

LABOR
PRODUCES
ALL WEALTH

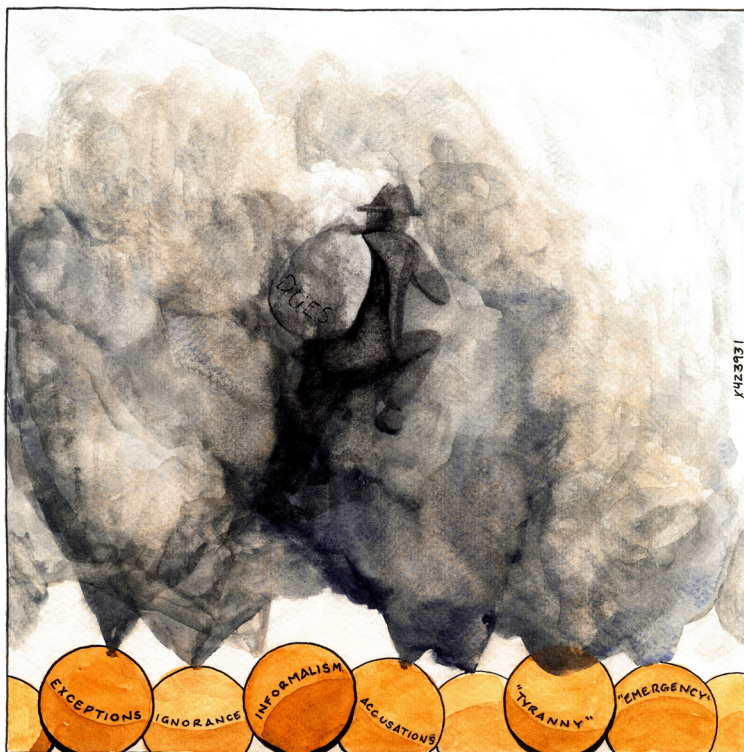
W ORGANIZATION W EDUCATION W EMANCIPATION

Industrial Worker

ALL WEALTH
MUST GO
TO LABOR

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

2026 Summer | Official Publication of the Industrial Workers of the World



"SMOKESCREEN"

GRIFTERS, CONS, AND THE IWW

August 5, 2026 Johnny Silence

In 1924 the Industrial Workers of the World was torn apart by scandal. Some¹ argue that the Communist Party was at the root of it. Others² argue the root of it was repression from after the first world war. But a recent look at the history from that time and the primary documents that are now available online

indicates it was very likely a failure to deal with grifters in the IWW's own ranks.

The IWW was blown open over a debate over whether the IWW was centralized or decentralized. However this was largely a distraction from the fact that two industrial unions, IU440 metal and mine workers and IU520 marine transport

workers, were found to be engaging in behaviour that looked an awful lot like corruption. The response by those who were accused was to throw up a smoke screen³ about how the organization was on a path to tyranny, due to the investigations into the large amounts of union cash paid to their officers for personal expenses. The charges included things like billing nice hotels, booze, cigarettes, and meals in expensive restaurants on the IWW's dime.

There are some hints these grifters were set upon the IWW by the US Government to destroy the union, but definitive proof is not yet there. Nor does it matter much because the real issue here is that a union does not recognize any authority higher than its own membership and so must hold its officers to account on its own.

This question points us in the direction of how to spot anti-social behavior in labor organizations and poses new problems: how to manage conflict so the organization can continue to grow despite disagreement and how can the members at large spot problematic behaviour that goes beyond simple disagreement?

The IWW's ambition (wanting to supplant the nation state and capitalism) led to problems many unions⁴ step back from, relying on government regulatory bodies to sort out for them. Organizations like the IWW would do well to take these concerns seriously.

PSYCHOLOGY, CONFLICT AND THE LEFT

We should say right out the gate that

politics should not be left to the experts, but the business of diagnosing individuals should be left to psychologists. There is also a lot of history of pathologizing dissent⁵ and non-conformity and any organization that wants to end capitalism and not replace it with a new tyranny should be careful of throwing around individual accusations that someone is not right psychologically.

But there is also no shortage of books and scholarship on anti-social behavior in organizations (especially workplaces) that speak to these issues. This isn't an article on academic or clinical psychology but I would encourage anyone interested in the subject to read up on the literature themselves.

The crossroads of these two concepts, politics and psychology, also almost always has some kind of a liberal standing in the middle telling everyone a different world is impossible "because of human nature." This of course is nonsense. But the point remains that 5 percent of the population, according to many credible mental health researchers, have some degree of diagnosable anti-social behaviour.

