

GIANT INDUSTRY AND THE I. W. W.

Against the Concentrated Power
Of Modern Big Business
Put the Concentrated
Power of Workers



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Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World

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 working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

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

HOW TO ORGANIZE

ONLY in recent years has labor succeeded in making itself felt as an organized, social force. The forerunners to modern unionism, such as the Knights of Labor, have their greatest value as experiments. Not until trade unionism appeared did labor gain any concession of permanent value.

It is only logical that this should be the case. Trade unionism had its birth at a time when production depended mostly upon skilled labor. The process of manufacturing and marketing products was entirely different from what it is today. To make our point clear we will take an industry for an example.

When fifty years ago, or more, a butcher was hunting for a place to establish himself, the first thing he looked for was a market. This was necessary at a time when refrigerators, cold storage, canned, evaporated and conserved meat and food products were still unknown. He needed a place where he could dispose of his products in a very short time, or else face destruction of his stock.

Having found such a place and established his little shop he began to develop his trade. If successful he employed help. The help he looked for was full-fledged butchers, men who knew the whole trade—killing of the animals, the preparation of the meat, how to dress it and place it on the counter for sale and even dispose of it to the consumer. In fact, the employee must be familiar with everything there was to the trade. If five, ten or more men were employed, all of them were required to possess the same amount of skill with the exception of the apprentices.

Where Craft Unions Had Power

To these men it soon became evident that by uniting into a union they could dictate to their boss the terms upon which their labor power would be available for him to use. If they withdrew their labor power he was at a loss to replace them. To get scabs to fill their places he had to canvass a large territory, as the men he needed in their places had to possess the same amount of skill or else they were worthless. While he was looking for scabs his competitor took his trade. If he did not succeed quickly he was faced with total ruin. To accept green help was impossible as it took several years for men to learn the trade. Under such conditions, craft unionism really filled the requirements. As for the unskilled, they had yet many thousands of valuable homesteads to fall back upon.

Today we find the whole meat packing industry controlled by four big corporations closely knitted together into one combination. When searching for a suitable place to erect a plant they no longer look for a market; the whole world is their market. They look for a place where communications afford an easy access to, on the one hand the livestock of the country, and on the other the various markets of the world.

The process of manufacturing is entirely different. When the animals come in from the stockraising centers at the rate of several trainloads per day, they are herded into great stockyards. From there they are herded to the killing floor of the plant. Each man has his particular task to perform. A few do nothing else but place a little chain around the hind leg of the pigs and hook them on to a big wheel that hoists them upon a rail. Another man does nothing else but drive a knife into the heart of each pig. The carcasses are placed on an endless chain, constantly in motion, where perhaps a couple of hundred men have each one their particular little cut or other little job to perform. When the meat is

cut up we find the same kind of specialization. Some trim the hams, others the bacon, some sort the meat, each one performing his special part. I know of one man who stood for 15 years trimming the same three bones. He had acquired a skill and speed that were the envy of every dog in the world.

The Packing Plant—A Giant Butcher

The original skill of our old-time butcher is split up in some three or four, perhaps five hundred specialties. To each one it becomes necessary to acquire only a correspondingly small part of the trade, and become an expert in that line. And when all these experts are combined, as they are in a modern plant, we have one giant, expert butcher, assisted with all modern machinery needed. But what is of the greatest importance to us is that each individual part of this Giant Butcher can be made in a few days. Each man has to learn only a four or five-hundredth part of what the old-time, skilled butcher had to learn, and therefore the trade is learned in a correspondingly short length of time.

If one of these groups, or part of that Giant Butcher which the trade unionist chooses to call a "craft," decides to go on strike, we face a different situation. While in the times of the butcher shop the whole butcher went on strike and it was necessary to find another butcher to take his place, it is today only a small part of the butcher that makes obstruction. This part can easily be remade out of entirely green material and the Giant is ready to proceed making profit for his boss.

It is obvious that under such circumstances trade unionism ceases to be of any value to the workers, in fact, becomes detrimental to their economic interest. When trade unionism enters such a plant with the object of "organizing" the workers it does exactly the opposite.

