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## **FACETS OF MAYDAY**

May 1, 2026 | Fellow Worker DC

**M**ay Day has layers of meaning – some celebratory, others tragic – shaped across centuries. From its origins as a festival of spring and renewal, to its modern incarnation as International Workers' Day, May Day reflects the aspirations and struggles of generations. It is a celebration of life beyond labor: time for ourselves, for our friends and families, for leisure, for imagination.

It is both a remembrance and a call to action.

In the heroic period of the classical workers' movement, May Day became a rallying cry to reduce working hours and to promote international working class consciousness. Today, it still affirms the dignity of those whose lives are defined by toil. It's a promise to show solidarity with other proletarians across the world. And precisely because

it celebrates these virtues, it has long been contested. Governments and reactionaries have repeatedly sought to suppress or redefine the holiday, antagonistic to its social and political implications.

And still, May Day endures.

Today, it remains the international working class holiday – while also evolving to encompass broader struggles for justice. To understand its relevance now, it is worth revisiting the history from which it emerged.

The modern history of May Day goes back 140 years, although its roots trace back further into the past.

In the words of Lucy Parsons<sup>1</sup>:

*"May 1st has marked a time in the long procession of the centuries. The beautiful month of May, when all nature emerges from her long, dreary, winter's sleep. Beautiful month of springtime and flowers. Man, too, revives his hopes and renews his resolves, for he, also, feels the flood-tide of nature in his own being and responds as best he can to her charming voice.*

*What more appropriate time could the workers choose to renew their efforts to inaugurate a better day, a better life for themselves?"*

In the nineteenth century, as industrialization reshaped the largest economies, working conditions dete-

riorated for millions. Former peasants and rural laborers were displaced and forced into factories and cities, where they endured long hours and dangerous environments, and earned meager pay. The rapid growth of industrial production enriched capitalists while leaving workers struggling to survive. The favorable labor market for capital, along with technological advancements, meant that profit rates increased substantially.

Central to this system was the extension of the working day. Time itself became a key site of class conflict. Internationally, workers and their friends created a movement to fight for an eight-hour working day.

At its Geneva convention in 1866, the International Workingmen's Association (AKA the "First International") proclaimed that "The legal limitation of the working day is a preliminary condition without which all further attempts at improvements and emancipation of the working class must prove abortive."<sup>2</sup> It proposed "eight hours as the legal limit of the working day." The first volume of Karl Marx's *Capital* was published the next year, 1867. Chapter 10, entitled "The Working Day," has detailed descriptions and insights into what working life was like during the industrial revolution, and how capital tried to maximize working time.

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1 Parsons, Lucy. "Stray Thoughts on May Day." 1 June 1912. <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/lucy-e-parsons-stray-thoughts-on-may-day>

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2 The International Workingmen's Association, 1866, "Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General Council," accessed April 27, 2026

While many people were overworked, others were unemployed or underemployed, unable to secure wages at all. Revolutionary socialists knew that an exhausted, run down, and starving working class would not have the wherewithal to organize itself and mount a challenge capital.

In the US, the Federation of Organized Labor and Trade Unions announced that, starting May 1, 1886, "...eight hours shall constitute a legal day's labor..."<sup>3</sup> To enforce this proclamation, the eight-hour-day movement orchestrated a massive work stoppage starting on May 1, 1886 in Chicago.

On that day, Albert Parsons, who was then head of the Chicago Knights of Labor, led what has come to be known as the first May Day. There were around 80,000 people in attendance. Over the next few days, approximately 70,000 workers in Chicago went on strike in a city of 1.2 million. Around 350,000 went on strike nationwide.

The strikers included the workers at McCormick Reaper Works. In the 1860s in the US, Cyrus McCormack's reaper became a symbol of mechanization in agriculture in the fields, as well as mechanization of labor in the factories. By the 1880s, his company produced tens of thousands of these machines per year.

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3 David Goldway, "A Neglected Page of History: The Story of May Day," *Science & Society* 69, no. 2 (2005): 218–24, <https://doi.org/10.1521/siso.69.2.218.64175>.

As much a product of hope and ambition, May Day was also born of resistance and suppression.

Following that first ever May Day march, on May 3, the Chicago police fired into a crowd of strikers at the McCormick factory, killing several men and wounding some others.

The next day, May 4, some anarchists held a protest meeting in Haymarket Square in Chicago. Although they intended their meeting to be peaceful, they could clearly see the latent threat of police violence against them. As August Spies stated in his address to the crowd:<sup>4</sup>

*"For more than twenty years the wage workers of this country begged and prayed their masters, the factory lords, to reduce their burdens. It has been in vain. They have pointed out the fact that over a million of willing and strong hands were in a state of enforced idleness and starvation, that to help them to obtain employment it would not only be advisable, nay; it was necessary to reduce the hours of daily toil of those who were fortunate enough in having found a buyer for their muscles, their bones, and their brain. The masters of this earth have treated them with contempt, have condemned them to vagabondage whenever they insisted. The legislatures have been called upon, one petition has succeeded the other, but with no avail.*

*"At last the condition of the disinherited producers has become unbearable. Seeing*

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4 August Spies, "Haymarket Speech," in Iain McKay, ed., *A Libertarian Reader*, Vol. 1: *Fighting For Freedom 1857 to 1896* (Active Distribution, 2024).

*that neither "boss" nor law would concede anything to them, they have organized for the purpose of helping themselves - a wise and prudent resolution."*

Police and militiamen began to surround the meeting. As they approached, someone threw a bomb. Then the shooting began. Within minutes, Haymarket Square was emptied. 11 people were dead and many were injured.