Even the most pro-capitalist literature⁶ points to things any organization can do to address people who are problematic for all sorts of reasons. From people who just can't tell the difference between a truth and a lie to full blown psychopaths, the answer is more openness in accounting for shared resources, more formal processes for decision making, and an

open honest political culture where positions of responsibility are elected directly from the membership.

Often witch hunts and pillorying people for bad behaviour is treated as a reasonable response to this problem. Ironically this kind of chaos is where those who are the worst behaved thrive. The alternative to clear processes is to close ranks, to treat all political business as “state” secrets, and to retreat into cliques. Neither witch hunts nor trusted cliques address the actual problems. Usually they make them worse.

SIGNS OF ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN ORGANIZING PROJECTS

It is worth repeating as many times as necessary that there are practices that allow bad actors to wreck organizations but we can't prove that some Fellow Workers are narcissists, psychopaths or chronic manipulators—nor should we. We are not psychologists.

Instead we need to assume that the vast majority of people are more less acting in good faith but an extremely damaging minority can act with impunity without proper checks and balances. Many of them are well intentioned and wrong. Making accusations is pointless but watching out for these red flags can save us a lot of problems later:

Constant Exceptions

Organizations have rules for a reason. The constitution of an organization isn't just a bunch of tinkering by old beards. Almost every line of a constitution is the

result of some kind of lesson learned and written down by Convention. It is also a contract between the organization and its members and unlike contracts with our enemies (like the bosses) the contracts we sign with each other must be treated as sacred.

Of course sometimes convention gets it wrong and the members at referendum can get it wrong. When this happens we may put a bad rule in place.

But the answer to that is not to just set aside the rules because we don't like them but rather to have an open debate about the rule and to change it by majority vote.

Skipping steps like taking a vote and then following the decision of the group is basically an admission that the working class as a whole are too stupid to manage their affairs themselves.

If we take seriously the idea that unions like the IWW are “the structure of the new society within the shell of the old” we need to accept the authority of our own rules. The flip side of this is equally important: we shouldn't create rules just for the sake of it.

When an organizing project wants an exception to the constitution or bylaws, they only have to wait a year or two to make the case at convention and then send the item to referendum. Then the organization gets to decide if they want to continue the rule or get rid of it.

The more ambiguity about the rules there is in an organization, the easier it is to say, for instance, that money wasn't misspent,

or that the office space has always been a social leader's living space and that the organization's funds are there to promote the pet projects of influential staff members—even if those projects have nothing to do with the organization itself.

Not Reporting to Avoid Accountability

If an organizing project can't say how many members they have, it's a major red flag if they are handling money. Any organization should have clear criteria for membership. The rights of members are what determines if an organization is controlled by the membership or someone else (ie. staff, a permanent paid officer clique or grant funders).

Of course volunteer and membership organizations can sometimes be lax or have spotty reporting, but that's not the point.

If a body of an organization asks for funds, there should be questions. If the answers are vague or don't make sense, it's the obligation of the members in positions of responsibility to press for more details.

Sometimes, like in the example from the 1924 IWW split, the questions lead to emotionally charged accusations, introducing unrelated politics or statements that this is a personal emergency for those involved. "Decentralization" is an important political commitment, but it can also be a smoke screen to avoid a conversation about where the money went.

In cases like that, people should be treated with empathy, but also the organization should stay on track. If every crisis leads to a major blow up and a collapse of

basic questions of accountability, then the revolutionary organization is not ready for revolution.

Claiming Ignorance

It's okay to say you don't know. But when you ask for money from an organization, questions like "what did you do with the money last time?" should require a clear answer before more money is given. This isn't tyranny, this is exactly how we build a world where we supplant the divine right of bosses with the working class conquering and owning the productive capacity of society. Like it or not, workers allocating resources democratically means we are getting rid of bosses by taking that role and putting in our own hands to manage through our organizations.

The main point of an organization is to take in dues money and then to spend that money based on the priorities of the members. If those priorities are building playgrounds in your neighborhood you need to provide receipts so everyone knows you didn't use it to pave your mom's driveway.

In a revolutionary organization you need to show what the money was spent on so you can make sure the mission of the organization was carried out.

GREEN FLAGS

There are lots of organizational practices that indicate a healthy political culture and these things are as important as talking about "what not to do" they are:

Clear Decision-Making Processes

Does the organization have a handbook

with how decisions are made? (In the IWW this is the Constitution, Manual of Policies and Procedures, and Roberts or Rusty's Rules of Order).

Is this shared with the members of the organization? Does the organization make clear motions or proposals and have a clear process for determining if they have enough support to be implemented? (ie. majority vote, how many?)

Some groups may just adopt Roberts Rules and list the exceptions, which is fine. If they say "consensus" decision making is used what do they mean? Are there guidelines for minutes and documenting proposals? Grifters love activist consensus decision making as the blurred lines allow for all sorts of ambiguity and chaos.