Here we find a group of workers of different occupations, performing different work, closely united

in the interest of their boss. The stock yard laborer, meat cutter, truck driver, engineer, electrician, sausage maker, box maker, bookkeeper, cook and waiter in the lunch room, and many others, all united in the one Giant Butcher. The trade unionist in his work of "organization" proceeds to unite these groups of workers and place them more or less independently of each other. Calling each group a "trade", he forms as many unions as he possibly can distinguish groups. Each of these so-called "trades" unite, not with each other, but with similar groups in other plants, thereby making each group look at its interest without any consideration of the other workers in the same industry.

By such methods the worker fails to see his true position, that he is only a part of an industrial body and that his welfare is entirely dependent upon the conditions of the whole body. It would be as logical for a physician to tell you, if you approached him with an injured thumb, that you don't suffer, only the thumb suffers from the wound, as it is for these special groups, misnamed "crafts", to contend that they are units in themselves and need not concern themselves with the welfare of their fellow workers in the other groups.

Although we found in this particular industry that craft unionism at least filled some good function at some distant time passed, we have other industries where the inception of craft unionism has been nothing but harmful to the workers.

The Giant Sailor

In marine transportation we find that practically no organization existed up to the time of steam navigation. Yet if craft unionism at any time was applicable in that industry it should be at the time when the wind-jammer reigned supreme on the seas. At that time sailing was a trade. It required skill and long experience to be a good sailor. With the begin-

ning of steam navigation a new type of sailor was created, the "Giant Sailor," just as we saw the "Giant Butcher" appear.

Regular routes with scheduled times for departure and arrival were established. The owners of the industry proceeded to organize and co-ordinate into one unit numerous crafts needed for modern marine transport. The engineer, sailor, mate and master, fireman, wireless operator, electrician, cook and waiter, freight and passenger agent, longshoreman, etc., were all moulded together into "One Giant Sailor". And here come, for the first time in the history of the industry, the craft unionists, and proceed to break up all these parts, already united in the interest of the boss, into so many separate unions which were to fight separately for themselves. Their slogan should rightfully be, "United for our boss, divided for ourselves!"

The result, so far as the marine transport workers are concerned, is exactly what could be expected. If at any time, for instance during the war, the lot of the marine worker became a little better, the betterment is clearly traceable to other sources than their craft unions. The improvement gained lately is due entirely to their growing industrial unions and is won, not by the craft unions, but in spite of them.

In railroad transportation we find a duplicate of what has taken place in the marine transport industry. Similarly in all the industries. Wherever we look today we find the same harmful work being done by the trade unions. Apparently, as craft unions do not unite but divide the workers, it is futile to look in that direction for that form of organization which will combine our forces so that we will become victorious. Before we offer a solution we will proceed to investigate another field of labor activity.

The Political Field

At a time when production was mostly an individual affair carried on by the small shopkeeper such

as the shoemaker, tailor, cabinet maker, butcher, etc., with a view of supplying the need of the locality only, participation in local as well as in national politics might have been of some value to the workers. The prosperity of the community in which one lived, its communications, schools, water, light and sanitary systems were all questions that vitally concerned the workers of that day, much more than they do today. Through their political organization the workers and producers in general could also exercise a far greater influence upon local and nation wide politics than they can today.

Due to the fact that production was carried on with a view of supplying the local market the general prosperity of the community became vital to all engaged in any industrial pursuit. True enough that the employing class, then as today, were the most interested, but labor itself also had some interest in the general prosperity of the community. With an industry that conformed mostly to the local need labor naturally became more stationary, as the market was less fluctuating. At the rate the community prospered chances for continuous employment improved and thereby also the prosperity of the wage worker. Being stationary the workers would also materially benefit by any improvements made in the community.