This has come to be known as the "Haymarket Incident," May 4, 1886.

Over the course of the next several months, eight men were brought to trial for the bomb throwing. Though none of them was responsible, they were railroaded at trial. The accused included Albert Parsons and August Spies. No evidence was ever presented that connected them to the bomb throwing. In fact, six of them weren't present at the rally at all, and the two who were were demonstrably innocent.

Nevertheless, all eight men were found guilty. On November 11, 1887, Parsons and Spies were hung, along with two others. One of the defendants committed suicide in prison. These five Chicago anarchists came to be considered the Haymarket Martyrs. November 11 is now also known as "Black Friday" to commemorate their lives.

Albert Spies is famously quoted as he approached his executioners as saying:

*"There will come a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today."<sup>5</sup>*

Lucy Parsons, Albert Parsons' widow, sought to make that silence powerful. Herself a union activist and anarchist of black, Hispanic, and Native American ancestry, she would campaign to make May Day an international holiday dedicated to shortening the working day. Thanks in large part to her efforts, the holiday has won its recognition.

Suffice it to say, May Day has also become a scandal for many in power, who have since sought to erase its legacy. It was outlawed in Germany. In 1894, President Grover Cleveland formally created and endorsed the patriotic "Labor Day" on the first Monday in September in an attempt to confuse the issue; not to celebrate workers so much as to divide American workers from the international working class. Instead of celebrating May Day, there would be an American labor holiday, separate from the international workers' holiday. In 1919 right wing mobs attacked May Day demonstrations across the country, as part of a "Red Scare." In 1947, congress set aside May 1 as "Loyalty Day," and in 1958, Eisenhower declared May 1 to be "Law Day." This has long be recognized as an attempt to minimize May Day as International Workers' Day. And last year, 2025, President Trump made this explicit in a speech he gave where he said "(Law and) Loyalty Day was inaugu-

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5 Paul Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton University Press, 1984).

rated to directly counter commemorations of May Day."<sup>6</sup>

Despite undeniable qualitative changes in the economy since the nineteenth century, the root problem that gave rise to May Day persists. Around the world, many workers still endure long hours, unsafe conditions, and economic precarity. Capital still dominates our lives. From shipbreaking yards in Bangladesh to mining operations in Central Africa, from agricultural labor to warehouse and service work in North America, exploitation persists in both old and new forms.

May Day speaks to these realities. It is not only about reducing working hours, though that remains relevant. It is about challenging a system in which economic necessity can be used as a tool of coercion—where the threat of unemployment, poverty, or worse enforces compliance. It is about envisioning a society in which human well-being takes precedence over profit.

At the same time, May Day continues to serve as a unifying force. It brings people together across industries, identities, and causes. It reminds us that collective action remains one of the most powerful tools available to those seeking change.

It asks not only that we remember

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6 Proclamations, "Loyalty Day and Law Day, U.S.A., 2025," The White House, May 2, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/05/loyalty-day-and-law-day-u-s-a-2025/>.

the past, but that we engage with the present. The struggles that defined its origins are ongoing. The forms may have changed, but the underlying questions remain.

What kind of society do we want?

What kind of lives should people be able to lead?

Answering those questions requires more than reflection. It requires participation.

As May Day approaches, communities across the country will gather once again—in marches, rallies, and demonstrations. These events are not merely symbolic. They are part of a living tradition, one that continues to evolve with each generation that takes it up.

May Day endures because people continue to make it meaningful by taking action.

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*Image courtesy of the IWW Materials Preservation Project.*



## THE LONG MEMORY: UTAH PHILLIPS' CABOOSE & LIBRARY

May 1, 2026 | Hannah D

**I**ndustrial Worker recently sat down with Fellow Worker Brendan Phillips, son of famous musician and labor activist Utah Phillips, to discuss the Utah Phillips Caboose and Library. Fellow Workers everywhere are widely familiar with Utah Phillips' music and contributions to the IWW, but they may not know that he once lived in a railcar.

When Utah Phillips was recording in Harrisburg, Vermont, the studio was “a big old white barn and it had a recording studio inside of it. He was working on records and realized that he'd be there pretty frequently, so he wanted a place to hole up. He purchased a railcar from

the Central Vermont Railway. It was a flanger car, which is a car like a caboose except it had those blades on it to clear rust, snow, and ice.”

When Brendan was first born in 1977, the whole family sometimes lived in the flanger. Eventually, Utah stopped going there as much, and the railcar ended up staying on that property.

Brendan says, “Long story short, the record company sold and the new guy who owned the property was Charlie Pilsner. He reached out to my brother Duncan and said, ‘Hey, I think I got your dad’s railcar, this flanger, on my property. I’m either going to sell it—or do you want it?’”

Charlie Pilsner donated it and then money was raised to move the railcar from Harrisburg to Weed, California, to the Black Butte Center for Railroad Culture (BBCRC)<sup>7</sup>, an intentional community of train riders. The BBCRC is dedicated to preserving train riding culture on over 40 acres of land – a rail junction full of restored rail cars and cabooses – along with some habitat restoration. Utah Phillip’s flanger now calls it home, too, thanks to generous donations, a crane, and a few trucks.

Brendan describes train culture in the following way: “When my dad got back from Korea under a considerable amount of distress like a lot of people who fought in wars will have, he travelled around and rode the rails. This led to Utah meeting Ammon Hennessy,

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bbcrc.org/>

who ran the Joe Hill House of Hospitality in Salt Lake. And Ammon was the one who just told my dad, straight out, 'You came in singing all those songs about this beautiful country you live in. It's not the country you hate. It's the state. You got to get it straight.' 'The trains one way or another rode him into his career and his understanding of what was going on in the world that needed to change. He was brought on by Ammon to put himself on the line as an activist, songwriter, and singer to tell stories and sing songs about working people and about the struggle,' Brendan elaborates.

