidation, and firings. After Ostrom Farms settled in 2023 with the state over a discrimination lawsuit for \$3.4 million, the business was bought by Windmill Farms, which is primarily owned by Canadian private equity firm Instar Asset Management.

The workers' mistreatment continues a long, exploitative tradition of governments denying farm workers' basic and inalienable labor rights by refusing to codify legal protections already conceded to (most) other workers. According to Rodman et al. (2016), the American version of 'agricultural exceptionalism' is rooted in the "successful efforts of southern agricultural interests to exempt black sharecroppers from the New Deal package of social reforms". Neither the federal nor the WA state government extends many labor protections to farm workers, like the rights to organize or be paid for overtime. Resultantly, the inhumane treatment at Windmill Farms continues. With workers seeking to escalate and raise awareness of their fight, the UFW announced the ongoing boycott in December 2024, targeting the Windmill Farms label and any generic or store-labeled mushrooms sourced from Sunnyside, WA.

Winco, UW Seattle, and Metro Market count among the grocery stores and food providers that've signed on in support—refusing to purchase or use Windmill Farms' mushroom products; Safeway and many others haven't. Alongside the in-store boycott, Sunnyside's farm workers also ask that Puget Sound locals and those throughout Western WA confirm whether their favorite restaurants are participating—pizzerias most of all—or to put pressure on them to do so.

—
Asked about alternatives to boycotted shrooms, a UFW organizer advocated for supporting the union workers at Monterrey Farms.

Substituting jackfruit in place of mushrooms was also recommended for at-home cooking, especially as a meat alternative. Wrapped in masa and then cornhusks, jackfruit filling makes terrific vegetarian or vegan tamales.

And while it's doubtful that any meal covered in 'Nana's homemade chili sauce' could fail to impress, the organizer also raved about mixing up some jackfruit sloppy joes with ingredients you'll probably find in your pantry already (recipe on following page →).

—
Rodman, S., Barry, C., Clayton, M., Frattaroli, S., Neff, R., & Rutkow, L. (2016) Agricultural Exceptionalism at the State Level: Characterization of Wage and Hour Laws for U.S. Farmworkers. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* 6(2).
<https://www.foodsystemsjournal.org/index.php/fsj/article/view/450>



For four sloppy joes from scratch, all it takes is adding finely chopped jackfruit (20 oz.) to a simmering, tomato-based sauce:

1. Sauté chopped yellow onions ($\frac{3}{4}$ C) and grated carrots ($\frac{1}{4}$ C) until soft.
2. Stir in tomato paste (2 tsp), garlic powder (1 tsp), chili powder (1 tsp), and black pepper ($\frac{1}{4}$ tsp) until the mix smells good enough to get stomachs grumbling.
3. Add tomato sauce ($\frac{3}{4}$ C), veggie broth ($\frac{1}{2}$ C), and ketchup ($\frac{1}{4}$ C)—all unsalted—followed by vegan Worcestershire sauce (1 Tbl), light brown sugar (1 Tbl), and liquid aminos or soy sauce (2 tsp).
4. Slide in the jackfruit, stir, and simmer for a few minutes before serving it up on rolls.

<https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/271034/jackfruit-sloppy-joes/>

May 2nd Labor History Tour

The Seattle Industrial Workers of the World and the University of Washington's Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies invite you to a curated tour of labor history in our city.

Presented by Bridges Center Associate Director, Andrew Hedden, learn about the history of Seattle's working class struggles over the last century on a 4-hour bus tour.

Bring a friend!

Tickets are \$20. Purchase tickets here:

<https://www.tixtree.com/e/a-labor-history-tour-of-seattle-d06280d0d112>



Industrial Worker, May 1 1926

Auntie's Closet:

Gender-Affirming Clothing as Care

by Josiah Devine Johnson

Holding a motorcycle helmet, the front door swings open for her as she steps across the threshold. She sports a knitted crop top with a large black spider on it and leopard pants—a snake tattoo with exposed ribs and flesh missing wraps around her forearm. The room erupts to welcome her, “Snake!” She responds with a small wave and twiddling fingers, “Hi guys!”, before diving into three conversations at once—incoming donations, raising money, and creating partnerships with other organizations.

This is Snake, and she runs Auntie's Closet.

Offering their services to Tacomans of all walks of life, Auntie's Closet provides aid to everyone who wishes to utilize it. Tucked in a homey corner of the Rainbow Center, Auntie's Closet is designed to feel like you're getting clothes from and with family. Colorful rugs adorn the floor, while armchairs sitting by the window look towards a mirror surrounded by jewelry. From the start, Snake explains, she had a vision that people getting clothes here would feel the “familial connection of going through the closet and trying clothes on and playing dressup.”

