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GAINS



November 10, 2025 | Jean-Carl Elliott

Critics of the IWW often point to our lack of contracts and NLRB-certified bargaining units as proof that we don't make lasting gains. But let's be clear: their definition of gains is shaped by eighty-five years of state-managed unionism. When "success" means sitting across the table from the boss and the government, the question of what kind of power workers are building gets lost.

The IWW has never existed to secure "labor peace." We exist to wage class war. That means we measure gains differently. Concessions from the boss—whether a pizza party or a pay raise—aren't the end point: They're tactics in an ongoing struggle. Bosses give up what they

have to when workers organize. But concessions fade. Contracts expire. The only lasting gains are the structures, militancy, and confidence we build in the process.

That's why our focus has to be on workers, not employers. Business unions chase contracts. We build worker committees, organizer trainings, and infrastructure that grows stronger with every fight. We turn shop-floor activists into long-term militants² who carry lessons, skills, and solidarity from workplace to workplace. We're not just bargaining over the scraps of today—we're preparing to organize production tomorrow, post-capitalism and post-revolution.

1 <https://www.iww.org/preamble/>

2 <https://industrialworker.org/level-up/>

It wasn't always like this. When I joined the IWW in 2012, the union was still finding its footing after the campaigns at Starbucks³ and Jimmy John's⁴. Much of the union's activity looked more like solidarity activism⁵ than solidarity unionism⁶. But a decade later, we've got organizing happening across industries and across continents⁷, under the IWW banner. That shift is a gain. It shows that we've grown into a union that not only trains workers to fight the boss, but also trains them to build the world we want in the shell of the old.

This doesn't mean we don't have debates. We do—and we should. But let's keep framing in mind. The question isn't whether workers are “doing it wrong.” It's about what kind of unionism we're building. Is it militant liberalism⁸, or revolutionary unionism?⁹ Does it build worker power that can one day overthrow capitalism, or does it just help manage it?¹⁰

Critics are right about one thing: the IWW doesn't make gains the way business unions do. We make them differently. We make them by prefiguring the society we want—through democratic decision-making¹¹, mutual aid¹², and direct action. We make them by developing militants, not managers. We make them by building infrastructure that outlasts any single campaign.

3 <https://www.restaurantworkernews.org/newsletter/thankthewobblies>

4 <https://archive.iww.org/category/campaigns/current-campaigns/food-retail-workers-organizing/jimmy-johns/>

5 <https://libcom.org/article/what-kind-solidarity-forever>

6 <https://organizing.work/2018/09/boom-without-bust-solidarity-unionism-for-the-long-term/>

7 <https://www.onebigunion.ie/blog>

8 <https://industrialworker.org/contracts-are-not-class-struggle/>

9 <https://industrialworker.org/direct-action-in-the-motor-city-restaurant-workers-fight-back/>

10 <https://industrialworker.org/no-nlr-no-problem/>

11 <https://industrialworker.org/losing-the-beer-belly/>

12 <https://organizing.work/2018/08/on-ly-one-democratic-funding/>

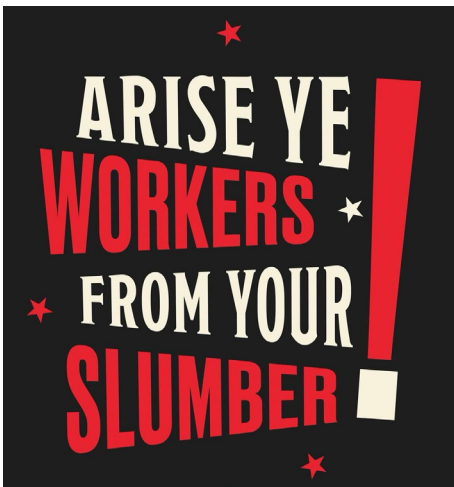
Our critics count gains in contracts. We count them in militants developed, workers organized, and power built. By that measure, our gains are real, growing, and revolutionary.

Take the campaign at Bobcat Bonnie's¹³. The restaurant shut down shortly after workers began presenting demands to management, but the story didn't end there—and neither did the gains. Through marches on the boss and coordinated pickets, workers forced management to concede severance pay, a win rarely seen in the service industry. That alone would mark a successful fight. But the deeper victory was in what came next.