Bylaws that require proposals to be written down, standard minute taking processes and how many people need to be in favour for a proposal to pass in a meeting are a powerful tool for keeping an organization on track and power in the hands of the members. Ambiguity lets people decide important things in a small group chat or at the bar. Informal groups are a natural part of any organization but the actual decisions need to be made openly and in a formal way.

Investigations and Findings

When a complaint of misconduct is brought forward does the organization have standing rules for how these things are handled? Are the investigations handled exclusively by leadership or is someone elected from the rank and

file to look into it and publish a report? Is there a charges process and are the members who do investigations elected independently or appointed by the people being investigated?

Many scandals on the left in recent memory were the result of an impulse to politically manage bad behaviour and to bury mistakes. This is much harder to do where complaints are investigated and the findings are presented by groups of rank-and-filers.

Elections of Officers and Administration

Does the organization have clear roles for running the organization? These should basically be job descriptions that are written in the bylaws. Are there clear boundaries between tasks and limits on the authority of officers? How much of the membership ratifies the budget? An organization should have oversight over its own budget and how the money is spent.

There are practical limits to this, the larger an organization gets but it's important that the members themselves can look at a budget and compare it to the stated priorities of the organization and argue about whether or not the resources of the organization reflect the direction they have agreed on.

CONCLUSION

In 1924 the Industrial Workers of the World made it as far as they ever have. They fell short not because of outside political actors (like the Communists), and not because people were mean to each other (in some cases they may not

have been mean enough). Instead the IWW came apart because it underestimated how hard it is for a working class movement to govern itself.

Determining what bad behaviour is and how to handle it is one of the most difficult things an organization can do. When we are asked how the world will work when the workers take over we need to be able to point to the democracy we practice now as an example. Failing to address this problem won't just hold us back in the future; it will make organizing tremendously difficult right now. There may come a time again when we face hundreds of thousands of members under a banner that reads "Abolition of the Wage System." We will also then face the fact that our treasury is large enough to be a good target for some bad actors. How we handle small problems now is the only way we can prevent that from happening again.

ENDNOTES

1 *Industrial suicide: understanding the 1924 split of the Industrial Workers of the World*. Cameron Molyneux. 2020, University of Washington.

2 *The Wobblies in Their Heyday: The Rise and Destruction of the Industrial Workers of the World during the World War I Era* Eric Thomas Chester.

3 *Tin Jesus and the Two Detectives* by K. King. June 20, 2026 on LibCom.

4 *How the UAW Went From a Militant, Trailblazing Union to a Corrupt, Dealmaking One* by C. Brooks. March 5, 2020 on In These Times.

5 *Pathologizing Dissent* by Mad in America. August 7, 2021 on Mad in America.

6 *Snakes in Suits*. Paul Babiak and Robert D. Hare. 2006, HarperCollins.



Bezya Kaplan. Pexels.

AGAINST THE ADVENTURIST CREEP

August 5, 2026 Jay Bettencourt

It is always a good time to organize. Some times, however, are better than others, and we are entering a period that appears promising. The political and cultural consensus of neoliberalism is breaking down and the imperial state has been forced to blink. Unlike the early 2010s and 2016, there is little liberal energy from the NGO sector cluttering the media or the streets. This creates a unique opening to build lasting institutional power and presence in the working class. However, an essential part of this strategy will be resisting the gravitational pull of adventurism and other distractions. Rather, we must double down on commitment to building institutional capacity and worker power.

The distinction between adventurism and committed organizing can best be illustrated by small, fringe activist groups. These tend to be much more adventurist in the sense that they are small, undisciplined, often built around a dysfunctional social group, and typically engage in

high-risk, low-reward activity like street fights with right wingers. This carries a lot of negative consequences, primarily that it repels less “intense” people. Without a sustainable growth strategy and only social bonds keeping the group together, the organization tends to shrink and fracture rapidly. This is especially true when internal discord occurs, which tends to happen often because high-risk, low-reward actions tend to attract egotistical or otherwise maladjusted men.

On the other hand, organizations that build up around shared class or material interests and whose activity focuses on low-risk, high reward action tend to fare much better. Well-defined organizational structures built around these, such as democratic processes, officership, conventions, transparent disciplinary bodies, transparent finances, etc., help drive sustainable growth without putting up too many barriers to entry.

Now, the contours of risk and reward are complicated and probably best left to open discussion. Plus, there is a point down the line when we will need to take greater risks and more decisive action to win bigger demands, like universal health care or a 4-day work week, much less seizing the means of production and living in harmony with the Earth. But we won't be able to get there if we aren't building organization for the long haul.

