

Direct Unionism: A Discussion Paper

Part 1: Organizing the Direct Unionist Way

Part one of *Direct Unionism* will lay out one way the IWW can move forward in our organizing and do so free of the restraints of labor law, bureaucracy, and contractualism. As with the rest of the pamphlet, part one is written in a ‘question and answer’ style that is designed to be both thought-provoking and easily understandable. To achieve this, we’ve attempted to avoid long boring sentences, academic language, and jargon that may be unfamiliar to newer members.

Section 1: What would a direct unionist campaign look like?

In a nutshell, we are proposing that instead of focusing on contracts, workplace elections, or legal procedures, IWW members should strive to build networks of militants in whatever industry they are employed. These militants will then agitate amongst their co-workers and lead direct actions over specific grievances in their own workplaces. The goal of such actions will *not* be union recognition from a single boss. Instead, the goal of the actions is to build up leadership and *consciousness* amongst other workers. Once a ‘critical mass’ of workers have experience with, and an understanding of, direct action the focus will be on large scale industrial actions that address issues of wages and conditions across entire regions or even whole countries. It will be from this base of *power* that the IWW will establish itself as a legitimate workers’ organization.

Section 2: What sorts of techniques would be employed in a direct unionist campaign?

When organizing without contracts—as direct unionist believe we should be—it is of great importance the IWW is (1) very strategic and tactical in our organizing and (2) honest with ourselves about how much power we can effectively exert in any workplace or industry.

With this in mind, we turn to the first step of any campaign: the workplace organizing committee. We won’t go into the details of setting up your committee here, but we would like to emphasize that once a shop committee is up and running, organizers should focus on agitating for feasible direct actions.¹ While most of our readers are probably familiar with the concept of direct action, we’d like to take a moment to illustrate what we mean when we use the word. Direct action is when workers—without the “help” of union bureaucrats, politicians, or lawyers— take action to make their jobs better.

Sometimes this means making the boss change something about the job. Perhaps you work in a coffee shop in a rough part of town and the boss refuses to hire a security guard. You, your co-workers, family members, and concerned community members can *picket* the shop demanding the boss hire a security guard. At other times direct action means workers doing what needs to be done without asking management for permission. Maybe you work in a busy restaurant where managers don't allow lunch breaks. Instead of asking for breaks, the workers can create their own break schedule.

Sometimes direct action can be defying what the boss says to do. In much of the service sector, employees have trouble getting full-time hours. Although a worker—let's call her Jane—is scheduled for an eight-hour shift, if sales are down she may be sent home after five hours. In response, workers can refuse to go home in groups. When the boss says, "Hey Jane, it's a slow day, we're going to need you to go home early," Jane and all her co-workers can walk into the boss' office and say, "Sorry boss, you've scheduled us for eight hours each and we'll all be working our full shifts. We'll gladly go home if you want to pay us, but no one here is leaving early without pay." Like any other situation, there's a whole bunch more workers than bosses. As long as we stand together, the bosses have to listen.

When organizing without contracts, it's important that we organize strategically and take 'small steps' to build up workplace power and confidence. In the early stages of a campaign, militants should encourage "**direct action grievances**". In a direct action grievance, workers will *collectively* confront whatever problem they may be having. Instead of using labor law (Unfair Labor Practices, for example), workers will strategize to come up with a response that involves as large a percentage of the workforce as possible. The following list offers some possible suggestions for direct actions. We remind our readers that each workplace is different and offers unique challenges and opportunities for action. As such, the following list is incomplete and is intended only as guide:ⁱⁱ

(1) Moral pressure: Using moral pressure on a boss is simple: workers, as a group, consistently confront a manager on inappropriate behaviour.

Sometimes bosses treat us badly as part of company policy. Other times, they just have 'a chip on their shoulder' and are taking it out on those they supervise. In either case, workers can use a variety of tactics to show their disapproval. This may involve workers only speaking to their boss on matters directly related to work. If a manager tries to spark up conversation, the response should be the same every time: point out whatever injustice the workers are facing and describe the desired solution. For example, workers at a restaurant may say, "It's not right that the company keeps our tips; we have bills to pay. I'm not interested in speaking to someone who helps steal my money. Perhaps we can talk when you stop asking for my tip money at the end of my shift."

In another example, workers at a grocery store may be fed up with getting yelled at on the floor. In response, every time the offending manager comes around they may simply ask, “How would you feel if you get yelled at in front of customers and co-workers? You need to apologize to us and not ever do it again.” In both instances, it is important that as many workers as possible confront the boss as many times as possible and keep it up until conditions change.