During the campaign, workers attended organizer trainings and got plugged into broader IWW infrastructure. Many are still organizing today in new shops, carrying with them the skills, confidence, and relationships forged in struggle. They aren't just past campaign veterans—they're current and future organizers, building the foundation for industry-wide power. Some had been Wobblies even before the campaign, and others became them in the thick of the fight. Now, they're part of a growing network of militants working toward long-term, revolutionary change.

This is how we win—not always in headlines or contracts, but in organizers made and infrastructure built. Each campaign is a school for struggle. Each shop floor battle lays another brick in the road to a new world. That's the kind of unionism the IWW exists to build—and the kind that capitalism can't survive.

13 <https://industrialworker.org/field-notes-bobcats-united-iww-campaign/>



REBUILDING THE IWW

November 10, 2025 | x423752

"Today is not June 27th, 1905 [the founding date of the IWW]. The world has moved forward, of course, but for many people in the working class we have moved backward. Our class is less organized. If anything, the present is as much or more like the 1880s than 1905.

It's not 1905. Our present tasks are not much like the tasks of the people who founded the IWW. Our present tasks are more like the people who worked to form the initial unions who later merged to form the Western Federation of Miners (WFM). June 27th, 1905 is a long term goal."

- Weakening the Dam, Twin Cities IWW, 2011

Weakening the Dam¹⁴ is one of my favorite pamphlets produced by the IWW (if you haven't read it yet, I highly recommend it). Its sober and realistic perspective on the position of the modern-day working class is invaluable to our mission as a revolutionary union. We have to be honest with ourselves if we want to achieve our goals.

When we talk about workplace organizing, we often refer to the "organizing pyramid" which places "understanding the workplace" at the bottom because understanding the workplace

is the most fundamental step of any organizing campaign. The same is true of the task at hand, namely rebuilding an IWW that has the power to transform society. We must first begin by understanding the current position of our class and also the relationship of the IWW to the broader working class. This is one question that I think *Weakening the Dam* fails to discuss.

CONNECTING WITH OTHER ORGANIZERS

The reality today is that the IWW is largely viewed as irrelevant and/or a "thing of the past" in a lot of communities across the country. This is what I hear from folks in communities all across the United States. For example, I was on a UFCW picket line the other day talking with some staff organizers from all across the country. I learned about them, their stories, and how they came to become staff organizers with the UFCW. Many of them were young, rank-and-file worker-organizers in the cannabis industry. Some were DSA members as well and involved with their Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee (EWOC) program.

They talked about how much they love the UFCW's **industrial** cannabis organizing committee, and how cool it was that the UFCW brought them on to organize other cannabis stores across the country, just like how they organized their own workplaces. Sound familiar?



I also asked them how the IWW is perceived back in their various hometowns and many of them reported to me that their local branches are very insular and the broader organizing community doesn't really know who they are

14 https://archive.iww.org/history/library/branches/TwinCitiesGMB/weakening_the_dam/

or what they do. It's almost like they don't exist.

This is just one example, but it's representative of many conversations I've had with non-wobbly organizers in the past couple years at Labor Notes 2024 in Chicago, at Movement School in Minnesota, at other picket lines, at other places and events I won't mention here.

This is my point: we have to pretend like the IWW doesn't exist. We need to do better integrating ourselves into the organizing ecosystem that we exist within if we want to grow and become relevant as an organization. We have to become visible and relevant.

Young labor radicals are being eaten up and burnt out by electorally focused groups like DSA and reformist business unions like UFCW, and if they don't know about the IWW or if they don't believe we're doing effective organizing, then this will continue to be the case.

I've spoken with wobblies in other branches who have admitted losing many amazing organizers to groups like DSA.

