

# DIRECT ACTION

PUBLICATION OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD – AUSTRALIAN ROC



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## Class Struggle for (ex)-Dummies



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At its root, capitalism is an economic system based on three things: wage labour (working for a wage), private ownership of the means of production (things like factories, machinery, farms, and offices), and production for exchange and profit.

While some people own means of production, or capital, most of us don't and so to survive we need to sell our ability to work in return for a wage, or else scrape by on benefits. This first group of people is the capitalist class or "bourgeoisie" in Marxist jargon, and the second group is the working class or "proletariat". [See below for more on class].

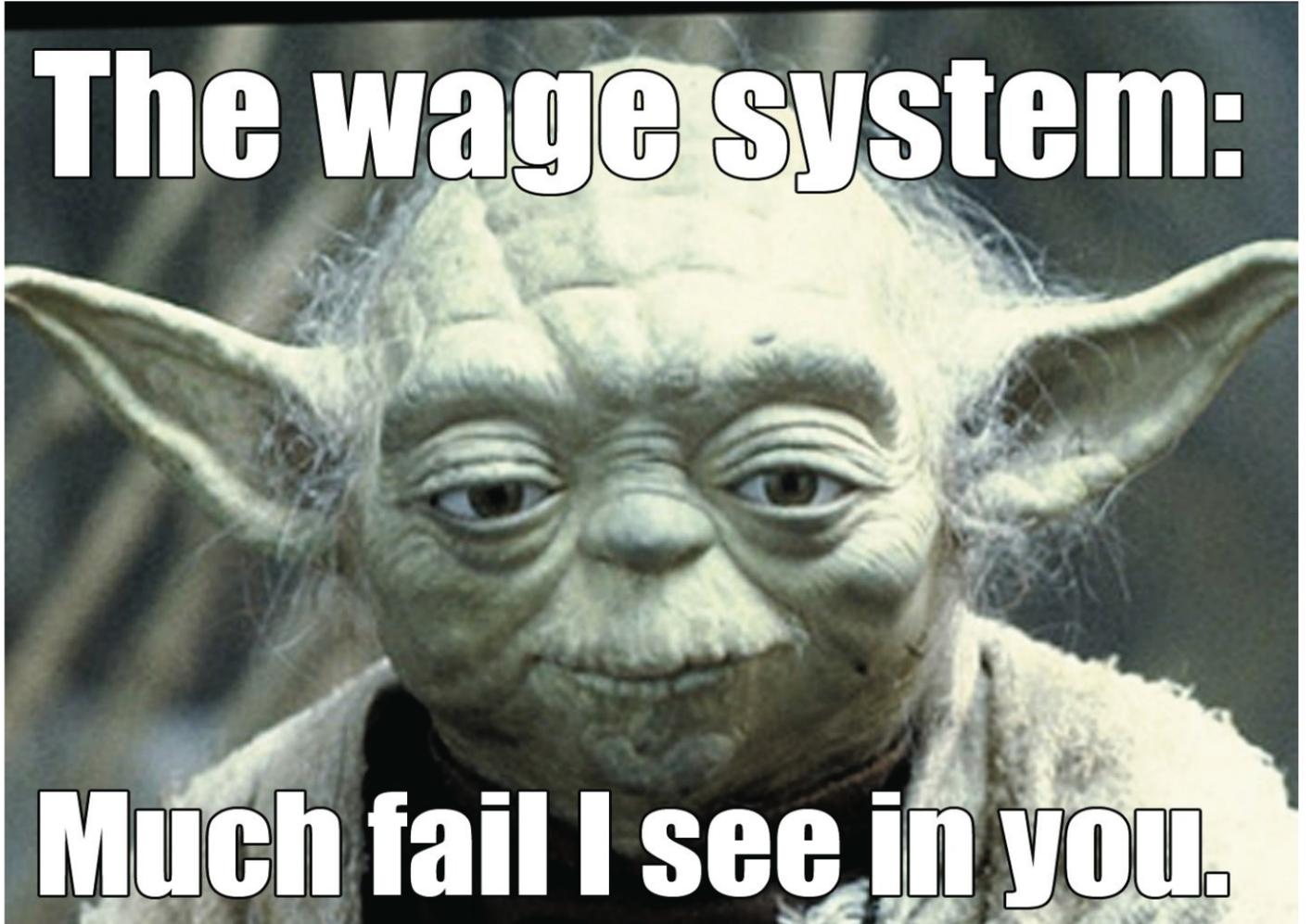
Capitalism is based on a simple process—money is invested to generate more money. When money functions like this, it functions as capital. For instance, when a company uses its profits to hire more staff or open new premises, and so make more profit, the money here is functioning as capital. As capital increases (or the economy expands), this is called 'capital accumulation', and it's the driving force of the economy.

Those accumulating capital do so better when they can shift costs onto others. If companies can cut costs by not protecting the environment, or by paying sweatshop wages, they will. So catastrophic climate change and widespread poverty are signs of the normal functioning of the system. Furthermore, for money to make more money, more and more things have to be exchangeable for money. Thus the tendency is for everything from everyday items to DNA sequences to carbon dioxide emissions—and, crucially, our ability to work—to become commodified.

And it is this last point—the commodification of our creative and productive capacities, our ability to work—which holds the secret to capital accumulation. Money does not turn into more money by magic, but by the work we do every day.

In a world where everything is for sale, we all need something to sell in order to buy the things we need. Those of us with nothing to sell except our ability to work have to sell this ability to those who own the factories, offices, etc. And of course, the things we produce at work aren't ours, they belong to our bosses.

Furthermore, because of long hours, productivity improvements etc, we produce much more than necessary to keep us going as workers. The wages we get roughly match the cost of the products necessary to keep us alive and able to work each day (which is why, at the end of each month, our bank balance rarely looks that different to the month before). The difference between the wages we are paid and the value we create is how capital is accumulated, or profit is made.



This difference between the wages we are paid and the value we create is called "surplus value". The extraction of surplus value by employers is the reason we view capitalism as a system based on exploitation—the exploitation of the working class.

This process is essentially the same for all wage labour, not just that in private companies. Public sector workers also face constant attacks on their wages and conditions in order to reduce costs and maximise profits across the economy as a whole.

### Unwaged labour

The accumulation of capital also relies on unwaged work, such as housework or domestic labour. This includes the reproduction of labour power in the form of producing and raising children—the next generation of workers—and servicing the current workforce—physically, emotionally, and sexually. This unpaid labour is predominately carried out by women.

Servicing men and children at home serves capital: by making housework and reproduction a women's 'natural and feminine' process rather than work, capitalism benefits in the form of free labour. When capital pays husbands they get two workers, not one.

Denying domestic labour a wage makes this work invisible, and divides the working

class into waged and unwaged at the expense of both.

### Competition

In order to accumulate capital, our boss must compete in the market with bosses of other companies. They cannot afford to ignore market forces, or they will lose ground to their rivals, lose money, go bust, get taken over, and ultimately cease to be our boss. Therefore even the bosses aren't really in control of capitalism, capital itself is. It's because of this that we can talk about capital as if it has agency or interests of its own, and so often talking about 'capital' is more precise than talking about bosses.

Both bosses and workers, therefore, are alienated by this process, but in different ways. While from the workers' perspective, our alienation is experienced through being controlled by our boss, the boss experiences it through impersonal market forces and competition with other bosses.

Because of this, bosses and politicians are powerless in the face of 'market forces,' each needing to act in a way conducive to continued accumulation (and in any case they do quite well out of it!). They cannot act in our interests, since any concessions they grant us will help their competitors on a national or international level.

So, for example, if a manufacturer develops new technology for making cars which doubles productivity it can lay off half its workers, increase its profits and reduce the price of its cars in order to undercut its competition.

If another company wants to be nice to its employees and not sack people, eventually it will be driven out of business or taken over by its more ruthless competitor—so it will also have to bring in the new machinery and make the layoffs to stay competitive.

Of course, if businesses were given a completely free hand to do as they please, monopolies would soon develop and stifle competition which would lead to the system grinding to a halt. The state intervenes, therefore to act on behalf of the long-term interests of capital as a whole.

### The State

The primary function of the state in capitalist society is to maintain the capitalist system and aid the accumulation of capital.

As such, the state uses repressive laws and violence against the working class when we try to further our interests against capital. For example, bringing in anti-strike laws, or sending in police or soldiers to break up strikes and demonstrations.

The "ideal" type of state under capitalism at the present time is liberal democratic, however in order to continue capital accumulation at times different political systems are used by capital to do this. State capitalism in the USSR, and fascism in Italy and Germany are two such models, which were necessary for the authorities at the time in order to co-opt and crush powerful working-class movements. Movements which threatened the very continuation of capitalism.

When the excesses of bosses cause workers to fight back, alongside repression the state occasionally intervenes to make sure business as usual resumes without disruption. For this reason national and international laws protecting workers' rights and the environment exist. Generally the strength and enforcement of these laws ebbs and flows in relation to the balance of power between employers and employees in any given time and place. For example, in France where workers are more well-organised and militant, there is a maximum working week of 35 hours. In the UK, where workers are (Continued on page 16)

# What is the IWW?



**IWW Regional Organising Committee**  
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#### A.C.T.

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- Delegate: Dan (p) 0411 783 051

#### New South Wales

- Sydney (e) sydneywobs@gmail.com
- The Sydney IWW group meets monthly at the Petersham Bowling Club.
- Coffs Harbour (e) mjd@almatech.net.au
- Lismore (e) northernriverswobbles@gmail.com
- Newcastle (e) newcastlewobs@gmail.com

#### Queensland

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- Delegate: Jake (ph) 0402 504 327
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#### Victoria

- Melbourne GMB PO Box 145, Moreland VIC 3058
- (e) melbournewobbles@gmail.com
- Delegate: Ben (ph) 0418 670 239
- The Melbourne General Membership Branch meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month in Rm. 3, New Building, Trades Hall, Lygon St., Carlton, 6.30pm. Phone or text the delegate if you get lost.

#### Friends:

- Your Rights at Work - rightsatwork.com.au
- Earthworker - earthworkercooperative.com
- Beyond Zero Emissions - beyondzeroemissions.org
- Refugee Action Collective (VIC) - rac-vic.org
- Rex Bellotti Support Group - bellottisupportgroup.org
- Catholic Worker Movement - catholicworker.org
- Loophole, Melbourne - loopholecommunitycentre.org
- Melbourne Anarchist Cub - mac.anarchobase.com
- Jura Books, Sydney - jura.org.au
- Organise! - organisesa.org
- Brisbane Solidarity Network - blackflag.co.nr
- Slackbastard - slackbastard.anarchobase.com



The IWW is a member-run union for all workers, a union dedicated to organising on the job, in our industries and in our communities. IWW members are organising to win better conditions today and build a world with economic democracy tomorrow. We want our workplaces run for the benefit of workers and communities rather than for a handful of bosses and executives.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organise industrially.

This means we organise all workers producing the same goods or providing the same services into one union, rather than dividing workers by skill or trade, so we can pool our strength to win our demands together. Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have made significant contributions to the labor struggles around the world and have a proud tradition of organizing across gender, ethnic and racial lines long before such organising was popular.

We invite you to become a member whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organise the worker, not the job, and recognise that unions are not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address common concerns.

The IWW is a democratic, member-run union. That means members decide what issues to address, and which tactics to use and we directly vote on office holders, from stewards to national offices. Why wait? Join the IWW and organise for a better future.

#### 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 organise 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



SW Shilo Harrison

interest of the working class upheld only by an organisation 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 organised, not only for everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

#### Don't Mourn, Organise!

If you want to organise a union in your workplace or industry, IWW volunteers would be happy to talk with you about strategies for improving your working conditions. We can also provide you assistance if you and your coworkers decide to organise a union with the IWW.

The best place to start is either a phone conversation or email correspondence. Before the first contact, it would be helpful (though not necessary) to know a few things about your workplace:

- 1) How many workers are there?
- 2) What are the different types of jobs are there at your company? How many workers are

there in each department?

3) Does your store/company have other shops or distribution lines in the area?

4) What percentage of your coworkers would initially be excited about a union? How many would be neutral or opposed? Do you think your coworkers at work need to know more about unions?

Here is some advice in the short term. You will want to keep any union talk, and general conversations about wages, benefits, hours, etc., out of the ears of management.

You will want to be a model employee because you do not want to give management any reason to fire you. Your job is worth defending and improving.

Start a workplace diary, noting positive and negative comments from supervisors and managers. Keep notes from meetings, schedule changes, etc. Make sure you note when, where, why, etc. Save company memos and pay stubs, ANYTHING that you think will help your case if you must use a government agency to fight the boss.

Lastly, it is legal to talk about union organizing and you have a legal right to organise to improve your working conditions.

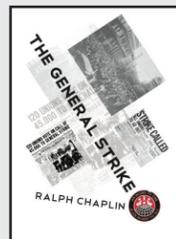
But you should know that some of the most seemingly friendly companies have waged the most vicious union busting drives. The goal of keeping the campaign out of the ears of management is to do as much organising as possible before your campaign goes public.

To get in touch with an IWW volunteer organiser, see the contacts section to the left.

## FINE MERCHANDISE FROM THE HOUSE OF WOBBLY.



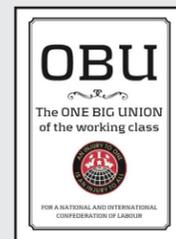
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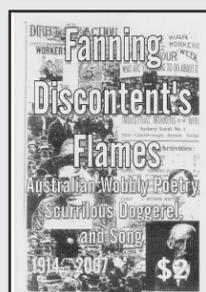
A Workers Guide to  
Direct Action  
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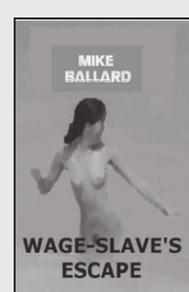
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FANNING  
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NEW! WAGE-SLAVE'S  
ESCAPE by Mike Ballard - \$20

WAGE-SLAVE'S ESCAPE is set in Western Australia. It's 2307. A fascist society exists in the Satellite City States that orbit Earth. Bettina Masters sees a piece of Wobbly graffiti: "Direct Action gets Satisfaction!" and takes you on a revolutionary adventure.

# Around Our Union

## Bread and Roses a Hundred Years On

One hundred years ago, in the dead of a Massachusetts winter, the great 1912 Lawrence Textile Strike—commonly referred to as the “Bread and Roses” strike—began. Accounts differ as to whether a woman striker actually held a sign that read “We Want Bread and We Want Roses, Too.” No matter. It’s a wonderful phrase, as appropriate for the Lawrence strikers as for any group at any time: the notion that, in addition to the necessities for survival, people should have “a sharing of life’s glories,” as James Oppenheim put it in his poem “Bread and Roses.”

Though 100 years have passed, the Lawrence strike resonates as one of the most important in the history of the United States. Like many labor conflicts of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the strike was marked by obscene disparities in wealth and power, open collusion between the state and business owners, large scale violence against unarmed strikers, and great ingenuity and solidarity on the part of workers. In important ways, though, the strike was also unique. It was the first large-scale industrial strike, the overwhelming majority of the strikers were immigrants, most were women and children, and the strike was guided in large part by the revolutionary strategy and vision of the IWW.

Beyond its historical significance, elements of this massive textile strike may be instructive to building a radical working class movement today. It is noteworthy that the Occupy movement shares many philosophical and strategic characteristics with the Lawrence strike—direct action, the prominent role of women, the centrality of class, participatory decision-making, egalitarianism, an authentic belief in the Wobly principle that We Are All Leaders—to name just a few. During the two months of the strike, the best parts of the revolutionary movement the IWW aspired to build were expressed. The Occupy movement carries that tradition forward, and as the attempt at a general strike in Oakland and solidarity events such as in New York for striking Teamsters indicate, many in Occupy understand that the working class is uniquely positioned to challenge corporate power. While we deepen our understanding of what that means and work to make it happen, there is much of value we can learn from what happened in Lawrence a century ago.

## Brisbane

Brisbane Wobblies and our Brisbane Solidarity Network (BSN) mates have been slowly working towards building a co-ordinated housing campaign in Brisbane.

One member is organising regular Housing Forums to raise awareness of housing issues and alternatives. Details to be announced when ready.

Another is promoting Occupy Homes within Occupy Brisbane. To get on this working group look at [www.facebook.com/groups/occupy-homesbrisbane](http://www.facebook.com/groups/occupy-homesbrisbane).

This action is being inspired by the Occupy Our Homes movement in the USA: [occupy-ourhomes.org](http://occupy-ourhomes.org).

BSN is in the process of supporting and organising tenants in the Edgewater boarding house, Annerly. A meeting was called on Saturday 18th February, 2012 for the tenants to take action against the owner. At dispute are a range of safety and health issues. Details and results to be announced when ready.

## IWW Cleaners Living Wage Victory

The Fighting Industrial Workers of the World Cleaners and Allied Trades Union today gained yet another victory notch on their belt against unscrupulous bosses!

Not ones to passively accept injustice, after their unfair sacking for organising a union, the Cleaners of NTT Communications stood up and confronted the management of cleaning services contractor Dynamiq for this unacceptable act of union-busting. Through the IWW Cleaners’ Union’s negotiations with Dynamiq management, the NTT Cleaners today obtained their reinstatement as a workforce onto a single worksite, and payment of



the London Living Wage. The demonstration planned for Friday 17 February has thus been CANCELLED for cause of VICTORY!!

Dynamiq Cleaning and Program Management Ltd kicked out an entire workforce who had been at NTT for years - why? Because they joined a union and stood up for their rights in the face of bullying and intimidation.

Following today’s negotiations with the cleaning contractor Dynamiq, who cover the contract for NTT, the Workers, with the IWW Cleaners Union’s representation, secured an agreement which puts all the workforce in one site and provides full-payment of the London Living Wage.

As a result the IWW Cleaners Branch and London Delegates Committee has cancelled the demonstration called for Tomorrow at Devon house. We thank all trade unionists and fellow workers for their solidarity and support.

## Sheffield, England: IWW Workers organise Pizza Hut Union

Today Pizza Hut Workers in Sheffield are taking action to improve their working conditions. Managements have not meaningfully listened to our concerns so far.

We need your support, please join us or read on for more information.

The Pizza Hut Workers Union is taking action as a direct result of managements unwillingness to compromise with us, in regards to our legitimate concerns over pay and conditions, and is part of a dispute dating back to last April.

### Bank Holiday Pay

Standard practice is to pay workers time and a half for working unsociable shifts, particularly Bank Holidays. Pizza Hut’s policy has been to reverse this and has now revoked it in all cases, including if a member of staff was to work Christmas Day. We raised the issue and have, at this time, seen no willingness on the part of management to compromise.

### Delivery Drivers Commission

Delivery staff, using their own cars, are paid a commission rate of 60p per delivery. The rate has remained static for several years. This is despite a changing delivery radius and the rising price of petrol. A driver can deliver a pizza that could be part of a 6 mile round trip, giving them a rate of 10p per mile. A worker on minimum wage is expected to pay for the cost of running a car as well as towards the cost of fuelling it while at work. Despite a review and the promise of a new rate, the rate has remained the same.

We ask for your support in our ongoing dispute and ask you to contact Pizza Hut head office to tell them to take our concerns seriously.

## And in other news from the class struggle..

### India

Workers at Regency Ceramics in Yanam, India, had been in dispute with their employers for the last three weeks over working conditions, and had been demanding the reinstatement of colleagues suspended during the course of their dispute.

There had been protests outside the fac-

tory on a daily basis, with varying degrees of hostility between workers and the local police. These eventually turned violent after the enforcers of the bosses’ laws prevented them from entering their own factory. Workers set company cars on fire, and clashed with the police. The Police used sticks to beat back protesters, and then opened fire when their initial attempts at dispersing them had failed.

Murali Mohan, a union leader and main agitator in the dispute, was attacked by the police. Has was battered with batons, and died from his injuries whilst in police custody. After the news of Mohan’s death reached the workers, four hundred of them stormed the house of senior company executive, K. C Chandrekhar, and beat him to death.