IWW member Nate H. has written quite a bit about moral pressure. As he puts it:

Sometimes it is just a matter of saying, “What you’re doing is wrong” many times by many people, making it hard for them to feel okay about what they’re doing... Of course not all bosses are movable this way, but it’s a useful tactic.

While recognizing that, on one hand, moral pressure is about confronting injustice, it is also about power. In another article Nate explains:

Work is a headache for us, and to a lesser degree it's headache for our bosses. Generally it's more of a headache for the boss the lower they are on the food-chain. Emotional action [Nate's term for moral pressure] is when we offer our boss a choice: make work less of a headache for us or we will make work more of a headache for the boss. This is easier the lower the level of the boss. If the boss is a supervisor we see every day, then they will care more about our opinions and how we treat them.

We realize that to some this may sound a bit harsh, but all we are really suggesting is to use the boss’s tactics against the boss. Management training courses encourage supervisors to be aware of the emotional state of the staff. Shop-level managers are told to “be a friend” to their employees. This way when workers disobey a rule, not only are they breaking company policy, they are letting down a friend. However, just as managers use emotional pressure to influence their workers, workers can do the same to them. Managers (and even owners) in small workplaces often work very closely with their workforce. Because the connection is so close, local management is easily affected when workers turn the tables and apply emotional pressure on *them*.

Remember that emotional tactics work best ‘low on the food chain’—primarily direct supervisors and assistant managers. There is little point using emotional pressure on even a store or factory manager, they’re too far removed from the workforce to be influenced by such a technique. Finally, remember that moral pressure, like any other tactic, should be tailored to individual circumstances. After all, we don’t want to make IWW members seem like bullies. Be firm, but stress the injustice that has made workers decide to take such a course of action.

(2) Find the Weak Spot: All companies have certain key measures of productivity and profit. The trick is to find them and work it to your advantage. We’ll offer

two examples here, but we're sure you'll be able to find the weak spot at your place of employment and achieve the same sorts of results.

- a) Workers at a chain department store had decided to form a union. The workers in the commissioned departments led the union drive. One of the main ways the store made profit was by having those very employees sell extended warranties. In the course of the union drive, one of the leaders was fired. The workers responded by going on a 'warranty strike'. When customers purchased a new product, the salesperson neglected to mention that an extended warranty was available. After three weeks, the fired union member had his job back.
- b) A group of workers in a call center were placed on a special project where they had to do a test run of a new customer satisfaction survey for one of the call center's major clients. They were placed in a basement which was in the process of being renovated. The windows were covered in plastic and one unfinished wall let in the cold winter air. When the workers complained about this to their immediate supervisor she called upstairs and was told to tell everyone to suck it up. Meanwhile, the company was installing special recording equipment so the client could listen in. In response to the unbearable working conditions, the workers sent one member from their ranks upstairs to inform their supervisor that everyone would walk out in the middle of calls *while the client was listening* if they were not moved somewhere warmer. Ten minutes later they were placed in a section upstairs.

(3) "March on the Boss": In a march on the boss, all the workers in a given shop (or even just the shop committee) walk off the floor and into the boss' office to discuss grievances and demands.

(4) "Reaching Out to the Class": Reaching out to the class entails bringing in other members of the working class to take part in a direct action against a particular boss.

In one very inspiring example, workers in the Swedish syndicalist union, the SAC, were contacted by undocumented workers who—as in much of the world—form the backbone of the Stockholm restaurant industry. The bosses were exploiting the workers' undocumented status and were paying them below minimum wage and/or refusing to hand over back pay. At this point the SAC had a choice: (1) 'go the legal route' and try to make the bosses follow the law, but risk exposing workers to deportation due to their lack of papers or (2) try some creative direct action. Choosing the second option, an SAC member called up the boss and stated, "One of the workers in your shop belongs to our union. We're not going to you who s/he is, but if you don't begin paying all your workers the minimum wage and/or any back pay, we're going to blockade your restaurant." After a few successful blockades, in most instances now all the SAC has to do is call a restaurant owner and any pay discrepancies will be quickly resolved.

(5) Publicly Displaying Paychecks: To raise wages—or to keep management from ‘playing favorites’ or not giving raises to workers who speak out—workers can get together and compare paychecks. A photocopy of the highest paid worker’s pay stub can be passed around the shop (or even “accidentally” left in the break room). Then workers, as a group, go into the boss’ office and demand that every worker receive the highest rate of pay. If he or she refuses, a direct action campaign can be waged until the boss agrees.

