IWW ORGANIZING MANUAL

Industrial Workers
of the
World

This second edition of the IWW's Organizing Manual builds upon the First Edition, published in 1978. This edition was published in May 1996, after a draft was circulated to the entire IWW membership for comments. It is a collective product, incorporating large sections of the 1978 edition, and suggestions from dozens of Wobblies.

This Manual is prepared primarily for workers in the United States While much of the discussion may be useful to workers in other countries, the legal restrictions imposed dramatically from country to country. For example, many countries do not have the "winner-take-all" system of union representation elections that provide in the US. Instead every union with a presence in the workplace is entitled to represent its members. Obviously union organizing strategies will differ with conditions.

I.W.W. General Headquarters
PO Box 13476,
Philadelphia, PA 19101, USA
(215) 222-1905

Flores Magón Los Angeles
General Membership Branch
PO Box 91691
Pasadena CA 91109
(626) 644-1973

Part 1: The Organizer

What Is Organizing?

Organizing is the process by which a group of people take power over some aspect of their lives--on the job or in their communities. While community struggles are important in their own right, this Organizing Manual concentrates on organizing our fellow workers in the workplace--where we, as workers, have the industrial power to enforce our demands. Too often, organizing is viewed as leaders' selling an external agency to workers to 'represent' them. A vast body of law and huge bureaucracies exist to reinforce such notions. But this is not what our organizing is all about.

IWW organizing aims at enabling a group of working people to build a union and use it to express their needs and desire and to accomplish the changes they want to make in their economic lives. The important consideration is their needs and their lives. The organizer simply makes the tools available to them. The union is the people in it. If it is not, it will not be worth the trouble of fighting for, and it will be abandoned at the first pressure.

The basic feelings most working people share, that make the union their natural tool, are already there: class consciousness, the conviction that their interests are not identical with their employers'; alienation from jobs they see as unrewarding and/or useless; self-respect that is outraged by the conditions of their work or the attitudes of their superiors. Organizing involves first understanding these working people as they now are, and then giving them information they need in order to be able to figure out how a union can meet their needs. The understanding is the important part.

A Class Conscious Working Class

For many, "working class" has become a dirty word since the 1930s. Paternalistic liberals try to define the working class out of existence by assigning workers above the poverty line to the middle class and the rest to an underclass (to become objects of government 'benevolence'). Part of the elitist left likewise tries to deny that wage workers are a class-conscious, potentially revolutionary class, and many left political parties identify class consciousness with acceptance of their party line. Establishment academics and politicians try to hide the working class in an amorphous middle class. None of these opinions changes reality.

The potential for a class-conscious working class exists because capitalist production exploits wage workers. Class consciousness depends not on labels and revolutionary rhetoric, but on the fact of oppression and each worker's awareness of his/her own individual exploitation. The intensity and breadth of working class struggle depend upon the pressure of exploitation and the viability of the practical tools available for struggle.

Each generation of workers learns for itself the bitter truth that, regardless of the myths and success stories they were taught in school, in reality they will not rise out of their class. The options are closed off, and they are stuck. For the next 40 years or so they will work (assuming they can find jobs) for wages. And for most those wages will be so modest that they will live their lives on the edge of financial disaster--only two or three paychecks from the street.

For most workers, class consciousness does not extend beyond their particular employer and their immediate fellow workers. They do not connect their situation to a capitalist class controlling a capitalist government for their enslavement. Nevertheless, every time a worker supports his/her fellow workers or union—any union—that worker is saying: "My employer is my enemy. I must combine with my fellow workers to fight this situation."

Our job as organizers is to build on that latent class consciousness, to show our fellow workers how their individual situations are fundamentally the same, and result from the structure of the workplace, the economy and the society. Only by working together, by recognizing that an injury to one is an injury to all, can we hope for substantive improvements for ourselves.

Who Can Organize?

Only class-conscious working people can organize their peers. We learn class consciousness in our blood and bones. We, each individually, learn the feel of our own particular boss's foot on our own particular neck. Without this personal experience, the knowledge in our heads is useless.

Our shared work experience develops understanding impossible to acquire in any other way. If you have never felt that you simply could not stand the last hour of a shift, how can you hope to understand that feeling in others? Or endured the humiliation of a boss's bawling out because you couldn't afford to quit? Or, for that matter, faced a job you hated every day because people you cared about depended on you for support and you didn't see another job in sight? If you have not had to make the thousand and one compromises with yourself and the way you would like things to be, how can you possibly understand most working people, who are forced to make such compromises?

Any class-conscious worker can be, and should be, an organizer. The business unions and government have led many of us to think of organizing as a job for specialists – rather than as something we do everyday on the job. The labor movement was not built by professional organizers (many of whom have never worked the jobs they're trying to organize). It was built by working people like us, who recognized that only by uniting on the job—in industry—could we hope to win better conditions and build a better world.

Part 2: Preparing to Organize

Most IWW organizing drives start with someone on the job (perhaps someone who already holds a red card and has decided conditions are ripe to organize his/her fellow workers) approaching the union for help organizing their fellow workers. Sometimes workers write or call our main office and are referred to the local General Membership Branch (GMB). Or else the local engages in activities designed to find workers interested in activism in the workplace. and/or organizing the place they work. Either way, you generally start off with a (generally small) pre-existing base of support on the job and information about working conditions, pay rates, and other useful information (such as when shifts change); which gives you an invaluable head start on getting the organizing drive off the ground.