The Ypsilanti IWW was in a similar position a few years back. No one knew we existed, what we had to offer, or what we believed in. We understood the position that we were in and were intentional about changing it. I'll offer a short list of things that we have done:

- Volunteering time, money, and labor to the free local monthly community brunch every month.
- Tabling at local music events, festivals, and grassroots political projects like the monthly Pull Over Prevention in our area.
- Collaborating with other radical labor organizers in the area who may not be in the IWW yet. For instance, we recently put on an Organizer Retreat with the local grad workers' union in the area and introduced the ideas of solidarity unionism and industrial unionism to a room full of 30 or so people, many of whom weren't wobblies at the time. Some of them joined right then and there at the retreat! Others signed up with the interest form at the event and

now we have a way to contact them and follow up with them. Many grad workers signed up through the planning process of the Organizer Retreat. Contrast this with OT101 which is mostly for IWW-members. How will people learn about the IWW and our tactics if we don't preach the wobbly gospel more broadly and make it more accessible? OT101 is irreplaceable, but we have to think about how we spread our ideas more widely.



LEARN THE BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS OF ORGANIZING



- Show up to the shit that's going on in the local organizing scene! Talk to people! Get to know them! Don't go to events with recruiting as the goal. Just show up and get to know people! Is there Palestine organizing going on? Student organizing? Abolition organizing? Harm reduction organizing? Homelessness solidarity organizing? Mutual aid organizing? Immigration defense organizing? Non-wobbly picket lines? **Show up, support, build relationships.**
- Putting on regular, community discussions and other community events that are free and open to the public (with food provided...feed people!)



- Giving away Ypsi IWW merch for free at all of our public events
- The Ypsi IWW's Bad Boss Hotline (a public campaign to let people know that they can reach out to the IWW if they have problems at work), throwing up stickers across town with the hotline's phone number, getting contact cards our members can leave at workplaces across the city
- Frequent wheatpasting (wheatpasting is the act of adhering propaganda to walls, posts, and construction barriers using a simple paste most often made from flour and water) campaigns with IWW agitprop
- **Focusing on Internal Organizing:** our branch had a lot of would-be organizers who just weren't sure how to plug in! Activating our current membership boosted our capacity to do more.

Not only are we putting ourselves out there, and working with the local community that we exist within, but we also established a solid onboarding process (which occurs 3 times a year) to orient the folks that sign up at these events to our union. We built the infrastructure to be able to handle an increase in membership that would inevitably result from putting our-

selves out there. Because, just like those young UFCW staff organizers, the idea of solidarity unionism and industrial unionism is exciting to people! It makes sense! We just have to meet people where they're at. And when they join us, we have to make them feel welcome by plugging them into our organizing.

RESISTING ISOLATIONISM

The phrase in that last paragraph is “plugging them into our *organizing*...” As I said earlier, there is an unfortunate tendency of IWW branches being completely *alienated* or separate from the other organizing going on locally. I wonder if this is because a lot of branches just aren't doing a lot of organizing. I've also spoken with former wobs who described their experience with the IWW as endless meetings: lots of talk, but no action. They kept showing up, but eventually left, because they didn't feel like their local branches were up to anything that was significant or worth their time. We shouldn't write these people or these experiences off!

As I write this article, I am reminded of an outstanding critique of the IWW written in 2017, *A Gigantic Network of Narrow Streams*¹⁵,

15 <https://libcom.org/article/gigantic-net->



which is just as relevant, if not more:

“The task is not to build ‘the union,’ to sign people up to the formal IWW, to reform it through superfluous bureaucracy, and to attempt mass high-profile campaigns on the job, but engage in subterranean guerrilla warfare at work and in our communities to the extent that once mass struggle materializes we can more effectively fuse with that energy rather than be completely bypassed, or worse, marginalized by establishment forces...”

Breaking out of our isolationism and preparing for future mass struggles are the most critical parts of how we can move past the current malaise and formalism pervading us. But rather than the passive policy of simply ignoring the formal IWW (although that would be a welcomed change), we should begin on the terms of strengthening the real IWW toward the end of new associations and new forms of organization in the long view.”

If mass struggle were to materialize in the United States tomorrow, without a doubt, the IWW broadly speaking would be bypassed or marginalized by other forces. We cannot afford to fetishize either the formal IWW or the historical IWW. Both are dead.