(6) Picket: The picket is a union classic. During a picket, workers with signs rally outside of their shop. Their presence not only puts pressure on the boss, but also discourages customers and suppliers from coming into the shop.

While we do feel a picket can be an effective early(ish) action, we remind our readers that they have drawbacks as well. If, for example, only five workers out of twenty show up for a picket, the boss has a very good idea of who the “trouble makers” are in the shop.

Finally, before undertaking any direct action, remember two very important things. First: get trained up. The IWW offers trainings that will prepare you and your co-workers for direct action. Unions grow by experience and there is no better place than an organizer training for workers to pass knowledge and experience to one another. The second thing to remember is to be creative. No one knows your workplace better than you and your co-workers. You know where the boss is most vulnerable, so be smart, but don’t be afraid to go for it.

Using direct actions like the ones listed here will help build up confidence amongst workers as well as achieve improvements in working conditions. *In the future*, such actions will also build up the skills and experience to pull off larger-scale ‘sexier’ actions like go-slows, work-to-rules, and even strikes. We will discuss one possible use for the *power* gained through sustained and successful direct action grievance in section five, “What is the industrial strategy?”.

Section 3: Are we trying to build a “union”

In a broad sense, yes, because anytime two or more workers take collective action, they are functioning as a union. However, in a more narrow sense—and since direct unionism does not have recognition as an immediate goal—we are operating outside what is traditionally understood as a union. It is possible that after we’ve organized a large percentage of a particular workforce we will seek to function as ‘the vehicle of workplace struggle.’ In other words, instead of IWW members contributing to workplace struggle *as organized workers*, we will force the employer to recognize the IWW as the collective voice of the workforce. However, in the short-term, and possibly for a very long time (or even forever), the goal will be to involve as many workers as possible the collective decision-making process, **regardless of IWW affiliation**. In the early stages of a campaign, the organizing committee will organize meetings of sympathetic workers to decide how grievances will be addressed. In a

more fully developed campaign, the goal will be to arrange well-attended mass meetings that will decide upon strategy and actions.

What about solidarity unionism?

Throughout the IWW's history we've attempted 'rebrand' unionism to reflect our ideals of direct democracy, militancy, and overt anti-capitalism. One of the most inspiring examples of this is "solidarity unionism." Solidarity unionism is based on the idea that workers only need solidarity to function effectively as a union—no bureaucrats, officials, or lawyers required. Solidarity unionism rejects the idea that a union needs recognition from the boss, or even a majority presence, to successfully improve shopfloor conditions.

Simply put: effective agitation, intelligent organizing, and committed militants held together by the bonds of solidarity— in a word, solidarity unionism—has always been and will always be the backbone of the labor movement. Although we wholeheartedly agree with the ideas and ideals of solidarity unionism, we feel the net of solidarity unionism has been a bit too widely cast (in contract campaigns, for example) to fully capture how we feel a non-contractual organizing strategy should function.

Why "direct unionism"?

Although we most certainly take inspiration from solidarity unionism, minority unionism, and industrial unionism (and incorporate many of their principles in to our strategy), we decided the term "direct unionism" best fits how we believe the IWW should organize. Direct unionism—at its very core—rejects contractualism and states that workers should *directly* control their workplace organizations. Accordingly, workers should reject any attempts to place a block between them their struggle—including contracts, union "reps," casework, and full-time outside organizers.

How important is signing up workers into the IWW?

The authors of this pamphlet believe that *informal participation in workplace struggle, not formal membership in the IWW, should be the first concern of a workplace organizer*. However, we realize that both participation and membership are important aspects of a successful campaign.

Allow us to elaborate:

- 1) Union membership is, and should be, an important part of any campaign. It helps sustain struggle—both in terms of finances and stability—and encourages workers to step up into leadership positions.
- 2) Membership in an organization reinforces a feeling of belonging to 'something bigger than yourself' and of being 'plugged in' to a collective struggle. The IWW,

with its open membership policies, combats the 'club mentality' that often exists in any type of social movement.

3) Membership = Accountability. By encouraging our co-workers to join up, it provides an extra way for them to hold organizers accountable. Alternatively, if a shop militant steps up into a leadership positions, his or her membership in the IWW provides another way for participants in shop floor actions to hold her or him to account.

We also recognize that some workers may be reluctant join the IWW. Perhaps they don't plan on working in a particular shop for very long or aren't comfortable putting themselves 'on the line' as a union member just yet. We feel an organizer's time is much better spent encouraging workplace actions instead of convincing co-workers to take out a red card. In fact, there may be certain situations where it may be 'safer,' smarter, and more strategic that an organizer begins leading actions before announcing he or she belongs to the IWW. (See the next section.) After all, a successful action turns 'regular' workers into militants faster than debate or pamphlet ever could. At the same time, even an unsuccessful action—if properly orchestrated—makes clear the class analysis that underpins the beliefs of the IWW.