Choosing the Target

But whether the IWW is asked in by workers on the job or you're coming in cold it helps to do a little research on the employer and the job. Even under the best possible conditions, the chances of success are not always certain. Here are some considerations.

Size is important. On a very small job the turnover of a few people may wipe out a majority. On a very large job, organizing may he beyond our resources and competition from other unions will likely be keen. Business unions often decline to organize small workplaces due to the relatively high cost per member of organizing and representing the workers. So workplaces with less than 50 employees should have the least competition from other unions. However, even where it isn't possible to win an IWW majority, the possibility of building a job branch to maintain a union presence on the shop floor should not be overlooked.

In well-organized areas the large workplaces and those involving traditional craft skills are likely to be already organized. The leavings are small places, generally with high turnover and poor wages and conditions. Most workers in these places know they are exploited and are planning to move along soon. They might organize if they can be convinced that they have a reasonable chance of success.

Researching the Target

The employer's financial condition and competitive position will affect the chances of raising wages and improving conditions. The strongest union can't get much in the way of pay hikes from a marginal employer in an unprofitable enterprise, though a direct action campaign may well be able to do something about the conditions. Many marginal employers will fight the union to the death, figuring bankruptcy preferable to granting better pay and conditions.

Workers know a lot about their workplace. They know about working conditions, pay rates, shift change times, facts about the supervisors and labor relations hacks (if any), and a host of other useful information. A lot of additional information is readily available from public sources. Financial information on many companies is available in the library in Dun and Bradstreet Credit Reports, Standard and Poor's Corporation Records and Moody's Investors Service. These sources should indicate whether the company is part of a chain or conglomerate and its financial condition. If none of them include the employer or provide the needed information, the library may have public relations material from the company or annual financial statements in the newspaper files. (If not, copies of the annual report to stockholders can usually be obtained from the company's public relations office, as long as they don't know what you need it for.)

If the target is a public institution, check out the information that is available under local, state or federal public information acts (your local public or law library can point you in the direction of those laws, and many libraries maintain clippings and other documents on local government agencies). If it is a private nonprofit institution information can be found in the institution's tax returns (the forms, called 990s, are available at regional IRS offices).). Whatever industry or type of workplace, be prepared to search out specific information and develop appropriate organizing techniques for that particular situation.

Other useful sources of information about your employer include trade and local magazines, the local newspaper (the library may have an index, and many maintain a clippings file for articles about major local employers), or local offices of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and its state equivalent, and the National Labor Relations Board. While neither is much good at their stated purpose of protecting workers' rights, they do maintain extensive files. From OSHA you can often get health and safety reports on your employer, and information on complaints that have been filed against conditions at your plant (or at others operated by the same employer). Sometimes they can also help with questions about the hazards of particular materials you're working with. The NLRB can provide information on past Unfair Labor Practice charges against the company, representation elections, which (if any) other company shops are union, since when, and which union (including local number). This information helps get a picture of the company's record on health and safety, and its probable response to your organizing drive. Check the phone book for your local office, if you're in a major city. Or write to the national offices (NLRB, 1717 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington DC 20570; OSHA, 200 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington DC 20210) to get the local office's address and phone number.

If you or your fellow workers are working with chemicals or other potentially toxic substances, state and federal environmental agencies might have useful information on toxic discharges, applicable safety standards, etc. The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation & Liability Act (CERCLA) requires companies with 10 or more workers to make an inventory of routine toxic emissions, and to make available (to workers and the community) Material Data Safety Sheets on some 700 extremely hazardous substances used in operations. Any worker is legally entitled to see MSDS's on any substances at their workplace, and they are usually available at local fire departments as well.

Environmental groups might be able to point you in the direction of information on specific chemicals (also try the sources listed at the back of this Manual under Health and

Safety). In some states, such as California, the federal government has turned over much of the responsibility for enforcing health and safety laws to state agencies; if you can't find an OSHA listing under federal agencies in your phone book you might look for something similar under state agencies. And state departments of labor usually gather statistics on industrial accidents which should be available both for the individual workplace and for the industry as a whole.

It can be important to research the industry as well. Your library's business department or a local college library (particularly if they have a business school) should be able to point you toward a wealth of material about typical financial structures, occupational and environmental hazards, regulatory bodies, industry work norms, etc. Trade publications (specialized magazines published for executives in a particular field) can be a useful source of information as to what's on the bosses' minds in the industry, and often include detailed and frank information (they don't expect workers to be listening in).

Research your target as thoroughly as possible. Don't focus solely on the economic issues. Consider ways in which their operations affect others, and reach out to work together against your common enemy. Is the boss poisoning workers? Those same poisons probably hurt the local community too. Does the boss discriminate, or try to divide workers against each other? If so, make it an issue.

A bad boss is the best organizer. Other factors being equal, employees of an 'enlightened' paternalist where workers are told to feel like 'one big happy family' are harder to organize than those of an old-fashioned tyrant.

Young workers may be easier to organize than older workers tied to company pensions and fearful of losing their jobs and pensions. But young workers are often transient and may think they have little to gain from a union. And older workers may come to believe they have more to gain by struggling than by following policies of moderation.