We must be able to move like water, we must be flexible and adaptable to our current conditions. We need to liberate ourselves from the

work-narrow-streams-ditching-formal-iww-and-building-real-tyler-zee

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formal IWW because it is one of the biggest obstacles holding us back from being a “feared name in the United States” once again. Largely speaking, to refer to the organizing pyramid once again, the IWW is operating as an upside down pyramid. We’re trying to practice democracy (or bureaucracy) and take direct action without understanding our relationship to the broader working class and without having real, genuine relationships with other organizers doing amazing work in our communities. Again, Tyler Zee says it better than I can:

“The formal IWW, like the rest of the Left, presently has no roots at all in the class, but it imagines that the dues it collects, the branches it charters, and the resolutions it passes will have some kind of effect on the vast layers of the class not currently within its ranks. It has attempted to recreate a form in a vacuum, one that was historically born from struggle and should have changed with the new political

reality following the defeat of those struggles. But in the formal IWW, form is elevated above content, structure above struggle, because the assumption is that such form produces struggle. In fact, the opposite is the case: struggle is and has always been the determinant of the forms of organization.”



To conclude, we need to humble ourselves. Our wobbly ancestors gave us a bad ass history to look back on and celebrate. But, that IWW doesn't exist anymore; we have to build it from scratch. Let's put ourselves, our ideas, and our tactics out there for all to see and learn from, let's re-create a modern-day wobbly "soapbox," let's show up to other groups' events and show up for other struggles, let's build relationships with local organizers (wobbly or not), let's meet people where they're at... wherever and whenever workers are organizing, the IWW should be there!

Has your branch been doing similar work? Reach out to ypsilanti@iww.org. We would love to chat!

Let's rebuild the IWW!



WORKING CLASS QUESTIONS

November 10, 2025

Andrew Wehrheim

In the early twentieth century industrial workers in the Bayview neighborhood of Milwaukee would congregate at a local saloon, now known as the Cactus Club¹⁶, to read radical literature, sing songs and play instruments, and host the occasional speaker as members of an anarchist book club. These workers were of the same ilk and residents of the same neighborhood as those who had organized and fought (including the death of seven marchers at the hands of the State Militia) for the eight-hour workday in 1886. Despite ten-hour days of strenuous labor six days a week these workers spent their evenings and their one day off spending time together in leisure and solidarity.¹⁷ If any group would have been justified in refusing these gatherings in order to rest and relax in their homes in what little

¹⁶ <https://www.cactusclubmilwaukee.com/history/>

¹⁷ <https://onmilwaukee.com/articles/urban-spelunking-bay-view-cactus-club>

free time they possessed—this was the one. Instead, these people saw their gatherings as an oasis of refreshment as they built community and organized.

Now consider the modern working class. Our workdays tend to be shorter, our labor not as physically strenuous, and our leisure time more abundant than our peers from the early twentieth century. And yet our commitment to building community and organizing for a better world looks nothing like that of our fellow workers from days gone by. We have television shows to catch up on and the constant temptation of social media. We have 24/7 access to email which reattaches us to work even when we are off the clock. In addition, we have pop psychology which reminds us that “it’s ok to say no” to social engagements and that “protecting our peace” is the most important thing we can do. And while this can serve as a healthy reminder for those who push themselves too much it can also be an excuse for those who don’t want to grow and refuse to challenge their own comfort zones.

In my opinion, guilt and shame are futile motivators that fail to light the necessary fire that creates a sustainable and vibrant community and working-class organization. So, I am not seeking to appeal to either. But I am intrigued and perplexed by the motivation of our working-class siblings from the early twentieth century who, while no doubt being tired and sore, put their gathering together above just about any other activity at their disposal while today we feel too tired and emotionally drained to gather at all. I can already sense the defenses of many of my working-class peers coming to the fore. After all, we live in late-stage capitalism. We live under a president who is sending out the National Guard and Federal troops onto American soil. We live in an age of increasing income inequality and the resurgence of white supremacy and racism.

In July of 1894 Grover Cleveland sent Federal troops from Fort Sheridan, twenty some miles to the north, to the city of Chicago to oppose the Pullman strike and boycott. Workers in that city and all over the country, despite a yearlong depression and largescale wage reductions and unemployment, went on strike

in solidarity with their fellow workers at the Pullman manufacturing plant who had gone out on strike in May. This strike was led by the indefatigable Eugene Debs and was carried out by members of the American Railway Union who found time, long workdays notwithstanding, to organize and sustain hundreds of locals within the first year of the Union's existence. This was the same Eugene Debs who endured long periods of travel and multitudinous deprivations to organize his fellow workers but made it a point to get home for Sundays in order to spend the day reading poetry, singing songs, and recreating with his family and friends.