Why do direct unionist believe we don't always need to “fly the union flag” to win the union's battles?

Direct unionists recognize there are good tactical reasons to begin fighting gripes in the workplace without letting the boss know a union is involved. It can buy us time by building the union through struggle before management goes on the attack. Often grievances appear like an upswing in everyday resentment, and bosses are quick to dole out concessions to go back to normal life. With a union however, the boss may take drastic measures, even going so far as to close a business than suffer the indignity of sharing power with organized workers. The repression is much more easily dealt with after a period of exercising collective power and inoculating against battles to come.

Organizing in such a manner allows organizers to think strategically about how we make ourselves known, when we ask for membership, and when (or even if) it is appropriate to build the IWW as the 'vehicle of struggle'.ⁱⁱⁱ The answers to these questions should help organizers adapt to individual situations, while changing working conditions for the better along the way.

Direct unionism, then, lowers the bar of initial activity, while avoiding many of the problems of unions as outside organizations (“service unionism”). This isn't to say that we never come out as a union early on, just that we should do so because there are no other options and that no gains can be made without doing so (or more gains can be made in the long run by doing so).

What is the difference between *qualitative growth* and *quantitative growth*?

As direct unionists we believe that the IWW needs to concentrate not on simply *growing* numerically, but increasing the *organizing capabilities* of our membership. Hence, we believe the union needs to focus on growing in terms of quality—*qualitatively*—rather than simply believing we build the union by numbers alone (i.e. *quantitatively*).

The union has already taken steps to do this very thing. The Organizer Training Committee, with its twin goals of training Wobblies in the *concepts* and practices of successful organizing, is one example of this. However, we must build on such accomplishments. We need to find other ways to train members to not only support the IWW *in principle* but to begin agitating in their own workplaces. In fact, if every IWW member is not actively organizing where they work, the union is not functioning as effectively as it should. We believe the implementation of the *industrial strategy* (to be discussed in part one, section five) will help to facilitate workers becoming more active in their own workplaces and, thus, help grow the union qualitatively.

There is one other very real reason to focus on qualitative growth: just joining the IWW does not prepare one for struggle. We could sign up 100% of a workplace, but without proper preparation, the organization is nothing more than a paper tiger. *Organization and struggle builds membership, not the other way around.*

When organizing new workers, we believe the direct unionist strategy will encourage both quantitative and qualitative growth. Since workers are included in workplace organizing regardless of membership, co-workers get to see the IWW in action before ever committing to join the union. Successful organizing, in turn, opens up a place to begin discussions on topics such as class, capitalism, and the labor movement. Once workers are committed to the IWW—both in principle and in practice—then they can take out a red card. In such a way, direct unionism combines the three Wobbly principles of “Agitate, Educate, Organize” and exposes workers to them before they even fill out a membership application.

We do we need to combat the assumption ‘join the IWW and the struggle will come to you’?

Because of our history, professed militancy, and high ideals, the IWW recruits many younger political activists who are attracted to our open commitment to class struggle. However, the IWW is rife with stories of new members who joined up, got their co-workers to do the same, and then didn’t know where to go from there. It is situations like this that make us emphasize, once again, the need to undertake the same types of direct action grievances listed in section two. After all, *struggle is a process*. It is *created* and certain elements of *consciousness, confidence, organization, and accountability* must be present if we are to make headway. These facts must be known by newer members if the IWW hopes to effectively engage in workplace resistance. Worse yet, if we don’t convey this information effectively we run the very real risk of falling into service unionism, an idea that will be explored more in part three, “Why organize without contracts?”

Section 4: The need for organization

We realize that our description of direct unionism could make it appear we are “fetishizing” “informal workplace resistance groups”. (In other words, advocating only for groups of pissed-off workers to concentrate on fighting grievances in their own workplaces.) Such groups certainly have a place and often provide the springboard for larger organizing efforts. Yet for any struggle to become fully developed, formal organization is eventually going to be necessary.

As our organizing experiences have taught us, overreliance on informal work groups is a real risk. This can take the form of always expecting the dedicated members we already have to step up to fulfil too many (or even all) organizing tasks. This lends itself to accountability problems and ‘clique-control’. This can cripple even the most promising campaign. What is needed, instead, is (1) formalized accountability from our organizers and (2) for militants from different workplaces to link up into industrial networks, a topic that will be covered in section five.