What does building for the long haul look like? For one thing, let's draw a distinction between *mobilizing* and *organizing*, because the two are often confused despite being

largely separate activities. Mobilizing is using the organization you have built to take action and try to notch a win. Organizing is the longer, slower, steadier work of creating the relationships, membership, organizational structures and events, and communications networks to effectively turn out a successful mobilization. Less experienced unionists or activists tend to look only at the mobilizations and try to throw as many mobilizations at the wall as possible, then burn out because there is no sustainable organization in place to strategically guide activity and prevent burnout. The immediate experience of the 2017-2020 IWW bears this out, where we experienced a large rush of inexperienced members motivated by progressive ideals and anger at injustice, which proved difficult to incorporate. On the other hand, a longer-term, slower, more intentional and less intense strategy of building out worker committees, starting with smaller actions and demands to gain experience and build toward bigger ones has proven more successful.

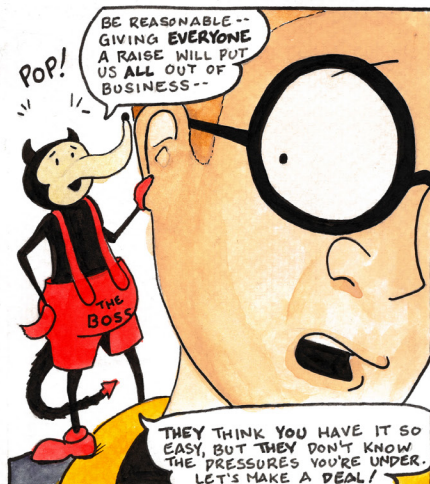
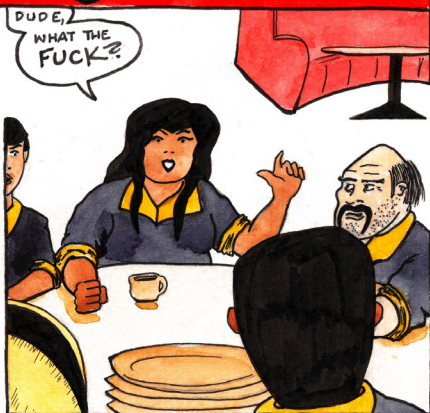
Consider weight lifting or a team sport as a metaphor. You practice together with your team, scrimmage, play against teams or individuals at your skill level, and eventually get good enough to level up to a higher league or level of play. At the beginning of every training session, you still do the same things: stretch, warm up, practice the fundamentals. Only after putting in the hours and hours of practice off the court can you mobilize for a big game and compete for the wins.

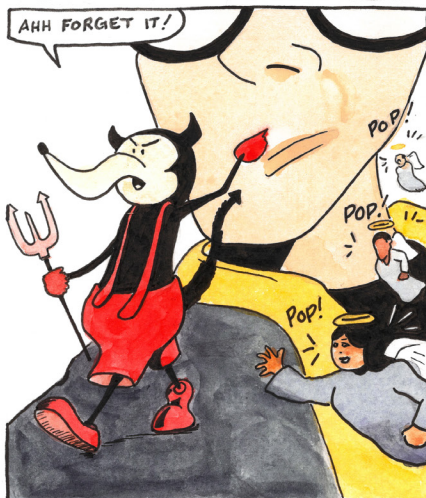
PACEY PRATT

THE SABO CAT



"MY BETTER ANGEL IS A TABBY"







LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

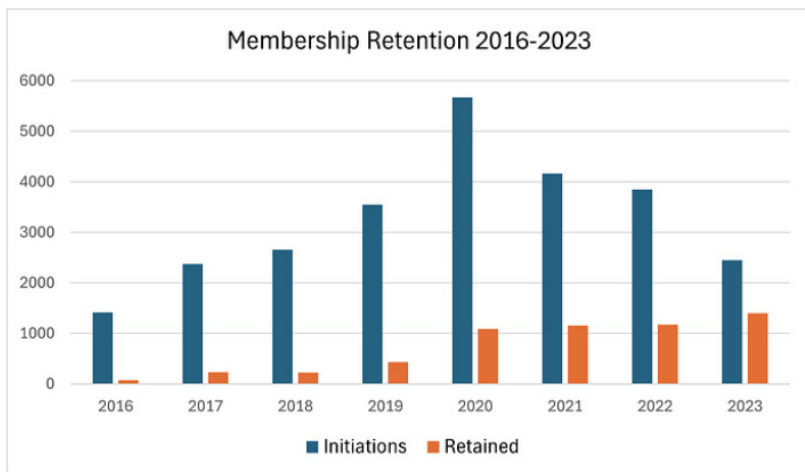


RE: MORE AND BETTER DATA

Christian S.