A Magistrate has ordered a full inquiry into the incidents, and the circumstances that preceded them.

## Greece: Health Workers Bring Hospital Under Workers’ Control

Health workers in Kilkis, Greece, have occupied their local hospital and have issued a statement saying it is now fully under workers control.

The general hospital of Kilkis in Greece is now under workers control. The workers at the hospital have declared that the long-lasting problems of the National Health System (ESY) cannot be resolved.

The workers have responded to the regime’s acceleration of fascism by occupying the hospital and outing it under direct and complete control by the workers. All decisions will be made by a ‘workers general assembly’.

The hospital has stated that. “The government is not acquitted of its financial responsibilities, and if their demands are not met, they will turn to the local and wider community for support in every possible way to save the hospital defend free public healthcare, to overthrow the government and every neo-liberal policy.”

From the 6th February, hospital workers will only deal with emergencies until their wages, and monies owed have been paid. They are also demanding a return to wage levels prior to the implementation of austerity measures.

The next general assembly will take place on the 13th, and a related press conference will be given on the 15th.

The following statement has been issued by the workers:

1. We recognize that the current and enduring problems of E.S.Y (the national health system) and related organizations cannot be solved with specific and isolated demands or demands serving our special interests, since these problems are a product of a more general anti-popular governmental policy and of the bold global neoliberalism.

2. We recognise, as well, that by insisting in the promotion of that kind of demands we essentially participate in the game of the ruthless authority. That authority which, in order to face its enemy - i.e. the people- weakened and fragmented, wishes to prevent the creation of a universal labour and popular front on a national and global level with common interests and demands against the social impoverishment that the authority’s policies bring.

3. For this reason, we place our special interests inside a general framework of political

and economic demands that are posed by a huge portion of the Greek people that today is under the most brutal capitalist attack; demands that in order to be fruitful must be promoted until the end in cooperation with the middle and lower classes of our society.

4. The only way to achieve this is to question, in action, not only its political legitimacy, but also the legality of the arbitrary authoritarian and anti-popular power and hierarchy which is moving towards totalitarianism with accelerating pace.

5. The workers at the General Hospital of Kilkis answer to this totalitarianism with democracy. We occupy the public hospital and put it under our direct and absolute control. The Γ.N. of Kilkis will henceforth be self-governed and the only legitimate means of administrative decision making will be the General Assembly of its workers.

6. The government is not released of its economic obligations of staffing and supplying the hospital, but if they continue to ignore these obligations, we will be forced to inform the public of this and ask the local government but most importantly the society to support us in any way possible for: (a) the survival of our hospital (b) the overall support of the right for public and free healthcare (c) the overthrow, through a common popular struggle, of the current government and any other neoliberal policy, no matter where it comes from (d) a deep and substantial democratisation, that is, one that will have society, rather than a third party, responsible for making decisions for its own future.

7. The labour union of the Γ.N. of Kilkis will begin, from 6 February, the retention of work, serving only emergency incidents in our hospital until the complete payment for the hours worked, and the rise of our income to the levels it was before the arrival of the troika (EU-ECB-IMF). Meanwhile, knowing fully well what our social mission and moral obligations are, we will protect the health of the citizens that come to the hospital by providing free healthcare to those in need, accommodating and calling the government to finally accept its responsibilities, overcoming even in the last minute its immoderate social ruthlessness.

8. We decide that a new general assembly will take place, on Monday 13 February in the assembly hall of the new building of the hospital at 11 am, in order to decide the procedures that are needed to efficiently implement the occupation of the administrative services and to successfully realise the self-governance of the hospital, which will start from that day. The general assemblies will take place daily and will be the paramount instrument for decision making regarding the employees and the operation of the hospital.

We ask for the solidarity of the people and workers from all fields, the collaboration of all workers’ unions and progressive organizations, as well as the support from any media organization that chooses to tell the truth. We are determined to continue until the traitors that sell out our country and our people leave. It’s either them or us!

The above decisions will be made public through a news conference to which all the Mass Media (local and national) will be invited on Wednesday 15/2/2012 at 12.30. Our daily assemblies begin on 13 February. We will inform the citizens about every important event taking place in our hospital by means of news releases and conferences. Furthermore, we will use any means available to publicise these events in order to make this mobilization successful.

We call:  
a) Our fellow citizens to show solidarity to our effort,

b) Every unfairly treated citizen of our country in contestation and opposition, with actions, against his/her’s oppressors,

c) Our fellow workers from other hospitals to make similar decisions,

d) The employees in other fields of the public and private sector and the participants in labour and progressive organisations to act likewise, in order to help our mobilisation take the form of a universal labour and popular resistance and uprising, until our final victory against the economic and political elite that today oppresses our country and the whole world.

# Organising Your Workplace: Getting Started



FW JOE HILL

You're working, or just started work at a non-union firm and would like to see the workers organised. What can you do? This is a guide to getting started.

You're working, or just started work at a non-union firm and would like to see the workers organised. What can you do?

It is a tactical decision when to approach a trade union. However unless you have already uncovered that most people want to join then there would be little point in asking a union to come in and negotiate a recognition agreement. Individuals can, of course, join a union at any time.

Unionised workers are in a minority, and on the whole workers are disorganised and under attack. Hardly, surprisingly, therefore that one of the most frequently asked questions by workers is - "What can be done at my workplace to improve things? It seems impossible, the bosses are too strong."

We would suggest that the following should be considered:

## Ask Questions and Listen to the Answers

Where do you begin? Some people when they first feel that they have been treated unfairly fly into a rage or start loudly crusading against the boss. This can be dangerous. Management jealously guards its authority in the workplace, and when you begin to question authority, you become a threat. In most workplaces, from the moment you begin to question authority, you become a troublemaker in management's eyes. If you have never before made any waves where you work, you may be shocked, hurt or angered by how quickly management turns against you. This is a good reason to be discrete when you begin to talk to others.

## Talk to your fellow workers

Ask them what they think about what's happening at work. What do they think about the problems you're concerned about? Listen to what others have to say. Get their views and opinions. Most people think of an organiser as an agitator and rabble-rouser (and there are times when an organiser must be those things), but a good organiser is first of all one who asks good questions and listens well to others. Having listened well, you should be able to express not only your own views and feelings, but also those of your colleagues. The main concerns could be pay, but this isn't always the case. Sometimes, their concerns can be reactionary, such as keeping immigrant workers out, so you will need to be aware that not all concerns are necessarily progressive.

## Take note

Keep a record of any major incidents at your workplace such as an accident or even threatening behaviour by a manager.

## Learn about the past

Try and find out what other attempts, if any, have been made to organise the workers. It may be that there was once a union but it has collapsed.

## Try to find allies

Almost inevitably there will be some people who are more concerned about the problems we face than others, and a few of those people will want to do something about it. Those few people now form the initial core of your "organisation". You might ask the two most interested people to have coffee or lunch with you, introduce them to each other, and then ask, "What do you think about this?" If they are indeed ready to do something and not just complain,

A few basic tips on how to build solidarity with your fellow workers and take the first steps towards giving the boss the sack.



then you are almost ready to begin organising.

## Map Your Workplace

Knowledge is power. Or at least it is the beginning of power. You will want to know everything you can about your workplace and your employer. This will be a long term, on-going process of education.

Try and find out as much as you can about the company you're working for. Does it have more than one factory or shop? Is it a public company, how many people work for it, who owns it? Try and build up a picture of the firm and people who work for it - for example, an increasing problem is that workers are 'off the cards' and not working legally. Some workers may have problems with their immigration status.

You should begin your research with your department. Management has long understood the value of identifying informal work groups, their natural organisers, and their weak links. In fact, one of the main thrusts of management training is to develop strategies to alter the psychology of the workplace.

For example, the multi-national United Parcel Service has developed its psychological manipulation techniques into a fine art. The UPS managers' training manual, entitled *Charting Spheres of Influence*, shows how to map the workplace to identify the informal work groups, isolate natural organisers or instigators in these groups, exploit the weak links, and in the end, break up the groups if they can't be used to management's advantage.

While most companies have not developed their techniques into the fine Orwellian art that UPS has, many do use some of the same methods. Have outspoken workers, instigators or organisers been transferred, promoted into management or singled out for discipline? Are work groups broken up and rearranged periodically? Has the layout of the workplace been arranged to make communication between workers difficult?

Do you get to walk around on your job? Who does? Who doesn't? Are certain people picked on or disciplined by management in public? How does this affect the rest of the workforce? Do you feel you are always under surveillance? You get the point. All of the above can be used to break up unity and communication between workers in your workplace. Incidentally, this training does not make our employers invincible, or make our efforts any less worthwhile (despite all the training their management had received, UPS workers won a mass strike in August 1997).

Let's say that you have an important message to communicate, but you don't have the time or resources to reach every one of your fellow workers. If you can reach the natural organisers in the informal work groups and get them on your side, you can bet that the word will get around to everyone. Once organisers have been identified and agree to co-operate, it is possible to develop a network which can exert considerable power and influence.

Informal work groups also have the advantage of creating certain loyalties among their members. You can draw on this loyalty to figure out unified strategies for problems, and take advantage of people's natural tendency to stick up for those who are close to them.

Besides working with the group organisers, it is important to draw in the loners too. More than likely, their apathy, isolation, or anti-union ideas stem from personal feelings of powerlessness and fear. If collective action can be pulled off successfully and a sense of security established through the group's action, fear and feelings of impotence can be reduced.

If you have got a particularly tough character in your workplace who seriously threatens unity, don't be afraid to use the social pressures that work groups can bring to bear to get that person back in line. This applies to supervisory personnel too, especially the supervisor who likes to think he or she is everyone's pal.

## The Balance of Power

The bottom line for this type of workplace organisation is to tilt the balance of power in the workers' favour. It can win grievances for example. If grievances remain individual problems or become the responsibility of union officials, the natural organisation and loyalty that exist among work groups is lost. Chances are that the grievance is lost too.

However, if the work groups can be used to make a show of unity, the threat that the work process could be disrupted can be enough to force management into a settlement. Grievances can only be won when management understand that a grievance is no longer the concern of an individual, but instead has become the concern of all, and that problems lie ahead unless it is resolved.

## Starting Organising

### Meet

When the time is right hold a meeting of those you have identified as being interested in getting organised. Do not be surprised if some workers do not turn up, don't get disappointed. The meeting should be as open as possible and discuss all is-

ues which concern workers. The most obvious concern will be how to get the mass of workers involved. Every person who attends the meeting should be expected to see if there are other workers who can be got involved. Stress the importance of ensuring that management doesn't get to know about what's happening.

## Delegation

An organising group could be elected to approach a trade union to see how they can assist. The word assist is vital, from the start the organisation of the workers should be by the workers themselves and not the union officials. This is vital if the organising and recruitment of workers to the union leads to industrial action. The workers movement is littered with hundreds of examples where workers have successfully organised and recruited workers to a union only to allow the officials to control their actions when strikes have recognition have broken out - i.e. Grunwicks in 1977, oil workers in the North Sea in 1988, textile workers at Bacton Fashions in Hackney in 1990, Burnsalls in West Midlands in 1992 and, in the mid 90s, cleaning workers at Hillingdon Hospital in London. The results have been disastrous and in some cases defeat has been snatched from the jaws of victory. The organising group can also try and establish whether there are any local groups who will be able to assist with practical initiatives such as leaflet production and a place to meet.

## Publicity

At some point a leaflet will need to be produced and either distributed secretly at work or by friends when the workers are leaving the workplace. These actions will undoubtedly bring to management's attention that some workers are involved in trying to organise.

## Demand

When it is felt appropriate (which could be a period of a few weeks to many months) another larger meeting of all interested workers will need to be organised. Use the meeting to draw up a list of grievances and demands. The meeting will need to elect spokespersons to approach management. The workers will also need to decide which union they would wish to join, trade unions are not illegal and a company can be forced to negotiate with a recognised trade union.

## Accountability

Don't allow negotiations with bosses take place behind closed doors. Keep all meetings transparent.

## It won't be easy

Be sure that the workers know that their actions may lead to the threat of dismissal and/or dismissal. Never con workers into believing it will be easy. Discuss what this would mean if all or some workers are dismissed as this will require a decision to either strike and/or occupy the workplace. Obviously the situation in countries where unions are outlawed is different and it will be impossible for workers to approach management. In discussions with workers from such countries it has become clear that sabotage of production becomes increasingly important.

## Write history

Keep a record of you attempts at organising - workers struggles are so rarely recorded that valuable experience is being lost and workers have to go through the same problems. Many of them could be avoided.

# My Body, My Rules: A Case for Rape and Domestic Violence Survivors Becoming Workplace Organisers

## TRIGGER WARNING: SEXUAL VIOLENCE



SW LIBERTE LOCKE

I was raped by a boyfriend on August 18th, 2006. The very next day I held back tears while I lied to a stranger over the phone about why I was unavailable to go in that day for a second interview for a job that I desperately needed. When I hung up the phone I saw a new text message. It was from him. "It's not over. It will never be over between us..."

The next day I went in for the second interview. It was inside of the Sears Tower Starbucks in Chicago. I took the train to the interview constantly looking around me and shaking. I needed work. I had just been fired from Target two weeks prior and had no prospects. I knew I would have to go through a metal detector in order to enter the building so despite every instinct in my body I did not bring a knife with me.

"What would you do if you caught a coworker stealing?"

My mind is racing. I'm thinking that I risked my safety by leaving my house for a stupid job that pays \$7.75/hr. Aren't I worth more than that? Aren't we all worth so much more?

"I'd tell management right away, of course. I've never understood why someone would steal from work..."

I tell them what they want me to.

I started working at Starbucks on August 22, 2006. That was a little over five years ago. Every year we have annual reviews where I generally get to argue with someone younger than me who makes significantly more than do about why my hard work, aching back, cracking hands, sore wrists, the bags under my eyes, the burns, the bruises on my arms, the cuts on my knees, the constant degrading treatment by the customers, the "baby, honey, sugar, bitch", the "hey, you, slut...I said NO whip cream!"s, the staring, the following after work...I get to argue why all that means I'm worth a 33cent raise rather than 22cents. Degrading for any worker. Degrading especially for a woman worker. Only for me, I get to do this every year just four days after the anniversary of when someone I was in love with raped me. My annual review is truly the only reason I'm reminded of the anniversary of the assault.

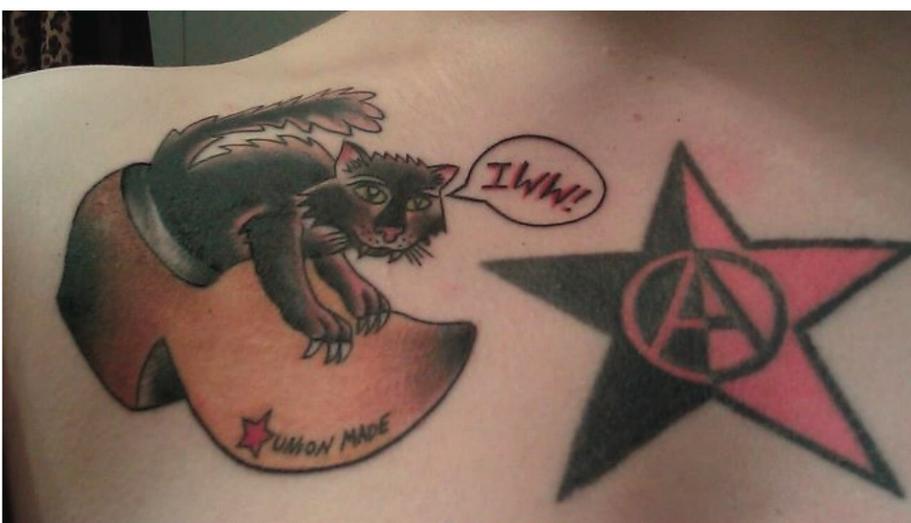
I wish I was exaggerating but truthfully I've just toned down how I really feel about it. Since we're talking about labor, I could also mention how when I was raped I didn't leave the house where it happened until the morning because of two main reasons 1) I feared riding the subway home at 3am and 2) I was getting picked up in the morning by my then best friend (and my boyfriend's other partner) to head to her wealthy parents' house in the suburbs where they were paying me to clean. Desperately needing to sell my labor in exchange for simple cash kept me laying awake next to my attacker. Not wanting to lose the gig had me lying to him. Promising that I'd never tell anyone. Promising not to leave him. Promises that at the time I wasn't sure that I wouldn't keep.

It was when I was on my hands and knees literally scrubbing the floor of her parents' house that it occurred to me that being poor was truly enough of an assault.

I stood up. I told her everything. I didn't hear any supportive words. She said she was jealous. I wanted to throw up. I told her to take me home and that I'd rather starve than clean her parents' house that day.

She gave me the cash even though I was no where near done and drove me home. Both from her guilty conscience, I'm sure. I resent her less these days realizing that his manipulative behavior had gotten to her too. But it was worse for her than me. I was getting out. She was deciding to stay and betray an-

other woman in the process. That's some pretty heavy manipulation.



In the months after the assault I went to therapy for free through a domestic violence program. I went through exercises that forced me to relive some of my happy memories of him and I together. I didn't want to. We dated on and off for a couple of years and had definitely had some wonderful times. I wished they'd never happened. I wished I'd never met him. I didn't want to remember his face, his voice, his scent. I purged my life of everything he gave me and everything that reminded me of him. My therapist wanted to get to the root cause of where the assault came from because I blamed myself so entirely. Thinking things were great before that one night that hit me out of no where. Or so I thought.

After nearly six months of therapy we hit a revelation. He was always manipulative, always verbally abusive. He preyed on my self-esteem and wanted me miserable so that I felt I needed him. So I'd crave his approval and attention. The few days leading up to the assault I had started standing up for myself, not taking his shit as much. Refusing sex when I thought he was being an asshole when in the past I would have caved even after he would insult me. My therapist presented the idea that he raped me because he felt he was losing his control over me. It was meant to break me...as you would a horse.

Through therapy I started to feel like I was worth something and that he was the sad loser. Not me. He wanted something from me and getting that something wasn't enough. He wanted my spirit and body. Ownership over things uncontainable.

When I started to feel stronger and less afraid I really stopped being able to put up with rude customers. Not putting up with rude customers meant facing the bosses' wrath when the customers complained which then meant I had to stand up to my bosses. Finally the real opportunity came and not wanting to live as a victim anymore took the form of signing a union card with the Industrial Workers of the World.

I learned about organized labor. I decided that if I'm not meant to be some man's slave than why be a slave to a boss, to a corporation, to a customer?

I looked at bosses as they sat in desks, sipping coffee drinks that they had me make them, pouring over sales numbers they got because of the hard work of me and my coworkers. We worked ourselves to complete exhaustion. Mothers I worked with talked about missing their kid's first step while making lattes. I've known many pregnant women who have worked while dilated, risking their

unborn child's well being and their own, because maternity leave is so short and they wanted as much time as possible with their newborns so they were holding out. I knew the bosses and the company were responsible for the state of things.

The bosses were very manipulative. Abusing you for many shifts in a row, refusing you breaks, calling you stupid, promoting people that sexually harassed you, giving you schedules that made sleep impossible, refusing raises based on petty things like whether you always remembered to wear the required black socks or cover your tattoos. Then when we started organizing they would do this behavior for days and suddenly throw a pizza party. The majority of workers would thank the boss and talk for weeks about how much they really cared about us. How kind they were. How lucky we were.

Suddenly all the abuse faded away and grudges were dropped. Bosses were welcomed back into group conversations and invited to baby showers.

I see no difference between this scenario and the boyfriend hitting his girlfriend in the face and then showing up with flowers & candy and the cycle starting all over again.

I am not ashamed of being raped or manipulated by my ex. I am also not ashamed of leaving him and trying to heal. I am not ashamed of what horrible abuses I've experienced and witnessed since beginning to work at Starbucks. I refuse to accept them back after a simple pizza party.

I don't want pizza. And I don't want flowers. I want freedom from a life of servitude. I want an end to the abuse.

Yes, I could quit and liken it to breaking up with an abusive boyfriend but the next job would recreate the cycle. The next job would be the next abusive partner.