Part-time workers are usually harder to organize than full-time workers because they nave less stake in improving the job. Some part-timers have second occupations, perhaps as students or homemakers. Often they regard the job as temporary and don't want to invest their time and energy in an organizing campaign. But increasing numbers of workers are being forced into part-time work as their main source of income, and may come to see organization as their only way out. Fast food places are among the hardest of all to organize through traditional means, though they are vulnerable to solidarity campaigns that target their multitude of consumer outlets.

Workers in the cooperative and social service/social change sectors of the economy should not be overlooked. Such workers can often be receptive to the IWW because of the similarity between their beliefs and the union' s. And such jobs are increasingly being subjected to capitalist 'rationalization', with management undermining (or simply abolishing) areas of workers self-management.

Methods of Organizing

Should we organize from the inside or outside? Most conventional unions organize from the outside, on the basis of workers contacting them for help. Sometimes. if the target is very large or strategic, they may try to organize cold with a series of leaflets to develop contacts and build a campaign.

These methods probably will not work for the IWW. We don't have an established product to sell, or a substantial presence on the job. And the hostility felt by many of our fellow workers for the business unions often rebounds against us. Working from the outside, you are more vulnerable to last-minute scare campaigns and intimidation, and more easily isolated from the workers you are trying to organize.

Particularly for the IWW, organizing from the inside seems to offer the best chance for success. First, the employer—not the union—pays the organizer's wages. Second, and most important, the organizer will have the necessary time and opportunity on the job to give people an understanding of the IWW. Many working people understand what most unions are all about. Practically none understand the IWW, and it will take more than a few leaflets to make ourselves known.

On many jobs, particularly those where the work process requires cooperation, informal work groups have developed which can play a key role in spreading union ideas and facilitating direct action. Make contact with a few key people in these circles, and they can do much of the organizing job. Employers are well aware of the existence of informal work groups, believing them to be one of the major causes of 'soldiering' and other forms of resistance on the shop floor, and not without reason. But unions have generally not paid sufficient attention to the importance of these work groups, and to their potential as a basis for rank-and-file power in the workplace.

Within the business unions, a debate goes on as to whether it is better strategy in an organizing campaign to have people just sign authorization cards and promise them that they will not have to pay anything until a contract is signed, or to ask people to join and pay dues during the organizing period. After many years of assuming that people would organize more readily if they had to pay nothing until assured of success, this assumption is finally being questioned. If people actually join the union, they have a more real and personal stake in its success, and may be less likely to change their minds when the employer applies pressure.

This approach is even more necessary for IWW organizing, because several additional problems exist beyond those other unions normally face in organizing. First, simply on the basis of immediate demands—the 'bread and butter' questions that workers customarily organize around—the IWW is likely to be challenged by another union having more resources, a paid representative available to advise and help negotiate, and a seemingly better chance at getting the support of other unions. People are more likely to resist the lure of other unions from inside the IWW than from the outside.

Second, the ultimate goals of the IWW—abolition of the wage system and establishment of workers' self-management—are integrally related to the day-to-day struggles on the job. These goals are linked to the IWW's structure, and to the ways we conduct union business.

Other unions have no such ultimate goals that conflict with most people's present conceptions of capitalism and the roles of Labor, Management and Government in the present system. If people are to choose the IWW as their union, they must also consciously choose to accept the ultimate goals.

Industrial Organizing

Ideally, of course, the IWW seeks to organize entire industries, not simply individual workplaces. Workplace job branches are building blocks towards our goal of organizing the entire working class. But if the rest of the industry pays minimum wage, you're going to be hard-pressed to win dramatically better conditions (either because the boss fears becoming "uncompetitive" or because there's a large supply of trained potential scabs just down the road). To win big improvements, you need to organize on an industrial basis.

In the 1970s, IWW branches across the country tried to organize workers in fast food and other restaurants, lining up majorities in several before being busted out by turnover, firings and closings. Might we have done better to try to line up all the food service workers in an area, turning the fluid nature of this workforce to our advantage in spreading the union presence? If the bosses know the next crew they hire are as likely to be union as the one in the shop, they might be more willing to talk turkey.

Among recent IWW industrial organizing efforts are the Duplicating Workers drive (targeting Kinko's) and the Education Workers Industrial Union drive, working to build on our relatively strong presence in schools and colleges. Industrial organizing committees could develop organizing materials and other support for local organizers, link up organizers across the country and around the globe, set (and fight for) an industry-wide wage scale, and pool information and resources.

The IWW and Conventional Unions

Some IWW organizers have tried to skirt this issue, presenting the IWW with its low dues and minimal staff as a bargain basement alternative to conventional unions. These campaigns have ignored the basic differences between the IWW and every other union: recognition of the class struggle, the need for class-wide unity, and the fact that the only way to end that struggle is by abolishing the wage system.

This sort of organizing tries to chop the IWW in two, separating the Preamble from the union as a vehicle for winning immediate demands. The thrust of such campaigns is, in effect: Forget about these visionary ideas. We believe in them, but we don't expect you common working people to. Just take us as a pure and simple union for the present. These campaigns—which tried to sell the IWW as a good, young, poor, clean union against the bad, old, rich, corrupt ones—have been uniformly unsuccessful.

Why? By dumping the Preamble we give up our strongest ground, completely ignoring the principal argument against the business unions: they are based upon an untrue premise, and therefore they cannot solve our problems.