The need for organization begins in the workplace itself. Some of this is quite simple: formal bylaws, scheduled meetings, regular reporting, and votes on all important matters. Likewise, it is important to maintain a record of struggle. If a campaign is public, newsletters provide one way to do this. In an ‘under the radar’ campaign, militants may want to write (or even record) ‘testimonials’ that highlight changes that came as a result of direct action. Besides being a record of successful (and not so successful) tactics, such testimonials can be read by future workers to give them a sense of the history of the campaign.

(Such testimonials, we should note, carry a very real danger. If they fall into the hands of a boss, they can spell trouble for the workers who created them. If a campaign decides to use testimonials, it may make sense to have them typed up anonymously or, if they are recorded, to have them re-read and re-recorded by a Fellow Worker who does not work in that particular shop.)

The need for organization also has implications for bringing new workers into a campaign. This can be a tricky process, but is also one that is absolutely key if the IWW is to survive and grow as a shopfloor presence. One way to accomplish this is for an ‘ambassador’ to reach out to each employee who is not actively involved. For example, if a new hire comes into the shop, a friendly member of the organizing committee can strike up a conversation about something that has recently changed. He or she might say, “They used to make us stay for an extra fifteen minutes after we’d clocked out to clean up. They stopped, though, since we let them know we weren’t going to put up with it. If they ask you to stay late, come let me know and we’ll work out a response. Don’t worry, workers here are willing to stand up for one another.” In this way, the organizer has introduced the new hire into a culture of solidarity and offered support in advance, but not scared off him or her by asking them to join a union, pay dues, or ‘resist the tyranny of the boss class.’ Once the new employee is a bit more comfortable in their job (made so through the support

of members on the organizing committee) or has mentioned a grievance, then s/he can be brought into the more formal network of workplace resistance.

All of this confirms something that all IWWs should keep in mind: organizing is about small steps and building relationships of trust. This must always be our guiding principle when we organize.

A final note on organization: direct unionists want to build the form of organization that makes the most sense for the workplace, the industry, and the current level of class struggle in society as whole. We try not to overemphasize *formalism*. In other words, we don't judge a struggle simply on its particular form—be it the union *form*, the workplace assembly *form*, or a “workers council” *form*. No form is perfect and the content and the goals of a struggle must be taken into account. In the final analysis, the goal of direct unionism is to create ‘practiced democracy, self-activity, and self-leadership’ within the context of a ‘participatory, collective, and class-conscious proletarian struggle.’ What this struggle may look like is going to vary from place to place and time to time. The goal, however, never changes.^{iv}

How will non-contractual organizing maintain workplace gains?

This is no small question. Since the end goal is not the signing of a contract (or, in many instances, even formal recognition from the boss) it is up to IWW members to create a culture of resistance that will continually defend gains. (In a sense, this is not much different than a contract since bosses regularly violate a contract when they don't think workers are organized enough to offer a defense.) To describe how we think this is best achieved we return to a concept developed by the IWW close to one-hundred years ago: *job conditioning*. Job conditioning is based on the idea that once experience, confidence, and solidarity is built up through small job actions, workers can begin tackling larger issues by ‘playing by their own rules.’

In many factories, including non-union ones, workers set the pace of production by refusing to work faster than a given speed. If the workers decide they will only make ten tables in an hour and they all stick to it, there is nothing the boss can do to change it. The workers have *conditioned* the boss through their solidarity and willingness to stand together. Even some of the IWW's greatest achievements were won through job conditioning. In the early 1900's when the IWW won the 8-hour day in the timber and wheat fields it was through a combination of raw industrial power (willingness to strike) and job conditioning: workers simply walked off the job after eight hours.

We realize these examples may seem a bit long-sighted given where the IWW is right now. What's important is that they were only possible because workers built up a culture that relied on solidarity and trust to establish and maintain gains. As direct unionists move forward in our organizing, we need to stress to our co-workers that solidarity *and solidarity alone* is the only weapon workers can rely on to make and cement gains in the workplace (not labor law, contracts, politicians, or union bosses).

When discussing organization, it is important to understand that direct unionism, like any form of unionism, poses problems of administration. Struggle is going to ebb and flow. Because of this—and especially in high-turnover industries—a direct unionist campaign may only lead to certain percentage of a particular workforce being actively organized at a given time. It's important that our co-workers understand this and are prepared for this potential outcome. Having the presence of an organizing committee in a shop will improve conditions, but by rejecting legalized notions of collective bargaining, sustaining a union presence is going to have its ups and downs. We view it like this: preparing workers for potential administrative difficulties is part of the *inoculation* process that the Organizer Training 101 addresses and the inoculation process all direct unionists should be taking their co-workers through.