So I stay. And I fight. I fight through organizing with other survivors of the abuse, my coworkers. Well, at least the ones that have reached rock bottom and now want to climb out. No, not everyone is ready when I meet them to break up with their oppressor. I'll be here when they are. When they, too, find the courage.

We work together to improve working conditions. Refusing to give them what they want when they are being assholes. Refusing them our labor. The use of our bodies for their own desires.

Under this current system we must make money to survive. To make money we must sell our labor. This is already unjust and disgusting to me. I'm fascinated by the creativity, the skill, and genius of the human mind and body. I feel great pride in being able to make

something, teach something, to speak, to write, to learn. How wonderful it is to know humans are capable of so much greatness. The fact that someone was smart enough to exploit this greatness out of others for their own means with as little return to the person who created it as possible is so very heartbreaking. It's the same heartbreak I feel when I learn of a person staying with an abuser and doing everything they say only to be beaten down again. I always wonder when they will leave. I wonder when they will fight back. I feel this way when I hold a coworker who is sobbing from being yelled at by a boss. I wonder when they will stop taking it. Many workers have. Workers who have started and joined unions. We are survivors.

These past five years have been amazing. I've healed from the abuse and degradation of that relationship. I healed through applying my therapist's teachings to my life at work.

I refuse to be a victim any more. I'm determined to remember my worth and to try to help others heal from years of abuse at the hands of employers and customers. It isn't enough to walk away if you still haven't realized your worth because low self-esteem for our labor can just put us continually in the same fucked up situations. Before we know it we've been broken down quite literally and have nothing to show for it. The big bosses will have the property they purchased with the money they kept from us. They will have the best doctors, their kids will receive the best education, their parents will be provided for, and they will enjoy the fruits of our labor while we starve. It is no different than the significant other that swipes your paycheck.

The burns from the extra hot milk don't hurt any less when I realize that drink cost my hourly wage but in one hour I will have made over a hundred of them.

Don't listen when a boss or an abused coworker tries to make you believe that your labor is worth is nothing. Don't believe them when they belittle your job because it's in fast food, or retail. Whether you sit at a desk, deliver a pizza, clean a toilet, sew a pair of pants, or act on stage in order to pay your bills...remember if the bosses could do it by themselves they would. Remember they need you way more than you need them. Yes, the abuse can get worse when you stand up and fight back. Much like what happened to me. But if it took being raped to get away from such a horribly destructive relationship than that is simply what it took. If it took recovering from that to teach me about liberation and refuse servitude then so be it.

I will not be a slave. I will not be a servant. I do not consent to the abuse of my mind & body or the belittlement of my spirit. When they try to divide us it is like the partner that says you can't see your friends. It is to isolate you so you feel alone, helpless, like your screaming and no one can hear you. Don't let them do that. Refuse isolation. Reach out to your coworkers. Refuse to do unsafe work. Demand the money you deserve. Those that do the most work should live in the most luxury. We earned it. It is ours.

If you've found a way out of an abusive relationship or situation in your life than you know how badly you needed out. You've gone over in your mind a thousand times just how bad it could have gotten. You feel grateful to have walked away with your life. Imagine if all the horrible treatment at work ended. Imagine you didn't dread clocking in. What if the boss now feared you? What if they wouldn't dare hit you again, call you a name, harass you? What if they gave you all your breaks on time and didn't refuse your overtime pay? What if you set your schedule and decided the tasks you'd take on? What if you set your pay rate?

What would it be like to finally be free?

# Sex Work: Solidarity Not Salvation



## SW WOB SEX WORKER

An ongoing debate is taking place in anarchist and feminist circles on the legitimacy of sex work and the rights of sex workers. The two main schools of thought are almost at polar opposites to each other. On the one side you have the abolitionist approach led by feminists such as Melissa Farley who maintains that sex work is a form of violence against women and states that "If we view prostitution as violence against women, it makes no sense to legalise or decriminalise prostitution". On the other side you have sex worker rights activists who view sex work as being much closer to work in general than most realise, who believe that the best way forward for sex workers is in the fight for workers rights and social acceptance and for activists to listen to what sex workers have to say. In this article I will discuss why the abolitionist approach discriminates against sex workers and takes advantage of their marginalised status, while the rights approach offer the opportunity to make solid differences in the labour rights and human rights of sex workers.

An example of the kind of arguments put forward by advocates of abolitionism runs as follows:

"The concept of women's 'choice' to sell sex is constructed in line with neoliberal and free-market thinking; the same school of thinking that purports that workers have real 'choices' and control over their work. It suggests that women chose to sell sex and we should therefore focus on issues to do with "sex workers's " safety, ability to earn money, and persecution by the state. Whilst women's safety and women's rights are paramount, the argument for state regulated brothels and unionisation is reformist at best, naive and regressive at worst. Even the proposal for "collective brothels" ignores the gendered nature of prostitution, and its function in supporting male domination.

An anarchist response should demand the eradication of all exploitative practices and not suggest they can be made safer or better." (Taken from a leaflet handed out by abolitionists at the sex work workshop at the 2011 London Anarchist Bookfair.

An Wobbly approach does call for the eradication of all exploitative practices not just those that do not benefit the one advocating for change or that one finds particularly distasteful. Work under capitalism is exploitative, you are either exploited or live off the exploitation of others, most of us do both. Sex under capitalism and patriarchy is all too often used as a means of exploitation and commodified. Work and sex in and of themselves are none of these things. Fighting sex work instead of fighting capitalism and patriarchy does not address the exploitation in its entirety. To focus on the gendered nature of sex work will not change the gendered society we live in, if anything it reinforces the myth that the gender divide is a natural part of life that must be worked around. It also silences the sex workers who do not fit the gendered notions of the female sex worker, a group who are all too conveniently ignored whenever they challenge the abolitionist discourse on sex work. Abolitionists have accused any approach other than theirs as being fundamentally reformist and thus not inline with the principles of anarchism but isn't trying to end an industry because the overarching capitalist, patriarchal system of our times feeds into it, rather than fighting for the emancipation of all workers in itself reformist?

The anthropologist, Laura Agustin, contends that the abolitionist movement took up strength at a time when the theories of welfarism were gaining popularity among the middle class who felt they had a duty to better the working class (without addressing the legitimacy of the class system as a whole.). Middle class women, in particular, found an outlet from their own gender oppression, by positioning themselves as the 'benevolent saviours' of the 'fallen', thus gaining positions and recognition in the male dominated public sphere that they never previously could have attained. There are more than a few remnants of the middle class, almost missionary, desire to

The following article by a Wobbly sex worker looks at the very polarised debates around the issue of sex work and the appropriateness and relative merit of the various ways that people have sought to approach it.



'save' by implanting one's own moral outlook on the 'fallen' in today's abolitionist movement. Not only does it give people a way in which to feel as if they are rescuing those most in need it does so without requiring them (in most instances) to question their own actions and privileges. The sight of someone dressed in sweatshop manufactured garments with an iphone, ipad and countless other gadgets made in appalling conditions calling for the abolition of the sex industry never ceases to confound me. It must be one of the few industries that has people calling for the destruction of because of the worst elements within it. They may recognise that the treatment of workers in apple factories amounts to slavery, that the instances of rape and sexual assault of garment makers in some factories amount to sexual slavery but they contend that abolition of either industry is not desirable, that mass

## Abolitionists have accused any approach other than theirs as being fundamentally reformist, but isn't trying to end an industry because the overarching capitalist, patriarchal system of our times feeds into it, rather than fighting for the emancipation of all workers, in itself reformist?

produced clothing and technology, unlike sex are essentials to our modern lives. Essential to who I may ask? To the workers making such products? They do not use the products they slave away producing, they do not benefit from their employment anymore than a sex worker in their country does theirs. It seems the essentiality of a product is judged through the lens of the consumer, not the worker, despite this being something the abolitionist accuses only opponents of abolition of doing. Calling for the abolition of sex work remains, largely, a way for people to position themselves in a seemingly selfless role without having to do the hard work of questioning their own social privilege. A fundamentally welfarist and reformist position to take.

Is sex (or the ability to engage in it if you so wish) not as essential to life or at least to happiness and health as any of the above are? Sex is a big part of life, a part that people should be free to take pleasure in and engage in, not a part that is viewed as being bad and dirty and shameful. I am not saying that anyone should be obligated to provide sex for someone else unless they want to, but pointing out that trying to justify abolishing the sex industry with the argument that sex isn't essential when there are so many industries that produce things we don't need is incredibly weak. It also, again, focuses more on the consumer than the worker, instead of focusing on what the sex worker thinks about their work, how important it is, how it makes them feel we are told to focus on the fact that they consumer doesn't really need it. The worker is reduced to no more than an object, an object that needs saving whether they want it or not.

Can no worker take pleasure in aspects of

their work despite capitalism? Can no woman take pleasure in sex despite patriarchy? If the answer is that they can, then why is it so hard to believe that there are sex workers who choose and/or take pleasure in their work despite capitalism and patriarchy not because of them? I have been told by abolitionists that this is not possible within the sex industry, that any worker who enjoys their job, or even those who do not enjoy but see it as a better opportunity than anything else available to them, only does so out of internalised misogyny. That if they were freed from this, by adopting an abolitionist mindset (any other stance is accused of being founded on internalised misogyny and therefore invalid) they would see the truth. It sounds an awful lot like religious dogma and is often treated with as much zeal. The abolitionist approach refuses to value or even acknowledge the intelligence, agency,

experiences and knowledge of sex workers. This is discrimination posing as feminism, if you want equality for women then you need to listen to all women, not just the ones who say what you want to hear.

Abolitionists seem to view sex workers who do not agree with them as too brainwashed by patriarchy to advocate for themselves or as not being representative of the experiences of the majority of sex workers. As an anarchist I view all work under capitalism to be exploitative, and that sex work is no exception. I do not believe however that work that involves sex is necessarily more exploitative or damaging than other forms of wage slavery. This is not to say that there are not terrible violations of workers rights within the sex industry, there are and they are violations I want to fight to overcome. (but by acknowledging these violations I am not saying that there are not wonderful experiences between workers and between workers and clients as well). If one is serious about respecting and advocating for the rights of sex workers then we have to look at what methods work. We do not live in some anarchist utopia where no one is forced to work in jobs they wouldn't otherwise do in order to get by so I do not see the point in spending energy debating whether sex work would exist in an anarchist society and what it would look like, if it starts to cut in to energy that could be spent advocating for the rights of sex workers in the here and now.

Abolitionists have often complained of rights activists using language to legitimise the industry by using terms like 'client' instead of 'john' and 'worker' instead of 'prostitute'. Sex workers and rights activists have moved away from the old terms as they are terms that have

often been used to disempower and discriminate against workers, whereas 'client' and 'sex worker' are much more value neutral. Abolitionists are not innocent of using language to further their agenda. Often the term 'prostituted' is used to describe sex workers, this positions the worker as an agency-less victim. Once you have positioned someone as being without agency it becomes easier to ignore their voice, to believe that you know what is in their best interest and that you are doing, or advocating, for them.

Another accusation made against rights activists is that they put the client's wants before the needs and safety of the worker or of attempting to legitimise commercial sexual exchanges (something that is not considered a legitimate service by abolitionists) I have not found this to be the case, the majority of rights activists are, have been or have close ties to sex workers (Scarlet Alliance, the national sex worker advocacy body, is made up of current and former sex workers, people who would have an interest in worker exploitation, such as employers, are not eligible to join) and their primary focus is on the rights, needs and safety of sex workers. That they do not focus on labelling clients (the clientele are too diverse to paint with the one label anyway) is no reflection on how important the needs and safety of sex workers are, in fact it is because they are paramount to the rights movement that the focus is not on making moral judgements on the clients and is instead on labour organising and worker advocacy. To ignore the vast amounts of change that can be made by workers organising and advocating together in favour of moralising over the reasons why the industry exists and whether it is an essential service is to sacrifice the rights and wellbeing of workers for theoretical gains.

At the end of the day the abolitionist is using their power and social privilege to take advantage of sex workers' marginalised position, something that they accuse clients of doing, the difference is that they are not seeking sexual but moral gratification. The abolitionist approach does not help sex workers, nor does it empower them. Rather, it gives them a role and penalises them if they refuse to play it. The sex worker rights approach works in the same way that all workers rights and anti discrimination movements have worked, by empowerment, support and solidarity.

There is no 'Anticapitalist Blueprint' as to how to best eradicate exploitation but rather several schools of thought, often their own internal schools, as to how to reach a free society. I believe that when it comes to eradicating exploitation in the workplace, syndicalism is the approach that best suits the fight at hand, when the workplace is that of a brothel, strip club, street corner, motel room etc the fundamentals of the fight are no different from that of other wage slaves. Sex workers need to be able to unionise, as yet there is no sex workers union, while I would love for there to be a sex workers union I also think the belief that all workers are equal, that we are all wage slaves, that we are all in this fight together and that it is the bosses who are the enemy make the IWW an ideal union for the marginalised workers who fall through the cracks of the existing trade unions (that said it really is the ideal union for all workers) Actions such as joining the IWW and using the strength of a union, rather than just one's lone voice, to advocate for change is one way in which sex workers can fight their battle. Another is joining Scarlet Alliance, the national, peak sex worker organisation. Like the IWW, bosses are not able to join, meaning that the interests of Scarlet Alliance are solely the interests of the workers, not those of the bosses or the abolitionists. It is actions like this, actions that empower sex workers that we need to fight the discrimination and marginalisation that exists.

If activists are truly serious about the rights of sex workers they will listen to us even if what we have to say is difficult to hear and they will support us even if they don't like what we do. It is only when all workers join together that we have the power fight capitalism and the bosses. We do not ask for salvation but for solidarity.

# Income Management: Blame-Shifting for Dummies



FW ALEX JOHNSON

As part of the 2011 Federal Budget, the Australian government announced that it plans to spend \$117.5 million over the next five years to introduce Income Management to five “disadvantaged” communities across Australia. These locations are: Bankstown, New South Wales; Logan, Queensland; Rockhampton, Queensland; Playford, South Australia; Shepparton, Victoria.

Income Management will commence in these sites from 1st July 2012 and will be compulsorily applied to welfare recipients in the “trial sites” who are considered by Centrelink to be “vulnerable to financial crisis.” Recipients so categorised will have 50% of their payment quarantined. Parents and legal guardians referred to Centrelink by child protection authorities (Community Services) will have 70% of their income compulsorily quarantined. Centrelink will issue a ‘BasicsCard’ to people who have had their payments quarantined. This card may only be used to purchase priority items e.g., food, clothing and utilities from government approved outlets such as: Woolworths, Coles, Target, Kmart, Best and Less and Big W. The Government estimates that 20,000 people will participate in Income Management in the five locations over the next five years. This is around 1000 persons per location each year.

Income management was first rolled out as part of the racist Intervention in the Northern Territory in 2007. Aboriginal communities have experienced almost 5 years of hardship and shame as a result of this and related policies. Income Management in the Northern Territory has been widely criticised, both locally and internationally as it stigmatises and humiliates welfare recipients, wastes money on bureaucratic administration and discriminates specifically against Aboriginal people. In the NT Income Management costs approximately \$4,400 per person per year in administration costs alone. There is no evidence base to support the expansion of the system. The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) states that Income Management will deter people from spending their Centrelink payments on alcohol, tobacco and gambling and will promote spending on fresh food, clothing and the payments of bills.

Independent research conducted by the Menzies School of Health, Darwin suggests that Income Management has had no beneficial effect on tobacco and cigarette sales, soft drink or fruit and vegetable sales.

A recent report by the Equality Rights Alliance surveyed 180 women on income management in the NT. It found that 79% wanted to exit the system, 85% had not changed what they buy and 74% felt discriminated against.

Mr Paddy Gibson from the Stop the Intervention Collective in Sydney said, “This report demolishes the key myths that Minister Jenny Macklin has been peddling about Income Management. It has not changed spending patterns and women do not feel safer. This report clearly captures the feelings of shame and indignation that exist across the NT”.

“Income Management epitomises everything that is wrong with the NT Intervention. It is built on racist assumptions that Aboriginal people are incapable of managing their lives; it imposes harsh control measures rather than creating opportunities; it demonises the most vulnerable and neglected in our society. This approach is eroding the heart of our welfare system and must be stopped immediately”, said Mr Gibson.

A report released by the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA) concludes that compulsory income management in the NT has profoundly long-term negative impacts on psychological health, social health and wellbeing and cultural integrity. International research suggests welfare reforms that utilise sanctions such as the income management system place additional stresses on families with young children and has the potential to increase family breakdown and child abuse.

Where it has been implemented, income management has been found to be an expensive and administration-intensive approach

**FW Alex Johnson examines the meaning of income management in the NT as well as its extension from First Nations peoples to other economically marginalised and disempowered communities around Australia.**



with no evidence to suggest that it delivers outcomes that justify its complexity and cost.

When the Government first announced the Bill that has allowed the expansion of income management in late 2009, and extending into its review period in 2010, the vast majority of the submissions that were received by the Senate Committee that was established to review the Bill opposed the extension of income management. These submissions represented the views of most members of the welfare lobby, Aboriginal organisations, women’s organisations, legal services, religious groups, human rights agencies, medical groups, unions and others.

These groups opposed the legislation for a range of compelling reasons relating to the lack of any substantial evidence for the efficacy of compulsory income management and the lack of serious investigation into the potential detrimental consequences of this policy which the Government has still not explored or seriously considered.

A strong new coalition “Say No to Government’s Income Management Not in Bankstown Not Anywhere” has formed in Bankstown, Sydney. The campaign has initiated a call for a national moratorium on income management, demanding immediate amnesty for those already on the system and a halt to plans for expansion. Its founding statement has been endorsed by more than 50 organisations including unions, church and community groups. Margaret Goneis, Chairperson of Bankstown City Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee said that she is angered by the proposed changes and the effect it will have on individuals already struggling financially: “People need improved access to transport, health services, mental health care and assistance with the high cost of medications; income management will not address these needs.”

Randa Kattan, the Executive Director of the Arab Council of Australia, represents a large constituency of Australians of Lebanese descent in Sydney’s Bankstown that form part of one of the largest and most vibrant multicultural suburbs in the country. Kattan recently said “When I’m on talkback radio within the community with SBS or others, the callers consistently say the same thing: “Because it is Bankstown, because it is highly populated by the Arab community—Lebanese people—and because of the reputation Bankstown has gained over the years due to the negative media feedback. People feel targeted. It’s highly derogatory, highly patronising—all of it. Income Management represents profound disempowerment, discrimination and hardship. It also shows that the government has ignored the voices of women in the Northern Territory for far too long. We cannot allow this system to extend into Bankstown. We are also calling for a full restoration of the rights of people already suffering under Income Management”, continued Ms Kattan.

The lack of serious community consultation on the matter is another parallel with the experience of Indigenous Australians living under the scheme in the Northern Territory.

Ms Barbara Shaw, spokesperson for the Intervention Rollback Action Group in Alice Springs, has been campaigning against Income

Management as one aspect of the NT Intervention since she was put on the system in 2007: “Income Management has made things harder and caused racism and humiliation. We need a moratorium on Income Management. I should be able to get off the BasicsCard tomorrow. How can the government talk about expanding this system when it is ruining lives in the NT?” said Ms Shaw. “Income Management is a disgusting waste of funds when our communities are in such desperate need. Aboriginal people and disadvantaged groups nationwide need better social services and employment opportunities, not Income Management. Here in the NT they have taken all the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) jobs away, forcing more Aboriginal people onto the dole.”

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has now added its weight to concerns about compulsory income management

schemes. In a recent media release PHAA Vice President Vanessa Lee stated “Compulsory income management for Aboriginal people discriminates against and disempowers individuals and leaves them with insufficient resources to manage their own lives. PHAA believes an intervention to quarantine welfare payments and allow families to buy food should only be implemented on a voluntary basis, as determined through a comprehensive engagement process with affected individuals, and as a last resort.”

According to the PHAA, any form of income management should use a rights-based approach in line with the UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples which emphasises the rights of Indigenous peoples to pursue their development in keeping with their own needs and aspirations. “This also has implications for the roll out of income management for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in other States and Territories, including New South Wales and other areas of Queensland.”