Motioning towards a small shrine above the shelves, Snake elaborates that the clothing bank got its name in honor of her Aunt Bobbie, whose impact on Snake inspired the project. “She was my introduction to the trans community and was a huge part of my life as a kid...the name's also an homage to all the queer ‘aunts’ and ‘uncles’ that have helped the community in many ways.”

Based almost entirely on donations, this clothing bank provides gender-affirming care by supplying clothes for all. With a range reaching all the way from work clothes to formal wear, Auntie's Closet is prepared to help for any occasion. “We store things away in preparation for upcoming events like Halloween or the upcoming Queer Prom,” said Snake.

They don't stop at clothes but also provide binders, packers, tucking underwear, garters, bras, etc. The variety of gender-affirming clothing that the Closet can provide creates stability and community for those who otherwise mightn't have it.



Honoring Aunt Bobbie, Snake aims to foster “gender euphoria rather than gender dysphoria”.

Snake tells me, “We get lots of houseless trans folks that come in, and it's great to alleviate their tension by helping them dress and hype them. You can truly feel their tension drop.”

“The timing of the closet couldn't have been better, unfortunately, with everything going on politically,” said Mary Woodard, who runs Education Programs at the Rainbow Center. Woodard's observation echoes that of multiple Rainbow Center employees and volunteers, who spoke about the recent increase of Queer political refugees coming to them for resources after arriving from Red states to find safety in Tacoma. Auntie's Closet-volunteer Veronica is one such person.

Having served in the military for over a decade before President Trump's executive order banned Trans individuals from the U.S. armed forces, Veronica chose early retirement rather than being forced out because of her trans identity. Trump's order recognizes only male and female sexes, declaring, "Service members diagnosed with gender dysphoria will soon be processed for separation by their respective services," according to the Department of War website.

Having traded in her military fatigues and chopped hair, Veronica styles a grey top and long hair, buzzed on the side to show off a new tattoo on the side of her head. Veronica has found a new duty during her time out of uniform—serving on the steering committee for the local chapter of the Human Rights Campaign—and now spending much of her time volunteering at the Closet. When I met Veronica, she had only been volunteering for a week, proclaiming she'd be back as often as she could.



Asked what Auntie Bobbie would say about what they thought their legacy might be, Snake replied, "She would say that she just wants to be able to express herself without the world demonizing her for it. And she wants that for everyone else. Everyone should be able to dress and present themselves as who they are." When Snake is asked about her own legacy, she replied, "I just want to give back to the community that welcomed me."

If you're interested in attending or volunteering at Auntie's Closet, please stop in between 1-4 pm, weekdays.

Seattle Worker Pledges No AI

The Seattle Worker editorial committee has voted to commit to a 'No AI' policy for our articles and art.

Our writers and editors at the Seattle Worker recognize the value and the labor of those who work in print publications and other mediums to produce articles and art that are worker-made and worker-focused. We recognize that AI, as it is presently being developed by private companies, does not have workers' best interests at heart.

The Seattle Worker has not previously, knowingly used AI-produced content, and from the time of this announcement, we pledge not to use AI in any aspect of our writing, editing, illustration, and production. Our policy is to attribute art whenever possible.

Workers Encyclopedia

Kleptocracy: [klep·taa·kruh·see] noun. "Rule by Thieves". Aka: thievocracy and crony capitalism.

A system of corruption in which a network of ruling elites uses the institutions of government to steal public assets for their own private gain.

Usage Notes: Permitting virtually unlimited theft, while the head of state provides cover for his cronies through pardons and the uneven application of the law. This system erodes democracy by silencing opposition, dumping unlimited private funds into the political system, and robbing workers of their wages.

Example: This system allows Russia's president Vladimir Putin to systematically plunder the economic value produced by workers in Russia. In the US, it facilitates the accumulation of wealth and influence in a small group of oligarchs. Thus, robbing workers of the profits of their labor.

See Also: Oligarch; our enemy in the class war.

Solidarity Union Primer

Direct Action





by FW Noah

Previously on Solidarity Union Primer, I described how you and your coworkers can form an organizing committee to help guide the direction of your union campaign and begin to plan the next steps. FW Donovan also discussed in a previous issue how to create a contact list of you and your coworkers for one-on-one conversations and building the committee, as well as keeping a track of grievances brought up by coworkers.

A “grievance” in union organizing means any complaint, criticism, or ideas by you or your coworkers relating to how your workplace functions and serves its workers.