The laws and ordinances in the community also concerned him in a different way than they do today. Although the petty bourgeois were the dominant element, outside powers did not make themselves felt in the same way as today. The judges and police force were not prevailed upon by big outside money powers as we find at the present time, because there were no such powers in whose interest to dictate policy to the officials. The forces that really did so were weak and easily combatted when compared with the trusts of today. To the unskilled laborer who settled down on some homestead, naturally politics played a still greater part in his life.

Corporations' Orders are our Laws

In the past we were ruled by some state and federal laws. Today we are ruled by some board of directors of some trust. Their rules and orders constitute our laws. Today the prosperity of the community in which some industrial establishment is located, is of little or no interest to the owner. He does not depend upon any local market. His market is the whole world.

In South St. Paul, Minn., a city of hardly 20,000 people, we find two very large packing plants with a producing capacity large enough to supply the whole city of New York with meat. Of what interest is the welfare of that city to Swift and Company or Armour and Company, the owners of the plants? No more than what the conditions in a logging camp are to the Weyerhausers, and not that much. A Weyerhauser must erect a camp in which his slaves can live or there will be no logs, while the slaves in the packing plants are themselves taking care of their housing problems. If conditions are unsanitary, if the workers die like flies in the autumn, it matters nothing to these plutes so long as labor is plentiful. These owners live hundreds of miles away, perhaps on some other continent, if that climate should be deemed more beneficial to their health. Their holdings are managed by hired experts. The expert might be as well disposed a man as can be found and willing to bring relief, but his report to the board of directors on this subject will be thrown into the wastebasket unless he can show that a continuance of the system will endanger the profits. What the owners are interested in is the balance sheet. If any local improvements are proposed that will tax their profit, they certainly will oppose them. Such improvements are of no personal benefit to them and are looked upon as a matter of charity rather than a just taxation.

When the board of directors in the meat trust, per-

haps a dozen in number, meet and pass a motion to cut the wages ten per cent, they decide how much reduction in the standard of living, how much amusement and comfort (if the workers in these plants ever had any) shall be sacrificed by at least 100,000 workers and their families living in every state in the Union. When the same board advances the price of their products a couple of cents per pound, or gobbles up all the eggs and poultry in the country so as to raise the price 25 or 50 per cent, they impose a tax upon every human being in every civilized country. The workers can vote at the polls all they want, protest all they please, and elect whatever representatives they see fit, these laws are final until the workers dispossess these parasites and replace them with executives of their own.

Today we find the major part of the industries firmly in the control of a few financiers. Their huge profits compel them to look towards other fields for investment. There still exists some small amount of private property in the farming industry and among the small home owners. But the process of assuming control and ownership over the homes and farms in America is in full swing. There is a field for exploitation on a more efficient plan in the hands of the trust directly, instead of only mortgaged to the banker, so it will only be a short time until even the big cities are entirely owned and controlled by a very few big corporations.

Henry Holds Detroit In Fist

We have such cities here already. Detroit, Michigan, and Akron, Ohio, are typical of this kind of corporation controlled cities. Both are almost entirely dependent upon one single industry. Detroit, with its million population, depends upon a few automobile manufacturing concerns. Should a Henry Ford find it more profitable to move his plant to another place he would cause thousands of homes to be abandoned and would scatter to all winds enough people

to compose a city of quite large proportions. And no political move whatsoever could prevent him from doing it. The same holds good in regard to the city of Akron and its rubber industry.

It might be argued that laws could be passed that prevent an owner from moving his plant or leaving his employees without any means of support. But it cannot be done. Production takes its course according to that economic law which says that commodities must be produced by that method which affords the best results with the smallest amount of labor power. That means, that if labor power can be saved by moving a plant, or by installation of new machinery, or reorganization of its productive forces, this will take place in spite of all congressional and parliamentary laws. This economic law cannot be abrogated either by any political party or industrial organization. The question before us is therefore to so arrange our activity that we act in conformity to this economic law.