Through this change in policy, the Government is not so much moving away from discriminating against Aboriginal people as expanding its discrimination to include a wider group of low-income and disadvantaged Australians.

The Federal Government maintains that Bankstown and the other trial sites were chosen based on a variety of factors including unemployment levels, youth unemployment, skills gaps and the length of time people have been on income support payments and yet they have not provided any substantial evidence to support the argument that Bankstown or the other sites specifically needs, or would benefit from, the introduction of such a regime, or that income management generally benefits people on welfare; in fact, as already outlined, much of the evidence points in the other direction.

[www.sayno2gim.info](http://www.sayno2gim.info)  
[stoptheintervention.org](http://stoptheintervention.org)

## The NT Intervention



SW FRANCA MORETTO

In 2006 the Northern Territory government initiated an inquiry into sexual abuse against Indigenous Australian children in reaction to various reports in the media that this was a growing concern for these communities. The end result was a report that came out in 2007 called ‘Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle “Little Children are Sacred”’. The findings of this report revealed issues relating to substance abuse, alcoholism, child abuse, violence and suicide. As a result, the government under John Howard took action and put in place the ‘Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007’. As a basic summary, this Act put in place ‘emergency response’ measures for Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. Some examples include income management, compulsory health checks for children, alcohol restrictions and welfare reform. In order for these measures to be put into place, a suspension was put on the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. Suspending such an integral piece of legislation fuelled the controversy behind these interventions, which have been described as ‘unmatched’ by anything in the past forty years. It has been seen by the government that the situations the Indigenous Australians in these communities find themselves in are so dire that their intervention is much needed and for the benefit of these communities. According to the overwhelming criticisms, the intervention continues the ongoing discrimination and disempowerment of Indigenous Australians that have been occurring since the arrival of Europeans in 1788 including some elders and the United Nations.

For some Indigenous Australians, the Intervention is a welcomed policy that addresses the issues faced in these

communities. An Indigenous Australian academic, Marcia Langton, supports the intervention and the suppression of alcohol sales as she argues it will allow for the “voices of women and children to be heard” (2007). This is based on the ‘Little Children are Sacred’ report that showed links between alcoholism and abuse towards children and women. Another well-known Indigenous Australian academic Noel Pearson is also in support. Pearson claims, “we’ve got to stop the grog, we’ve got to get the police in there and we’ve got to have an absolutely vigilant attitude towards the behaviour of adults around children” (2007). This statement comes from idea that Indigenous Australians need to start being accountable and those who do not make-up the problem should see the benefits of the intervention instead of a strike against them.

Another action taken by the government was to cease the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) in order to be able to manage half of the income of Indigenous Australians. This program employs Indigenous Australians to complete community-focused work for a payment. Work includes rubbish removal and fence building. Removing this has left Indigenous Australians out of work and back onto the dole. Some elders have been found to support the governments move to scrap the CDEP by mid-2008. These elders were concerned that their ‘young warriors are all working on CDEP when they should be properly employed’. The idea of self-determination according to Pearson is the act of “Indigenous people taking responsibility” (2007) and he feels this is what the intervention is allowing. Another defender of the intervention is Warren Mundine who is a former ALP president. He feels the intervention is a reflection of issues faced by these (Cont. on page 14)

# A Meeting With Noam Chomsky



FW LINDSAY HAWKINS

Myself, my partner Michelle, and three others in our group connected with Jura Books, Claire, Nina and Sid, are ushered into an elegant, art-deco style meeting room to meet Noam Chomsky, who is visiting our shores to accept the 2011 Sydney Peace Prize. He finishes chatting to a couple of people while we take our seats around a coffee table. When he comes over to greet us he seems tired, having flown from in from Boston the previous day, but yet interested and engaged. At the age of 82 and still frequently travelling internationally to give talks, his stamina and commitment to fighting for justice is remarkable [Ed's note: *As is the fact that, for someone whose thoughts are in such high demand, he does such a good job of listening.*]

As we introduce ourselves he asks each of us in turn about the kind of activities we are involved in. As the topic of conversation turns to the Occupy movement in Australia and Occupy Sydney in particular Noam asks about the current situation following the recent eviction at Martin Place, and wants to know if there are different groups converging around same interests, if it is factionalised, and if there are also the development of communities with linkages that's happening in a lot of places. He wants to know if homelessness is a big problem in Sydney and if there has been any coordination between Occupy and the unions. "What is their attitude?" FW Chomsky enquires. "Do they participate in rallies?" We reply in the affirmative.

I ask him if he thinks that's an area where anarchists could enhance the debate?"

"Yeah I think so. I think it's right to try to construct non-hierarchical forms of interaction and struggle. That makes perfectly good sense, people learn from it, they internalise attitudes, make associations, but if it's going to be a lasting force it's going to have to confront real issues. In the United States one of the issues that can be dealt with and is real is workers taking over closed factories."

FW Chomsky starts to warm to the theme of workers self-management and provides some recent popular history of movements for workers self-management in the United States and relates it back to the Occupy movement.

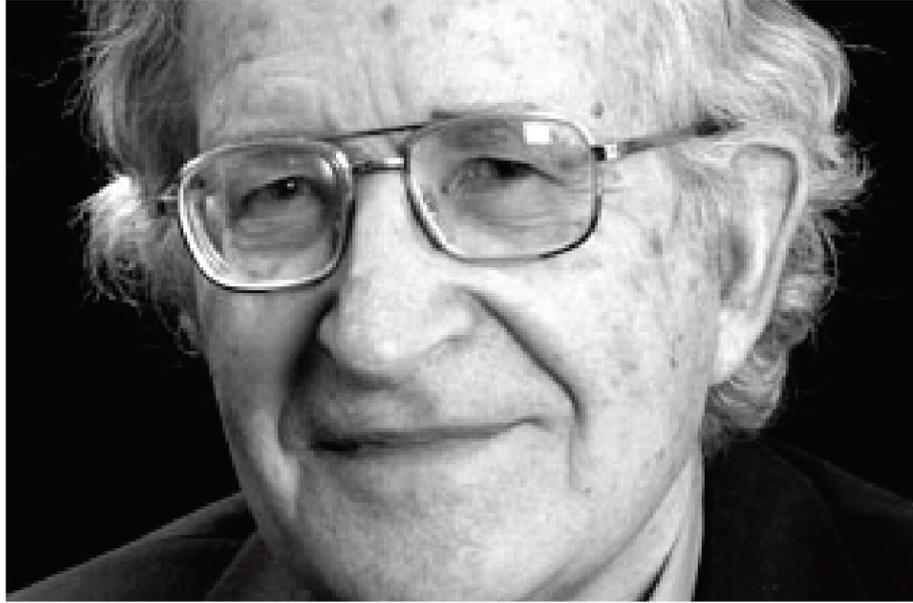
"A multinational may typically decide to close some particular enterprise which is working fine but just because it is not profitable. There is a case right outside of Boston now in fact where a reasonably high tech manufacturing enterprise which is successful but not profitable enough for the multinational that owns it, they don't bother with it, so they want to close it down. The workforce and in this case the union, which is a pretty militant union, offered to buy it and just hand it over to the workforce to run. They didn't win unfortunately but if something like the Occupy movement had been going on at the time and could have provided the popular support for it they might have won."

"It seems to be a reflection of what happened in Argentina", says Sid.

"It's kind of like that yeah but it's happened all over the United States. I mean if you look back, in the early '70s there was something like what you just described, there was a very militant group of young workers, a lot of them coming out of the '60s, veterans, part of the whole '60s environment carrying out very important strike action, industrial actions, but not just on the usual labour issues like wages and benefits but on control of the workplace."

"This was a time when, you may remember Lordstown was the famous example, when they were kind of trying to robotise everything and it was a young workforce and they just rejected being turned into automata, they wanted control of the workplace. It was pretty interesting, it was mostly beaten back but not entirely. There was a major case in Youngstown Ohio. The US steel, big industry, wanted to shut down one of their main facilities in Youngstown Ohio. Steel had sort of built the whole town; it was one of those rust belt areas where everything was around the industry, the workforce, the community, so it was going to destroy the community. Instead of just giving up the workers and the community organised to try to take over the plant and they were getting some pretty conservative support, like from the Republican Governor and others who wanted to just keep something there. It would have been, if it had worked, a community run worker installation. Worker-owned and worker-managed of course are two different things but

FW Hawkins was on hand to talk to FW Professor Noam Chomsky, world-renowned scholar, activist and intellectual - and, according to the Chicago Tribune, the most cited author on the planet - who was in Sydney towards the end of 2011 to collect the Sydney Peace prize.



it could have gone on. Well they didn't win it, it went to the courts and they lost in the courts but it left a kind of culture of self-management and it has spawned in Ohio lots of small, some not so small, enterprises, from laundries on to bigger things. There's probably hundreds, maybe thousands of them by now which are worker owned, sometimes worker managed, forming networks of various kinds."

These comments are consistent with Noam Chomsky's long held anarcho-syndicalist convictions. From a young age he has been an exponent of the principles of workers self-management and workers control, influenced by such thinkers as Rudolf Rocker.

He goes on to discuss the nationalisation of the US auto industry by Obama and posits that an alternative to just handing it back to the rich 1%, which is predictably what happened, was handing the factories over to the workforce, something that the Occupy movement could have pressed for, had it existed at the time. Industry under worker self-management would enable it to produce things that are socially useful rather than simply what is most profitable. Chomsky describes how the US is desperately in need of high speed transit, being 40 years behind the rest of the world in this regard.

"If this had have been done a very substantial part of the industrial system would have been collectivised and it would also be doing something useful instead of wasteful, like more gas-guzzlers. It wasn't an option because it wasn't part of popular consciousness but I think that's the kind of thing where anarchists could have an effect."

For Chomsky one of the key aims for Occupy should be to sustain a long-term movement always aiming towards future goals.

"If it's going to survive it's going to have to go on to constructive efforts to achieve some goal, not just have the right process, and in formulating those goals anarchists could be pressing for thinking through the kind of society we're trying to reach."

"One of the interesting things that's happening in the States is what they're calling "Occupy the Hood". Poor communities - black, Hispanic - are trying to take over part of the neighbourhood; that's starting to happen. The Occupy movements tend to be white, educated, middle class, sometimes pretty radical but they don't reach out, so there's kind of a race issue, not clearly, but just implicit. If that can be overcome through the 'Hood movements, that could be pretty powerful."

"And there's a lot of important things happening, like one thing that was quite successful in Boston was there was a major anti-foreclosure march, you know, poor people are getting smashed, [people being evicted from their homes unable to afford their mortgage repayments, often due to being laid off] which ended up in the banks. That has to keep going."

"Whatever you thought about the old Communist Party, there was a lot of flaws with it but there was one good thing about it, they knew you were not going to win victories tomorrow. So you're going to try and maybe make some progress and you fail but you're going to be

around anyway and you continue the process. Like the civil rights movement in the United States, it didn't begin in the '60s, it began in the '30s, and the Communists were way in the front of it."

"You lose a lot of things but you gain something from the losses too; you're ready to go forward the next time and finally you can make some progress. I don't know about here but in the United States by now that continuity has been lost, everything starts anew, mostly with young people who of course don't have the experience themselves and there isn't enough continuity there."

"So the implication is in linking something like Occupy and workplace organising that we need to develop anarcho-syndicalist structures", says Sid.

"In the 1930s in the United States what really drove the New Deal forward was sit-in strikes, business was terrified by it. As soon as the sit-down strikes started you just get real terror because a sit-down strike is one step before just taking over the factory and saying good bye to the bosses and that's when you start getting the New Deal legislation through."

"It's a bit like the Wobblies idea of building the new world in the shell of the old", Sid suggests.

"And you know the Wobblies were very frightening, in fact that's why they were crushed by Woodrow Wilson, because they were just doing too much. They were organising a militant workforce, so the power of the state came down really hard", says Noam.

"Yeah, same in Australia, they were brutally crushed. My grandfather went to jail actually, for being a member", I say.

"As a Wobbly?" Chomsky asks.

"Yeah."

"My father was in the IWW, I think we were probably the only father-son members. He didn't understand it, he was a poor immigrant who came off the ship and didn't know any English and working in a sweatshop and he joined the IWW. I asked him later: "Why did you join?" He said: "some guy came around..." he didn't understand him, "and he seemed to be for the workers", Chomsky chuckles as he recounts this family story.

"It was just the union that showed up" I add. Noam has always been a strong proponent of unions as the main social force contributing to improved conditions in society but I am curious about how, as an anarchist, he views some of the obvious limitations of conventional unions.

"Presumably you see the Occupy movement linking up with the unions as a positive development but to what extent is a union's capacity to organise restricted by a layer of bureaucracy and control?" I ask.

In response he talks about the period of union militancy in 1970s and the experience of young workers and marginalised communities such as women workers and Chicanos whose efforts at organising were opposed by union leaders who, for example, broke picket lines of striking secretaries.

"The labour movement leadership believed,

falsely of course, that they had a compact with business. You know, "We'll manage the workforce for you, you'll give us decent jobs and benefits". What they don't understand is the business classes are very class conscious, they're always fighting class war. They'll use the compact when they can, if they don't want it any more and they want to ship factories to China, they'll do that. But the labour leadership assumed that they basically had the perfect system, and for them it wasn't bad. They were pretty corrupt, they lived well, you know, just like other executives, they just managed the workforce. So when labour movement militancy comes along they were usually opposed to it. And the militancy can be as something as simple as secretaries organising or nurses organising because it wasn't done - "It's not the way we do things". I imagine it's not that different here [in Australia]."

Sid confirms that it is indeed very similar and adds that in Australia "there is also an escalator for some union bureaucrats to get into Parliament and into the Senate. I don't know if it is the same in America".

"They just become part of the... it's good for them, it's a stable system, it works for them, they don't want it changed. But a lot of labour militancy has always been against the labour bureaucracy. There are sometimes pretty good democracy movements inside the unions. You know, 'Teamsters for Democracy', 'Steelworkers for Democracy', really quite good people."

"We've got the same in Australia. There's a number of rank and file groups organising within unions and becoming..." I say as Noam continues,

"I mean some of these rank and file groups could be the kind that would go on to do things like what they tried to do at Youngstown and achieved partially elsewhere: worker owned, worker managed factories and enterprises."

"Well, we're hopeful," I say.

We move on to environmental issues, an important topic we did not want to leave out of the discussion. We raise the topic of the Carbon Tax, something which Chomsky sees as very flawed but none-the-less "a step forward" asking "what are the alternatives?" The Carbon Tax is not a great idea but it's a lot better than going backwards and building more coal-fired plants."

I mention that many on the Left are critical of the Carbon Tax for relying on market mechanisms.

"It's good to avoid market mechanisms but in favour of what?"

"Environmentalists have argued in favour of investing in renewable energy and moving away from fossil fuels" I proffer to which he says,

"Yeah, but these are not contradictory. You can have a Carbon Tax and say 'Ok, let's use the income for renewable energy development'. We need to get around the inherent problems of markets but you can't pretend we're not in this world. We're in this world whether we like it or not and we've got to deal with things within it."

"There are inherent reasons, deep reasons, why any market based system is going to almost necessarily have negative environmental consequences, just because in a market based system you are essentially disregarding "externalities"; market transactions don't consider effects on others. That doesn't change the fact that in the "semi-market" system that we have, it's not really a market system, it's a "semi-market" system, using some of its mechanisms may be the only way to prevent worse disasters. You still want to get rid of it in the longer term but maybe that's the best thing you can use for the moment."

This view about reforms within the system laying the ground work for more far-reaching changes is consistent with Chomsky long held views about "expanding the floor of the cage", a metaphor he has borrowed from the Brazilian peasants movement.

"You can say "I'd like to get rid of the state" but you really need the cage, you need the state to protect you from worse enemies. Take a really old, venerable, anarchist journal like, say, "Freedom" in England which is a good, serious, anarchist journal. Take a look at the columns. I mean most of them are dealing with what you call 'reformist' issues - protecting the workplace, safety and health - and that's right, that's what you should do, and the only institution that can do it is the government which you have at least some influence over, you have no influence over the corporations. So it's part of the protection that you have to go forward."

# Arguments For a Four-Hour Day



FW JON BEKKEN

On May 1, 1886, more than 300,000 workers struck thousands of shops across the United States in a national campaign for the 8 Hour Day. In Chicago, center of the movement and a stronghold of revolutionary unionism, 40,000 workers struck and 80,000 workers joined a May Day parade organized by the International Working People's Association and the revolutionary Central Labor Union. In the decades that followed, the 8 Hour Day and 5 Day Week became universal (the 40-hour week was even enacted into U.S. law in 1938), and in the 1930s the American Federation of Labor launched a short-lived lobbying campaign for the Six Hour Day.

Yet today the 40-hour work week remains the legal norm - a norm as often honored in the breach as in reality. Indeed, the average full-time worker in the U.S. now works nearly 49 hours a week, according to the Harris Poll. And while we are once again seeing massive and often successful strikes for shorter hours in other countries (particularly in Europe, but workers in several Asian countries have also won significant cuts in their working hours), in the United States there is no serious movement in this direction today.

There have been no reductions in the average U.S. work week in the more than sixty years since the Fair Labor Standards Act was passed. Indeed, working hours have been held steady only by the rapid growth of part-time, low-paid work - the proportion of workers putting in more than 48 hours a week on the job has been steadily increasing since 1948. The long hours we are putting in on the job have serious consequences for our health, for our fellow workers forced onto unemployment lines, and for our ability to lead the rich, fulfilling lives that should be ours by right. Our lives should not be dominated by drudgery and toil, slaving away for endless hours to make our masters rich. Sixty years of stagnation is long enough - it's time to resume the fight for shorter hours.

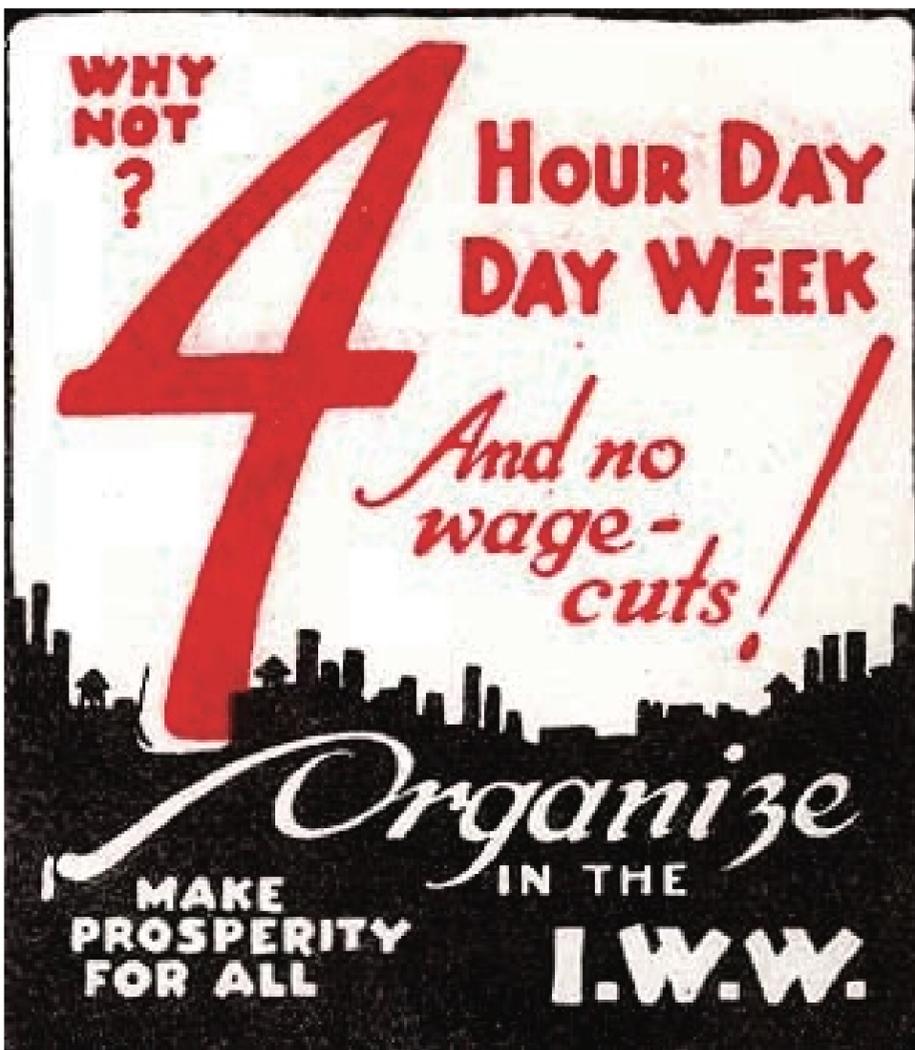
## Working Ourselves Out of Our Jobs

One in ten U.S. workers today is unemployed or working part-time because they can't find full-time jobs. (Government statistics putting unemployment at 4 percent or less ignore the huge numbers of workers involuntarily working part-time, as well as millions of workers who have been driven from the job market by employers' refusal to consider hiring them. Sociologist Harry Brill recently estimated that U.S. unemployment is actually about 11 percent.) There is a great deal of evidence that unemployment is substantially higher than the official statistics indicate, including the fact that wages have remained stagnant in what the government insists is a "dangerously tight" labor market, and that it took unemployed workers 13.4 weeks on average to find a new job in 1999 - this at a time when millions of U.S. workers' financial condition is so precarious that they are but one or two paychecks from becoming homeless. Unable to find work in their field millions of college-educated workers are taking jobs as street vendors, janitors, bus and truck drivers, and sales workers. Census data shows unemployment rates of 17 percent for computer programmers over age 50, despite long overtime hours and employers' claims that they can not find enough qualified workers and must import them from overseas.