Sometimes these look like simple small complaints, like a broken coffee machine or faulty tools that you are otherwise obliged to use for the job. Others can be more serious, such as health and safety violations, labor law violations, hostile treatment or even criminal behavior. Cataloging these grievances—possibly in its own separate list or document—can help you and your coworkers understand who in the workplace has ideas about what could be changed for the benefit of the workers, or understand what problems are currently being faced by your coworkers and why they occur.

In any case, an organizing committee might find multiple steps that need to occur in order to fix a single problem. Important questions are likely to rise from these conversations:

-  What is the problem exactly?
-  When did it start?
-  How does it affect other people's experience in the workplace?
-  What would have to be done in order to fix it?

Perhaps the most important questions that an organizing committee could ask are, “Who is responsible for the problem, and who is responsible for fixing it?” While some problems in the workplace can be easier to ignore than others, everybody can feel the effect that the problem causes, and can recognize that it is ultimately the business owner who is responsible for maintaining a safe, clean, and supportive workplace. If the business owner does

not recognize the problem, or is unwilling to correct the problem, then—ultimately—the workers must act to increasingly bring attention to it until their bosses provide the solution.

This is best described in two words: direct action.

Direct action means workers coming together to specifically address one or more grievances that they collectively recognize in the workplace, and act in such a way as to force their employer to fix it. There are a variety of strategies that can be implemented in order to bring about the desired solution, with some being as subtle as a petition or letter writing campaign, and more serious actions such as marching on the boss or even going on strike. There's a broad spectrum of potential strategies that can be implemented, with each having their own specific effects and consequences.

A simple form of direct action (that is also relatively low cost and low risk to workers) could be something as straightforward as creating and signing a petition to have a grievance in the workplace corrected. Petitions or letter writing campaigns can be easy to act upon and deliver to your employer, and may not arouse their suspicions that there may be more concerted, collective activity taking place in the workplace.

Petitions give the employer the simple option of respecting their workers' desires, and these actions can appear to be amicable and approachable for the employer to consider. Simpler actions like these tend to be the safer bet for smaller grievances that workers seek to find solutions to, and don't carry as much risk of employers' retaliation or investigation as to whether or not there may be a union campaign brewing.

For example, if the coffee machine is broken in the break room, and the employer seems initially disinterested in fixing it or replacing it, then the workers can come together to request that the coffee machine finally be fixed or replaced. Something minute and simple as having a working coffee machine is probably not going to cause the employer to become indignant or obstructive at the possible cost, and the formal nature of a petition can make an employer hesitate to refuse for fear of seeming uncaring or obtuse to their workers.

If the employer were still to refuse, and the workers collectively recognize the grievance as unsolved and still being a hindrance to the well-being of their workplace, there are options for escalation that a union campaign can take to address it. These actions are typically taken when the 'nice' options do not catch the attention or interest of the employer, or if an employer refuses to solve a grievance despite being able to do so. The kinds of escalation that workers can take tend to be a lot more direct regarding how those workers confront their employers. Moreover, these escalations start transforming into clear and unabashed demands.

As another example, if a workplace had machinery that could potentially cause health or safety problems, and the employer was unwilling to spend the money to fix the machinery or implement better safety protections, then workers carry the risk of potentially getting further harmed or injured on the job. Despite a formal petition to the employer for better safety protections, the employer might simply shrug and say that it would affect their profit margins too much to implement the safety protections the workers need to stay safe. The organizing committee could reconvene and decide to encourage their coworkers to call out sick on a particular day the following week, so as to emphasize to their employers that the lack of health and safety protections they have in the workplace is beginning to take a toll on their productivity, as well as their profits. The employer, seeing the sudden lack of the workforce they need to stay successful, would be smart to take the hint and reconsider the lack of care that they show for their workers who get injured or sick on the job.

Other forms of escalatory tactics can also include:

- 🐾 'Working to rule', where workers deliberately slow down their productivity by following the specific instructions for their job down to the letter of their employee manual.
- 🐾 Banner dropping or leafleting for the employer to resolve the grievances their workers have, or for the purpose of growing the union campaign
- 🐾 'Marching on the Boss', where workers directly confront their employer regarding grievances in the workplace that have gone unresolved, and demanding an outcome by a certain time or criteria
- 🐾 'Good Work' strikes, where workers give benefits or limit costs to consumers by undercharging, providing extra services at no cost, or otherwise going above and beyond what is expected of their jobs while preventing an increase in profit to the employer