The conventional (business) unions are based on the premise that Labor and Capital are partners, with the Government as umpire, in a system of class collaboration that will benefit everyone. These unions explicitly deny that a class struggle exists, and thus deny the most essential function of any combination of working people: mutual protection against the employing class. Yet most working people know that their interests are not the same as their employers and that they are neither friends nor partners. They know that the politicians who make up the government are more beholden to capital than labor, and therefore are biased umpires at best.

In recognizing the government's right to umpire the employer/employee relationship, the business unions renounce their one real source of strength, economic power, in favor of the futile gestures of lobbying and political action. How can such an illogical institution be expected to serve working people efficiently? How have those unions sewed them?

The business unions have gradually given away the gains of the 1930s. Contenting themselves with "Buy Union—Buy American" bumper stickers, they have watched the employers export their jobs to unorganized, low-wage countries. They have acquiesced meekly to speedups and hazardous working conditions, while the employers profited from working people's increased productivity. They have presided over faring real wage rates, through direct givebacks to the employers and through wages that don't keep up with inflation. They have ordered union members to scab on each other in obedience to the 'impartial' umpire's ban on their strongest weapons: the picket line and the secondary boycott, class solidarity. Some working people, bargaining through these unions, have undeniably made gains in wages, security and conditions, but in spite of the union structure and only where they have forced the issues with their economic strength.

This massive failure wasn't caused by corrupt officials, but by the basically unreal position of the conventional unions:

1. Partnership implies equal power. Within the limits that the unions attempt to confine their members, the power is decidedly unequal.
2. While denying officially that a class struggle exists, the business unions tacitly admit the reality by bargaining with employers and setting up grievance machinery.
3. Supporting the wage system, the conventional unions are therefore committed to trying to make it work "fairly:' at the expense of the class interests of their members. Witness the frequency with which AFL-CIO unions bail out or support "their" employers in distress at the expense of other working people.
4. Subscribing to the government-as-umpire theory the conventional unions meekly comply with each new restriction on working people's right to use their economic power. They forget that the employing class uses its money to buy umpires who will tend to render favorable decisions to their class.

Local officials may be very honest and sincere people, but they are immobilized by these contradictions. Even if they themselves understand the class struggle and would really like to see their locals bargain on that basis, they simply can't accomplish much against the weight of the rest of the union structure. More often, they accept the official myth and therefore label as troublemakers those union members who disagree. Anyone trapped in the same circumstances would react this way.

A conventional union offers:

Paid professional negotiators. But since the economic power of the workers themselves is the only consideration that moves the employer to grant concessions these negotiators really can't accomplish any more than a committee from the job, armed with the facts.

The security of a big "international" union with many

members and many signed agreements. The price for that security is an unremitting battle against the pressures to get along with the employer and sacrifice working conditions and individual militants in the process.

A large strike fund. This fund is usually controlled by the "international" union and may be used only with international sanction. Besides, the legal starve-out strike today is one of the most costly and least rewarding weapons for working people. It is the only weapon, however, that most conventional unions sanction. They discourage job actions, slowdowns, wildcats and other such tactics, in pan for fear of being sued by employers or having their funds impounded by the government. So the strike fund is often not available to the members, and instead becomes a club to discipline members for taking direct action.

A new group organizing under a business union can expect, in succession:

1. Statements that the union will give them security, the opportunity to bargain for improved wages and conditions, and control of their own agreement.
2. Pressure, meanwhile, to let the union, rather than the people on the job, direct the organizing campaign
3. After the employer recognizes the union, pressure to let the union, rather than the workers on the job, dictate the contents of the agreement.
4. After the agreement is signed, pressure by the union to ignore individual grievances, speedup and poor working conditions, provided the employer pays the wages and provides the benefits under the agreement.
5. Pressure to acquiesce in the employer's moves to eliminate troublemakers who refuse to be quiet.

Nothing short of a good understanding of class interests and the differences between the IWW and other unions is going to hold a group in the IWW.

In the past many IWW members have argued that any union is better than no union and have helped conventional unions organize. This choosing a second-best situation has generally been based on two considerations: that right now some improvement in the immediate conditions of their fellow workers was desirable and possible, and that even within the limited perspective of a business union, class consciousness and a sense of solidarity could be developed. In other words, organized workers, no matter what union they belong to, could be considered one step nearer the goal of the IWW than unorganized workers. Entire IWW organizing campaigns and job branches have been turned over to the business unions on this reasoning.

The business unions can devote immense resources to organizing the job, should they choose to do so. And they have certain advantages, as most workers are unfamiliar with IWW unionism. But while some business unions are better than others, none has the IWW's commitment to revolutionary unionism, direct action, and workers' self-management. A conventional union might be able to win a pay hike (but so can the IWW), but when the boss speeds up the line, asks you to handle scab goods, or has the foreman breathing down your neck the most they'll be able to do is file a grievance. (AFL-CIO contracts almost always forbid strikes during the life of the contract, let alone direct action.) That may be fine for the lawyers, but it's no way to run a union—or to build workers' awareness of their industrial power. if you don't have the strength to win IWW majority status on the job and a business union gets representation, you should work to keep the IWW nucleus together, to organize the job right.