There was something different back then that we are missing today. Dare we say that we have it worse than they did? Or perhaps they had it so much worse than us that utter desperation became the spark that lit the fire of practical solidarity. Maybe once our desperation reaches the same level we will be moved out of our comfort zones. However, I have a feeling that desperation, at least on its own, isn't much more effective than guilt and shame.

Perhaps those early twentieth century radicals had a compelling positive vision of what was possible if only they organized and built community. Or maybe they truly felt the reality of the new world they were seeking to create in their fellowship. Perhaps their lack of entertainment options made social gathering more appealing and exciting. In a day when social justice warriors abound with quick and easy answers it is not my intention to give one at all. My goal is simply to share the questions that have been on my mind. What was so different back then? What motivated them to organize with such energy and passion? Is it possible to find comparable motivation today? If so, how? If we gathered, sang songs, and read poetry and radical literature to one another would we soon discover some answers? Please consider these questions with me.

In regard to the labor movement of the current moment we see signs of resurgence as well as a cultural shift in public attitudes toward unions and organizing. Just a few years ago UPS drivers, under the Teamsters' banner, won an historic contract after an intense battle with

management. And just last year Volkswagen workers in Chattanooga, Tennessee voted to unionize under the UAW banner. Furthermore, a July, 2024 report by the Economic Policy Institute indicated growing support for unions but also revealed a level of "uncertainty" about what organizing entails. This support and "curiosity" are especially strong among the younger generations who are still in the early stage of their working lives or have freshly entered the workforce¹⁸. But how do we, as the labor movement, channel this interest and support into tangible organizing efforts that succeed that stand the test of time?

Evidence of union victories and growing support for union organizing are hopeful signs. But as my Anthropology Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Dr. Mark Freeland points out, "hope is not a good methodology." We need more than hope. We need action. Nevertheless, hope can propel us to take concrete action and sustain us as we do the hard work of organizing like a spark that lights a fire and like fuel which sustains it. There is an epidemic of hopelessness and a deep sense of the heaviness of late stage capitalism which blankets the collective shoulders of the working class—especially the younger generations. I have felt this many times and many times I have buckled under the weight. So, while hope alone is not enough, action without hope and the fire of solidarity is hollow and destined to fail.

But where do we find hope in a cold world of division, exploitation, and alienation? We don't find it from our employers or from the major political parties. We don't find it in the coverage of mainstream media or the dominant narratives of empire. But we do find it with one another if we dare to try and allow ourselves to be vulnerable with one another. This takes trust. This takes a genuine belief in solidarity. This means taking chances. Yes, we must have boundaries. Yes, we should maintain self-care. But we also must wade back into the waters of collective gathering and practical lived-out solidarity. Because it is here that we discover far more than coping tools. We dis-

18 <https://www.epi.org/publication/rise-of-the-union-curious/>

cover the motivation and tools for organizing toward collective liberation. Together we can chart the path forward as we learn from one another and lean on one another.

I recently visited the Eugene Debs museum in Terre Haute, Indiana and reread Ray Ginger's romantic biography of Debs entitled *The Bending Cross*. And in that museum and in that book I rediscovered hope and rekindled a fire that had grown cold and was smouldering in the ashes of apathy and hopelessness. A comrade from a century ago, now beyond the veil, was able to stir something in me again. Imagine what we can do together as we gather, as we share our longing for a new world, and as we take collective action to make that new world a reality here and now. The fire that burned in Eugene Debs and in the anarchists who gathered at the Cactus Club in Milwaukee has not left the earth. You have a flame and I have a flame and when we gather together our mingled flames have the potential to become a mighty blaze that burns away the fetters of alienation, exploitation, hierarchy, and all of the abuses and failures of capitalism. Hope is not the end. But it very well may be the only suitable beginning.

PHILADELPHIA IWW UNVEILS HISTORICAL MARKER

October 10, 2025

Philadelphia IWW Membership Branch

PHILADELPHIA, PA—On Saturday June 21, 2025 the Philadelphia Historical and Museum Commission unveiled its newest historical marker to honor the legacy of the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) Local 8 and labor organizer Ben Fletcher. A crowd of Wobblies and supporters gathered at Spruce Street Harbor Park on the Delaware River to celebrate their legacy of radical, militant labor organizing.