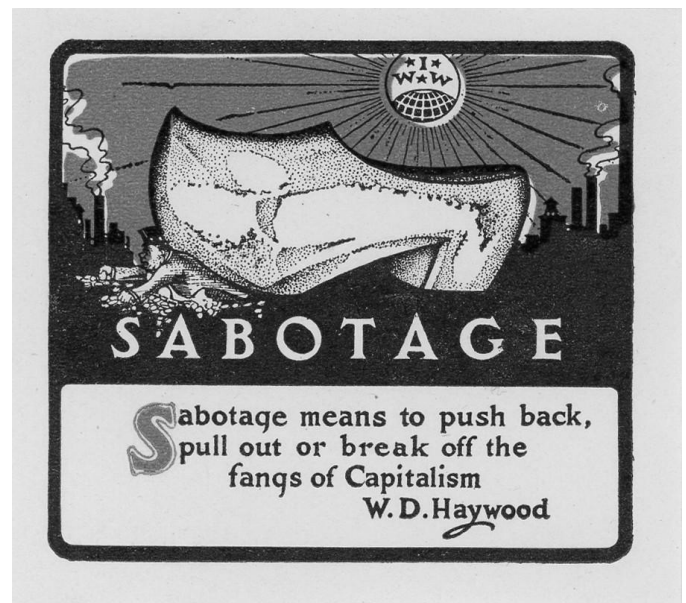
- 🐾 'Sick-Ins', where workers call out of work sick en-masse to limit or halt productivity
- 🐾 Whistleblowing about working conditions, treatment from management, poor pay, or how the job is done
- 🐾 'Sit-down' or 'slow-down' strikes, where workers intentionally slow down or take 'extra breaks' on the job

Some of these actions can carry greater or lesser risk, depending on how they're implemented and towards what grievances they're addressing. It should also be said that labor law can and does come into conflict with some of these tactics, and if you are an at-will employee, there is nothing preventing your employer from potentially targeting or firing you for taking these actions.

However, if you and your coworkers act as a majority—or even unified collective—and you stay resolute in your demands, you can together bring employers to the table and reconsider the treatment, conditions or compensation they provide to their workers.

If you would like to learn more, see "How to Fire Your Boss: A Worker's Guide to Direct Action", available through the IWW Literature Committee:

<https://www.iww.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Workers-Guide-9-pt-print-layout-Smith-cover-clr-adj.pdf>



IWW SONG SHEET * MAY DAY, 2026

There is Power in a Union

Lyrics: Joe Hill

Would you have freedom from wage slavery,
Then join in the grand Industrial band;
Would you from mis'ry and hunger be free,
Then come! Do your share, lend a hand.

CHORUS:

There is pow'r, there is pow'r, in a band of workingfolk,
When they stand (*When they stand!*), hand in hand (*Hand in hand!*),
That's a pow'r, that's a pow'r, that must rule in every land.
One Industrial Union Grand.

Would you have mansions of gold in the sky,
And live in a shack, way in the back?
Would you have wings up in heaven to fly,
And starve here with rags on your back?

(CHORUS)

If you've had "nuff" of "these corp'rate demand
Then join in the grand Industrial band;
If, for a change, you would have eggs and ham,
Then come, do your share, lend a hand.

(CHORUS)

If you like sluggers to beat off your head,
Then don't organize, all unions despise,
if you want nothing before you are dead,
Shake hands with your boss and look wise.

(CHORUS)

Come, all you workers, from every land,
Come, join in the grand Industrial band,
Then we our share of this earth shall demand.
Come on! Do your share, lend a hand.

(CHORUS)

Bread and Roses

Lyrics: James Oppenheim

As we come marching, marching, in the beauty of the day,
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts gray
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,
For the people hear us singing: "Bread & roses! Bread & roses!"

As we come marching, marching, we battle too for men –
For they are in this struggle, and together we may win.
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes –
Hearts starve as well as bodies: Give us bread, but give us roses!

As we come marching, marching, unnumbered women dead
Go crying through our singing their ancient cry for bread.
Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew.
Yes, it is bread we fight for—but we fight for roses, too!

As we come marching, marching, we're standing proud and tall,
The rising of the women means the rising of us all.
No more the drudge and idler—ten that toil where one reposes—
But a sharing of life's glories: Bread and roses! Bread and roses!

Dump the Bosses

John Brill, 1916

Are you poor, forlorn and hungry?
Are there lots of things you lack?
Is your life made up of misery?
Then dump the bosses off your back.

Are your clothes all torn and tattered?
Are you living in a shack?
Would you have your troubles scattered?
Then dump the bosses off your back.