The IWW has a member retention problem. The following graph comes from an article FW Simon recently wrote and the IW published called “Our Goals, Our Methods, and Our Efficacy.” It demonstrates the number of initiations into the IWW versus how many members remained from those years.

not very well set up or conducted and as a result, the data it gives us is spurious. The response rates were low; there’s no reason to believe the respondents represent the larger population; the questions are weighted; and possible responses are not sufficiently distinct and/or meaningful. We need more and better data. If we can collect/build better data, then we can understand who joins the union, who leaves the union, and why. If we know why wobblies leave the union, then we can figure out what we can do to



The article blames onboarding, failure to engage members, and failure to organize at our workplaces for our retention woes, at least partially. Making sure we onboard and engage members and organize at our workplaces are all good ideas. The article draws from a number of sources, but the claims about onboarding and engagement largely come from 2023’s Exit Survey. The 2023 Exit Survey was

retain members and continue building decentralized, bottom-up, power at the workplace. After that, the sky is the limit.

REPRESENTATIVENESS

Few departing wobs responded to the survey. That affects the study’s external validity, whether researchers can generalize the findings out to a larger population. Researchers gave the survey to

everyone who formally resigned from the union. They also included it in the standard outreach email to members who fell inactive and might have been fading out, which is how they define informal resignation. 3033 people left the IWW in 2023. 275 formally resigned and 2758 informally resigned. Only 127 responded total. That comes out to about 4 percent of 2023's departing wobblies. 4 cannot represent 100. In reality, nothing and no one ever completely represents anything else. So, even 99 cannot represent 100. But, it's closer; it's better; it's more likely to be valid.

Fractional studies could perhaps represent a larger population well enough if we conduct them accordingly. To do that, we need to know demographic information. The representative and the represented need to be the same kind of being. Only 4 percent of departing wobs returned the survey. We have no reason to believe that those who responded represent the larger population. By accepting all the surveys at face value, we select a sample based on behavior. Behaviors and attitudes are deeply connected to categories such as race, ethnicity, language, education level, income, culture, and so on. Those who responded may share traits and characteristics and may differ from those who did not respond. We can salvage a study with a partial response rate by selecting a representative sample from within the completed surveys. To do this, we need participants' demographic information and should collect that at the end of the survey. We also need demographic information about the larger population for comparison, which the survey

and research committee was collecting in 2025.

We need valid data but we also need reliable data. Reliability means the testing instrument produces consistent results (within a margin of error). To determine if data is reliable, we need to test multiple times. We can't expect departing wobblies to fill out multiple surveys and even if they did, it would probably wreck the study's internal validity since becoming familiar with a study can affect how we respond to it. Personality tests are a good example of this. But, we can conduct the study continuously over time. If we use the same instrument (the same survey) year after year, we can compare the data from one year to the next and at least make some reasonable claims about change over time. This allows us to then study if our interventions have any impact.

High quality studies are both valid and reliable. They account for these kinds of problems through large and representative samples that account for impactful characteristics and through repeated testing. We need surveys that go out to all departing wobs and mark their demographics so we can have a representative selection even with partial responses. We must continue doing this over time. Without these, our results are untrustworthy and may mislead later researchers using our data. We don't want to be the blind leading the blind.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

So far, my arguments assumed that respondents respond honestly and accu-

rately, which is never certain, but is especially unlikely given the survey’s questions and answer options. The survey’s first question was “Why did you quit the IWW?” This table shows the responses.

hear or see the word “quit.” This matters because shaming respondents can impact the results.

The most common response was “no longer interested in maintaining membership.” This may have been the most

Reason	Percentage of Respondents
No longer interested in maintaining membership	41%
Can't afford dues	26%
No branch near me	18%
No branch contacted me	12%
No longer eligible for membership	10%
No longer interested in organizing my workplace	9%
No longer agree with the union's views	9%
Personal situation*	9%
Joined a different union*	6%
Organizational conflict or dysfunction*	4%
Confusing structure and/or jargon*	4%
Joined political organization or activist group*	3%
Intimidation/Harassment/Discrimination*	3%

“Quit” carries a heavy burden and creates problems. American rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke tells us in *Permanence and Change* that neutral vocabularies do not exist. All words carry weight. If you don’t believe me, ask yourself: do you want to be a quitter? I highly doubt it. Even if we individually understand that quitting is alright sometimes, American culture tends to tell people that quitting is shameful. This starts very young. So, we carry around this cultural-linguistic baggage that crops up whenever we

common reply because the question made respondents feel ashamed. It is difficult to answer honestly or accurately when stressed. This answer gives respondents an easy out, which they’d be more likely to take because they’re under stress and want to get out of the situation. We subject children to similar situations and see them behave similarly. Many times as a child, people would shame me for behaving in some way and ask why I did it. My only reply was “I don’t know” or “because.” There is no difference here. I

suspect others have similar experiences.