"Train riding culture at large is people who travel around, who eschew the modern capitalist notion of 'get a job, build a family, contribute to the capitalist system.' It's people who find work on the margins." Instead of merely traveling to get some place, they're also traveling for the journey, Brendan adds.

"It's a mindset built around community and knowing people...it's also a group of people who often have experienced serious traumas in their lives...it's a lot of hard luck stories but it's also a lot of finding solace in the country you live in. Understanding that you can have a life and live a beautiful life without being connected to the profit M.O."

Besides being an homage to train riders and hoboes, the railcar will serve as a space for Utah Phillips' private papers and books.

Brendan also hopes to transform it into a residence space for artists and writers.

Brendan says, "This project is about the long memory, which my dad called the most radical idea in America. His notion and something I ascribe to wholeheartedly is that we have this long river of people who came before us." The way Brendan describes it, our ancestors contributed to the river, and when we need something, we can go down to it and pull from it and create what we need and then put it back in the river so that the next group of people who need that understanding can use it as well. The long memory "unites the movement together and it comes from decades of organizing."



"We are at a precipice. I think that everyone knows that we are at a place as a movement where new ideas pulled from the old need to be explored in

community and pushed forward. And so the library will be a nexus for that. We're going to do an artisan residence process. So, people will be able to petition to come to the library and stay in it."

"You'll be able to go to the library, immerse yourself in it, drink a cup of coffee in the morning, cook yourself a dinner at night, invite people in to sit around the fire. All of that is going to be there."

But the library can't open without significant repairs and renovations to the deteriorated railcar. After all, it's 120 years old and has been exposed to the elements throughout that time. For the railcar to preserve its precious cargo of historical papers and books, there needs to be structural changes, fixes, rot removal, painting, and even some electrical upgrades to ensure it can be lived in comfortably. To support Brendan's off-grid intentions, high-voltage solar power will be needed for basic appliances.

"The main thing is that the cupola needs to be rebuilt entirely." A cupola is the telltale part of a caboose that projects out of the top that people can look out of. With the flanger's lengthwise support beams rotting in some places, the railcar must be lifted before a new framing system with new header beams can be rebuilt to support the weight of the cupola.

"The damage in the interior came from the leaks from the cupola, which was

collapsing." Brendan plans on replacing all of that—adding a moisture barrier, insulation, and new double-paned windows to protect the precious cargo of books and papers from the elements.

He also plans on performing cosmetic upgrades. "We had painted this beautiful IWW [mural] on the side of it. We will have to get the sign painters back out who did that...they're very skilled at what they do." The original mural painters have already informed Brendan that it needs to be repainted so that it lasts. He also wants to add a landing and a deck.

They anticipate a lot of labor to complete this ambitious project. The Utah Phillips Caboose and Library fundraiser remains active, sitting at a little over two-thirds of the way toward its goal of \$60,000. Consider making a donation<sup>8</sup> in honor of Utah's Living Memory, preserving IWW history and making it available for future generations to learn from and enjoy.

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*Images courtesy of Brendan Phillips*

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<sup>8</sup> [gofundme.com/f/restore-utah-phillips-caboose-and-library](https://gofundme.com/f/restore-utah-phillips-caboose-and-library)



## OUR GOALS, OUR METHODS, OUR EFFICACY

May 1, 2026 | Simon W

**T**he year was 2025. Austin, Texas, was hosting the Southern Regional Organizing Assembly (SROA) for the first time. Members came from all across the southern states to attend, learn about workplace organizing, and make connections with fellow workers. We were ready for 50 members to attend, as we had at the 2023 SROA, but only about 30 showed up. This was yet another sign that something was wrong with the One Big Union.

And things were getting worse.

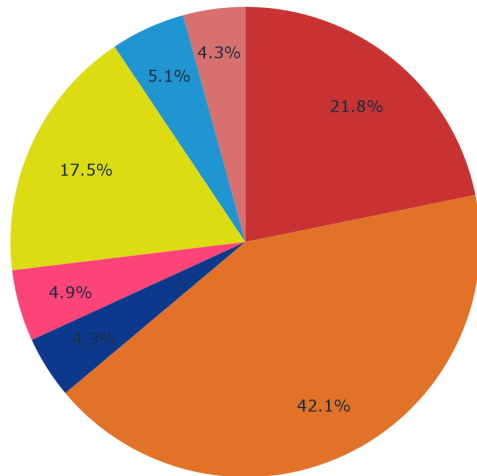
I had noted that we had fewer workplace campaigns than in previous years. Fewer members attended the general business meetings, or the monthly socials.

Even more alarming, the southern coordinating committee had lost 3 branches since 2023, and gained none. I felt like I was hearing the last gasping breaths of my beloved union.