Finally, we'd like to note that direct unionism does not reject recognition from the boss. It only rejects 'official' recognition and the legalistic methods (contracts, labor board elections, union registration) used to do so. However, we also recognize that even non-contractual recognition carries risks and that in certain instances it is just not a realistic goal.^v The focus, at least in the foreseeable future, should be the creation of industrial networks, a topic we now turn to...

Section 5: What is the industrial strategy?

As direct unionists, we believe the IWW must pursue a non-contractual "industrial strategy" if we are to grow as a working class force. In the introductory paragraph to section one, we laid out very briefly how industrial networks should function:

...The goal [of smaller-scale workplace] actions [are] to build up leadership and consciousness amongst other workers. Once a 'critical mass' of workers have experience with, and an understanding of, direct action the focus will be on large scale industrial actions that address issues of wages and conditions across entire regions or even whole countries.

The goal of industrial networks, then, is threefold:

- 1) To encourage the formation of workplace committees who will organize direct action grievances.
- 2) To link up militants from across the industry into a formal body, preferably through the formation of IUBs.
- 3) In the long-term, to begin taking cross-workplace actions designed to cement gains and *standardize* conditions across the industry.

As we see it, the industrial strategy must be a 'two-pronged' attack that will differ depending on whether IWW members are organizing in a union or non-union workplace. In workplaces with *and* without a recognized union, the immediate goals will be the same: the creation of a rank-and-file shop committee that will encourage

and help organize direct action grievances in much the way we've described in this pamphlet.

In workplaces where IWWs are dual-carding, the organizing committee will seek to encourage workers to 'supersede' (i.e. move 'above and beyond') the trade-union form and push for *mass assemblies as the only legitimate voice of the workforce*. Wobblies will encourage struggle to be organized *across* trade unions (since many workplaces have more than one active union, a fact bosses regularly uses to their advantage) and seek to bring unorganized workers into the struggle as well. When mass actions occur, Wobblies should make sure that workers remain in full control of the struggle. This means democratic and open mass assemblies of workers (as opposed the secretive "back rooms" inhabited by union officials) must decide *every* aspect of the struggle. The final decision on what actions to take and when to call them off *must* be decided by the workers themselves.

When union-sanctioned struggle occurs, organized Wobblies should take a leading role in laying the groundwork for successful industrial action. Recently, Wobblies working at AT&T did this very thing. In summer 2009, workers at AT&T were preparing for a nationwide strike since contract negotiations had broken down between the Communication Workers of America and company management. Recognizing that the CWA was woefully unprepared for strike action, an IWW shop committee in an AT&T call center began organizing actions (including a work-to-rule) to build solidarity amongst their co-workers. They also discussed ways to 'up the ante' should management not be responsive to the strike, including a potential occupation of the office.

Of course, it goes without saying that we are **not** seeking to function as a union pressure group, reform caucus, or trying to "capture" official positions within the union (although IWW members may well decide to serve as shop stewards, safety reps, or other 'lay' union positions). In a union workplace, the IWW organizing committee must remain independent of the recognized union at all times. In fact, all militant workers must be prepared to clash with the union when we overstep the bounds of 'acceptable industrial action' or encourage our workmates to ignore anti-worker labor laws.

How would the industrial strategy work in the long-term?

As direct unionist we recognize that all tactics have limitations. Given that capitalism "cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production," the job conditioning we advocate is primarily a medium-term solution. In other words, since the bosses are always seeking to increase profit in any way possible—undercutting the gains of workers, using new technology, "outsourcing" jobs, etc.—simple job conditioning is not going to be enough. As a long-term solution (and we cannot emphasize enough that *Organizing without Contracts* focuses on the **here and now**), the IWW and the working class must decide what to do with the *power* we build through successful industrial networks. This is not something we intend to decide right now. We recognize,

however, that when the time comes we will have to strike a balance between protecting “bread-and-butter” gains and continuing down the path of revolutionary unionism. In terms of bread-and-butter it may make sense to institute hiring halls in industries and regions where the IWW exercises large amounts of industrial might.

In the long-term, politically and socially, our goal should be changing the way workers relate to one another, how they view their boss, and how the working class understands the larger economic system. In a nutshell, we need to be able to leverage the short-term gains we make to not only improve conditions, but to make workers understand that we won't be able to achieve long-term changes in society without a fundamental confrontation with capital.^{vi} We don't pretend to know what the demands—revolutionary or not—will be when these large scale conflicts occur. The demands will develop and be set *by the working class in the process of struggle*. The long-term goal of the industrial strategy, then, is to organize in a way that develops such consciousness and gives workers a way to relate to one another that creates that very change within their workplaces and within themselves.