We should remove this answer because it measures nothing and adds nothing to our analysis. It is not a real answer. It's like asking someone "why did you stop going to work" and them replying "because I wasn't interested in going anymore." How useful. Questions and answers need to measure something. We should remove this answer because it measures nothing and provides no value to our analysis.

The survey supplies double barreled answers. When we remove "no longer interested in maintaining membership" from the running, "can't afford dues" becomes the primary reason respondents claim they left the union. "Can't afford" can mean multiple things. It can mean that someone lacks the means, they cannot, and it can mean someone lacks the motivation, they will not. These are different problems and require different solutions. We should separate this response into two alternatives, one that measures those who can't afford dues and those who won't afford dues.

Lastly, the survey double dips. It lets respondents reply with both "no branch near me" and "no branch contacted me." We're measuring the same thing twice. Or, at least they're measuring overlapping things. A branch cannot contact you if no branch exists. To really determine why people leave, we need to disentangle the questions. We should change "no branch contacted me" to "branch near me, but branch did not contact me."

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Validity:** Send exit surveys to everyone who leaves the union, formally or informally, and ask for demographic data at the end. Select a representative sample based on respondents' demographic data and the union's larger demographics. Giving away personal data frightens people, but that info is crucial to figuring out who joins, who stays, who leaves, and why. Place demographic questions at the end of the survey, consider telling participants honestly why it matters, and anonymizing their responses. Asking those questions early can frighten people and prevent them from answering the survey at all. Participants are more likely to answer them if they're at the end because they already committed the time.
- **Reliability:** conduct exit surveys continuously and release yearly results so that we can measure change over time. This insulates our data somewhat and helps us determine if our actions have any impact and so adjust course.
- **Develop better questions and better responses.** First determine what we want to know. Ensure that our questions don't unduly affect responses. Our questions will always affect responses, but there is a difference between "why did you quit," "why are you leaving," and "why are you withdrawing?" Questions and answers must be distinct and meaningful, not double-barreled or double dipping.

- Perhaps use a Likert survey to collect data. Likert surveys quantify and measure attitudes and opinions across respondents. They help us measure how well we're doing across the board and identify areas to improve. Here is an example:

I believe that ecological questions are the most important issues facing human beings today.

Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Undecided (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)

CONCLUSION

I am not an empirical scientist. I took one PhD class on empirical research methods, so take what I say with a grain of salt. But, you don't have to be Doc Brown to see my point. Results result from the questions we ask and the lenses we apply. When our questions have flaws, and the available responses have flaws, and when the way we conduct the study has flaws, we can't be surprised to find flawed results. I cast no blame because it won't help us and it doesn't really matter. I merely want us to continue growing as a union, to produce more and better organizers who can organize more workplaces, more completely, and with greater and greater results so that we can realize true liberty, equality, and solidarity more fully with each passing day. To do that, we need to discover who joins the union, who stays, who leaves, and why. And to do that, we need more and better data, produced by more and better studies. Only by doing this can we accurately determine where we are and bridge the gap between where we are and where we want to be.

A WOBBLING CROSS SECTION

James Haywood

Three articles over the past several months in the Industrial Worker with three views in correspondence with one another. Three views—despite ebbs and flows between them—largely reflect the current outlook of many IWW members. A Ypsilanti fellow worker initiated it all with “Rebuilding the IWW”, followed with “A Response” by fellow worker Carmen Molinari, and most recently a response to both by another anonymous fellow worker. What can we deduce from all three? In short, the persistence of dual unionist thinking within the IWW, a reaffirmation (even if implicitly or unconsciously) of syndicalism, and sectarianism following it.

Granted, the initial “Rebuilding” article correctly identifies the problem of “isolationism” (which is a symptom of sectarianism) of the IWW, but their prescriptions miss the mark. Yes, agitprop is a baseline for any union trying to raise their profile among the working class. Many unions now have social media managers working to popularize their campaigns and slogans. But building ties to social movements which are not working class in character and which are integrated into the NGO industrial complex, leading to the graveyard of social movements—the Democratic Party—are not going to fix the problems of the IWW.

The two responses to “Rebuild” with their counter-proposals also miss the mark. Fellow worker Molinari poses the following questions to the Ypsilanti FW: “Why do we need to be connected to the labor left?” “Why be visible to the labor left?” “Why should we measure ourselves by whether Labor Notes or DSA talks about us?” to paraphrase further “why care what these types think when they are dedicated to conservative and co-opted unions?” “why would we want to recruit from this milieu?” Not much in the way of answers from FW Molinari other than to bypass these types and go straight to the US working class which is 90 percent nonunion and unorganized.