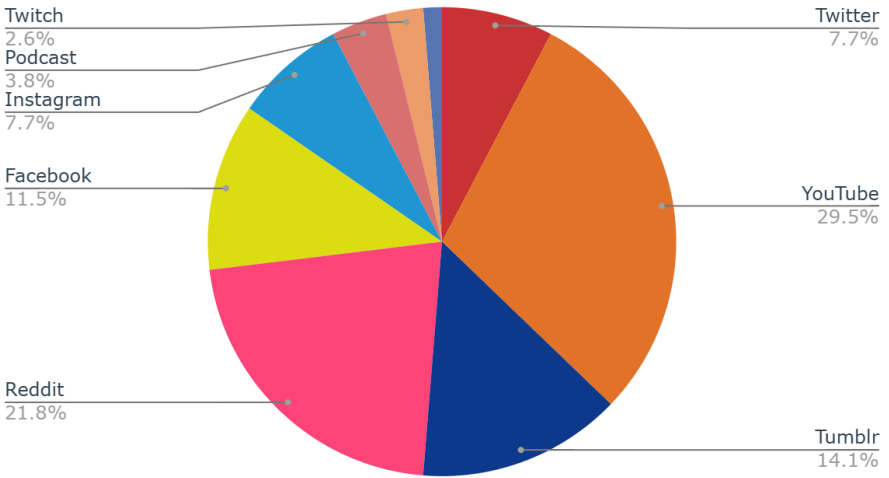
But all was not lost. I knew that the SROA was a great place to take stock, brainstorm solutions and start to fix the problems we identified. So I prepared a presentation that took stock of where we are as a union, and how we might reach the goals we have set for ourselves.

How did you find out about the IWW?

- Non-coworker IWW member
- Media (book, music, movie, etc.)
- Non-IWW member
- Coworker in the IWW
- Social media
- History
- Web Search



## Social Media you learned about the IWW from



### 1. DEFINING OUR GOALS

*“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.”*

Preamble to the IWW Constitution

The IWW has existed for 120 years but these ideas were already in the first preamble. The fellow workers of the past have lived by those words and done their part to make them true. Sadly, these goals have yet to be achieved. We aren't organized as a class. We haven't taken possession of the means of production. The wage system is proving harder to overthrow than expected. And I see less and less harmony with the earth when I seek it.

Those aspirations are what we work towards, but what's our collective strategy? Currently, we focus on three smaller goals:

**Membership growth:** Our efforts focus on the efficient administrative intake of new members and advertising our organization online and offline. Once intake is done, we work to involve new members with organizing their workplaces and local projects.

**Workplace organizing campaigns:** We support workers directly through external organizers, strike funds, branch support and ODB reimbursement of organizing related spending

**Trainings:** OT101, OT102, Workshops, Power hour, Roleplays. All these trainings aim to give workers the skills to organize their workplace directly, democratically, and efficiently.

### 2. MEMBERSHIP

I started this research by reaching out to our then membership coordinator Warren and to the Survey and Research Committee. The following data is from the reports done on the 2021 and 2025

membership surveys and from the 2023 exit survey report.

Our current strategy for growth at the branch level consists of two efforts: Maintaining our social media presence, and convincing workers to join through the efficacy of our campaigns. At the national level, we rely on word-of-mouth. Here we see that only 4.9 percent of members found us from one of their coworkers in the IWW. But the efforts we put into social media were the first exposure to the union of 17.5 percent of our membership. Which ones you may ask? Mostly Youtube, Tumblr and Reddit.

*“The union has gone through extreme swings on how this [our web presence] is viewed, seemingly ranging from seeing it as one of the most important things to not mattering much at all. In my opinion [...] its importance falls in the middle. A web presence in the form of an updated website and frequent, relevant social media posts may not by itself push people to actually join, but I think it does make people who are looking to join for other factors a final nudge to go through with it.”*

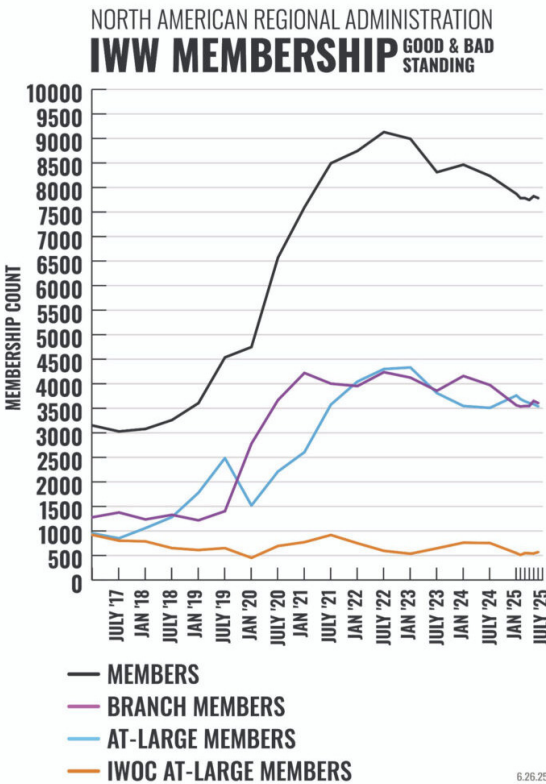
–Former Membership coordinator Warren (2023)

So, our efforts to grow membership are working, right? Wrong.

If you want to see real membership growth, look at the surge of new members that started in 2019 and ended in 2022.

