

# Who We Are (Online Article)

## Historical Note

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## Content

### About the IWW

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) is an international worker-run labor union which aims to unite all workers in One Big Union, to effectively organize and fight against the exploitation, injustice and oppression they are facing from their employers. It was originally founded in the United States of America in 1905, at a time when a large part of the working class (unskilled laborers, women, migrants, minorities etc) were not accepted in the craft unions. Its founders understood that the entire working class must stand together against the interests of the employing class. (For a chronology of the IWW's history in the US until 2000 see [here](#), and for the same period outside the US see [here](#))

### “Industrial”

The term should not be confused as to mean only light and heavy industry. All sectors of economic life are called industries, for example healthcare, tourism, education, transportation, retail, services of all kinds, entertainment etc. Industrial unionism stands for the organization of whole industries, rather than individual trades, so that unions can be more effective, as well as not cause divides among the working class. For example, when a school is organized industrially, every worker – from the janitors to security and from secretaries to teachers – becomes the member of the same union. As such, when one worker or category of workers is targeted by the employers, they all fight back together in solidarity; thus the slogan: “An Injury to One is an Injury to All”.

### “Workers”

Every member of the working class is a worker, including students, retirees, the unemployed and those who are temporarily or permanently unable to work. That is why the solidarity unionism model of the IWW stands for organizing not only in the workplace where workers work, but also in the communities where workers live. Evictions, high bills, pollution, unhealthy living conditions, access to health and other services, police brutality and social problems like racism and sexism, are all working class issues, and high on the IWW's agenda of community struggles. While fighting for a truly democratic society, the union also struggles for workplace democracy, which is the active participation of workers in the decision-making of the company. A society where the majority of the population spends a big part of their waking hours in an environment where they have no control over or even a say, is not a democratic society; especially considering that the labor of workers is the source of the employers' profits. In the same vein, the IWW is a union which was built by workers and is run by workers in a democratic horizontal manner, with no bureaucrats interfering with the decision-making of the rank and file; the members make the decisions, they carry them out with actions and they reap the full benefits of those actions.

## **“of the World”**

The IWW is an international and multinational union, following the simple truth that all workers around the world have the same interests and that national barriers should not divide them. As such, the IWW has always been against all wars that pit workers of one country against the workers of another, in favor of the interests of the ruling class. Moreover, now more than ever the power of the employer class is global; in order to fight against this power, there is a need for global organizing. Soon after its formation, the IWW spread in countries all over the world, and today has active branches in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Iceland, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium and Greece; Wobblies (the nickname of the members of the IWW) can be found in many other countries all over the world, including Latvia, India, the Philippines, Turkey, France, Italy and Cyprus.

## **The three stars**

- Education → Knowledge is power. To build power in the workplace and other parts of life, Wobblies share their experiences and educate each other about many topics: workers' rights, labor laws, ways to fight against injustice, how to organize their workplace, working class history etc.
- Organisation → All this knowledge is used to organize more effectively against the forces of the employing class, against the employer, the manager, the landlord, the cop, the government. They have every interest to keep workers down, and they can not be convinced to part with their wealth through dialogue and mere words; direct industrial action is needed. (What is direct action you ask? Click on the Black Cat to find out!)
- Emancipation → The end goal of the IWW is a world free of wage-slavery, with an economy built to satisfy human needs and desires, and not the profit-mongering of a handful of wealthy elites. Humanity will truly be free, when everyone is able to live a full and happy life, without having to choose between starvation or slaving for a wage.

## **The Preamble to the IWW Constitution**

(The full Constitution of the IWW can be found [here](#))

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the Earth.

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

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

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

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

[Needs Turkish Translation](#), [Online Articles](#), [IWW Cyprus \(Group\)](#), [Decade 2020-2029](#), [2022](#), [Labour Rights](#), [Undefined Location](#)

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