To get an idea of what this centralization of management really means to the workers a few figures from the above named cities ought to be illustrative. In the month of June, 1920, we found in the city of Akron, Ohio, 95,000 workers employed in the rubber factories producing 100,000 tires per day. In the same month, 1921, the number was reduced to 50,000 workers producing 80,000 tires per day. That meant 40,000 workers thrown out of employment and a decrease in production of only 20,000 tires. In Ford's plant in Detroit we found in June, 1920, 65,000 workers employed producing an average of 4,000 cars per day while in the same month, 1921, 45,000 workers produced 4,500 cars per day. The Willis Overland Company in Toledo shows a comparatively still greater reduction in their working force with an increase in their production, and the same tendency to speed up production is manifest in every industry.

What can we do under these conditions with our

voting machinery? Can we hope to bring any relief to these discharged workers by any political move? Can we by any municipal, state or federal laws hope to bring about such changes in our industrial conditions that these thousands of workers will again be absorbed in the industries instead of constantly constituting a weapon in the hands of our employers to be used against us any time we demand a little more of what we produce? Can we really hope for any such action on the political field when all the means by which public opinion is formed and moulded, the press, pulpit and news agencies; when all the agencies and means for enforcing the laws if passed; when the very means of existence of the voters themselves are firmly in the hands of those against whom we should legislate? To all who take the trouble of analyzing our social system with a view to finding some means by which conditions can be so changed that a fuller and better life may be the lot of those who produce all the wealth of the world, it is obvious that by parliamentary action we can accomplish nothing.

Industrial Unionism Only Solution

We have shown in the above resume how the workers through their cooperative effort in behalf of their masters can pile up enormous profits for them. It stands to reason that by applying the same methods in their own behalf they will gain the same result for themselves. We must keep all these Giant Industrial Workers, the butcher, transport worker, steel worker and all the other Giants in the same fighting trim as they are kept as a producing factor for the boss. And still more; we must unite all these Giants into one solid unit; **the one big union of all the workers—The Industrial Workers of the World.** Only so long as our masters succeed in keeping us united when working for him and divided when acting in our own behalf—a Giant when producing profit for him and a multitude of Pigmies

when fighting for our own welfare—can he succeed in keeping us enslaved.

When acting as a unit we can force our masters to concede any demands we place upon them. We can, we will, and WE MUST take over the industries and operate them in our own behalf. Because the strength of the ruling class depends entirely upon us; we constitute a power in ourselves without any masters—they are nothing without us. Industrial Unionism is the only solution. And not any separate industrial unions, confining themselves to their own particular industry, but all industrial unions combined into One Big Industrial Unit for the ultimate purpose of taking over the industries, on behalf of all producers in society, and operating them according to the needs of the people instead of for the profit of the few.

Independent industrial unions are industrial unions in name only. Industry as a whole is a very complicated affair. Each and every industry is equally dependent upon each other. It is as futile for the workers in one industry to hope to emancipate themselves without the united effort of the workers in all industries as it is for one little group of workers in a factory to accomplish their liberation independently of the other workers in the factory.

The tendency of certain groups, and particularly would-be leaders, in the labor world of today to create independent industrial unions is mostly due to their fear of persecution if they align themselves with the I. W. W. They hope to evade the terrible persecution measured out to the I. W. W. by keeping themselves outside of that organization. The ideal for which they organize is oftentimes the same as ours. But by adopting another name they hope to mislead their masters as to their real object. This, however, is useless. If they insist upon obtaining what they are organized for, there is only one way by which it can be accomplished. We must dispossess our masters, take control of the industries and produce for need and not for

profit. And even in our every day struggle for some small betterments in our conditions, these can only be gained through interference with our master's profits. And every time we interfere with his profits we will face the same kind of persecution even if we call ourselves the Holy Rollers or Salvation Army.

To evade persecution there is only one way: Unite the Giants! Only through our organized strength can we protect ourselves from our masters' dungeons, from his thugs and hirelings. But so long as we stay divided or act as individual groups he has the power over us. He will use this power, must use it, to prevent us from uniting our forces which would mean an end to his regime.

For further particulars write to General Headquarters of the Industrial Workers of the World, 1001 West Madison St., Chicago, Ill.

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