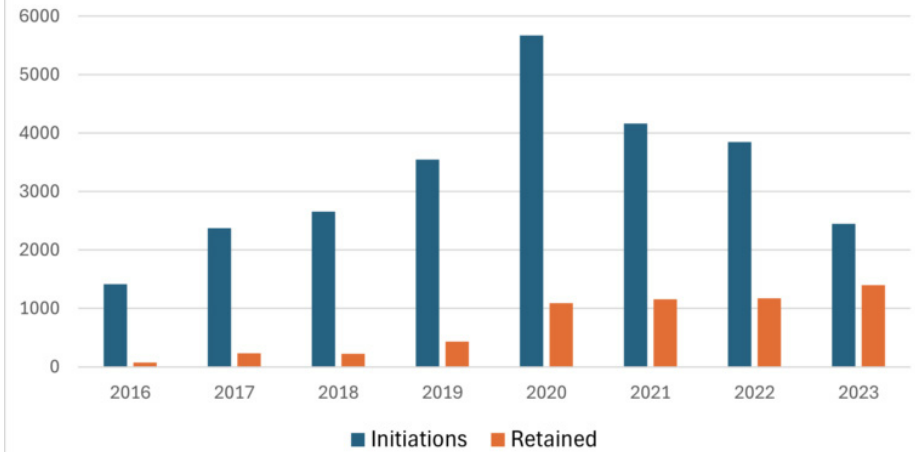
I asked our then membership coordinator about it. If we had such a successful recruitment campaign, why did we stop? The answer is disappointing to those of us who make propaganda: The surge wasn't our doing.

*“The IWW has little control over whether people join. Almost all significant membership surges correlate with events the IWW has little to no involvement in such as the 2016 US Presidential elections, the COVID shutdowns, Bernie Sanders dropping out*



Thanks to FW Ryan K for making this chart.

## Membership Retention 2016-2023



*of the 2020 Democratic Party primaries, the 2017 far-right march in Charlottesville, VA and the US Supreme Court's 'Janus Decision'. Put more bluntly, people join when bad things happen and they see the IWW as potentially addressing these bad things.*

*It is more difficult to correlate specific IWW projects with bumps in membership. It seems that often when a workplace organizing campaign goes public, there is a bump in people joining in that specific metro area. “*

Former Membership coordinator (2023, 2025)

The IWW produces a lot of art, educational content like flyers, and passionate calls to action. Yet it does not seem like those IWW projects result in noticeable membership growth, at least not noticeable on the larger scale of the NARA territory. Whatever effort we are putting in advertising the IWW, it does not compare with the impact of historical events beyond our control.

This could mean we just haven't found

the right type of propaganda to call the masses into action, or that such propaganda does not exist. On the other hand, writing union songs, drawing posters and other forms of union media production are beneficial to the one making them. It helps us relax and have fun where union work is often serious and stressful. As such, I don't think we should stop our efforts of recruiting workers that way, but advocate for mindfulness around its efficacy

### Membership Retention

Membership retention shows us that our members don't stay in the organization very long. In the above graph, the blue shows the number of members who joined that year. The orange shows who was still in the IWW in 2024 based on the year they joined.

We see that retention drops off quickly and surely the more time passes after a member joins. A stunning figure in the former membership coordinator's survey is that only 35 members remain

from all of those who joined before 2015. This means that we are consistently losing members and we are unable to keep any but the most tenacious for more than a decade.

As a consequence, our collective memory is relatively short because we cannot retain the members with the most experience. On the other hand, the 2025 survey report shows a disproportionate number of respondents were retired workers with a desire for more involvement. So we might still tap into our collective memory by involving those fellow workers more.

The exit survey report shows the details of why members leave the IWW and here are my takeaways:

12 percent of exiting members reported they were leaving because they had never been contacted by a branch. 29 percent had never taken part in any union activity. Not even going on the union's forums. This shows the need for an improved onboarding process into branches, both local and industrial.

### **Demographics**

Demographic data shows us who we are.

It shows which groups we are not reaching, or whose membership we lose consistently.

It shows the strengths and weaknesses of our growth strategy.

And from there, it might show us a better way to increase our numbers.

I recommend that you read the 2025 membership survey report for the details. In short, IWW members are most likely to be cis, white, male, aged 25-34, neurodivergent and have low income. It is worth noting that trans women and non-binary people are massively overrepresented in the IWW compared to the general population. Otherwise, the data shows that our membership is very homogeneous which can lead to flaws in our organization. For example:

- Echo chamber effects
- Lack of connection with intersectional issues
- Difficulties recruiting and retaining members from a majority of the social groups that comprise the working class.
- Workers will not feel like they are represented in the union, and in the positions of leadership.

So our current growth strategy needs to evolve. But how?

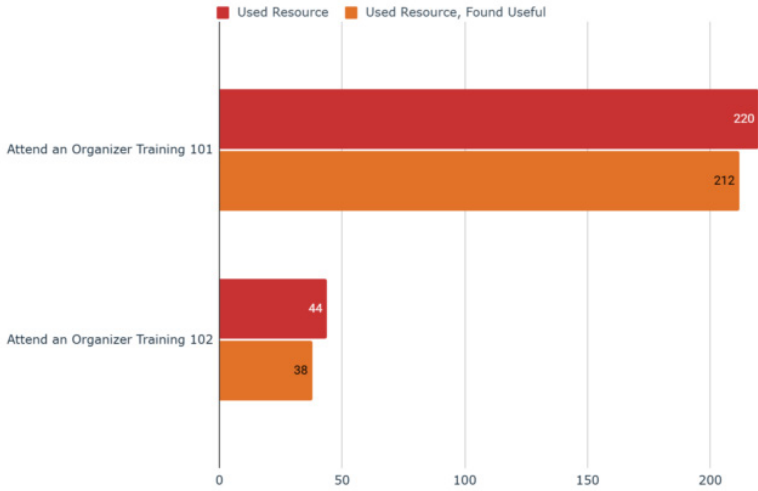
*“The ideal way would be for membership to come from shops, people joining based on organizing within their structure. Otherwise we would only ever get people who are already politically activated.”*

—Fellow Worker Hazel (2025)

### **3. CAMPAIGNS**

*“When it comes to campaigns, we lie to ourselves a lot. One of the campaigns in my branch lasted years. It was just a couple at their workplace.”*

## Resource Usage, and Reported Utility



*They never recruited anyone.”*

–Fellow worker Anonymous

There are 3 steps of growth in a campaign. It starts as a lead with a small number of workers who are trying to unionize their workplace. It levels up when enough workers join to create an organizing committee, and again when it becomes a job branch. At that point, the campaign has its own bylaws and budget, and is partly independent of the local branch.