Our third FW attempts to reconcile the two and goes on to say “we must also take seriously the risk of drifting toward becoming a group of labour activists, indistinct in our activity from numerous others except in our branding as a union and the historical cache of our name”.

Hasn't this already happened?

“If we allow our focus to become growth among those who are politically sympathetic rather than among our coworkers, we are undercutting our very raison d’être. We need to acknowledge that many skilled organizers leave the IWW for other unions due, at least in part, to an internal culture that sometimes emphasizes posturing over real workplace organizing”

Again, hasn't this already happened? Any GOB will tell you a huge proportion of our union membership are at-large members divorced from any IUB or GEB and found their way to the IWW via the internet and

memes. It has become and has been for a long time a leftist social club despite its legal status as a labor union. How do we correct that? Yes, as the Ypsilanti FW says, we must look outward, be outward facing, but it also must be strategic, that any outreach we do must be to build new contacts with the working class wherever we may be, not the activist scene that may have some workers involved, but which has no working class orientation. We can mingle in these spaces, we can raise our profile at a No Kings protest without compromising a strategic view to organize workers primarily at the point of production, but if unpaid labor is to be expended by an all-volunteer membership of workers in a GMB or IUB let it primarily be to reach unorganized workers.

This also doesn't mean, as FW Molinari suggests, to simply ignore organized labor. The state of the US working class-including the minority of unionized workers-is our business. We should build bridges between workers across unions. The relative power of the working class is based on the highest level of unity achievable among the entire class. This is a basic position of a revolutionary politics. Dividing the working class is historically the behavior of reactionaries within the labor movement, whether based on craft, skill, or social identity. Industrial unionism is based on the recognition that the class is strongest when all divisions are overcome. Our task must be to unite the class on a principled basis - a united front that cuts across political and social differences. This is how reaction-

ary and opportunist leadership among the working class is exposed and how workers under their influence are won over to a revolutionary position. Let the reactionaries show themselves to be the dividers, not us.

This is why we must care what workers who go to Labor Notes or are in the DSA think about the IWW. If they aren't thinking about us that is a reflection of the IWW's relevancy, or irrelevance, to the US working class. The IWW and the big unions are in a similar situation. Union density keeps shrinking, we haven't been able to reverse this decades-long trend whether through enacting business unionism or solidarity unionism. The big unions do have some sectoral power that we don't though. We can't name a single multinational corporation which would be shut down through an IWW-led strike, unlike the UAW or the Teamsters. They do have substantial resources. We can't pretend the billions of dollars these big unions sit on don't exist, those funds come from workers, those funds should be used as a war chest to raise a labor army and have that labor army storm the capitalist headquarters.

There are fellow workers in these unions who are fellow travelers, who aspire to abolish the wage system. We even have wobblers dual carding between our union and these others unions. We should be working towards unity across unions on this shared understanding and there has been a promising and recent effort to do so.

During the latest Labor Notes Conference a breakaway meeting occurred nearby in Chicago under the banner of "For A Fighting Workers Movement". This featured panelists from a variety of militant caucuses within the big unions to struggle against their union misleaders in Starbucks Workers United, the International Association of Machinists, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the National Education Association, The International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the Amalgamated Transit Union and Transport Workers Union. The basis of unity for these workers, which my IWW branch endorsed, are very in line with the wobbly spirit:

Workers within the established unions must organize themselves on a class-struggle basis to oppose the misleadership of boss-linked officials.

- The working class and the employer class hold no common interests.
- Unions must break from the capitalist class political parties.
- The struggle of the working class is an international struggle against a global capitalist class system of wage labor exploitation and requires international solidarity between workers of all nations to succeed in realizing its aims.
- Building working-class strike power remains an indispensable and central pillar to advancing the independent interest of the working class in defense of wages, living standards, and in forcing greater political demands

against the class of employers and their state.

- Unions must break from timid subordination to the capitalist state's legal-regulatory apparatus, that of the National Labor Relations Act and Taft-Hartley, which mandate recognition of employer rights, suppress sympathy strikes, and were historically used to purge unions of their most militant leaders.

Advancing this effort across unions builds the much-needed working class united front. The IWW has a role to play in this if we can overcome sectarianism and stop pretending we have the perfect organizational form and principles to liberate the working class. It is delusional to think the IWW can accomplish the abolition of the wage system on its own, as if the majority of US workers will flock to the union some day in the future if they only knew the good word. This is the thinking of sects, whether they be stalinist, anarchist, trotskyst, etc.