Are you almost split asunder?
Loaded like a long-eared jack?
Fool! Why don't you buck like thunder
And dump the bosses off your back?

All the agonies you suffer,
You can end with one good whack
Stiffen up you orn'ry duffer
And dump the bosses off your back!

“Friends, They May Think It’s a Movement...”

Newcastle Tenant Union Goes Public in Tacoma’s Second Supermajority Launch

— FW John (x430192)

Credit: Gordig Media (3/27 Audio)

During OT 101, our trainers asked how many people we thought were needed to form a union. I’m pretty sure our group’s guesses hit both the over and the under: 3 & 1.

The IWW regards any pair of workers acting in solidarity with each other to be a union. But when two supermajority tenant unions act in solidarity—and many more continue organizing, preparing to go public—that sure starts feeling like something more.









And we decided that one big pile was better’n two little piles...¹

—
“With today’s launch of the Newcastle Tenant Union, I’m here to tell you that tenant unionization is now officially a movement in Tacoma!,” Scott announces to the raucous crowd gathered on a gorgeous March 27 evening. With the sun yet to set on a Friday night, Newcastle Tenant Union’s (NTU) launch feels like a sneak peak of the coming summer—and not just the weather.

Forced to speak up and around the Division Ave. din—revving bikes and drive-by honks showing support for the street-side launch—Scott adds, “We are gathered in solidarity to take back our dignity and make our homes safe to live in; democratic tenant power *just makes sense*.”

After New York Apartments Tenant Union (NYATU) made Tacoma’s history books at their December 6 launch, efforts to organize renters throughout the city continue, chooglin’ along. Not far up the street from our city’s first tenant union—sharing Rob and Candy Hoover as their absentee landlords (plus Ann Limbourne)—NTU has revealed itself as Tacoma’s second supermajority tenant union.

Scott shares NTU’s demands:

-  That the Hoovers & Ann Limbourne negotiate face-to-face
-  Standardized rent, utilities, fees, and a two-year rent freeze
-  All current and future tenants keep their pets
-  Major structural repairs—plumbing, heating, broken windows, rotted floors, rotted walls, and rotted ceilings
-  Maintenance requests fulfilled in timely manner
-  Basic quality of life—working laundry, pest control, safe units
-  Respect for tenants’ dignity, privacy, and right to organize
-  That the Hoovers & Ann Limbourne respond by 4/6

If the list sounds familiar, that’s because it’s nearly identical to NYATU’s demands—further credence that the Hoovers’ treatment of tenants is synonymous, if not systemic, across the more than \$20 million of local property assets from which they extract rent.

Francis Faye Oak—a NYATU leader—proclaimed “We know that the problems we face are not just here at the New York Apartments and not just here at the Newcastle Apartments. Half of Tacoma’s population is tenants—100,000 of us. Tens of thousands of us are being constantly harassed, price-gouged, targeted for eviction, outpriced, and forced out of our community and some into homelessness. AND. THAT. ISN’T. RIGHT.”

—
The NTU members who followed on the mic shared their stories, further illustrating what life’s like in one of Tacoma’s ‘Hoovervilles’.

Konstanza—overcoming health concerns to be present in solidarity with fellow NTU members—moved into Newcastle Apartments last September after escaping a pest problem at another Hoover-owned property. Among *many* other issues, Konstanza had increasingly unreliable access to “tepid” water, let alone hot.

By Dec., the hot water heater was all but clapped out; she’s been showering at the Y since. Despite [RCW 59.18.070](#) clearly stating hot water must be restored within 24 hours, two successive property management companies instead tried to gaslight Konstanza—claiming hers was the only unit with water problems. The NTU members standing beside her express otherwise.

Supported by her extensive documentation, Konstanza started a now-successful solo rent strike in February—forced to start before NTU could offer more help. Her demands for lease termination and rent credit recently approved in full, Konstanza will soon move out.

For Rachel, a three-year resident, the ‘Hooverville’ experience started with an early oven fire that was followed by WiFi issues from faulty wiring. Forced to “cafe hop” for grad school, she successfully pursued her passion to become a social worker despite Newcastle’s added obstacles. Rachel knows first-hand how “steady, livable, safe housing is the foundation for recovery, stability, and a full life”. She sees it daily.

More recently, her CO alarm went off. Despite making maintenance requests to check for a carbon monoxide leak, no one followed up. She bought her own just to feel safe again.

Now, they want to evict Pumpkin, Rachel’s roommate and cat,

despite them having moved in together. Similarly, multiple tenants were denied lease renewals under a sudden prohibition on pets despite their fuzzleball friends being multi-year residents, too.