And the business unions also have important weaknesses. We are all familiar with the public distaste for "big labor:' and the widespread belief that high-paid, longserving union officers are out of touch with rank-and-file members. Our fellow workers believe this because it's true. The IWW, however, is carefully structured to keep control in the hands of the membership. We have no high-paid officers, no lifetime sinecures, no large treasuries and fancy offices to protect. IWW dues are deliberately kept low, as we have learned that it's best to keep the union treasury in the member's pockets where it's safe from court fines. Unlike conventional unions, the IWW relies on direct payment of dues. Too many unions rely on the boss to serve as union treasurer through the dues checkoff. Workers pay dues willy-nilly, as the boss takes the money from their wages just like taxes and insurance. With direct payment of dues, each worker comes into contact with a delegate at least once a month, and has an easy opportunity to discuss job conditions and the union.

When there is no checkoff, the way dues are paid is a direct barometer of the members' satisfaction (or lack of it) with the union and its officers.. Direct collection of dues ensures at least a minimum level of regular contact between members and of officers It guarantees rank-and-file control over the source of union funds, and thus protects against the growth of an undemocratic, unaccountable bureaucracy.

Part 3: The Organizing Campaign

Initially the organizer must win acceptance as a person, a good human being and fellow worker. This takes time, and until it is accomplished your ideas generally won't matter in the least. A good organizer is well liked and well respected. Conversely, the organizer sites and respects his/her fellow workers. Having gained the respect of your fellow workers, you can begin to let them know your economic and social views and exchange ideas with them. One of the best ways of making a point is to ask questions that lead your follow workers to the conclusions you have already reached. Go from the familiar and particular to the general and abstract. An abstract idea is more likely to be important to a person if it plainly bears on everyday life. When you talk with people, work with their strengths, and leave their weak points for later. Communicating ideas goes by the feel of it. If you can't feel when this situation is right and comfortable, you probably aren't in touch with your fellow workers in the first place.

Before you can think about launching a public organizing campaign you will need to build a nucleus in the workplace of IWW members with whom you will work jointly on the whole effort. Assemble this nucleus quietly and deliberately without letting management or the rest of the workforce know there is an organizing campaign in prospect. Try to sign up those individuals most receptive to the IWW, on the basis of their complete support of the IWW program and the premise that maybe the IWW can organize the place. If they agree with the program, but are not sure the place can be organized into the IWW, leave that decision open until later and sign them up. If they want to wait to join the IWW until an organizing drive gets going, maybe you can work with them on that basis. Whatever its composition, the nucleus should be firmly committed to organizing the workplace.

Consider with your fellow workers the possible options:

1. To organize into the IWW with the goat of union recognition and collective bargaining.
2. To organize a shop committee and agitate and bargain informally for certain demands, without trying to get a signed contract.
3. To organize around a single issue with wide appeal, possibly as the first step toward later organizing a union or shop committee.

Whatever form of organization you finally choose, the nucleus will be studying, listening, evaluating, planning. You will be finding out all you can about the company's financial and productive position, its labor history and policies, and the nature of other unions that might compete in an organizing campaign. This will be a continuous, intense process, all the white waiting for the opportune time to make the move to organize.

The Organizing Committee

When a job becomes the target of concerted organizing work, the first step, generally, is to form an organizing committee. The organizing committee should include at least one Wobbly from the workplace, and should be chosen on the basis of past organizing and direct action experience and familiarity with the industry and legal restrictions. Members of the committee should inventory the skills which they have among them: what experience do people have in organizing, negotiations and direct action? Who has public speaking experience or has put together a newsletter?

The committee's job is to help build an active group of members, a lob Branch, at the workplace, particularly by assisting with the tasks that can't practically (or safely) be carried out by Wobs on the shop floor. The Job Branch then takes control of the campaign and the committee is dissolved (although the Job Branch is, of course, encouraged to call outside members for assistance and advice). The methods and goals of the organizing committee should be planned and developed in order to pass on the skirts and tools and information necessary for the development of a Job Branch capable of conducting its own affairs in a democratic fashion—both in periods of intense activity and in the inevitable dry spells when little seems to be happening.

The organizing committee should be established by the nearest IWW branch or group in response to a request for organizing assistance and should report on its progress and activities at least monthly to the Branch and the General Executive Board. Financial, advisory and moral support is generally available from other IWW branches, especially the closer ones—don't hesitate to get in touch and let them know what you need.

While in some situations--particularly at larger workplaces—leafletting and similar open organizing efforts may make sense from the start, it often makes more sense in the early stages of a campaign to approach workers individually. Whatever the tactics chosen, the Organizing Committee should focus its efforts on building the basis for IWW members on the job to take over and sustain the campaign.

Job and Industrial Union Branches

IWW Job Branches are organized wherever five or more Wobblies are working on the same job. The Job Branch is the organized IWW presence on the job; it coordinates organizing efforts, presses grievances, negotiates with the boss, etc. A Job Branch need not represent a majority of the workforce to be effective. It can mobilize workers around particular, widely felt grievances even if most workers do not yet recognize the need for a union.

Industrial Union Branches are generally chartered on a regional (city, county, etc. - a small enough area that it is practical for members to meet) basis, although sometimes it may make sense to establish an IU Branch to deal with a particularly large employer. Industrial Union Branches bring together all IWW workers in the same industry, whether they have established job control or not. IU Branches keep branch allowance on IWW dues and serve as coordinating and support bodies for job branches and local organizing efforts. They may arrange affiliation with local General Membership Branches.