Statement from the Philadelphia I.W.W. General Membership Branch:

Ben Fletcher was a Black man in Philadelphia in the early 1900s who had less than a high school education. He could not join a mainstream business union and could not effectively vote, so it was very nearly illegal for him to do anything besides keep his head down and work. He knew he was not welcome in electoral politics so instead, he fought for a better world through organizing democracy on the shop floor.

He not only believed in a better future, but actively fought for it. He dreamed and fought for a Philadelphia where workers labor is recognized as the lifeblood of the city, a city free from the strangling grasp of the bosses and politicians. He achieved a glimpse of that with the Marine Transport Workers union, but was thrown in jail for showing the working class how close this dream was to reality.

Ben Fletcher knew what a lot of Philadelphians have forgotten today. He braved the lynching noose, the gun, the baton, and jail cell, to show us that when workers are united, we do not lose. He united workers across the race lines that the bosses use to divide us, and as a result, he built the most effective multi-racial and multi-ethnic, and most radical union in the US.

We must remember Ben Fletcher because he is a hero the Philadelphian working class created and his memory is still a threat to power, oppression, racism,



and greed. As politicians and the owning class continue to ignore our needs and attack our right to organize, it's important to understand the origins of racial segregation and systemic racism now as part of the system that is still with us and that we must actively combat.

As an international, multi-racial, and gender inclusive union that has been around for over a hundred years, our struggle continues today. We organize workplaces to improve our material conditions and help others trying to build democracy in their workplaces too.

Our struggle also extends beyond the workplace. We are united with the liberation of immigrants who are being targeted by ICE, we are united with abolitionists and the Stop Cop City movement. We are united with Palestinians fighting for their right for self determination. And we are united with the global struggles of all people seeking to free themselves from the clutches of imperialism.

Let this marker stand as a commemoration to Fellow Workers, both past and present, and a reaffirmation of our need to organize as a working class to abolish the wage system. We reject electoral politics and vote begging as a means of improving our material conditions and instead, we recognize that the solution to our suffering lies with each other. We welcome all who want to organize and strengthen the labor movement, so we can grip industries through militant working class solidarity and win demands.

The event kicked off at noon with some good old union tunes with the attendees singing along in their little red songbooks. It was a sweltering afternoon, but the crowd was in high spirits. Passersby gave appreciative smiles to the performers as we passed out literature. Matt from DSA's Racial Justice Committee spoke about the importance of preserving working class memory, and Fellow

Workers from the Philly branch spoke on the marker's significance to themselves, the chapter, Philadelphia, and the times in which we find ourselves today. Finally, we heard from Comrade Musa Bey - chair of the Philadelphia Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression. No politicians were invited to speak - the marker belongs to the working people of the city. We wanted to show the city what we can

accomplish without the support of people in supposed positions of power. This marker is a reminder that these are our streets and we will not forget the legacy of working class power that Philadelphia created.

The Philadelphia I.W.W. Branch members spoke on how we actively engage in class struggle through organizing workplaces and shift the power dynamics in favor of everyday workers. FW Ben Fletcher and Local 8 showed us what is possible,

and we must continue this struggle until we are organized as a class to take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

“It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.”

FW Todd, our Branch Secretary, analogized our current moment to that of Local 8: “As I think about the days Ben Fletcher organized, they seem an awful lot like our own. In many ways, they were worse. Liberals will tell you what we’re going through now is unprecedented in U.S. history, but as I look back on U.S. history I don’t know what the hell they’re talking about! Oppression of black and brown people, using deportation as a fear tactic, and suppressing dissent are all as American as apple pie! So comrades and Fellow Workers, while liberals run around confused and scared, let’s take



after FW Ben and diligently keep organizing. We've seen this movie before, and we'll likely see it again, but if you're truly committed to this cause, then you'll keep fighting because you know that this cause is right. You'll keep fighting because you know that when we fight, we win! So let's rally around the red banner and stand together in solidarity!"