For millions of our fellow workers, unemployment is a grim daily reality. For those of us who are working, unemployment hangs over our heads as a constant threat undermining our wages and working conditions and providing the bosses with a ready source of scabs. The unemployed, of course, are barely (if that) able to scrape by, often unable to afford the most basic necessities of life and so are often compelled to take work at whatever conditions the employers offer. Welfare "reform" makes their plight all the more desperate, while raising the tragic specter of millions of hungry children left to fend for themselves while their mothers toil away long hours in minimum-wage, deadend jobs.

A number of factors cause unemployment - some, such as economic recessions and depressions and so-called overproduction, are

This pamphlet is a revised and updated version of an article that appeared in *Libertarian Labor Review* #1 (1986), based on a presentation on the fight for a shorter workweek sponsored by the Chicago General Membership Branch of the IWW in January 1986.



cyclical. But there are two major causes of unemployment which do not go away during economic "recoveries" (that is, during periods of rising profits). The first, and most serious, is the economic system under which we live and work, which makes it profitable to cut payrolls even when the work we do is desperately needed. Thus we see construction workers facing massive unemployment at the same time that hundreds of thousands are without housing, and streets and other infrastructure are falling apart. We see farmers going bankrupt because there is no market for the food they grow at the same time that millions are starving. We see industries where the bulk of productive capacity has been mothballed, and others which no one could properly term productive going full steam because that's where the money is. This is the fundamental cause of unemployment, and as long as we allow this rotten system to persist, want, misery and unemployment will always be with us.

Of course, this corporate bloodletting does not eliminate the need for work, so the bosses respond by piling more work on those who remain, and by hiring armies of part-time and temporary workers who typically work without benefits for a fraction of the pay, without even the faintest hint of job security. One week a temp might be ordered to put in 60 or 80 hours, the next week they might not work at all. Often, temps go into work not knowing how many hours they will work that day, or whether they'll have a job the next.

The other systemic cause of unemployment is automation, which eliminates jobs by enabling fewer workers to do more work. Automation is eliminating jobs not only in the manufacturing sector, but in "service" industries as well. And though these new technologies do create some new jobs in their wake, these jobs are generally lower-paid than the ones they eliminate, require less skill, and are far fewer in number. Millions of manufacturing jobs have been lost due to automation in the last two decades, with the workers who remain increasingly tending robots. Automation is now deeply entrenched in service occupations as well. As the "information revolution" took off, the Science Council of Canada projected massive lay-offs in information processing and han-

dling industries due to automation and new technologies, singling out the disproportionate impact of such unemployment on women. New technologies in the service sector have also led to skyrocketing occupational stress. Many workers are collapsing under increased workloads and inhuman work schedules, and our fellow workers' bodies are literally falling apart from repetitive strain injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

"The conclusion is clear," reports the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department. "The new jobs being generated in most cases now involve a lower standard of living - for the individual worker and for the society as a whole. ... The occupations experiencing the largest net growth in number of jobs demand little skill, are only weakly organized into unions, and usually offer little pay - ranging from building custodians to fast-food workers."

## Making the Bosses Rich(er)

Automation and other innovations result in our productivity (output per work hour) doubling every 25 years or so. We now produce about three times as much in an hour of work as we did in 1947, but are we living three times as well or working a third as much? Far from living better, average wages (adjusted for inflation) are only slightly higher than they were 25 years ago. And we're not putting any fewer hours in on the job either, in fact we're working longer and harder. Somebody's benefiting from the fact that our work is producing more; but it's not us.

The machines that eliminate workers from payrolls are built by workers. They're paid for out of profits created by our labor. So why should we bear the costs, while the bosses reap the profits? And, for that matter, why should the decisions about whether to introduce this robot or that new chemical process be made by the bosses, instead of by us? After all, we're the ones who'll be working with the damn things.

I am not against automation - the prospect of drudge work being eliminated by new technology is, properly handled, a welcome one. (However, the new technology often realizes its increased productivity by forcing us to work harder. Some computer terminals now keep

track of the number of characters typed per minute and report workers who fall behind company standards to management. At Hormel Meatpacking's Austin, Minnesota, plant workers found that a new high-tech line led to horrendous injury rates more than twice the industry average as workers struggled to keep up with faster line speeds.)

Eliminating useless work doesn't have to mean eliminating workers. But if we leave control of industry to the bosses, work the same hours, live the same way, and produce twice as much as we used to, it stands to reason that we're going to work ourselves right out of our jobs. The bosses don't employ us out of charity, after all.

## Scabbing on the Unemployed

Fifty years ago the American Federation of Labor called for a 30-hour work week (the U.S. Senate even passed a 30-hour law, though it was defeated in the House); in 1961 the head of the New York Central Labor Council urged unions to campaign for a 4-hour day; but today the business unions won't campaign even for a 35-hour week. Indeed, many unions, including the United Auto Workers and the United Mine Workers of America, have watched massive overtime make even the 40-hour week seem a feeble joke while their members suffer record unemployment.

In the December 1985 edition of the *United Mine Workers Journal*, for example, a laid-off Illinois miner wrote in to express his feelings (and those of his 88 laid-off coworkers) "that most of us could be working now if our UMWA brothers and sisters were not working overtime. As long as they are working overtime, we feel we have no chance of getting called back." Soon afterwards, the *Journal* published a letter from a miner's wife explaining that her husband worked overtime - substantial overtime - not because he wanted to or was unconcerned with the fate of his fellow UMWA workers, but because the company would fire him (or any miner who refused overtime) if he didn't. (There has been no indication in the pages of the *UMW Journal* since then that the union is fighting to end forced overtime.)

In the 15 years since then the situation has only gotten worse. Manufacturing overtime hours soared in the 1990s, as employers responded to the economic recovery not by hiring new workers but rather by making their existing workers work harder. In the early 1990s, the bosses continued laying off workers even as they piled on the overtime. A Bureau of Labor Statistics economist reports that between March 1991 (when the recovery began) and January 1998, employers added 601,000 production workers and increased overtime hours the equivalent of another 571,000 jobs. Eliminating the increased overtime in transportation equipment manufacturing (auto and aerospace), which has been decimated by lay-offs and plant closings, would have created 107,000 new jobs (eliminating overtime work altogether would double that).

The question of unemployment - not just locally, but on the global scale on which the bosses now operate - is inseparable from the question of overtime, particularly forced overtime. Overtime is typically concentrated in those industries where unemployment is highest, such as automaking, shipyards and steel mills, and in many manufacturing industries 50- to 56-hour weeks and 12- to 16-hour days are not uncommon. Sometimes this overtime is "voluntary" but often, even in organized shops, it's not. The bosses work us overtime because it's cheaper than hiring on extra workers to take up the slack. But overtime makes poor labor economics; like speed-ups, overtime inevitably leads to lay-offs and less income. To work overtime is ultimately to scab on ourselves, and to scab on the unemployed.

## A Life At Hard Labor

It's absurd, but the typical U.S. worker puts in about as many hours a year today as British urban workers put in in the latter half of the 16th century. (They worked longer work days, but had many more days off.) If you add in the increase in commuting time and such, our work week is about as long as what workers put in

# The Aussie 4-Hour Day



FW MIKE BALLARD

The fact that 10% of Australian households own 45% of Australia's wealth while 50% of Australian households own only 7% of Australia's wealth is information which is unknown to most Australian workers.

The source is this inequality lies in the wages system. Workers create the wealth in the economy. Of course they use wealth lying dormant in Nature to do it, for example in mining. Workers sell their skills for defined periods of time to employers to create the wealth of society which is then measured in the sales of goods and services, aka the GDP. The price workers get for their sale on the labour market is called wages.

More than 120 years ago, workers came out in the streets of Chicago to demand the 8 hour day. Productivity since 1886 has skyrocketed. Workers deserve more free-time. Workers have earned it. Workers today should have a four hour day with no cut in pay. Shorter work time could solve many of what seem to be today's unsolvable problems: climate change, unemployment, child care, social alienation, cultural development and the overproduction of garbage polluting the environment.

The more the productiveness of labour increases, the more can the working-day be shortened; and the more the working-day is shortened, the more can the intensity of labour increase.

From a social point of view, the productiveness increases in the same ratio as the economy of labour, which, in its turn, includes not only economy of the means of production, but also the avoidance of all useless labour. The capitalist mode of production, while on the one hand, enforcing economy in each individual business, on the other hand, begets, by its anarchical [sic] system of competition, the most outrageous squandering of labour-power and of the social means of production, not to mention the creation of a vast number of employments, at present indispensable, but in themselves superfluous. The intensity and productive-

ness of labour being given, the time which society is bound to devote to material production is shorter, and as a consequence, the time at its disposal for the free development, intellectual and social, of the individual is greater, in proportion as the work is more and more evenly divided among all the able-bodied members of society, and as a particular class is more and more deprived of the power to shift the natural burden of labour from its own shoulders to those of another layer of society. In this direction, the shortening of the working-day finds at last a limit in the generalisation of labour. In capitalist society spare time is acquired for one class by converting the whole life-time of the masses into labour time.

From CAPITAL, Vol. I by Karl Marx  
[marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch17.htm](http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch17.htm)

The theft of alien labour time, on which the present wealth is based, appears a miserable foundation in face of this new one, created by large-scale industry itself.

As soon as labour in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value. The surplus labour of the mass has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the non-labour of the few, for the development of the general powers of the human head. With that, production based on exchange value breaks down, and the direct, material production process is stripped of the form of penury and antithesis. The free development of individualities, and hence not the reduction of necessary labour time so as to posit surplus labour, but rather the general reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, which then corresponds to the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them.

from the GRUNDRISSE by Karl Marx  
[marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch14.htm](http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch14.htm)

in 1850. Productivity has skyrocketed in the intervening period, as have our living standards. But our living standards have not come close to keeping up with our increased productivity. Instead much of our productivity has gone to hire a host of supervisors and other non-productive workers, and to soaring profits.

Increasingly employment is concentrated in the so-called service sector, and in prisons and military production. Huge numbers of workers are employed - often at miserable wages - to keep track of and facilitate the flow of profits. Other service workers are engaged in providing vital human services, such as health care or education, and so are paid even less. But many, perhaps most, of our fellow workers are engaged in activity that is at best non-productive, and often actually counter-productive from the standpoint of meeting human needs.

Capitalism has literally sentenced workers to a life at hard labor. Fifteen years ago, in 1985, we saw two events that viewed together embody the total inability of the capitalist system to deliver the goods. On the one hand we saw hundreds of thousands of people organizing and donating to an effort to raise funds for Ethiopian famine relief. Shortly thereafter, tens of thousands did the same on behalf of American farmers who are desperately trying to cut back production and maintain government subsidies in order to stave off bankruptcy. (Since then, the number of family farmers has been sharply reduced and much agricultural land converted to suburban sprawl - famines continue unabated, often in the very same countries which are under pressure from international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to increase their exports of agricultural products in order to generate foreign currency to pay off the bankers.) Similar contrasts between unmet needs and unused productive capacity could be cited in virtually any sphere (except military production) of the economy.

## Our Time Is Our Life

In 1962, New York City electricians struck for and won a 25-hour work week (though they were generally obliged to work an additional five hours at overtime rates). The strikes in the mid-1980s by Virginia shipyard workers demanding the right to have their weekends off or by German metalworkers for a 35-hour week would seem to indicate that large numbers of workers continue to want more free time. In May 2000 nurses in Worcester, Massachusetts, won a strike against the Tenet hospital chain in which the main issue was Tenet's demand for up to eight hours a day of mandatory overtime; one of a growing number of labor disputes across the U.S. and the world against "flexible" work schedules, double-shifts, mandatory overtime and other such assaults on what remains of our free time and our lives. Many other struggles against overtime or brutal "flexible" work schedules were defeated, but workers have made it clear that they are not willing to acquiesce to these assaults against our few precious hours of free time without a fight, and growing numbers are prepared to once again take the offensive and demand shorter hours.

The most important reason to fight for shorter hours is quite simple: Our time is our life. We are compelled to rent a major portion of our waking hours to the bosses for their purposes in order to buy back the things we produce and need so that we can live our lives (and have a little fun). The time we spend at work is not our own, and far too much of it is squandered on useless production, the support of parasites (bosses, supervisors, investment bankers, marketers and the like), the construction of the means of our annihilation, and so forth. A shorter work week, without loss of pay or speed-ups, would not only reduce unemployment and lead to fewer industrial accidents and deaths (a dis-

proportionate number of which occur in the final hours of work, due to fatigue), it would give us more free time in which to enjoy life.

We could use that time to nurture our families and rebuild our communities, to make art or music or to study subjects that interest us. We could socialize, party, reflect, relax. We could use some of the free time we so richly deserve to get together with our fellow workers to discuss the kind of society we would like to live in, and to begin a campaign to create it. More free time (for too many of us, any free time at all) would provide us the means to lead more fulfilling, truly human lives.

A campaign for shorter hours also has potential universal appeal - benefiting both the organized and unorganized, employed and unemployed alike. It could help reinvigorate a labor movement that has been stagnating since this fight was abandoned, and which was largely built around the struggle to cut the work week. And such a campaign would cut at the root of the bosses' profits by restricting the number of hours we work solely for their enrichment.

## The Futility of Legislation

Rather than organize our class at the point of production, many labor "reformers" prefer to rely on Congress. But every reduction in the work week in this country has been accomplished through labor action, through strikes and direct action on the job. Our strength as a labor movement lies in our organization and our willingness to act in solidarity with each other, not in appeals to the politicians.

From time to time, legislators have proposed new laws to cut the work week or increase penalties on overtime work. Substantial energies and funds have been invested in such legislation for more than a hundred years, but those laws which have been passed have been almost wholly ineffective. Indeed, the U.S. government has never adopted enforceable legislation cutting the work week below that already won by the vast majority of workers except under threat of a general strike (as in the case of the 1915 Railway Act declared constitutional by the Supreme Court on March 15, 1917, under threat of national strike action). In England, parliament frequently passed legislation regulating the length of the work week, but M.A. Bienefeld shows that aside from a few cases where prevailing conditions were extended to industries employing predominantly women and children, these laws were aimed not at reducing the work week, but rather at maintaining or increasing its length. Similarly, by the time the U.S. Congress finally approved the 40-hour work, many workers had already won shorter working hours.

This is because any meaningful sense of full employment is incompatible with our economic system. The financial press routinely speaks of the economic benefits of preserving a large reserve pool of unemployed workers, and warn of impending economic disaster when too many of our fellow workers secure jobs. They do not speak this way because they derive some sort of sadistic pleasure from seeing our class suffer, but because their economic interests require substantial unemployment (or, at minimum, ill-paid, insecure jobs little better than actual joblessness) in order to enforce labor discipline, contain wage costs, and ensure that workers are readily available when and if needed - that is, when or if it becomes profitable to hire them.

Laws mandating shorter hours have been passed before (a whole series of state laws were adopted in the late 1800s purporting to establish the 8-Hour Day, for example), but they have done little good where workers have not possessed the industrial organization to compel the employers to accept shorter hours. In 1923, the IWW argued: "With the state the workers need not concern themselves except to recognize its class character and function. To scheme for concessions and favors from it, as an institution, is to cherish a delusion.. Government has always been a disguise under which acquisitive predatory powers moved for the conquest of socially necessary things and by which they held the producers... in subjection. ... The acts of the legislative bodies, the decisions of the courts, the use of repressive forces by executives, the control of the educational system, all manifest a class hostility and all tend to keep the working class in its place."

Recognizing this fact, the IWW seeks to organize workers at the point of production to win our demands through our economic power as producers. It was in this fashion that IWW-orga-

nized lumber workers won the Eight-Hour Day in the Pacific Northwest, simply by refusing to work the extra hours that the bosses demanded - backed up, of course, by solid organization.

## The Four Hour Day

Not only is the work week not being cut, over the last 50 years it has grown substantially longer for millions of workers. This retreat on the shorter hours front follows more than a century of battles for a shorter work week. Yet a shorter work week is practical even within the constraints of a capitalist society. (Indeed, workers already put in far fewer working hours per year than we do in the United States in most industrialized countries; usually in the form of longer vacations.) If we move beyond the constraints imposed by capitalism, deep cuts in the work week are quite feasible. German economists concluded many years ago that a 20-hour week would suffice to meet socially necessary production given an egalitarian division of labor and the abolition of unproductive activity. This is, to say the least, a conservative estimate; in 1932 engineers at Columbia University demonstrated that workers could live extremely comfortably on four hours of work a day, if industry was properly arranged. And a study by the Goodman brothers published in the mid-1960s argued that "our present-day capabilities, intelligently used, could enable each one of us to work fewer than 10 hours a week" to meet our needs. More recently, Harvard economist Juliet Schor has demonstrated that a four-hour day could have been implemented in the United States a decade ago without any decline in living standards.

Shorter hours, of course, are not a panacea. Minor cuts in the work week - say to 35 or 32 hours - would not eliminate unemployment, nor would they bring an end to the exploitation that we suffer every day on the job. But they could, if coupled with a strong fight against overtime and speed-ups and effective resistance to pay cuts, lead to quantitative and qualitative improvements in our lives. (Without such a fight, overtime and speed-ups can quickly erode or negate these benefits. In 1850, gas workers in Leeds, England won a reduction of the workday from 12 to 8 hours, but soon complained that the employers "tried to put such a frightful amount of work upon them (the workmen) as would make them beg for the twelve hours day again." In the U.S., rubberworkers had a 30-hour work week for many years, which was eroded through overtime and ultimately eliminated. Today, French workers are finding that employers are trying to cheat on the new 35-hour week by speeding up production. Clearly it is not enough to win shorter hours, workers must be organized to resist the bosses' attempts to recoup the time through speedups or overtime if we are to make lasting gains.)

The IWW argues that we should fight not merely to put people to work, but rather that we should organize workers as a class to reorganize society and production in our own interests. We favor substantial cuts in the work week, but these must be won by workers at the point of production - determined not to lose out through pay cuts, speed-ups or overtime - if they are to be effective.