In the 2025 membership survey, 25 percent of our working members were organizing their workplace. Only 6.1 percent were part of an organizing committee with at least 2 members and only 1.6 percent of members were part of a job branch. This shows a mix of positive and negative signs. Our conversion rate from worker to committee and committee to branch is about a quarter (24 percent and 27 percent respectively).

Unfortunately, our actual organizing participation is very low.

## 4. TRAININGS

*“Going on information from 2008-2018 and 2021-2025, there have been 392 Organizer Training Programs reported to the OTC. The vast majority of these 392+ trainings are OT 101s, I do not believe the OTC has ever run more than two T4Ts per year, and OT 102s have also been put on rather infrequently.*

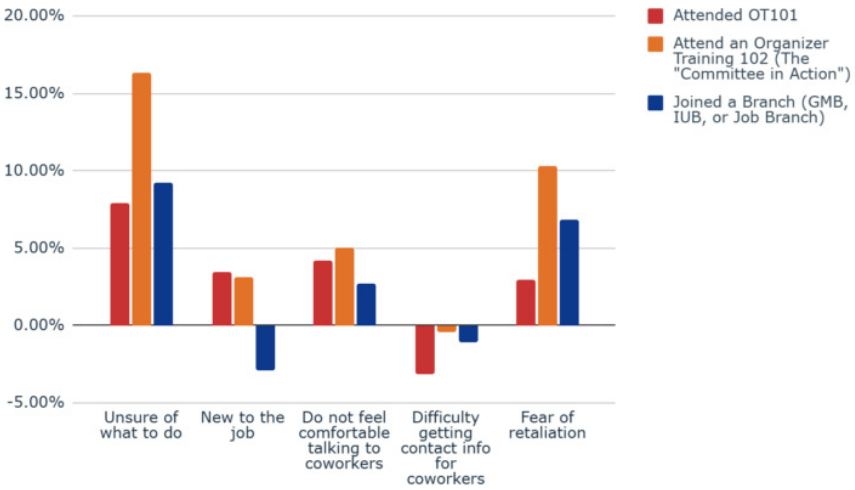
*Based on reported 2025 (OT101) trainings so far, average attendance is 11.7 people, so round to 12. Smallest training was 5, largest was 30.”*

–Fellow Worker Jacob, Organizer Training Committee (2025)

Based on the OTC’s estimates, we have, over the course of 14 years, put together:

- A little more than 364 Organizer trainings 101
- Up to 14 Organizer Trainings 102

Decrease in Targeted Barrier Report Rate ( $\Delta\%$ )



- Up to 14 trainings for trainers

If the average of 11.7 attendees per training in 2025 is assumed to represent the attendance in previous years then we have taught OT101 to about 4260 workers since the training was created. About 300 workers per year received OT101 training, although this does not account for members taking it multiple times.

That is quite an achievement, but it doesn't scale well with our ambition of making "every worker an organizer."

This graph shows most trainees found OT101 and OT102 useful. But the positive impressions of participants does not necessarily translate into efficacy.

So how do we evaluate the efficacy of our training? Once again, by looking at the stated objectives of OT101: Train employees to unionize their workplace safely. Trainees are taught to reach out to fellow workers, obtain means to contact

them outside of the workplace, and understand ways to protect themselves and others from retaliation. The below chart comes from 2025 survey data around resource use and several common barriers to workplace organizing that our trainings aim to address. It shows how using a resource impacts how often members report facing those barriers.

As we can see, training attendance does seem to generally correlate with a reduction in reported barriers. The exception here is in "Obtaining contact info for coworkers," but this may be a reflection of higher attempts. It is worth noting, however, that the improvements here for OT101 do not vary substantially from those of joining a branch, and while only in 2025 29 percent of branch members have taken an OT 101, 81 percent of OT101 participants are members of a branch.

So training looks effective, but it's

difficult to separate it from branch membership.

## 5. POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Back to the 2025 SROA. I had come up with multiple potential solutions to our problems. I would run those solutions by the attendants and we would choose a couple to focus on moving forward. I suggested that we make a Youtube series about workplace organizing with all the content of OT101 to create a version of the training that would scale better. Attendees pointed out we didn't have the budget to gamble on such an undertaking.

I suggested we allow donations, and make the lowest a member could pay in dues a mere 1 cent. Attendees pointed out that the administrative cost of each member was too expensive to try to run the union that way.

I suggested that we create a new religious system called "syndicalism" so that workers could skip work to attend union meetings and trainings under the protection of "religious exemption." Attendees liked the idea but none have converted so far.

In short, my ideas weren't going to save the union. But another idea will. The best solution had already been revealed to the assembly 30 minutes before my presentation by fellow worker Glenn. He had also shared this idea when I did the training for trainers with him. And every time I've seen him. And yet it hadn't gotten through my thick skull until this year. The solution is for

you to focus on organizing your own workplace by the book. No excuses.

*"There are no magic solutions."*

—Fellow worker Glenn

Fellow worker Tim has been pointing out for years that very few members of the IWW are actually organizing their workplace, even those who took OT101. Only 25 percent of us when we aim for 100 percent.