Role of the General Membership Branch

A branch is an official unit of the IWW with rights and re-

sponsibilities defined in the IWW Constitution. White the basic organizational unit of the IWW is the job branch, which brings together members working on the same job, the most visible unit is the geographically based General Membership Branch (or GMB). A GMB must have ten or more active members who live close enough to attend meetings together, and is entitled to retain half the dues and initiation fees of local members. The Branch must include all members in an area before it has a right to speak for the IWW there and may include scattered members in the surrounding area if those members so desire. In areas with fewer than 10 members an IWW Group may be formed. Job Branch members should participate in their local GMB (and/or Industrial Union Branch bringing together job branches in the same industry on a local level), both to help spread IWW ideas and to assist each others organizing efforts.

The branch is a small community of like-minded workers who are acting together through the union. One of its main activities is to organize new members. The best organizing is face to face—personal contact is critical. It can happen on the job during breaks and lunches, or off the job in public places or people's homes. Social affairs such as union picnics, ball games and parties are good places for workers to meet and relate to reach other—and to the union.

A "paper army" of members in name only can't accomplish anything. The branch needs to get and keep members active. When someone joins the branch, especially if he or she is from a new work site, an active Branch member should take time to talk to the new member personally. Find out why they joined the IWW what particular issues are important to them, if they are willing to distribute materials where they work, if they'd like to write an article for the Branch newsletter, etc. Presumably they joined because they support the union and want to help it grow. But many people wilt be hesitant to volunteer their ideas or to jump in without an invitation. Always seek to involve the new member in current and future projects, but without overwhelming them with work.

An effective organizer is a teacher. Teach people how to do things for themselves. A good way to do that is to have different tasks carried out by small committees which pair experienced Wobblies with newer members. Encourage members to serve on various committees (newsletter, Industrial Worker distribution, fundraising, etc.) to build the union. If members are asked to do tasks, the chances of getting them done are much greater than when everyone waits for spontaneous urges of others to carry out the work. Asking members to get involved also spreads the work around and avoids the common situation of too few doing too much and getting burned out.

Each member should be actively encouraged to do at least one of the following jobs: distribute the Industrial Worker and the Branch newsletter where they work, talk to people at work about the union and workplace issues, promote Branch activities, give input to the Branch newsletter and Industrial Worker (acting as a reporter on local issues, investigating local contracts and working conditions, etc.). Keeping people active in these ways will help your local network grow through their contacts and influence. It will ensure that you know about important struggles in your area, and have the opportunity to lend your support to them.

Branch members have the responsibility for building this network of activists and organizers. They should seek out new members in new workplaces. One way to reach new people is to write an article for the Branch newsletter about problems faced by potential groups of new members and contacts - and to make sure the newsletter gets to them. Another way is to be sure that the Industrial Worker and the Branch newsletter are distributed in and near as many potential organizing sites as possible.

To reach people, we have to make it easy for them to find us. People will call a phone line faster than they will sit down and write a letter. People will call or write or even drop by if they have a concrete reason to. Potential members will seek out working-class organizations that offer meaningful services. (Witness the history of mutual aid societies and cooperatives.) A post office box and a phone line with an answering machine make the Branch easy to reach. The distribution of newsletters, Industrial Workers, silent agitators and other printed materials including information on how to get in touch with the union, and how it can help, gets the word to potential members. IWW branches can offer services such as advice lines for dealing with the unemployment system, paralegal advice regarding workplace rights, etc. Cultural events and open meetings also offer toe Branch a chance to come together and to network with other workers in the area. And strike solidarity efforts can offer concrete examples of the possibilities for working-class solidarity, helping our fellow workers in their struggles while implicitly challenging the 'everyone for him or herself' attitude so prevalent in our society.

The Right Time to Organize

Timing is perhaps the single most important factor in organizing. Most places can't be organized at the wrong time. Many, but not all, can be organized at the right time.

Often the decisive factor in a successful campaign is an incident or situation that reveals to people the need for and possibility of changing their situation—that tips the workplace toward action. Wait for this situation to begin the active campaign. It may be new machines, new processes, safety violations or speedup. Sometimes marked union success in a similar establishment locally or in another facility of the same employer will tip the workplace. But without some impetus, either from within or without, the campaign probably won't move.

Timing is also related to business conditions. Most people have their jobs pretty well figured out long before an organizer shows up. An impending layoff means that a strike isn't likely to be successful. On the other hand, a new contract to fill may strengthen the workgroup's capability to pull off a strike or other job action. If the demands are seasonal, figure out when the employer can least afford disruptions and delays.

Whether to act at any given moment involves weighing the immediate situation and prospects. The work situation is not sitting on solid ground, but poised in midair, to be tipped toward or away from action by any change in people's perception of it. Objectively, all working people possess the economic power to control their own workplaces, provided they understand their power and act on this understanding. However, working people in any given place can not necessarily predict or control important external factors: the will-

ingness of others to take their jobs, the degree of outside help to expect, their ability to make workers outside understand and support their efforts, and the degree of commitment of their own group.

Even then, evaluate your position carefully. You have more strength when business is good and the workforce is needed than when a layoff is in prospect How much does the employer really need these present employees right now, and how easily could they be replaced? If demand is seasonal, when can the employer least afford delays and disruptions in the operation? If enough factors are favorable, and the Wobs on the job must decide this, then move.