The IWW itself was formed out of a fusion between multiple unions and socialist organizations, any new revolutionary workers movement will require the same and can only happen when we prioritize a principle unity - a united front - across unions. Otherwise we are no better than the gonzaloists who offer their New Labor Organizing Committee as the answer or the Northites in the Socialist Equality Party who advocate "rank and file committees" to workers in the big unions through their World Socialist Website publication. That is what we can look

forward to with a dual unionist orientation. It has been a pernicious tendency within the leftwing of the US workers movement all the way back to at least the DeLeonist Socialist Labor Party and their Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance.

The reactionaries dominating the big unions want us to leave them alone as we look inward to the IWW. But we miss key opportunities to demonstrate to workers under their influence that their misleaders sell them out when Teamsters President Sean O'Brien cuts a deal with UPS to avoid a strike or when UAW President Shawn Fain endorses a senile capitalist politician like Biden while calling Trump a "scab" all the while Biden broke the 2022 railroad strike with support from "the squad." Why should we abandon our fellow workers who are fed up with the compromised misleaders of these unions and are actively struggling to transform their unions into schools of communism? Wouldn't the US working class be in a better position to go on the offensive if these fellow workers had breakthroughs in taking back control of their unions on a principled basis? Wouldn't the IWW benefit as well, especially if our dual carders joined in these efforts? We miss the forest for the trees when we have a purely inward-facing orientation that doesn't factor all this in.

With all this said, this still doesn't negate the importance of revitalizing the IWW. Our third FW in their response claims that *"we nevertheless have a structure which is prepared to accommodate organizing on a mass scale, i.e. to move personnel and resources*

throughout North America, to train thousands of organizers, to carry out agitation, education, and action in a way that most other groups oriented to shop-floor organizing cannot. While it is not impossible that another group might be able to achieve this in time, it is absolutely certain that the IWW has these resources right now.”

This is wishful thinking. We struggle to find trainers for OT101s and 102s, we struggle to train more trainers. Our members have applied for years now to receive training for trainers only for these sessions to be cancelled. It has created a bottleneck in the union which is costly for the locals and the union as a whole. Until this is rectified we will be in no position to handle a mass influx of workers. We must tackle the dual task of reforming the IWW and relate to the broader working class, including those in the big unions. We need to put our full support behind forging a working class united front!



Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in all articles are those of the authors. They do not purport to represent that of the IWW or Industrial Worker as a whole.



MAY DAY CROSSWORD ANSWERS

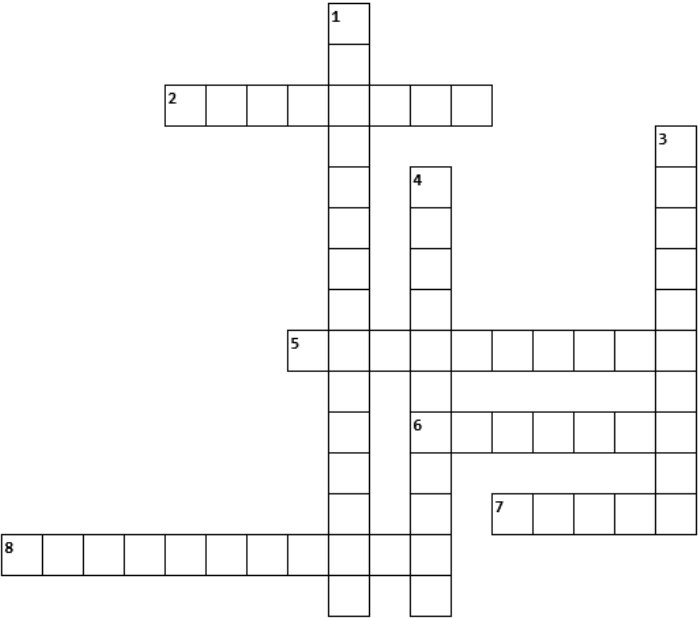
Across

1. Flanger
3. Mayday
7. Haymarket
8. Propaganda
9. Constitution

Down

2. Red
3. Minneapolis
4. Lucy Parsons
5. Sabotabby
6. Graff

SUMMER 2026 CROSSWORD



ACROSS

DOWN

2. One of our most famous IWW shops located in NYC, these singing servers have done a lot of direct actions

5. A fellow worker feline who is always there to help agitate his fellow workers

6. This IWW campaign has two shops, one in Vancouver, and one in Lakewood, and has been on strike since May 20, 2026

7. Current chair of the Organizing Department Board, 2026 to present

8. Founding member and leader of the IWW, known for his role in Colorado Labor Wars, the Lawrence Textile Strike, and Paterson Silk Strike
1. In the IWW, we use these to unite all workers in a specific industry

3. This band of fellow workers performed at the Toronto General Convention in 2024

4. The first federal red scare that had a devastating effect on the IWW and resulted in hundreds of arrests



WRITE FOR 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 history, obituaries for Fellow Workers, labor cartoons, and more!

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**