In my time at the Austin branch, I've asked many FWs if they were interested in organizing their workplace. Each answer was different, because each workplace is different. But, strangely enough, these answers all start the same way: "I just don't think it would work in my workplace." Seasoned external organizers and trainers have said that. These are the folks who know the most about workplace organizing. I've said that. I have been an OT101 trainer for almost 3 years now so I know everything we teach on workplace organizing by rote. But when I had started organizing at my workplace, I skipped some steps, encountered a couple of rejections and gave up. I didn't do it by the book and my failures sapped all my motivation. We are very much lacking in confidence in the union and that translates to very few campaigns when we need campaigns in every workplace.

Shortly after the SROA ended, I started organizing my work again. Exactly the way we are taught in OT101 (including the very important step of asking for

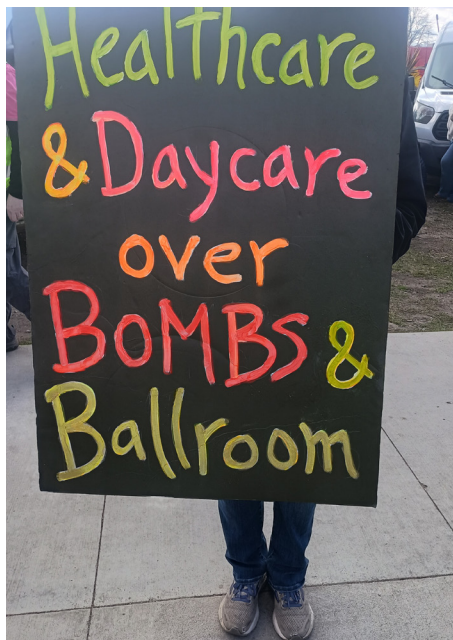
help from my branch). And it worked! I now have 2 coworkers on board, a social chart that takes up a whole wall in my apartment, and hope. Organizing my own workplace has also revitalized my branch a little bit. I asked other trainers and external organizers for help, advice, and practice roleplays, something we don't do enough after taking an OT101 in my opinion. The involvement of these organizers re-energized them into action. One such EO even started organizing her own workplace!

Previously, I thought that the most I could do for the union was to be a branch officer, an external organizer and a branch trainer. Now, I'm not so sure. Now, I feel that my efforts are better spent focusing on organizing my own place of work.

I know you have reservations and doubts about organizing at your work. We all do. But that's what the IWW was made for. So let's return to our roots together.

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*Special thanks to x431037 for all the data crunching and graph making work that went into this article.*



## MINNEAPOLIS IS A UNION TOWN

May 14, 2026 | Janelle Carlson

**T**he first International Workers Day hinged on the May Day festival and the strike for the eight hour work week, according to activist Lucy Parsons, who was involved in planning the first May Day strike in 1866. But it would only evolve into the holiday it is today after someone threw a bomb at the rally in Chicago. In response, the government would round up and hang prominent organizers of the time, including Louis Lingg, who was not even present at the rally. These men would become known as the Haymarket Martyrs and their deaths would be the groundfire underpinning May Day celebrations around the world in the years to come.

Minneapolis knows something about

martyrs and they know something about strikes. The January 23rd strike brought more than 70,000 to the streets<sup>9</sup> of Minneapolis as people marched against ICE in -47 degree Fahrenheit weather<sup>10</sup>, demanding justice for Renee Good, the young mother shot three<sup>11</sup> times by an ICE enforcement agent, and justice for their neighbors kidnapped off the street. The mood that day was less defiant than euphoric as people spilled out of apartment complexes in Minneapolis and St. Paul, or drove into the city from Red Wing or Duluth in hurt and anger, only to find themselves flanked by others. And across Minnesota, one in four people participated in the strike.

The next day Alex Pretti was shot in the street in front of a donut shop after helping<sup>12</sup> a woman ICE had been attacking.

Yet Alex Pretti's murder, like the murder of Renee Good, appeared to only stiffen the resolve of the strikers. Mothers continue<sup>13</sup> to tend to children whose own mothers have been taken by ICE,

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9 <https://inthesetimes.com/article/labor-general-strike-minnesotans-ice-protest-trump-cbp>

10 <https://www.fox9.com/weather/minnesota-weather-heres-how-cold-got-jan-23-2026>

11 <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/renee-good-was-shot-head-autopsy-commissioned-family-finds-rcna255335>

12 <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c62r4g590wqo>

13 <https://www.minnpost.com/metro/2026/01/mothers-of-massive-resistance-pta-members-organize-minneapolis-relief-efforts/>

neighborhoods came together to keep one another housed and organizers organized as the success of the No Kings rally in March demonstrates.

In the weeks that followed Pretti's murder, organizations bled together as people who knew Alex and Renee met with politicians and union organizers. People from across the Twin Cities came together to unravel this new tragedy. In those cramped rooms, it seemed like all the different microcosms of the city were represented. It was the very same solidarity that brought about May Day

## THE IWW AND INTERLOCKING UNIONS

In many ways, this crosshatching of communities in Minneapolis is what underpinned the original idea of the IWW. This union, after all, was intended to represent all industrial workers of the world with the idea that if one union went on strike, that that union would be supported by all the unions.

Minneapolis took this idea and applied it to neighborhoods. The understanding of a neighborhood grew until it encompassed the whole city, and then the whole state, in the aftermath of Operation Metro surge. After all, what is a state or a nation but a collection of neighborhoods? What is a union but the same?