The One Issue Campaign?

Maybe instead of trying to organize a union you decide to organize a campaign around a single issue—to gain one point. This is not a retreat, nor a trivial undertaking. The single issue campaign may be the catalyst that will later bring the workplace together to fight for other demands or to organize a union. Besides gaining the necessary objective the campaign can develop mutual trust and a strong sense of solidarity. Winning that point can give people self-confidence and convince them better than a thousand words that they do indeed have economic power with which to improve their lives.

While this manual's focus is on organizing a job branch, most of the information is also relevant for a one-issue campaign. Whether you decide to organize a union or to build a campaign around one issue, organize to win.

The Job Branch

The IWW Constitution provides that a Job Branch is to be established when there are at least five IWW members at a workplace. The Job Branch has a dual function—to organize the rest of the workforce and to, so far as possible, defend workers' interests in the meantime. In practice, of course, these functions overlap. If you're able to win a grievance or improve working conditions through direct action, for example, it's bound to give organizing efforts a boost.

The Job Branch is the IWW's basic unit of industrial organization. All IWW members at the workplace should join and actively participate in the job branch. Without organization, five Wobblies on a job are just that—through the Job Branch they can coordinate their efforts and establish a functioning, visible (even if small) IWW presence on the shop floor.

One group of young workers with no previous union experience made a reasonable demand on their employer. Management stalled and evaded the issue. They continued to press the demand, meanwhile looking for an opportunity to force the point. One day a load of sacks of cement arrived at the job site in an open truck just as heavy black clouds threatened momentarily to pour down rain. The water would ruin the cement. The supervisor started to hustle the crew to unload the cement. The crew declined to move until the long-neglected demand was dealt with. The supervisor promised to talk about it after the cement was under cover. The crew still didn't move. Rain drops began to fall. The supervisor granted the demand and the crew promptly unloaded the cement. Soon afterwards they won union recognition...

In recent years the view that a union, in order to be effective, has to line up the majority of the work force and negotiate a contract has come to be widely accepted, even among many Wobblies. But though its true that the stronger and more broadly based union support is, the more economic power can be brought to bear, a great deal can still be accomplished by a small group on the shop floor working to mobilize their fellow workers around particular grievances and to coordinate direct action campaigns. Maintaining an ongoing union presence of this sort does far more than leaflets alone can to show that you're serious about winning better working conditions—and that real unionism doesn't depend on government certification or a large treasury, but is working people acting together in concert to defend their interests against those of their employers.

The IWW is a democratic union of workers operating within a constitutional structure. The Job Branch is controlled by its members, and is thus the foundation of union democracy. With a bare minimum of members to maintain administrative functions and some continuity, the IWW recognizes the rights of workers on the shop floor to decide workplace issues and control their affairs. The Job Branch, not union organizers or the General Executive Board, controls the organizing campaign, decides what issues are important and what tactics to pursue. For this union democracy to be effective, you need to adopt democratic working rules; a body without structure tends to become undemocratic and to develop cliques.

Making the Job Branch Grow

Having established a Job Branch, a great deal remains to be done to organize your work place. You need to get and update information on the company, on workplace hazards. pay scales and other working conditions and procedures. (Having this information on hand makes it possible to respond quickly to issues as they arise, and to avoid the kinds of careless mistakes that can discredit a campaign). You need to reach out to departments and shifts not represented in the Job Branch, and to strive to include members of all ethnic, racial, age and sex groups. Without this sort of broad-based support, its all too easy for the employer to isolate union supporters and to play workers off against each other. And try to assemble a complete list of employees (and their home addresses) as soon as possible.

It's often useful to develop working subcommittees to divide up tasks and accomplish the practical work of the organizing campaign and to involve as many members as possible. Suggested committees include:

Membership To compile and keep up to date a list of names, addresses, departments, classifications, shifts, and other pertinent information about all employees;

House Calls. To arrange appointments and coordinate them with available union supporters to make the house calls;

Ways and Means. To handle all finances and arrangements, including purchases and bills, meeting arrangements and transportation;

Publicity. To prepare leaflets, letters, newsletters and news releases;

Distribution. Responsible for distributing leaflets and

preparing mailings.

Local situations may necessitate other committees, such as for legal defense, to mediate problems within the group, mutual aid, etc. Structure your committees to meet concrete needs, not an abstract plan.

A worker that you suspect may be a company plant or a politico trying to use the campaign for private ends may offer to help. Let them help in a nonsensitive area, such as distributing leaflets or stuffing mail, and have a trustworthy committee member keep an eye on him/her. Keep such people away from names of union supporters and house calls, where they have opportunity to speak for the union.

The Job Branch may want to study information on the labor laws applying to the campaign, in order to understand your legal rights and those of the employer. Some sources for this are listed at the end of this manual. Many public libraries have the Bureau of National Affairs Labor Reports and other good material. Labor law is a specialized field, and labor attorneys are expensive. Sometimes you can get good information from the regional NLRB office. Having some familiarity with labor law can help you know what to expect from the employer and the government, and to be prepared to deal with it. It's extremely important not to rely on labor law to protect your rights to organize, etc. Many of your supposed rights enshrined in the labor laws exist only on paper, while it often takes years for cases to make their way through NLRB hearings and appeals. Even when you "win" through the labor laws, you end up losing—endless hours are eaten up pursuing the case, momentum is lost, and power is shifted from the workplace to the bosses' courts. While you should know the law in order to make informed decisions about your options, the workplace remains your real source of strength.