Four-year-resident Kenny credits the pet ban for motivating him to step up for Meecko, his cat of two years: “Even though many of us have lived alongside our pets for many years, any animal lover would know that this motivated me to furiously start organizing our building and save my animal companion’s home.”

Regarding conditions at Newcastle, Kenny states, “No changes appear imminent, unless you count a rotating cast of maintenance people and management teams.” On the third management team since last June, NTU learned the first “was let go because he wasn’t squeezing rent out of the tenants” and the second “for doing too much maintenance and ownership couldn’t afford it.”

Doubting the Hoovers and Ann Limbourne are too cash-strapped to meet minimum standards of human decency, Kenny remarks, “They could afford their yacht; they could afford their new art gallery down in Huntington Beach.”

Regarding some over-due maintenance recently done, he credits Tacoma’s tenant movement, “because our neighbors in the NYATU were pressuring them to get it done. So, I thank you all for that, from the bottom of my heart.” However, the management team’s response remains woefully insufficient overall; per Kenny: “Things continue to deteriorate.”

Maggie describes this as Newcastle’s norm for the decade she and Scott have made the building and the North Slope neighborhood their home. Finding a leak following their move-in, “it took another half-a-dozen separate maintenance requests, at least four lengthy maintenance calls and emails, and a full year” to get it under control. “Although,” Maggie continues, “the patchwork in our ceiling remains unfinished, today, even nine years later.”

Maggie recalls all the documented requests—“simple, inexpensive fixes when first reported.” Ignored for months or years, “they became expensive and time-consuming repairs: replacing the entire oven, replacing the entire floor.” But even those resolutions were disruptive. “Weeks or months after carefully making the request in writing and receiving no response—I received a sudden maintenance phone call at 7am or experienced a spontaneous knock on the door by maintenance staff as I was [leaving] for work.”

“A property manager told me to ‘pick one’ of my critical maintenance requests, because there was no way they’d finance all three.” Maggie and Scott were exhausted. “Alone, we no longer had the energy to fight for what every human being deserves.”

So, NTU’s members stopped going it alone. They started a union.

Born and raised in Tacoma—now nurturing our next generation of local creatives—Maggie doesn’t see herself anywhere else. “We love this neighborhood. We love our neighbors. We love this beautiful, old building. This part of Tacoma is gorgeous and walkable and vibrant and we fill it with our art and activism and culture and compassion. We are Tacoma.”

Calling on Tacomans to join them, Maggie concludes: “We hope to inspire those of you who are living in conditions like ours and worse to raise your voices. To come together in solidarity. Together, we can support and nurture those amongst us that are most vulnerable, most marginalized. This is how Tacoma combats the egregious injustice of homelessness. This is how owners who care about Tacoma support the vitality, stability, and vibrancy of our city!

—

Maggie and Scott—partners, pillars of Tacoma’s art community, and two of NTU’s leaders—graciously sat down to share more of their experiences. I asked what got the pair involved initially; per Maggie, “I think it was just recognizing what was happening for our neighbors... There’s always a part of you that thinks, ‘It’s just me.’”

*Now it all started two Thanksgivings ago,
was on—two years ago on Thanksgiving,
when my friend and I
went up to visit Alice at the restaurant...¹*

Maggie recounts the issues with their gas range and oven, which she impressively overcame to cook last Fall’s holiday dinner: “Heat was escaping the oven in a way it shouldn’t have... I let them know, I was like, ‘Hey, the oven seal has deteriorated.’ Nothing. ‘I need a new oven seal, this is not good—I think it might be leaking carbon monoxide.’ Right...?”

“Because the heat was escaping, the plastic knobs on the front of the oven,” Maggie explains, “two of them failed.” For months, she and Scott had to swap the knobs around. “This is amidst updates in the portal. I have documentation; I took screenshots... And then the oven knob failed, the one that controlled the oven temperature.

“So, we go out and buy an internal oven thermometer... Now we’re turning the oven on by pliers, by little notches we’ve made on the front... and checking the internal temperature of the oven to do all our cooking. I cooked the entirety of Thanksgiving dinner that way.”

That night, she filed another request.

*Well, we got there and there was a big sign
and a chain across the dump saying,
“Closed on Thanksgiving.”
And we had never heard of a dump
closed on Thanksgiving before...¹*

Maggie sums up: “I wouldn’t allow somebody for whom I was working to experience that.”