For many years the IWW has called for a Four Hour Day. This may strike some as drastic or utopian, but only because the labor movement did not fight for and win the Six-Hour Day when it became practical sixty years ago. Significant cuts in the work week - to 16 or 20 hours - would require significant reorganization of production, and perhaps even the elimination of the host of capitalist parasites we presently support. But such cuts could be won by a working class determined to do so. The productive capacity exists to make a Four-Hour Day practical, though many of the necessary workers have been diverted into low-paid, insecure and socially useless labor. Even more modest reductions in the work week would be an improvement over present conditions, provided only that our class was organized well enough to ensure that we were not forced to bear the costs.

The four-hour day is practical, it's necessary, and we've already paid for it. Now it's up to us to organize to take our time back from the employers who have been robbing us of the product of our labor, our dignity, and enormous (and growing) chunks of our lives for centuries.

# Green Syndicalism: An Alternative Red-Green Vision



JEFF SHANTZ

Recently, interesting convergences of radical union movements with ecology have been reported in Europe and North America. These developments have given voice to a radical 'syndical ecology', or what some within the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) call "green syndicalism" [Kauffman and Ditz., 1992]. The emergent greening of syndicalist discourses is perhaps most significant in the theoretical questions raised regarding syndicalism and ecology, indeed questions about the possibilities for a radical convergence of social movements. While most attempts to form labour and environmentalist alliances have pursued Marxian approaches, Adkin [1992a: 148] suggests that more compelling solutions might be expected from anarchists and libertarian socialists. Still others [Pepper, 1993; Heider, 1994; Purchase, 1994: 1997a; Shantz and Adam, 1999] suggest that greens should pay more attention to anarcho-syndicalist ideas.

Pepper argues [1993: 198] that an infusion of anarcho-syndicalism might shake up the contemporary green movement in North America just as syndicalism shook up the labour movement of the 1910s. Martel [1997] argues that confronting 'jobs versus environment' blackmail may require nothing less than militant labour-based organisations, arming workers with the necessary weapons to confront the power of capital and to strike over ecological concerns. Still, little has been said about green syndicalism and its specific red-green vision. This article attempts to correct that oversight by offering a discussion of the varied perspectives, the different theoretical and practical strands, which might make up a syndicalist ecology.

## The Emergence of Green Syndicalism

In Australia, the 'green bans' movement showed a number of features which were suggestive of a syndical ecology although the primary union organisation behind the green bans was not a syndicalist organisation [Burgmann, 2000; Burgmann and Burgmann, 1998]. Beginning in the early 1970s in New South Wales, the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) worked to stop the destruction of green spaces, historic districts and working-class communities by refusing to work on those projects. The BLF did all of this against its own economic interests, taking advantage of labourers' newfound economic clout in the midst of a massive development boom which was transforming Sydney and destroying low-income neighbourhoods. Between 1971 and 1975 more than 49 bans halted projects worth more than A\$5 billion [Burgmann, 2000]. Forest and island reserves were defended and parks were saved from destruction. In what must have been a blow to the national bourgeoisie, the bans successfully ended plans for a car park adjacent to the Sydney Opera House which would have threatened the root systems of Moreton Bay Fig trees. Perhaps most significantly, the BLF was able to make the connection between destruction of the environment and the destruction of working-class communities. The union opposed the eviction of tenants and refused to take part in gentrification projects. Significantly the union's actions inspired a groundswell of local opposition to redevelopment [Anderson and Jacobs, 1999].

During 2000 the Electrical Trades Union resurrected the green ban tactic in an effort to halt construction of a 34-metre light tower near the Melbourne Zoo. The union claimed that the light towers would harm the sleeping and breeding patterns of some animals. In September 2001 a number of community actions were held to support green bans against construction of a gas fired power generator and its pipeline in Somerton, Victoria because the pipeline would destroy the habitat of the endangered Growling Grass Frog.

In the early 1990's, Roussopoulos [1991] noted the emergence of a green syndicalist discourse in France within the Confédération Nationale du Travail (CNT). Expressions of a green syndicalism were also observed in Spain [Marshall, 1993]. There the Confederación General de Trabajadores (CGT) adopted social ecology as part of its struggle for 'a future in which nei-

ther the person nor the planet is exploited' [Marshall, 1993: 468].

Most approaches to labour and environmentalist alliances have taken statist perspectives, to the exclusion of non- or anti-state approaches. Recent developments, however, have given rise to what the IWW calls "green syndicalism." Green syndicalism highlights certain points of similarity between revolutionary unionism and radical ecology. These include, but are by no means limited to, decentralisation, regionalism, direct action, autonomy, pluralism and federation. The article discusses the theoretical and practical implications of syndicalism made green.



ther the person nor the planet is exploited' [Marshall, 1993: 468].

Among the more interesting of recent attempts to articulate solidarity across the ecology and workers' movements were those involving Earth First! activist Judi Bari and her efforts to build alliances with workers in order to save old-growth forest in Northern California. Bari sought to learn from the organising and practices of the IWW to see if a radical ecology movement might be built along anarcho-syndicalist lines. In so doing she tried to bring a radical working-class perspective to the agitational practices of Earth First! as a way to overcome the conflicts between environmentalists and timber workers which kept them from fighting the corporate logging firms which were killing both forests and jobs. The organisation which she helped form, IWW/Earth First Local 1, eventually built a measure of solidarity between radical environmentalists and loggers which resulted in the protection of the Headwaters old-growth forest which had been slated for clearcutting [Shantz, 1999].

## The IWW's Greenward Turn

In 1991 the Wobblies (IWW), following a union-wide vote, changed the preamble to the IWW constitution for the first time since 1908. The preamble now reads as follows:

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 organise as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and *live in harmony with the earth* [emphasis added].

These seven words present a significant shift in strategy regarding industrial unionism and considerations of what is to be meant by work. At the same time, their embeddedness

within the constitution's original class struggle narrative draws a mythic connection with the history of the IWW and the practices of revolutionary syndicalism.

The greening of the IWW was more explicitly expressed through a statement issued by the General Assembly at the time of the preamble change. It is worth quoting at length.

In addition to the exploitation of labour, industrial society creates wealth by exploiting the earth and non-human species. Just as the capitalists value the working class only for their labor, so they value the Earth and non-human species only for their economic usefulness to humans. This has created such an imbalance that the life support systems of the Earth are on the verge of collapse. The working class bears the brunt of this degradation by being forced to produce, consume and live in the toxic environment created by this abuse. Human society must recognise that all beings have a right to exist for their own sake, and that humans must learn to live in balance with the rest of nature.

This philosophical shift has been simultaneous with the recent upswing in IWW activism. While the IWW has never returned to the numbers of members it enjoyed in the 1910-20s, the last decade has seen a revitalisation of the radical union as it has organised a number of workplaces in North America. As it was historically, the IWW is a union which organises the unorganised including the unemployed. Significantly, the increase in direct actions around ecology have come from the largest workplace branches, not simply students or unemployed members. Ecological activism has encouraged a decentralisation of formerly centrist union projects along with a revival of contacts with other industrial unions.

## Theoretical Syndicalism and Radical Working-Class Histories

R.J. Holton [1980] explicitly rejects the characterisation of syndicalism as expressed by anti-syndicalist ecologists such as Murray Bookchin as economic. He suggests that such perspectives result from the gross misreading of historic syndicalist struggles. In the works of Melvyn Dubofsky [1969], Jeremy Brecher [1972], David

Montgomery [1974], and Kenneth Tucker [1991] one finds substantial evidence against the positions taken by radical ecologists such as Bookchin, Dave Foreman [1991] and Paul Watson [1994]. Guarasci and Peck [1987] stress the significance of this class struggle historiography as a corrective to theorising which objectifies labour. Tucker [1991] argues that much of the theoretical distance separating new movements from workers might be attributed to a refusal to explore syndicalist strategies.

Historic syndicalist campaigns have provided significant evidence that class struggles entail more than battles over bread and butter concerns carried out at the level of the factory [Kornblugh, 1964; Brecher, 1972; Thompson and Murfin, 1976; DeCaux, 1978; Tucker, 1991]. In an earlier article, Hobsbawm [1979] identifies the hostility of syndicalist movements towards the bureaucratic control of work, concerns over local specificity and techniques of spontaneous militancy and direct action. Similar expressions of radicalism have also characterised the practices of ecology. Class struggles have, in different instances and over varied terrain, been articulated to engage the broader manifestations of domination and control constituted alongside of the enclosure and ruthlessly private ownership of vast ecosystems and the potentialities for freedom contained therein [Adkin, 1992a: 140-41].

From a theoretical standpoint Tucker's [1991] work is instructive. His work provides a detailed discussion of possible affinity between French revolutionary syndicalism and contemporary radical democracy. Tucker suggests that within French syndicalism one can discern such 'new' themes as: consensus formation; participation of equals; dialogue; decentralisation; and autonomy.

French syndicalist theories of capitalist power place emphasis upon an alternative revolutionary worldview emerging out of working-class experiences and offering a challenge to bourgeois morality [Holton, 1980]. Fernand Pelloutier, an important syndicalist theorist whose works influenced Sorel, argues that ideas rather than economic processes are the motive force in bringing about revolutionary transformation. Pelloutier vigorously attempted to come to terms with 'the problem of ideological and cultural domination as a basis for capitalist power' [Holton, 1980: 19].

Reconstituting social relations, in Pelloutier's view, becomes possible when workers begin developing revolutionary identities, through self-preparation and self-education, as the means for combatting capitalist culture [Spitzer, 1963]. Thus, syndicalists have characteristically looked to labour unrest as an agency of social regeneration whereby workers desecrate the culture surrounding class domination, for example, deference to authority, acceptance of capitalist superiority and dependence upon elites. According to Jennings [1991: 82], syndicalism 'conceived the transmission of power not in terms of the replacement of one intellectual elite by another but as a process of displacement spreading power out into the workers' own organizations'. This displacement of power would originate in industry when workers came to question the status of their bosses. 'This was not intended as a form of left "economism" but rather as a means of developing the confidence and aggression of a working class threatened with the spectre of a "sober, efficient and docile" work discipline' [Holton, 1980: 14]. Towards that end syndicalist movements have emphasised 'life' and 'action' against the severity of capitalist labour processes and their corresponding culture.

It might be argued that, far from being economic, syndicalist movements are best understood as counter-cultural in character, more similar to contemporary new social movements than to movements of the traditional left. Syndicalist themes such as autonomy, anti-hierarchy, and diffusion of power have echoes in sentiments of the new movements. This similarity is reflected not only in the syndicalist emphasis upon novel tactics such as direct action, consumer boycotts, or slowdowns.

It also finds expression in an appreciation of radical labour histories, especially where workers have exerted themselves through inspiring acts which seem to have surprisingly much in common with present-day eco-activism. At-

tempts have been made within green syndicalism to articulate labour as part of the ecological 'we' through inclusion of radical labour within an ecological genealogy. Within green syndicalist discourses, this assumption of connectedness between historic radical movements, especially those of labour, anarchism and ecology has much significance. In this the place of the IWW is especially suggestive.

The IWW, as opposed to bureaucratic unions, sought the organisation of workers from the bottom up. As Montgomery [1974] notes, IWW strategies rejected large strike funds, negotiations, written contracts and the supposed autonomy of trades. Actions took the form of 'guerilla tactics' including sabotage, slowdown, planned inefficiency and passive resistance.

Furthermore, and of special significance for contemporary activists, the Wobblies placed great emphasis upon the nurturing of unity-in-diversity among workers. As Green [1974] notes, the IWW frequently organised in industrial towns marked by deep divisions, especially racial divisions, among the proletariat.

Interestingly, Montgomery [1974] notes that concerns over 'success' or 'failure' of strikes were not of the utmost importance to strikers. Strikes spoke more to 'the audacity of the strikers' pretensions and to their willingness to act in defiance of warnings from experienced union leaders that chance of victory were slim' [Montgomery, 1974: 512]. This approach to protest could well refer to recent ecological actions. Such rebellious expressions reflect the mythic aspects of resistance, beyond mere pragmatic considerations or strict pursuance of 'interests'.

Contemporary workers have little, if any, knowledge of historic IWW struggles, even in their own regions and industries. In my view, green syndicalist articulations are important in informing or reminding ecology activists and workers alike that workers are not always willing pawns. 'Historically, it was the IWW who broke the stranglehold of the timber barons on the loggers and millworkers in the nineteen teens' [Bari, 1994: 18]. It is just this stranglehold which needs again be broken – this time for nature as well as for workers. 'Now the companies are back in total control, only this time they're taking down not only the workers but the Earth as well' [Bari, 1994: 18].

#### Workers' Control: Ecology Enters the Machine

As the ones most often at the centre of ecological damage [Bullard, 1990; Kaufmann and Ditz, 1992] workers in industrial workplaces may be expected to have some insights into immediate and future threats to local and surrounding ecosystems. Such awareness derived from the location of workers at the point of production and/or destruction may allow workers to provide important, although not central, contributions to ecological resistance.

However, this possibly strategic placement does not mean that such resistance is inevitable. Those people who suffer most from ecological pillage, both at workplaces and in home communities, are also those with the least control over production thanks to the kind of class-based autocracy presently sanctioned by the capitalist state [Ecologist, 1993; Faber and O'Connor, 1993; Peet and Watts, 1996]. These relations of power become significant mechanisms in the oppression of not only workers but of non-human nature as well. Without being attentive to this web of power one cannot adequately answer Eckersley's [1989] pertinent questions concerning why those who are affected most directly and materially by assaults upon local ecosystems are often least active in resistance, both in defending nature and in defending themselves. Thus the questions of workplace democracy and workers' control have become crucial to green syndicalist theory.

'The IWW stands for worker self-management, direct action and rank and file control' [Miller, 1993: 56]. For green syndicalism workers' control becomes an attempt by workers to formulate their own responses to the question 'what of work?' Within the IWW, decisions over tactics are left to groups of workers or even individual workers themselves. Worker self-determination 'on the job' becomes a mechanism by which to contest the power/knowledge imbalance within the workplace.

Labour insurgency typically promotes shifting relations within transformations of production and the emergence of new hegemonic practices. Times of economic reorganisation offer wide-ranging opportunities for creating

novel or unprecedented forms of confrontation on the parts of workers. The offensives of capital can provide a stimulus to varied articulations of renewed militancy. Such might be the case within the present context of capital strike, de-unionisation, and joblessness characterising globalisation. Of course the emphasis must always remain on possibility as there is always room for more than one response to emerge. Green syndicalists recognise that ecological crises have only become possible within social relations whose articulation has engendered a weakening of people's capacities to fight a coordinated defence of the planet's ecological communities.

Bari [1994: 2001] argued that the restriction of participation in decision-making processes within ordered hierarchies, prerequisite to accumulation, has been a crucial impediment to ecological organising. The persistent lack of workers' control allows coercion of workers into the performance of tasks which they might otherwise abhor, or which have consequences of which they are unaware. Additionally the absence of self-determination results in workers competing with one another over jobs or even the possibility of jobs. Workers are left more susceptible to threats of capital strike or environmental blackmail [Bullard, 1990]. This susceptibility is perhaps the greatest deterrent to labour/ecology alliances. Without job security and workplace power workers cannot provide an effective counterbalance to the power of capital.

Radical ecology, outside of green syndicalism, has failed to appreciate the negative consequences of the lack of democracy within the

### GREEN SYNDICALISM PROPOSES THE TRANSFORMATION OF WORK, BOTH IN STRUCTURE AND MEANING, AS AN ECOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE. SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OF WORK CANNOT BE FOUND MERELY IN THE CONTROL OF EXISTING FORMS. RATHER, ANTISOCIAL GREED ALONG WITH ECONOMIC HIERARCHIES MUST BE OVERCOME.

workplace for participation in more explicitly political realms. Participation as conceived by green syndicalism cannot come from management. 'Such awareness has to question unflinching deference to experts, as part of a more general attack on centralised power and managerial prerogatives' [Guarasci and Peck, 1987: 70]. Direct participation is understood as that which contributes to worker self-determination, constituted by workers against the veiled offerings of management which form part of ecocapitalism, whose visions leave the megamachine and its power hierarchies intact and thus offers no alternative. Production remains undemocratic and profitability determines whether or not resources should be used. Thus, eco-capitalism introduces to us the wonders of biodegradable take-out containers and starch-based golf tees [Purchase, 1994].

Green syndicalism emerges, then, as an experiment in more creative conceptions of workplace participation. For Purchase [1994, 1997a, 1997b], productive control organised around face-to-face, voluntary interaction and encouraging self-determination might be employed towards the freeing up of vast quantities of labour from useless, though profitable production, to be used in the playful development of life-affirming activities. Thus a common theme of working-class radicalism becomes an important element of ecological theory. Leftists have long argued that eventually human needs must become the primary consideration of production, replacing profitability and accumulation. Such critiques of production must now go even further, raising questions about the 'needs' of ecosystems and non-humans.

#### Rethinking Unionism

The decreased demand for labour, within cybernetised capital relations, means that corporations are less compelled to deal with mainstream trade unions as under the Keynesian arrangement.(3) If unions are to have any influence it can only come through active efforts to disrupt the exploitation of wage labour. These disruptive efforts may include increased militancy within workplace relations. Evidence for a rebellion among workers has been reflected typically in such activities as sabotage,

slowdowns and absences.

IWW activists explicitly agitate for 'deliberate inefficiency' as a means to encourage the disruption of autocratic work relations. For green syndicalists the desired tactics against corporate destruction of the environment include forms of direct action such as shop-floor sabotage, boycotts, green bans and the development of extra-union, community solidarity. Of course the power to halt production through strike action is unmatched in its capacity to confront antisocial corporate greed.

Environmentalists can stop production for a few hours or a few days. There is no more effective counter-force to capital accumulation and the pursuit of profit than the power of workers to stop work to achieve their demands. Ecological protection, as with work conditions, benefits or wages, must be fought for. Where workers are involved this means they must be struck for. This, however, requires that workers develop a position of strength. This, in turn, means organising workers so that they no longer face the prospects of 'jobs versus environment' blackmail. In order for this to occur, non-unionised workers must be mobilised. (Otherwise they are mobilised by capital – as scabs.) Recognising this the IWW gives a great deal of attention to organising the traditionally unorganised.

A green syndicalist conception of workers' organisation rejects the hierarchical, centralised, bureaucratic structures of mainstream unionism. Economistic union organisations and bureaucrats who have worked to convince workers that environmentalists are responsible for job loss point up the need for syndicalist unions or

democracy and participation. It must be stressed that these structural changes were essential for the development of the BLF's environmental perspective [Burgmann and Burgmann, 1998]. Job site autonomy was encouraged, officials' wages were linked to industry wages and officials were not paid during strikes. The union also established a 'limited tenure of office' and executive meetings were opened to all members [Burgmann and Burgmann, 1998]. The BLF also showed the expansive vision of working class solidarity which is a strength of syndicalism. For example, the union banned work at Macquarie University after a gay student was expelled. The BLF also offered strong support for First Nations land rights and squatters and banned work on the construction of a \$1 million maximum security prison block. Unfortunately the BLF was betrayed by the same authoritarian forces which have haunted the syndicalists. Maoists and Stalinists within the National conspired with bosses to impose Federal control over the union, expel leading militants and end the bans.

#### The Question of Work

The green syndicalist responses might be understood, most interestingly, as characterising a broader revolt against work. 'The one goal that unites all IWW members is to abolish the wage system' [Meyers, 1995: 73]. Ecological crises make clear that the capitalist construction of 'jobs' and 'workers' are incompatible with the preservation of nature. It is, perhaps, then, not entirely paradoxical that green syndicalism should hint at an overcoming of workerlessness as one possible outcome.

Radical ecology activists have increasingly come to understand jobs, under the guise of work, as perhaps the most basic moment of oppression, one which must be overcome in any quest towards liberty. Too often, previously, the common response has been one of turning away from workers and from questions relating to the organisation of working relations. Green syndicalism hints that radical theory can no longer ignore these questions which are posed by the presence of jobs. Indeed it might be said that a return to the problem of jobs becomes the starting point for a reformulation of radicalism along green lines.

Green syndicalism conceives of the transformation of work as an ecological imperative. What is proposed is a radical alteration of work, both in structure and meaning. Solutions to the problems of work cannot be found merely in the control of existing forms. Rather, current practices of production along with the hierarchy of labour must be overcome.