Comrade Musa Bey closed us out with a strong message to keep the Black Radical Tradition alive in labor organizing. "Ben Fletcher. A name they tried to erase — but one that still echoes through every labor struggle, every prison cell, and every Black radical's heart."

"As a young man, Fletcher worked on the docks — where the labor was brutal, the wages were low, and Black workers were treated as disposable. But unlike many, Fletcher didn't just keep his head down. He started asking questions. Studying. Reading. Listening. And eventually, organizing. He joined the Industrial Workers of the World — the IWW — also known as the "Wobblies." Now let's be clear: this wasn't just any union. This was a revolutionary, internationalist, anti-capitalist labor movement. The IWW didn't just want better hours — they wanted to end wage slavery altogether. They believed, like we believe, that the working class has no borders, no color lines, and no obligation to obey their oppressors.

But Ben Fletcher did something even more radical. In 1913, he helped organize Local 8 of the IWW, right here on the Philadelphia waterfront. It was one of the first multiracial labor unions in U.S. history — Black, Irish, Caribbean, Eastern European workers all organizing together under Black leadership. Under his leadership. At a time when white unions excluded Black workers, Fletcher united them. When the bosses tried to divide by race, he united by class. Local 8 didn't just hold meetings — they shut

the port down. They didn't just make demands — they enforced them. They won control of hiring halls, created democratic workplaces, and refused to allow scabs to break their strikes.

That was Black power. That was revolutionary unionism. That was Ben Fletcher.

Ben Fletcher is the Black Radical Tradition. He belongs to that long line — from David Walker to Ida B. Wells, from the Garveyites to the Panthers, from MOVE to the youth organizing today. He knew what we know: that racism and capitalism are not separate systems — they're married. That labor rights without Black liberation is just white supremacy in overalls. That freedom can't be negotiated — it must be taken.



And just like in Fletcher's time, the system still represses those who dare to fight back. We are still losing lives to police terror — Robert Jones, Aaron Rainey, Walter Wallace, Eddie Irizarry — say their names.

We are still watching political prisoners like Mumia Abu-Jamal rot behind bars while killers walk free. We are still being told to be patient while they bomb Black and Brown nations — from West Philly to Rafah.

But Fletcher teaches us that solidarity is our weapon, and courage is our tradition. He reminds us that the people have the power to shut the system down. That multiracial, working-class unity isn't a dream — it's a strategy. That you don't need a PhD to lead a movement — you need discipline, principle, and love for your people.

So what do we do with Ben Fletcher's legacy?

We don't just honor it — we use it.

We organize our workplaces.

We study our history.

We fight political repression — at home and abroad.

We build organizations rooted in radical love and revolutionary discipline.

We refuse to separate the labor struggle from the Black struggle, from the anti-police struggle, from the anti-colonial struggle.

And we remember:

Black life is resistance.

To be Black, alive, and fighting — that alone is an act of defiance.

So say it with me:

Ben Fletcher lives.

In our strikes. In our protests. In our campaigns.

In every time we say NO to repression and YES to liberation.”

Not only was the city overdue to honor this labor hero and movement, but the ceremony itself was the culmination of years of effort. Our branch has been working with the local DSA chapter on this project for years. We unveiled a mural of Fletcher and Local 8 last May just down the boardwalk from where the historical marker now stands.

Read more here.¹⁹



¹⁹ <https://lawcha.org/2025/06/19/ben-fletcher-local-8-mural-marker/>

WORKING CLASS ★ ORGANIZE ★
POWER
LIES IN
ORGANIZATION ★ EDUCATE ★ AGITATE ★



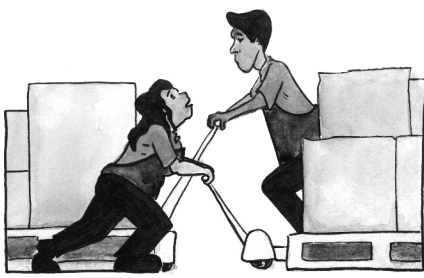
JOIN THE  **O.B.U.**
ONE BIG UNION

PACEY PRATT

THE SABO CAT



"THE 'G' WORD"





* PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE HAD THIS CONVERSATION



1909 IWW Band Postcard. From the IWW Materials Preservation Project.

FOR THE LITTLE RED SONGBOOK

September 4, 2025

Little Red Songbook Committee

Greetings Fellow Workers, the Little Red Songbook (LRS) Committee has been working for two years on the new 39th Edition of the songs of the IWW. The Literature Committee sent requests to the GOB, IW, Wob Forum, and the Seattle Worker seeking committee participants, submissions, and ideas. A survey for song suggestions was created and widely distributed. With input from many Wobs, we reviewed over 150 songs for their potential publication in our new edition of the songbook.