Section 5: Non-Contractual Organizing in the IWW

Since, admittedly, the IWW is not involved in the sort of widespread non-contractual campaign we've laid out in this pamphlet, this section will focus on two things:

1) Potential structures that are *already in place* that could be used in a non-contractual campaign. In particular, we will concentrate on the potential of the Industrial Delegate System while highlighting current campaigns that have made successful use of direct action grievances.

2) Historical examples of successful non-contractual organizing. IWW Local 8 will be our prime case study.

In keeping with the renewed interest and growth the IWW has experienced since the turn of the 21st century, in 2009 the General Executive Board passed a motion to create an Industrial Delegate for IU 530. The premise for the Industrial Delegate System (IDS) is simple: workers in a particular IU can choose to pay their dues directly to their IU's delegate. Their dues money will then be split between the Industrial Organizing Committee and the general administration.

When the IU 530 Freight Truckers Organizing Committee proposed the IDS, they did not do so in a specifically non-contractual context. However, we feel that the structure of the IDS lends itself quite well to a non-contractual campaign. As a precursor to an Industrial Union, it creates the exact sort of industrial networks we've been talking about. Workers create organizing committees both in their workplace and across the industry. Those organizing committees then begin opening lines of communication (conference calls, newsletters, listserves, conferences, etc) in which workers can share experiences and plan actions.

Another example worth mentioning is the success of the Starbucks Workers Union in employing direct action grievances. Through the use of simple measures such as moral pressure workers have forced abusive managers to resign. In a celebrated example, workers took matters of health and safety into their own hands and forced Starbucks to install an industrial-strength fan in an overheated workplace.

Historically, few examples demonstrate the potential of a non-contractual organizing model more than Local 8 of the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union. Established in the nineteen-teens by Philadelphia longshoremen, two things made Local 8 remarkable. The first was that its leaders and membership were biracial. In an age where most unions were openly racist, Local 8 organized black and white workers as equals. The second thing that made Local 8 so special was the fact it established 'worker control' on the Philadelphia docks while balancing bread-and-butter concerns with radical, non-contractual principles. To achieve this Philadelphia's longshore workers would strike any pier in which a shipper tried to bring in non-union labor to unload cargo. Or, if a shipping agent tried to pay below the union rate or ignored union work rules, workers struck and held mass pickets outside the ship. When workers decided a raise was needed, a delegation would be sent to the bosses with the demand. If the bosses refused, a direct action campaign would be waged until the workers called it off. Although they did not always receive the full amount requested (Local 8 was not opposed to elected and accountable negotiating committees), such tactics saw Philadelphia longshoremen win some of the highest wages of any pier in the country.

To ensure that non-union workers would not bring down wage rates, members of the Local 8 refused to work with non-union members or individuals who were not caught up on dues. Such practices ensured IWW members maintained steady work (no small feat in the shipping industry) and that the IWW had de facto control of hiring practices. If a potential co-worker did not meet the requirements of a dedicated class warrior (by scabbing, for example), they would be denied a red card and, thus, denied a job on the docks.

Section 7: Non-contractual organizing outside the IWW

The following examples are not necessarily direct unionist, but they do point to ways that, historically and contemporarily, workers (many of whom would not identify as 'radical') have organized in ways that avoided getting bogged down by contractualism and legalized notions of unionism. As such, they are worthy of examination and discussion by direct unionists.

McDonald's Workers' Resistance: We are including the example of the MWR not because we believe it is the ideal example of how the IWW ought to move forward, but because it shows the manner in which a successful network of 'everyday workers' can be built in the notoriously hard to organize service sector. MWR began when workers in a Glasgow McDonalds decided their jobs basically sucked. Instead being constantly exploited at their "McJob," they decided their lives would be much better if they began sticking up for one another and sticking it to the boss. Much of

MWR's organizing was just trying to make their jobs more liveable. "Zines" were printed which told raunchy jokes about Ronald McDonald and encouraged co-workers to slow down on the job, take longer breaks, or refuse to do unsafe work.

Notably, very little of the MWR focused on issues of wages. As one of the founders later recalled, the MWR lost much of its steam once they began to tackle more 'traditional' labor issues. That being said, MWR was not without its victories. It ran a successful website that connected pissed off workers from around the world and in 2002, MWR called for all McDonald's workers to undertake a day of resistance. Direct actions, including attempted work stoppages and go-slows, were undertaken in England, Europe, Russia, and Australia. Besides giving the MWR some serious publicity, such a day of actions encouraged solidarity and consciousness amongst a massive, young, and unorganized workforce.