Union 17's<sup>14</sup> May Day strike highlights not only the power of interlocked unions but also how strikes can be

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14 <https://www.uniteherelocal17.org/>

seen as a subtle reordering between neighbors. Union 17's 10 a.m. walk-out at the Hotel Ivy and the Normandy hotel on May Day was not only their first strike. It also kicked off a day of union organizing, beginning with the hospitality workers, followed by the folks at Hennepin County Medical Center who are fighting for the very survival of one of the city's main trauma hospitals, the negotiations<sup>15</sup> of the Target Field workers, and ending with the long May Day March led by Mirac.

The strikers were not alone in any of these actions. All striking workers were joined by representatives of other unions and members of the community. Union 17 was joined by members of the Inter Faculty Organization (IFO) and the graduate student union at the University of Minnesota among others. As Jennifer Chernega from the IFO told the Industrial Worker, "It's really important for all workers to come together, even if they do very different kinds of jobs, because we have more in common with each other than the bosses."

But it was a worker from Union 17 who pointed out the sense of betrayal that finally pushed the workers to walk out that May Day. She had worked at the Normandy for over 20 years and was still paid less than hospitality workers in other parts of the city. All she and other workers wanted was to be paid the same as other workers, receive steady

hours and ensure that the guests' rooms were cleaned daily. If all three needs were met it would allow her and her coworkers to receive a steady income that would allow them to survive in an economy buffeted by ICE, inflation and a new war with Iran. Instead, workers had received silence, at least, until they walked out.

Within an hour of the walk-out, a union representative for Union 17 reported that management had called to enter into negotiations.

Hours later, members of the striking unions joined together for the May Day march. They celebrated their wins, rued their ongoing battles, and ultimately they celebrated each other. As they flowed out from the intersection of Lake and Chicago, they chanted, "ICE OUT NOW!"

Proving that while the weather may be warmer, the January 23rd strike is still under way. An injury to one is an injury to all.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://bringmethenews.com/minnesota-news/target-field-workers-vote-to-authorize-a-strike>



## **IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE UNION OF JOURNALISTS IN LEBANON**

May 13, 2026 | IWW PPWU-FJU

In light of the ongoing Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Industrial Workers of the World Printing and Publishing Workers Union and Freelance Journalists Union expresses its solidarity with the Union of Journalists in Lebanon<sup>16</sup>, a member of the International Federation of Journalists.

The Israeli invasion has already claimed the lives of at least 1,268 people in Lebanon, according to the Ministry of Public Health as of this writing. Among the dead are at least four journalists, per IFJ<sup>17</sup>. In addition to those killings, the

Israeli invasion has also displaced more than one million people, including at least 65 journalists registered with UJL.

To support journalists in Lebanon, UJL is offering both professional services, such as workplace access, and social services, such as housing. While the humanitarian crisis is immense and growing with each day the Israeli invasion persists, UJL is seeking an initial contribution of \$10,000 to address the most pressing needs.

The IWW PPWU-FJU is therefore fundraising to provide UJL with this initial contribution. We encourage all journalists, union members and others to support UJL by contributing to this fundraiser and sharing it widely.

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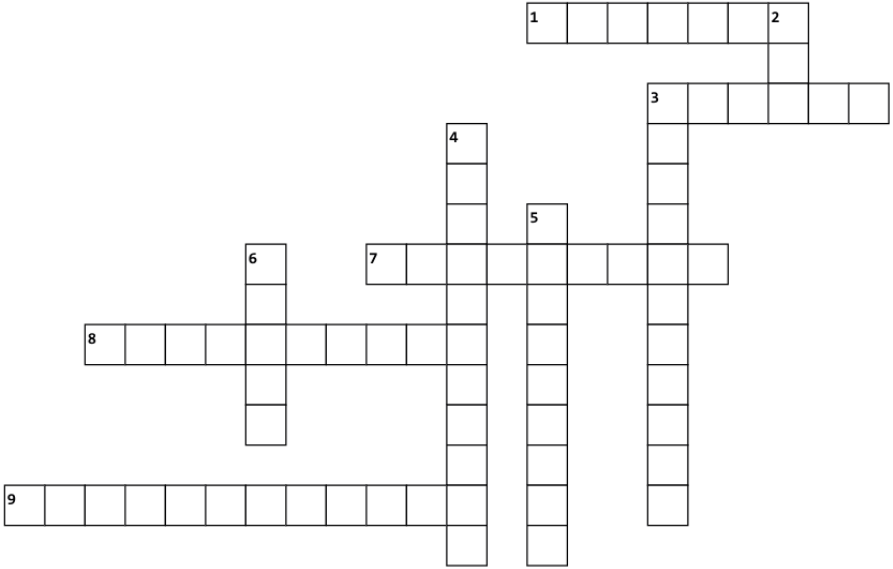
16 <https://ujleb.com/>

17 <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/>

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[article/lebanon-ifj-condemns-killing-three-journalists-by-israel-southern-lebanon](https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/)

# MAY DAY IWW CROSSWORD



## ACROSS

1. The technical term of Utah Phillip's railroad car
3. Holiday commemorating the historic and ongoing struggles of workers
7. 11 people were killed here in 1886 due to police violence against strikers
8. Reading material intended to recruit new members
9. System of fundamental principles adopted and written to guide an organization

## DOWN

2. A color on the IWW flag
3. Site of 1934 Teamsters strike and the recent January 23 general strike
4. One of the founders of the IWW, speaker, writer, labor organizer and anarchist.
5. Direct action symbol in the IWW
6. Current General Secretary-Treasurer (2025-2026)



## **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](http://tinyurl.com/OTrequest)**