The Songbook has been a part of the IWW since its first publication 1909. Published in Spokane, Washington during the 1909 Free Speech Fight under the title, *Songs of Workers, on the Road, in the Jungles, and in the Shops*.

The songbook is a foundational piece of our Union. The songbook is the most widely distributed piece of IWW literature to the general public, and might be the best-selling item in our store inventory.

Members of the Committee judged songs based on their pertinence to today, musicality, and content. We submit the following list of songs for publication. We ask for your comments and opinions.

Our goal for the next year is to finalize the song list and to start the process of laying out and creating the new edition complete with cords, lyrics, notes, and art. We are hoping to create a rough draft by September 2026.

Contact, comment, and join the LRS Committee by sending a note to: lrs-39@googlegroups.com

For the OBU.

SONG LIST

1. A la Huelga – Chico Sánchez Ferlosio
2. All Used Up
3. All You Fascists Are Bound to Lose – Woody Guthrie
4. Banks of Marble
5. Bread and Roses / Du Pain et des Roses
6. Dump the Bosses Off Your Back
7. El Derecho de Vivir en Paz (2019 version) – Victor Jara
8. El Pueblo Unido Jamás Será Vencido –

- anonymous
9. En la Plaza de Mi Pueblo – anonymous
 10. God Bless You Very Wealthy Men
 11. Hallelujah, I'm a Bum
 12. Hold the Fort / Recordad!!
 13. Huelga En General
 14. I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night – Alfred Hayes & Earl Robinson
 15. If They Come For You – Ed Peckford
 16. Joe Hill's Last Will
 17. May Day
 18. Minimum Wage Strike
 19. Never Cross a Picket Line – Billy Bragg
 20. Niños Campesinos
 21. Paper Heart -Si Kahn
 22. Rich People – Carsie Blanton
 23. Roll the Union On – John Handcox
 24. Solidarity Forever / Solidaridad pa' siempre / Solidarité mes frères sœurs
 25. Stung Right
 26. That Sabo-Tabby Kitten
 27. The Chemical Worker's Song – Process Man
 28. The Internationale
 29. The Little Flame – Carsie Blanton
 30. The Little Red Songbook – Richard Brazier
 31. The Popular Wobbly
 32. The Preacher and the Slave / Pastel Celestial
 33. The Rebel Girl – Joe Hill
 34. The Right to be Lazy
 35. There is Power in a Union
 36. There is Power in a Union (Pride Version) – Billy Bragg
 37. Tierra y Libertad
 38. Union Maid
 39. We Have Fed You All for a Thousand Years
 40. What Shall We Do with the Starbucks Bosses?

41. Where the Fraser River Flows – Utah Phil- lips
42. Which Side Are You On?
43. Wobbly Doxology
44. Workers Song – Dick Gaughan
45. Working Folk Unite
46. Ya Ain't Done Nothing if ya Ain't Been Called a Red – Faith Petric

This story was published in Seattle Worker in the 2025 September/October edition.



WRITE FOR THE INDUSTRIAL WORKER

We are looking for submissions about organizing stories and lessons, debates on Wobbly topics, reporting on labor news from a Wobbly perspective, historical pieces on Wobbly- or Wobbly-adjacent history, obituaries for Fellow Workers, labor cartoons, and reviews of labor media!
If you have an idea that isn't listed, please contact me.

- FW Hannah, IW Editor
BLOG@IWW.ORG

CONTACT

Contact the IWW today if you want to start organizing at your job.
IWW.ORG/ORGANIZE

If you are a member in good standing and wish to take the Organizer Training 101, please email the Organizer Training Committee at **OTC@IWW.ORG**
If you would like to request a group OT101 with your GMB, job branch, or coworkers, fill out this form: **tinyurl.com/OTrequest**