For theorists of green syndicalism [Kaufmann and Ditz, 1992; Purchase, 1994, 1997a, 1997b], a reduction in the amount of work being done is among the prerequisites for ecological change. Their concern is that much of work, involving massive appropriation of natural elements, is useless. That includes the defence and reproduction of autocratic and exploitative work relations in political (ownership) and economic (circulation) forms. In addition, they perceive an even more radical change as being required to transform the nature of the remaining work towards ecological ends, eg. recovery, repair, and reconstruction. Furthermore, the processes of transforming existing work involve those who perform and are most familiar with the tasks under question. Green syndicalists [Kaufmann and Ditz, 1992; Purchase, 1994] envision work being performed through democratic, participatory means within which work is conceived more as craft or as play.

Production on a green syndicalist basis [Purchase, 1994, 1997a, 1997b], may include the provision of ecologically sensitive foods, transportation or energy. Work, newly organised along decentralised, local, democratic lines might allow for the introduction of materials and practices with diminished impact upon the bioregion in which each is employed.

Green syndicalist discourses are raised against the undermining influences of work in contemporary conditions of globalism. Far from being irrational responses to serious social transformations, workplace democratisation and workers' self-determination become ever more reasonable responses to the uncertainty and contingency of emerging conditions of (un)employment.

Green syndicalists emphasise workers' empowerment and self-emancipation – as against pessimistic or cynical responses such as mass retraining which simply (Continued on page 15)

# Earthworker and the Green Syndicalist Future



FW BRENDAN LIBERTAD

The union movement, as Jack Munday points out, has “been caught in a false dichotomy, where they have been presented with choosing between jobs or the environment. It’s a contradiction that has been fostered by opportunist politicians, corporations or government bureaucracies who try to force people to say, ‘You’ve got to make a decision, it’s either the environment or jobs’. But we should be able to have both: an environment fit for our children and sustainable, socially useful employment.”

The Latrobe Valley, in rural eastern Victoria, is home to one of the country’s dirtiest energy industries. Large plumes of toxic smoke, visible from a distance, ascend high into the atmosphere much like the sinister black skyscrapers – those Dark Satanic Mills – depicted in William Blake’s Jerusalem. The area has been the scene of significant confrontations over recent years as the plight of the planet has become mainstream discourse, between, on the one hand, environmental protesters attempting to shut down the industry and highlight concerns over an impending ecological disaster, and on the other, the corporations and local police. Unfortunately, all too often, the industry unions, and the workers they represent, also oppose the environmental campaigners, for fear of substantial job losses, the likes of which they have seen on occasion previously.

The major corporations that call the valley their home are involved predominantly in brown coal electricity generation, and as the second largest employer in the region, they possess significant political clout, which they wield regularly. Currently, they supply 90% of the electricity needs of Victoria, Australia’s second most populous state and the fastest growing in the country, with a population of 5.5 million. According to a study conducted in 1996 on the nature of energy supply in the Latrobe Valley, the region contains enough coal to power Victoria for another 400 years; more recent research estimates that 50,000 million tonnes of useable reserves remain. It is this fact, amongst others – Australia being the largest coal exporter in the world, and the strength of the coal and mining lobbies – that have led to calls for research into “Clean Coal” technologies.

Carbon Sequestration, or Carbon Capture and Storage, has been heavily vaunted by politicians, the press and big business alike, as the future of a “clean-energy” Australia, and undoubtedly the industry pins their hopes on the viability of such a scheme; scientists and environmental activists, however, have questioned whether coal can ever be “clean” and have instead pushed for solar, wind and other renewable energies to become the mainstay of a carbon-neutral future. Whilst the problems of energy use and supply are admittedly, multifaceted, the foremost issue in contemporary Australia is one of wealth and power: much as Lewis Mumford identified when considering mankind’s unwillingness to transition from the “neotechnic” phase of energy generation, the problem is “because of the enormous vested interest in coal measures, the cheaper sources of energy have not received sufficient systematic attention upon the part of the inventors.”

It is here in the Latrobe Valley, where long-time IWW member, Dave Kerin, has pioneered what could well be the future of that clean-energy Australia. Taking into account his own history in the ground-breaking Builders Labourers Federation, which created the Green Bans movement in the 1970s, FW Kerin has established the Earthworker Cooperative, with the aim of constructing an alternative economy – founded on cooperative workplace principles and clean renewable energy – within the very heartland of the Victorian coal industry. The ideological perspective that informs and influences FW Kerin’s vision of federated cooperatives – ecological and otherwise – can be placed within the same historical milieu of the decentralised and localised self-managed economy emphasised by Kropotkin, Reclus and others.

The Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) has been credited for being significant in the creation of the environmental movement, and certainly in the case of the various Green Parties that exist across the developed world. Petra Kelly, the founder of the German Greens

Here FW Brendan Libertad talks to FW Dave Kerin whose work with the Earthworker cooperative seeks to combat the brown market economy with clean renewable energy developed and utilised via the principles of co-operation and solidarity that underpin Green Syndicalism.



(the first National Green Party anywhere in the world), was highly influenced by events taking place in 1970’s Australia, where the BLF had allied itself with various community groups to oppose development and developers – particularly in areas deemed ecologically or historically significant – by applying a moratorium on construction at those sites. Between 1971 and 1975, it is estimated that the BLF had established 49 separate bans in New South Wales alone, with a value of \$5 billion, and many of the locations – like The Rocks in Sydney, have since been Heritage Listed. More significantly, it was an ideological convergence of syndicalism, environmentalism and community that gestured towards a new form of collective power: incorporating, from one element, the historic methods and goals of the syndicalist cause, and from another, those of the emergent environmental movement.

Unfortunately, in recent times, Australian unions have often been at the forefront of opposition to progressive and environmental change. In the Australian Federal Election of 2004, elements of the union movement in Australia allied themselves with the John Howard led conservative government due to the opposition Labor Party’s willingness to adopt a policy of desisting logging in Tasmania’s old growth forests; it led to a tide of reaction from members of the militant Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), with bumper stickers proclaiming “I log and I vote” demonstrating the anger and volatility of forestry workers to long-required environmental measures. Historically, the forestry industry has attempted to portray environmental activists as “middle-class city dwellers interfering with honest workers’ livelihoods” and the industry has previously been involved in national advertising campaigns funded towards these aims.

It is these campaigns, and those of other big business interests, that has led to domestic debate about economic reforms to address climate change being presented, much as they are in the United States, as a dichotomy between jobs, on the one hand, and the environment, on the other – as the introductory quote of BLF leader and green syndicalist pioneer, Jack Munday, demonstrates. It is important to note that Munday, although at the time a card-carrying member of the Communist Party of Australia, has attributed many BLF tactics and successes to the revolutionary strategic approach of the IWW in the early days of the 20th Century. In the 1970s, as now, the debate has been framed in the same context: choosing the environment equals choosing unemployment, a convenient ruse that serves the interests of

employers and politicians alike.

The Latrobe Valley is particularly sensitive to issues of employment: in the 1990s, the radically neo-liberal state government of Jeff Kennett introduced a raft of pro-business reforms, including privatisation of almost all major industries, power included. 16,000 jobs in the Valley were lost, and in a region where towns are built and survive on the back of certain industries, this was particularly devastating. Distrust of reform, therefore, is particularly high in the region, and the likelihood of governmental implementation of measures to address climate change are unlikely given the historical precedent that potential job-losses directly translate to vote-losses. The likelihood that business would implement similar measures, in the interests of “corporate social responsibility,” or some other oxymoronic concept, is hardly worth addressing.

It is precisely this dilemma, and the prevailing farce that is political and economic discourse associated with the environment and the economy in Australia, that the Earthworker Cooperative is attempting to redress: August 2011 saw the launch of the 100,000 Australians campaign, the goal of which was to have 100,000 Australians buy into the co-operative, at the small fee of \$20, with the aim of producing solar hot water systems to be installed in businesses, and eventually, other cooperatives federated with, and potentially funded by, Earthworker. Construction of the solar hot water systems is to take place at Earthworker’s “Eureka’s Future” factory in Morwell; Eureka being the name of a famous uprising of workers in the Australian gold fields in the mid 19th Century, its symbolism adopted by the Australian union movement as historically emblematic.

The campaign has been heavily backed by progressive unions, and one of the foremost ways that the systems will become viable and widely utilised will be through unions including them in Enterprise Bargaining Agreements, a testament to the social-capital approach that FW Kerin and Earthworker are employing:

In the wage clauses of Enterprise Bargaining Agreements negotiated between unions and employers, workers will have the ability to collectively purchase the goods and services produced by the manufacturing cooperatives, reducing their bills towards zero, creating jobs which never leave our shores and which attach training with a long term future for our young. As further indication of the green syndicalism that Earthworker embodies, not only will it combine issues of climate change and workplace self-management, but FW Kerin has also identified that funds would be put aside to con-

tribute to various social programs:

We want to put five per cent of the surplus or profit towards social justice and in this project we’ve always talked about youth homelessness and the aged-care waiting list for hospital, dental and optical...We (also) want to make sure a percentage of any intake (of workers) is young Koori kids, so real wealth creating jobs for our indigenous population.

Of significance to the creation of Earthworker is the introduction of market “measures” to reduce carbon pollution: the Labor Government of Kevin Rudd, elected in 2007, was swept to power on the back of substantial public support for governmental schemes to address climate change. At the time, the election led some to proclaim it the first climate change election in the world. However, since then, an emergent right-wing populist rhetoric – particularly from talk radio “shock-jocks” and the Murdoch press in Australia, which controls 70% of the print media – has led to a marked decrease in support for any proposed “solutions” to climate change, market or otherwise. Nonetheless, despite it badly affecting their poll ratings, the government has continued to pursue an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), which passed the Senate in late 2011. FW Kerin argues that following the introduction of the scheme, Australia may “flood with green technologies,” putting Earthworker in an ideal position to capitalise on the changing economic situation. However, in no sense does FW Kerin perceive market mechanisms capable of addressing the present climate disaster unfolding; in fact, the opposite is true – Earthworker has been established to bypass the market system and provide a working example of a participatory democracy producing green technologies.

FW Kerin’s approach in the Earthworker Cooperative is in many ways indicative of his work in applying the ideas of the IWW and anarchist writers in “sow[ing] in the very belly of capitalist society the seeds of the free producer’s groups through which it seems our communist and anarchist ideal must come to pass.”

While social movement institutions must inevitably go on protesting, our struggles must also mature and begin as rapidly as possible to move towards the new social structures of worker-owned and controlled social enterprises. The participatory democratic option must be modeled, it must be proved. We must move from protest as our primary function towards actual democratic change within the eco-nomy [sic – emphasis in original].

Indeed, environmental notions can be traced back – within anarchist literature – to the very beginning, and anarchism undoubtedly possesses the most environmentally conscious writings amongst the revolutionary tradition: Kropotkin’s *Conquest of Bread* includes the suggestion of applying the power of the “heat of the sun and the breath of the wind” to human production and his *Fields, Factories and Workshops* contains an unmistakably sustainable perspective. Environmentalism cannot be confined to Kropotkin, the natural scientist, alone. Indeed, Elisee Reclus’ groundbreaking study, *The Earth*, further demonstrates the green paradigm within which anarchist and syndicalist ideas have historically and theoretically been situated. Furthermore, given the scope of the looming ecological emergency and – potentially as concerning – peak oil, anarchism will find itself well equipped to provide the cooperative model for future generations: Kropotkin’s findings in *Mutual Aid* – that organisms have historically cooperated to survive their environments – is of particular importance. If the cooperative movement can provide an embryonic example for a sustainable alternative, where the principles of mutual aid and solidarity – rather than ruthlessness and destruction – are demonstrated, the future for humanity may not be as bleak as it currently appears.

As of now, FW Kerin is optimistic that the Earthworker Cooperative has that capacity to demonstrate the ecological and economical alternative for the future: “At stake is the conflicted heart of capitalism itself. At the moment, on life support, capitalism can continue exhaling its poison until we finally agree that it cannot provide for the basic needs of humankind, and turn off the machine.”



(Cont. from page 7) communities. He feels that in time the intervention will start to make changes and the undoing of our past can take quite some time.

The initial problem with the intervention was that it was put into place with little consultation with the Indigenous Australians it was going to affect. In fact, even Pearson who is a supporter of the intervention feels the government did not exercise their responsibility in this area, he believes "you have to engage Aboriginal people in this process" (2007). This links into the ongoing dilemma for Indigenous Australians that the same banners under the government brand them all. In a video released on the Aljazeera website from July 2011 that was to look into the progress of the intervention saw a lot of Indigenous Australians who feel a sense of humiliation when their government tells them they're not able to decide how to spend their money. This sentiment is shared by Pearson in the way that he feels that income management should only be applied to those found to be negligible in their spending. He also argues that it is the removal of self-determination through previous policies and being treated like 'children' that has led the situation to become so dire. Pearson's argument goes on to say that the intervention is a means to stabilize the situation, but one could argue that it is just continuing past trends of disempowerment.

Mal Brough who was behind the policy of this intervention came out in 2011 to declare that it is not working. Brough's comments are based on the fact that the policy has stayed the same without review or change and as a result has led to "escalating violence and dysfunction" (2011).

The intervention also affects land rights, which can become a quite complex aspect of this topic. The legislation allows for the government to easily remove Indigenous Australians from common areas and access roads, allows government control over approximately 70 townships for a minimum of 5 years and allows customary law to not be recognized in sentencing and bail proceedings. The negative affects that flow on from this includes increased incarcerations and the break down of cultural relationships between elders and communities created by the Aboriginal Courts.

In 2008 a report called 'Name Removed' was delivered to the current Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Jenny Macklin, and reveals the effects of the intervention within these communities. The Intervention Rollback Action Group who was responsible for this report sought extensive feedback through the community and has growing support from different unions. The report brought up a lot of issues starting with the topic of disempowerment and the fact that 90% of those questioned opposed the measures put in place of the intervention. The report claims that the measures put in place are not based on evidence and that the NTERI and Taskforce recommendations are not considered evidence. Another point discussed in the report is that to transfer people from the country to more populated areas on the basis that the intervention isn't viable for them puts those people in worse off situations as it has been found those living in the country are more healthy.

The areas of sexual abuse, violence, alcoholism etc have been the issues that have given the government a form of justification for their interventions. Whether this justification is warranted can be seen through whether the intervention is making progress and whether there are long term benefits. The issues faced by these communities are serious, but the intervention is not the solu-

tion and statistics are proving this. In 2010, a report came out that shows that "income management may not affect people's spending overall" (2010). Accounts of the intervention not working can also be found in an article written by Professor Jon Altman from the Australian National University who paints a bleak picture. Professor Altman reveals that housing is actually worse off due to shoddy work done on houses that will have to be demolished meaning that it "might actually result in more rather than less overcrowding" (2010). He also reveals that 4600 participants will be moving from the CDEP to the dole as part of the intervention and will see "employment/population ratio decrease by at least 10%". Professor Altman concludes his report acknowledging that these communities have issues that need addressing, but the intervention is not the right delivery.

The ALP is currently trying to put in place a new version of the NT Intervention called 'Stronger Futures'. There have been many reports that Aboriginal leaders are rejecting plans for the intervention. The founder of Central Australian Aboriginal Strong Women's Alliance, Elaine Peckham says, "indigenous people wanted their basic human rights back" (2012). Barbara Shaw who is the leader of the NT Intervention Rollback Collective claims the consultation, as part of this next stage of intervention, hasn't been enough. Stronger Futures will allow the government to cease Centrelink payments if their children are found not to be attending school. It gives licensed premises that ability to discriminate by race as to whom they sell alcohol to. Indigenous Australians found to be carrying more than 1.35Ls of alcohol will get an 18month jail term and for less than this amount it would be a 6month jail term. The policy will aim to creating new jobs including 50 new ranger positions. There are many elements to the new intervention and if it is put into place, it would be active for 10 years according to the plan.

As recent as late last year, government-funded surveys have had positive feedback from the NT Intervention. Based on a report taking a close look at these surveys shows that less than 9% of the people taking the survey were Indigenous Australians. Across various reports on the effectiveness of the intervention shows no solid evidence of a positive impact for Indigenous Australians. The Rollback the Intervention Collective (rollbacktheintervention.wordpress.com) offers alternatives to the intervention such as restoring community governance, jobs with fair wages for work decided by the community (not the CDEP), improve housing. The alternatives are discussed on their website.

Disadvantages faced by Indigenous Australians are complex, multifaceted and are linked in with themes such as racism and poverty. As a result, statewide solutions don't address the varying circumstances that these people find themselves in. The disadvantages faced by Indigenous Australians today have been created by policies that continue to lead to disempowering them. The intervention was introduced based on serious issues being faced by these communities, but it is not necessarily the right solution. If disempowerment has been the inhibitor of Indigenous Australian rights, then the intervention will simply further this problem.

[Eds note: The references and bibliography accompanying this article have been removed due to severe lack of space. For anyone interested in following up on them please email SW Moretto at francamoretto@gmail.com. Watch this space in the next issue for a great piece by FW Campbell.]

## Web Poetry Corner

### The Truth

We are crushed down to dust and are scattered,  
This leviathan we made now enslaves us  
It's swift as a panther in triumph,  
Fierce as a bear in defeat,  
Sired of scarcities parent  
Steeled by our attacks and retreat

It eats the best of our breeding,  
And spits their bones at our feet  
Clutches our worst to its breast,  
Calls their sons our rulers  
And gilds them with pleasures  
As they glut on our meat

How large is this beast?  
Wide as the world its borders,  
Stern as death is its sway  
From its ruthless throne it rules alone,  
For a thousands of years to this day  
It spread like a monsoon torrent,  
In it's wake the scum  
Pimps of the deadline, parasites of the pen  
Spin doctors of its morality,  
It's viscious pigs at arms with legs

One by one weeded us out,  
Frightened us all with glooms  
One and all dismayed us,  
Betrayed by it's manifold dreams  
Drowned us like rats at sea,  
Starved us like dogs on the plains  
It's code poisons the goodwill between us,  
And rots our hearts to its taint

Industry burst like winter upon us,  
Searing forever our sight  
We stagger blind through blizzards still,  
Our future featureless, formless, forsaken,  
Scented by wolves in their flight

Hopes gnaw the black crust of failure,  
Searching the pit of despair  
Crooking it's toe on trap triggers,  
Trying to patter a prayer  
Roaming the dark without escort,  
Raving with lips all afoam  
It's screams the crushed dreams of the 6 billion  
It then drivels feebly of reform...

We live crimped with crimes of the city,  
Sin saddled and bridled with lies  
Others in plague, famine and war  
These be tools of leviathons purpose,  
So nathless it suffers them thrive  
Crushing the weak in its gears,  
Only the cannibals thrive

Yet emancipation is always in reach,  
In an idea Monstrous, moody and powerful  
Bound by our fear of each other,  
Bound sad with longing forlorn  
See her womb over pregnant,  
With the seed of freedom unborn  
As she whispers, as a mantra,  
again and again on the winds  
they carry her call to some ears...

"I wait for revolution to win me,  
I will not be won in a day.  
I will not be won by the selfish,  
The subtle, the suave or the mild.  
But by workers whose sight is  
Rekindled by courage.  
Whose hatred and love burn like fire,  
And carry red cards to the fray."

FW Dan Smash

### Reminders of the sins of our skin

I am of the privileged class.  
I know that with my white skin i can get  
anywhere.  
I know that with my colour of skin doors open  
the world over....

Yet people of indigenous cultures and creeds  
have no such luck, when they show the colour  
of their skin, they collectively get ostracised  
and punished as sinners, devils or worse. It's  
well documented in history; the 1st fleet in  
Australia in 1788 and many more like it.  
Colonialism only supported one colour of skin,  
which isn't indigenous.

I know that because the colour of my skin,

I will be allowed to vote if I so choose too and  
be allowed to make choices that affect me  
without interference from any religious bodies.  
I have freedom of expression of my religious  
faith and I have power to do what I like and  
think what I like and even then i will be allowed  
the right to make choices that directly affect  
me and my world.