Of course, the faults of the MWR are many. Due to the secretive nature of the organizing, communication was patchy at best. More importantly, MWR's lack of structure provided little room for accountability or coordination. However, what's important to take away from MWR is the notion of how to build networks. We shouldn't be promising workers what we can't yet deliver, be it a raise or a revolutionary struggle. Instead, IWWs should agitate around conditions to create a shared sense of struggle and focus on linking up pissed-off workers across an industry. By facilitating such dialog we not only increase the potential for concerted activity, but spread our ideas to workers who may have never considered themselves "unionists" or "militants" but are fed up with their jobs and looking for a way to improve their working lives.

Gravel Truck Drivers and Taxi Workers in Edmonton:

Puerto Real Shipyards: The struggle in the Puerto Real began when the Spanish government attempted to shut down the shipyard in the late 1980s. As is common in most Spanish workplaces, multiple unions were operating in the yard including the anarcho-syndicalist CNT. From the struggle's inception, the CNT took a leading role in organizing resistance to the government's plans. While the struggle was ultimately successful—the shipyard remained open and workers won a number of concessions—it is the form of the struggle that most interests us. When the CNT organizes, the goal is always to organize in such a manner that the mass assembly of workers always has the final say. In Puerto Real, such a method brought dramatic consequences.

When the CNT called assemblies they were open not only to CNT members, but all shipyard workers, their families, and the entire working-class community of Puerto Real. Such an arrangement brought a flowering of resistance and encouraged widespread direct action. For example, every Tuesday was dedicated to acts of solidarity and resistance. Barricades were set up, offices occupied, and workers cut telephone service in an effort to put pressure on the bosses and the government. Of course, such assemblies showed the ability of everyday people to successfully

control their own struggles and do so in a way that relies only on solidarity, direct action, and direct democracy to do so.

Before continuing we would like to remind our readers that, as addressed in part one, section four, *form* is only one part of the struggle.^{vii} The content (basically the long and short-term demands and *practiced* democracy within the movement) and the leadership that comes from any struggle are all keys toward creating the direct unionist movement we desire. Form alone does not build consciousness, let alone the revolutionary activity that direct unionism ultimately seeks. While the form of the Puerto Real struggle is commendable, other forms (and new forms!) may be better suited to other situations.

All that being said, we believe the CNT's actions in Puerto Real show how a successful direct unionist approach to organizing *could* operate. As direct unionists we can relate to both their theoretical rejection of contractualism and their practical implementation of mass struggle. As the IWW moves forward this is a model and struggle that we can look toward for inspiration.

ⁱ If you're unfamiliar with how the IWW organizes we recommend you contact the IWW Organizing Department to schedule an organizer training. During a training, IWW-certified trainers will come to your town to show you how organize your workplace. In the US, **the Organizing Department can be reached at (970) 903-8721** (this number was current as of Summer 2009). You can also go to **<http://www.iww.org/en/organize>** to find out more. If you live outside of the US, go to **www.iww.org** to find out how to reach an IWW organizer in your country.

ⁱⁱ A more complete list of direct action tactics will hopefully soon be available in another pamphlet by the same authors.

ⁱⁱⁱ For an explanation of "vehicle of struggle" see the introduction to part one, section three "Are we trying to build a union?"

^{iv} We apologize about all the complex annoying language in this paragraph. We'll try not to let it happen again.

^v This pamphlet intentionally stresses the 'here and now', but if we reach a point where the IWW is a majority presence in a shop, recognition won't go much further than there being a recognized IWW delegate who is management's "first point of call" when it come to shop conditions. The rep—who will always be a member of the staff—will be limited by the fact all decisions must still be put to a vote of the entire workforce (with the exception of scabs, management stools, etc).

^{vi} Once again, we apologize for the language in this paragraph. For clarification, in this sentence, "capital" refers to all business owners (capitalists) *as a class*.

^{vii} "We try not to overemphasize *formalism*. In other words, we don't judge a struggle simply on its particular form—be it the union *form*, the workplace assembly *form*, or a "workers council" *form*. No

form is perfect and the content and the goals of a struggle must be taken into account. In the final analysis, the goal of direct unionism is to create 'practiced democracy, self-activity, and self-leadership' within the context of a 'participatory, collective, and class-conscious proletarian struggle.' What this struggle may look like is going to vary from place to place and time to time. The goal, however, never changes"