Back to their involvement with NTU, Maggie explains: “I think it was more just, this year, the sudden and disparate information that came from any accountable channel. People who had just paid a pet deposit a year and a half ago getting a new lease that stipulated ‘No Pets.’” She says the pet deposit they paid at move-in (as opposed to a monthly pet rent) contributed to them choosing Newcastle. “So, it was that and just finding out from the neighbors what they were experiencing. Just the mandates from on high with no channel for communication about it.

“There’s an emergency number in the app—in the portal.” But per Maggie: “You reach a call center, I think overseas. And my point is somebody needs to be accountable... Somebody we can reach that has some knowledge and some history with the building.”

Reinforcing her point, a fellow Newcastle tenant was locked out of their apartment during the launch event—the same day the property management posted physical notices of a rent increase (for which they’d received emails before NTU went public). Maggie tried the emergency number again. Same results.

“They can send somebody around to put notices on the door, but it took four hours to let my neighbor in. They changed her lock [but] didn’t provide her the proper key... The whole situation is just crazy. You should be able to reach somebody.”

Maggie continues, “It’s not the maintenance—it’s the dignity and respect. The maintenance is a symptom of the lack of dignity and respect. You’ll call their management office, [they’ll] tell you, ‘Oh no, that was managed.’ And you’ll say, ‘No, it’s not, because I’m sitting here looking at a river running through the laundry room.’ And they’ll say, ‘No no, that was’... After a while, it’s unreal.”

Scott adds, “The only thing they replied to quickly was someone was breaking into the laundry room from outside and stealing quarters out of the machines... They responded right away to make sure they put locks on those machines and nobody could steal all those quarters. That was a high-priority item for them.”

They was taking plaster tire tracks, foot prints, dog-smelling prints, and they took 27 8"x10" color glossy photographs, with circles and arrows and a paragraph on the back of each one explaining what each one was to be used as evidence against us.

Took pictures of the approach, the getaway, the northwest corner, the southwest corner, and that's not to mention the aerial photography.¹

—

After discussing Maggie and Scott’s involvement with the local arts community, he brings it all together: “This is another part of that for us. It’s just neighbors helping neighbors, because you’ve gotta do it local. Because that’s the only place you can make change. And get other people on board to do it with you—because that’s what union is all about and what solidarity is all about. And it inspired people to work together, and that’s what I like about it. That’s what we need.”

On that uplifting note, I ask what Maggie, Scott, and the other NTU members look forward to most, now past their launch event.

“I think we’re most excited about the movement. I think we’re most excited about supporting people in other buildings, in smaller situations. Putting what supermajority privilege we have behind others in our neighborhood... Just to help each other, help our neighbors. Because, you know, Tacoma’s a working town—a working-class town. And I think we have the rare opportunity right now to push things in a better direction for the future of this city.

“I love Tacoma; I’ve lived here all my life.” But with her exasperation evident, Maggie muses, “I’m just at a point where I’m old enough now that I don’t care anymore. What am I here for, if not to make the world a little bit better for those who come after me?”

Maggie’s message for the Hoovers and Ann Limbourne is simple: “At this point it’s just ridiculous. Just come to the table and talk to us... You’re gonna own multiple properties in our area, come and sit down and have a conversation with us. I think we can help each other. I think you can learn from our intimacy with our space.”

—

After mentioning my plans to talk with Kenny as well, Maggie and Scott smile, telling me, “It’s so funny because he’s our direct next-door neighbor... We’d hardly spoken to him. And I’ve really enjoyed getting to know him through this process. He’s incredibly energized.

“There are several of us on the organizing committee, but he has been ‘boots-on-the-ground’, talking to people on an almost daily basis. And it’s just been incredible. We all love Kenny.”

—

Kenny calls himself a “bit of a hot head. Everybody’s pissed, but I’ve got a certain righteous fury that’s *downright biblical*, man.”

As he tells it, the pet ban “got me out of bed. It got me standing up and talking to people... The pet clause got me up and interested in negotiating with Rob and Candy Hoover and Ann Limbourne... And once you wake me up, I’m not going back to sleep—especially after I keep hearing horror stories, you know?”

“I’m one of those people who can live with blinders on—even if the laundry room is flooding every other time I use it, it’s something I can kinda ignore. But when there’s holes in people’s units for years and no hot water when they’re raising little kids there—for anybody, but especially when it comes to kids and animals and people who already have barriers. People need advocates.”

How can you refuse it?

Let fury have the hour, anger can be power

D’you know that you can use it?²

“I just started knocking on doors and seeing what people’s response would be to considering forming a union. And it was such an overwhelming ‘YES’—beyond a supermajority.”