Yet people of indigenous cultures, have no  
choice; they have been forced to follow my  
classes rules. They aren't allowed to follow  
their native religions... they get told what to do,  
how to think. The privileged class has decided  
it's there god given right to do what they want  
to the indigenous tribes across the world.

The Maori's in New Zealand... the Kooris in  
Australia.. it has happened time and again.

Now its time for us of the privileged class  
to help fight for what's rights and give back  
what doesn't belong to them.

Sometimes looking back in history reminds  
us of what needs to be done now... reminds us  
of what challenges await and what wars we  
have to fight.

But the big questions are these  
Will you be an ally?

Will you support the indigenous  
communities across the world in their fight for  
the same rights as us?

The choice is yours.

### The Workers Suffer

The world suffers at the hands of the bosses  
who make money off misery and angst  
The workers suffer

At the hands of corrupt governments who do  
nothing but line their own pockets  
The workers suffer  
Because people fail to stand up and take what  
is theirs.....

Because the all powerful elite wants to keep us  
down....  
It is time to fightback...  
Because the power belongs to the workers...  
Not the 1%, But the 99%  
It is time to take back what belongs to the  
world.... Not just the elite  
Before its too late.....

SW Simsy

[poems-of-a-radical-nature.posterous.com](http://poems-of-a-radical-nature.posterous.com)  
[illegalletterdropping.posterous.com](http://illegalletterdropping.posterous.com)

### What if

What if all the problems in the world  
The fact that 20% of the world's population  
controls 85% of its wealth  
The shipwrecking of democracy on the shores  
of class society and corporatism  
The destruction of the natural environment  
People losing their minds and blaming people  
who think, look or act differently  
People treating women, workers, other  
peoples, the Earth all as objects to be exploited  
The tendency of history to repeat itself over  
and over thanks to our inability to overcome  
the fear of the unknown that gives rise to our  
moral disengagement

The tendency to assume you have all the  
answers without knowing what the question is  
The fear of freedom, fear of self, fear of change  
Just to name a few

Were all the result of and fed into our inability  
to appreciate the importance of maintaining a  
basic harmony between freedom as an  
outcome and freedom as a means

What if we learnt our lesson and began applying  
it in the present, to build the facts of the future  
by developing new economic and social  
relationships based on solidarity and mutual aid

What if we planted the seeds in our daily lives  
of a basically sane and just world, a world built  
on an economy responsive to our needs  
because it was organised on the basis of  
economic democracy and self-management

Needs not least of which being our need to  
control our own fate and our need for an  
ecosystem capable of supporting life  
What if we kept on refining the harmony  
between means and ends and in finding new  
and better ways to control our own fate, and  
never stopped - what then?

FW Ben Hogwallop



(Cont. from page 12) reinforce dependence upon elites. They offer but one initiative towards the overcoming of wage-slavery and a movement towards need-based economics and collective decision-making.

### Beyond Leftism and Ecology: Reflections on Green Syndicalist Visions

Green syndicalism highlights certain points of similarity between syndicalism and ecology. These include, but are by no means limited to: decentralisation; regionalism; direct action; autonomy; and pluralism and diversity. Syndicalists, however, can no longer disregard, as some Marxists [Blackie, 1990; Raskin and Bernow, 1991] are wont to do, the linkages between industrialism, hierarchy, nihilistic individualism and ecological destruction.

The mass production techniques of industrialism cannot be reconciled with ecological sustenance, regardless of whether bosses or sturdy proletarians control them. To be anti-capitalist does not have to imply being pro-ecology. Ending the autocratic capitalist relations of production, however, remains necessary for a radical social transformation since these autocratic relations encompass many positions of subordination. However, this is only one aspect of radical politics.

Thus, green syndicalists reject the workerist premises of 'old-style' leftists who argue that issues such as ecology are external to questions of production and only serve to distract from the essential task of organising workers, at the point of production, towards emancipation. Within green syndicalist discourses ecological concerns cannot, with any reason, be divorced from questions of production or economics. Rather than being represented as strictly separate spheres, nature, production, economics or workplace become understood as endlessly contested features in an always shifting theoretical terrain.

The workplace is but one of the sites for extension of social resistance. Given the prominent position of the workplace under capitalism, as a realm of capitalist discipline and hegemony, activists must understand the importance of applying struggles to everyday workplace situations. Workplaces are sites of solidarity, innovation, cultural diversity, and personal interactions expressed in informal networks and through multiple antagonisms. These 'steel cages' appear inescapable only because they remain isolated, practically and conceptually, from a host of important social, cultural, and political-economic dynamics operating inside and out of workplaces proper. Critical to any discussion, syndicalist unions must be seen as series of settings and situations providing choices that are constrained, but not immutably, by the broader fabric of the society into which they are woven [Guarasci and Peck, 1987: 72].

Green syndicalism calls for the replacement of profit-driven capitalist production with socially necessary production through means which are ecologically sensible [Purchase, 1994]. Production would be organised around human and ecological considerations rather than the rapacious requirements of private accumulation and expansion characterising capitalist organisation. Syndicalists suggest that if production and distribution are to be carried out in a black-green manner workers must stop producing for capitalists subject to the whims

of the market. Syndicalists are interested neither in profit nor in growth and their conception of industry has nothing to do with the consumerism of advanced capitalism. Finally, green syndicalists realise that overcoming ecological devastation depends on recognising shared responsibilities for developing cooperative and harmonious ways of living and for nurturing respect for each other and for other species as well.

In addition, the re-integration of production with consumption, organised in an egalitarian and democratic fashion – such that members of a community contribute according to ability and take according to need – may allow for a break with consumerism. People might consume only that which they've had a hand in producing; people might use free time for creative activities rather than tedious, unnecessary production of luxuries. Individual consumption might be regulated by the capacities of individual production, (for example, personal creativity), not from the hysterics of mass advertising.

Syndicalism might be freed thusly from requirements of growth or mass consumption characterising industrialism as 'social relations' [Purchase, 1994, 1997a, 1997b; Bari, 2001]. Green syndicalism, as opposed to state socialism or even revolutionary syndicalism, opposes large-scale, centralised, mass-production. Green syndicalism does not hold to a socialist optimism of the liberatory potential of industrialism. Ecological calls for a complete, immediate break with industrialism, however, contradict radical eco-philosophical emphases upon interconnectedness, mutualism and continuity. Simple calls for a return to nature reveal the lingering fundamentalisms afflicting much ecological discourse. The idea of an immediate return to small, village-centred living as espoused by some deep ecologists and anarchists is not only utopian, it ignores questions concerning the impacts which the toxic remains of industry would continue to inflict upon their surroundings. The spectre of industrialism will still – and must inevitably – haunt efforts at transformation, especially in decisions concerning the mess that industry has left behind [Purchase, 1994]. How can we disconnect society from nature given the mass encroachments of society on nature, for example, global warming, or depletion of the ozone layer? Where do you put toxic wastes? What of the abandoned factories? How will decommissioning occur? One cannot just walk away from all of that.

Without romanticising the role played by workers, green syndicalists are aware that workers may offer certain insights into these problems. In responding to this dilemma, green syndicalists [Kaufmann and Ditz, 1992; Purchase, 1994, 1997a, 1997b; Bari, 2001] have tried to ask the crucial question of where those who are currently producers might belong in the multiple tasks of transformation – both cultural as well as ecological. They have argued that radical ecology can no longer leave out producers, they will either be allies or enemies. Green syndicalism, almost alone among radical ecology, suggest that peoples' identities as producers, rather than representing fixed entities, may actually be articulated against industrialism. The processes of engaging this articulation, wherein workers understand an interest in changing rather than upholding current conditions, present the perplexing task which has as yet foiled ecology.

Dismantling industrial capital, the radical approach to industrialism, would still require the participation of industrial workers provided it is not to be carried out on an authoritarian basis. Any meaningful project of liberation implies the direct participation of industrial workers in decision-making processes and the maintenance of a basic harmony between means and ends.

Of course, the democratic character of any movement for liberation cannot be assumed; the possibility for reaction, to the exclusion of workers [Foreman, 1991; Watson, 1994], is ever-present. One sees this within ecological fundamentalism or in strengthened corporatist alliances pitting labour/capital against environmentalists, each calling for centralised and bureaucratic enforcement of regulations. In the absence of a grass-roots workers movement any manner of authoritarianism, even ones which include radical ecology [Foreman, 1991; Watson, 1994], might be envisioned.

For their part theorists of green syndicalism envision the association of workers towards the dismantling of the factory system, its work, hierarchies, regimentation [Kaufmann and Ditz, 1992; Purchase, 1994, 1997a, 1997b]. This may involve a literal destruction as factories may be dismantled; or perhaps converted towards 'soft' forms of localised production. Likewise, productive activity can be conceived in terms of restoration, including research into a region's natural history. Reconstruction might be understood in terms of food and energy provision or recovery monitoring. These are acts in which all members might be active, indeed will need to be active in some regard. These shifting priorities – towards non-industrial relations generally – express the novelty of green syndicalism as both green and as syndicalist.

For green syndicalism it is important that ecology engage with workers in raising the possibilities for resisting, challenging and even abandoning the capitalist megamachine. However, certain industrial workshops and processes may be necessary [Purchase, 1994]. (How would bikes, or windmills be produced, for example?) The failure to develop democratic workers' associations would then seem to render even the most well-considered ecology scenarios untenable. Not engaging such possibilities restricts radicalism to mere utopia building [Purchase, 1994].

Green syndicalists argue for the construction of 'place' around the contours of geographical regions, in opposition to the boundaries of nation-states which show only contempt for ecological boundaries as marked by topography, climate, species distribution or drainage. Affinity with bio-regionalist themes is recognised in green syndicalist appeals for a replacement of nation-states with decentralised federations of bioregional communities [Purchase, 1994, 1997a]. For green syndicalism such communities might constitute social relations in an articulation with local ecological requirements to the exclusion of the bureaucratic, hierarchical interference of distant corporatist bodies. [Ed's note - In the context of Australia any development of bio-regionalism would necessarily be carried out in conjunction with First Nations peoples and with proper consideration and respect for their land rights.]

Local community becomes the context of social and ecological identification. Eco-defence, then, should begin at local levels: in the

homes, workplaces, and neighbourhoods. Green syndicalist discourses urge that people identify with the ecosystems of their locality and region and work to defend those areas through industrial and agricultural practices which are developed and adapted to specific ecological characteristics. One aspect of green syndicalism thus involves ecology activists helping workers to educate themselves about regional, community-based ways of living [Bari, 1994; Purchase, 1994, 1997b]. A green syndicalist perspective encourages people to broaden and unite the individual actions, such as saving a park or cleaning up a river, in which they are already involved towards regional efforts of self-determination protecting local ecosystems [Purchase, 1994].

The point here, however, has not been (nor is it for theorists of green syndicalism generally) to draw plans for the green syndicalist future. Specific questions about the status of cities, organisation of labour, means of production, or methods of distribution cannot be answered here. They will be addressed by those involved as the outcome of active practice. Human relations with nature nevertheless pose crucial and difficult questions for class conscious workers. Those relations, under capitalism, have taken the alienated form of 'jobs' where nature and labour both become commodified. Indeed nature as 'resources' and work as 'jobs' provide the twin commodity forms which have always been necessary for the expansion of the market [Polanyi, 1944].

Capitalist values of private accumulation, endless growth regardless of the social and environmental cost and commodification remain crucial concerns for ecological politics. Questions concerning the organising of life are still pivotal questions, though what might constitute acceptable answers has changed. One might ask: 'What does intervention in nature mean for ecology?' Taking ecology seriously means confronting the dysfunctionality, authoritarianism and anti-social nature of capitalist production.

### NOTES

1. For interesting accounts of the radicalisation of workers in response to unsatisfying or degrading workplace experiences see Zimpel [1974] and Sproue [1992].
3. Montgomery [1974] suggests that workers' struggles generally belong to two types: control struggles and wage struggles. Employers spend much energy trying to prevent the convergence of the two currents. Unions have, since 1945, been preoccupied typically with wage struggles, while control struggles have been traded for wages and benefits or diverted through limited participation schemes, as exemplified in recent approaches to management, or in 'commitments to quality'. The challenge again confronting organised labour is precisely to revitalise control struggles. This challenge also faces 'new movement' activists in their attempts to engage with labour.
4. For a discussion of the debates around Fosterism see Bekken [2001]. Recently, Wobblies in Edmonton, Canada attempted to revive Fosterism within the IWW, a proposal which was overwhelmingly rejected.

Visit [ecowobbly.blogspot.com](http://ecowobbly.blogspot.com) for bibliography.



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## INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Name (or Pseudonym):

*Less than \$1500, dues are \$4 per month; Between \$1500 - \$2000, dues are \$10 per month; Greater than \$2000, dues are \$15 per month. Initiation fee is equal to one month's dues.*

Address:

City:

Initiation Fee:

Dues:

State:

PostCode:

Total Amount:

Enclosed:

Phone Number:

### DECLARATION:

E-mail:

1. I affirm that I am a worker, not an employer;
2. I agree to abide by the IWW Constitution;
3. I will study the organisations' principles and make myself acquainted with its purposes.

Occupation:

Industry:

Monthly Take-home Pay:

Signed.....



Please complete and return to:  
IWW Aust. ROC,  
PO Box 746, Rockingham, WA 6968

less militant the maximum is 48 hours, and in the US where workers are even less likely to strike there is no maximum at all.

### History

Capitalism is presented as a 'natural' system, formed a bit like mountains or land masses by forces beyond human control, that it is an economic system ultimately resulting from human nature. However it was not established by 'natural forces' but by intense and massive violence across the globe. First in the 'advanced' countries, enclosures drove self-sufficient peasants from communal land into the cities to work in factories. Any resistance was crushed. People who resisted the imposition of wage labour were subjected to vagabond laws and imprisonment, torture, deprecation or execution. In England under the reign of Henry VIII alone 72,000 people were executed for vagabondage.

Later capitalism was spread by invasion and conquest by Western imperialist powers around the globe. Whole civilisations were brutally destroyed with communities driven from their land into waged work. The only countries that avoided conquest were those—like Japan—which adopted capitalism on their own in order to compete with the other imperial powers. Everywhere capitalism developed, peasants and early workers resisted, but were eventually overcome by mass terror and violence.

Capitalism did not arise by a set of natural laws which stem from human nature: it was spread by the organised violence of the elite. The concept of private property of land and means of production might seem now like the natural state of things, however we should remember it is a man-made concept enforced by conquest. Similarly, the existence of a class of people with nothing to sell but their labour power is not something which has always been the case - common land shared by all was seized by force, and the dispossessed forced to work for a wage under the threat of starvation or even execution.

As capital expanded, it created a global working class consisting of the majority of the

world's population whom it exploits but also depends on.

### The Future

Capitalism has only existed as the dominant economic system on the planet for a little over 200 years. Compared to the half a million years of human existence it is a momentary blip, and therefore it would be naive to assume that it will last for ever.

It is entirely reliant on us, the working class, and our labour which it must exploit, and so it will only survive as long as we let it.

### CLASS & CLASS STRUGGLE: AN INTRODUCTION

The first thing to say is that there are various ways of referring to class. Often, when people talk about class, they talk in terms of cultural/sociological labels. For example, middle-class people like foreign films, working class people like football, upper-class people like top hats and so on.

Another way to talk about class, however, is based on classes' economic positions. We talk about class like this because we see it as essential for understanding how capitalist society works, and consequently how we can change it.

It is important to stress that our definition of class is not for classifying individuals or putting them in boxes, but in order to understand the forces which shape our world, why our bosses and politicians act the way they do, and how we can act to improve our conditions.

### Class and Capitalism

The economic system which dominates the world at present is called capitalism.

As mentioned earlier, capitalism is essentially a system based on the self-expansion of capital—commodities and money making more commodities and more money.

This doesn't happen by magic, but by human labour. For the work we do, we're paid for only a fraction of what we produce. The difference between the value we produce and the amount we're paid in wages is the "surplus value" we've produced. This is kept by our boss

as profit and either reinvested to make more money or used to buy swimming pools or fur coats or whatever.

In order for this to take place, a class of people must be created who don't own anything they can use to make money i.e. offices, factories, farmland or other means of production. This class must then sell their ability to work in order to purchase essential goods and services in order to survive. This class is the working class.

So at one end of the spectrum is this class, with nothing to sell but their ability to work. At the other, those who do own capital to hire workers to expand their capital. Individuals in society will fall at some point between these two poles, but what is important from a political point of view is not the positions of individuals but the social relationship between classes.

### The Working Class

The working class then, or 'proletariat' as it is sometimes called, the class who is forced to work for wages, or claim benefits if we cannot find work or are too sick or elderly to work, to survive. We sell our time and energy to a boss for their benefit.

Our work is the basis of this society. And it is the fact that this society relies on the work we do, while at the same time always squeezing us to maximise profit, that makes it vulnerable.

### Class Struggle

When we are at work, our time and activity is not our own. We have to obey the alarm clock, the time card, the managers, the deadlines and the targets.

Work takes up the majority of our lives. We may see our managers more than we see our friends and partners. Even if we enjoy parts of our job we experience it as something alien to us, over which we have very little control. This is true whether we're talking about the nuts and bolts of the actual work itself or the amount of hours, breaks, time off etc.

Work being forced on us like this compels us to resist.

Employers and bosses want to get the maximum amount of work from us, from the longest hours, for the least pay. We, on the other hand, want to be able to enjoy our lives: we don't want to be over-worked, and we want shorter hours and more pay.

This antagonism is central to capitalism. Between these two sides is a push and pull: employers cut pay, increase hours, speed up the pace of work. But we attempt to resist: either covertly and individually by taking it easy, grabbing moments to take a break and chat to colleagues, calling in sick, leaving early. Or we can resist overtly and collectively with strikes, slow-downs, occupations etc.

This is class struggle. The conflict between those of us who have to work for a wage and our employers and governments, who are the capitalist class, or 'bourgeoisie'.

By resisting the imposition of work, we say that our lives are more important than our boss's profits. This attacks the very nature of capitalism, where profit is the most important reason for doing anything, and points to the possibility of a world without classes and privately-owned means of production. We are

the working class resisting our own existence. We are the working class struggling against work and class.

### Beyond the Workplace

Class struggle does not only take place in the workplace. Class conflict reveals itself in many aspects of life.

For example, affordable housing is something that concerns all working class people. However, affordable for us means unprofitable for them. In a capitalist economy, it often makes more sense to build luxury apartment blocks, even while tens of thousands are homeless, than to build housing which we can afford to live in. So struggles to defend social housing, or occupying empty properties to live in are part of the class struggle.

Similarly, healthcare provision can be a site of class conflict. Governments or companies attempt to reduce spending on healthcare by cutting budgets and introducing charges for services to shift the burden of costs onto the working class, whereas we want the best healthcare possible for as little cost as possible.

### The 'Middle Class'

While the economic interests of capitalists are directly opposed to those of workers, a minority of the working class will be better off than others, or have some level of power over others. When talking about history and social change it can be useful to refer to this part of the proletariat as a "middle class", despite the fact that it is not a distinct economic class, in order to understand the behaviour of different groups.

Class struggle can sometimes be derailed by allowing the creation or expansion of the middle class—Margaret Thatcher encouraged home ownership by cheaply selling off social housing in the UK during the big struggles of the 1980s, knowing that workers are less likely to strike if they have a mortgage, and allowing some workers to become better off on individual levels, rather than as a collective. And in South Africa the creation of a black middle class helped derail workers' struggles when apartheid was overturned, by allowing limited social mobility and giving some black workers a stake in the system.

Bosses try to find all sorts of ways to materially and psychologically divide the working class, including by salary differentials, professional status, race and by gender.

It should be pointed out again that we use these class definitions in order to understand social forces at work, and not to label individuals or determine how individuals will act in given situations.

### Conclusion

Talking about class in a political sense is not about which accent you have but the basic conflict which defines capitalism—those of us who must work for a living vs. those who profit from the work that we do. By fighting for our own interests and needs against the dictates of capital and the market we lay the basis for a new type of society—a society without money or class, organised for the direct fulfilment of our needs.