Doing the rough math, Kenny reports, “We are at 92.8% of occupied units on union cards. It’s really great. Lots of voices; good leadership.” His recap of NTU’s organizing progress further evidences that: “Once we established an organizing committee at Newcastle, it really became quite streamlined quite quickly. We assigned floors to each leader, got good relationships built, established two asynchronous communication lines.”

He stresses, “Communication was so important. We’re working class people living there—ain’t no nepo babies in the Newcastle. Working class people all on completely different schedules, some people working nonstop. And we all have different lives—the last thing we want is this to become a second job for anybody, including our leaders. So, that delegation was so important.

For the members of NTU, Kenny believes “the appetite was there so much that it did not take a lot of inoculation... People are showing up with their capacity and tons of enthusiasm.”

—
(remember Alice? It’s a song about Alice)¹

Recalling what Maggie said at the launch, I mention their unit’s unfinished ceiling patch. Kenny nods, “Almost everybody has something like that,” before summarizing: “Our top floor leaks, our bottom floor floods, but I bet their yacht doesn’t...”

When asked how to support NTU, Kenny recommends getting involved with the city-wide tenant organizing: “This is a very grass-roots movement. It starts literally at home, like it did for me.” His reasoning is straightforward, “It’s important to introduce yourself to your neighbors and build community at home because that’s where this kind of power starts... because it’s a lot easier to organize people you know than to organize a group of strangers.”

But even strangers see what’s up. “We got a lot of passing interest at our public launch. People would stop and ask a lot of questions and seem very supportive. I think Tacoma’s always been a union town, it was a railroad town, working class and on the blue-collar

side. But that doesn’t mean we’re stupid, it doesn’t mean we’re not intelligent, it doesn’t mean we can be taken advantage of, it doesn’t mean we’re gonna lay down and let some external force extract wealth from the community, gaslight clients—that’s how I think of it: They’re supposed to provide a service, and they dropped the ball on that, and it’s time for them to be held accountable. Simple as.”

He adds, “And if they’re not going to come to the negotiating table, we’re gonna find another way to hold them accountable.”

—
Asked about NTU being Tacoma’s second supermajority tenant union, Kenny asserts, “After Newcastle’s launch, I think the movement in Tacoma is stronger than it ever has been. The future looks bright for the movement.”

I’m reminded of Kenny’s words at NTU’s launch: “Let me make this abundantly clear to all the absentee landlords extracting wealth from the Tacoma community—those who don’t provide dignified living conditions, those who ignore tenants living in their properties:

“If you think we’re done, this is just getting started. And if you think you’re immune to this movement, you just might be next!”

*And the only reason I’m singing you this song now
is ‘cause you may know somebody in a similar situation,
or you may be in a similar situation.
And if you’re in a situation like that,
there’s only one thing you can do¹*

—
Tenants at McIlvaine Apartments proved Kenny right. Their own supermajority tenant union launched April 11. 100% of residents.

Days later comes news that North Slope Tenant Union (another Hoover-owned collection of buildings) goes public April 19. Per Tacoma For All’s announcement: “Combined, the unions represent 70% of their Tacoma units and control over \$50,000 in rent.”

*And if three people do it,
Three—can you imagine?
Three people walking in,
Singin’ a bar of Alice’s Restaurant’n walking out.
They may think it’s an organization.
And can you—can you imagine 50 people a day?
I said 50 PEOPLE A DAY walking in,
Singin’ a bar of Alice’s Restaurant’n walking out.
And friends, they may think it’s a movement!
And that’s what it is...¹*

—
1 Arlo Guthrie. “Alice’s Restaurant Massacree.” *Alice’s Restaurant*.

2 The Clash. “Clampdown.” *London Calling*.

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 maintain the union and assist organizing campaigns. As a result, monthly dues are low.

To join, visit: iww.org/membership/ or email: seattle@iww.org or tacoma@iww.org

To begin organizing your workplace, visit: seattleiww.org/organize-your-workplace/

Take the Organizer Training!

The IWW Organizer Training 101 (OT101) gives you the skills to organize with your coworkers to flip workplace power dynamics—winning demands around conditions and wages, even without a formal union. It is focused on IWW's concept of 'solidarity unionism' and direct action tactics rather than legalistic NLRB processes.

OT101 is an intensive, two-day training—covering information that includes organizing conversations with coworkers, building organizing committees from the ground up, how to take direct action, and how to navigate with (and around) labor law.

For notice of the Seattle General Membership Branch's regularly held OT101s, visit: <https://forms.gle/q9edxoGrEVXhMVd89>

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."

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.

Official publication of the
Seattle IWW
Seattle Worker
March-April 2020 Vol. 9, Iss. 2



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