The Job Branch must agree on a public address for mail, possibly a post office box. It should decide how much money will be needed and how/where to raise it (organizing funds from IWW General Administration are limited), where to find equipment to produce leaflets and letters, and where the Job Branch and committees can meet and work. (It's important to make sure that meeting sites are convenient for the members.)

The Issues

The Job Branch should be able to agree on the key issues in the workplace around which people will be most ready to organize. Issues tend to group themselves around two general subjects: human dignity (which involves workplace conditions, safety, speedup, seniority, union security, nondiscrimination, job organization and control, and the like), and "bread and butter"—wages, health and other benefits, and the like. Both are important, and deserve thoughtful consideration. (You may also want to raise demands speaking to broader community concerns, such as pollution.) The Job Branch should try to get hold of other union agreements, though these are often written in language intended to make them incomprehensible. While the bread-and-butter issues of wages and benefits are necessary to the individual worker's economic survival, the issues involving human dignity are the underpinning of the union, and therefore of the rest of the conditions.

Without the union and job security, workers will be hard pressed to protect their bread-and-butter gains. The branch should reach agreement on the key issues around which it will organize and act. Later, if a new situation develops, this decision can be altered; but at every point in the campaign you should work with a given set of issues democratically adopted.

Making Contacts

The best way to organize is face-to-face personal contact, on the job during breaks and lunch periods and off the job in social contacts or visits to workers' homes. Make every effort to get to know each of your fellow workers personally. Social affairs are good places to get acquainted with workers and maybe put in a word for the union.

Leaflets and letters are important, but, by themselves, are often not enough. Early in the campaign you may want to use leaflets. The first one may be general, introducing the IWW and unionism and suggesting why your workplace needs to organize. After that, the leaflets (or letters) should discuss the issues in the campaign, and details about the union (dues structure, rights of members, and so on). This information can anticipate some of the issues the employer will likely raise later. In any leaflet or newsletter, be sure to offer an easy way to get in touch with you. Many unions distribute authorization cards (signed statements by individual workers authorizing the union to represent them; although employers could theoretically recognize the union on the basis of such authorizations, in practice they are usually used to trigger an NLRB election) as part of all leaflets and newsletters. If you are going the NLRB route you will ultimately need authorization cards, even if not the cards (or a similar response coupon) can help develop a list of contacts to work with, particularly in parts of the workplace where the union is not strong.

Leaflets should be short and to the point. Don't overload them with dry facts or tiny type. Try to touch your readers emotionally. Be clear, explaining what you want readers to do. Write several drafts, and test them out on friends and union supporters (and invite criticism and suggestions) before you print up a thousand copies and start handing them out.

Be honest from the outset. Do not promise that the union will deliver this or that. Point out that the union is a tool that workers can we, and their own strength and determination will decide how much or lime they gain from a union. Do not promise them protection against firing for union activity. The law says employers may not do that, but they do it every day: again, the solidarity of the group will be their real protection. The surest way to lose people's respect is to deceive them and lie to them. No solid union group was ever built on a bunch of dupes who didn't know what might happen next.

Once a favorable contact is made, hang onto the person. Try to sign him or her up into the IWW; make sure he/she understands that her/his help is welcome in the campaign. People are committed to an undertaking in proportion as they give of themselves for it. (this is one of the best reasons for not, as the business unions so often do, merely asking people to sign authorization cards. Signing a card may be a useful first step, and may give some sense of the level of interest in the workplace. But many people will sign them just to get rid of union organizers or to scare the boss into a raise. Many unions have gotten signed authorization cards from a solid

majority of the workers and gone on to lose a NLRB election.) Besides, the help will be needed and the more people involved, the less plausible the employer's inevitable charge that the campaign is being carried on by outside agitators or a handful of malcontents.

Dealing With Fear

If you are honest with people, all of you will understand that you risk your jobs to some degree in a union organizing efforts. Most people, understandably, don't want to and can't afford to lose their jobs. Being sensible people, your fellow workers will likely have some fear to overcome before organizing.

What is the best way to deal with that fear? There are various legal stratagems that are often suggested to put the employer on notice that an organizing drive is underway, in hopes of laying the groundwork for later challenging the firing of any union activists. (If interested, consult the sources listed in the back.)

Most important is to use your common sense and avoid making things easy for the boss. Union activists should not use working time to organize and in general should be sure to keep their noses clean (making sure not to give the boss a "legitimate" reason for discharge). Show up on time, follow the rules, don't take a swing at the boss (no matter what the provocation). Organizing is difficult enough without having to deal with a key activist being fired for "just cause." It is, however, perfectly legal to organize on the employer's property before and after work and during break time, as long as you don't interfere with others working. Of course, this may not stop the boss from firing you, but it's legal nonetheless.

Avoid the appearance of one or two workers spearheading the drive, as they may prove too tempting a target for many bosses. You need to spread out the visible work among as many people as possible, without spotlighting anyone as "the" organizer. Use off-the-job organizers and supporters for vocal roles, or for meetings with the boss (unless you can bring so many workers that its impractical to fire them all), especially in the early stages when you have only a few members on the job.

Care must be taken in handling membership lists and associated information that could endanger workers' jobs if it fell into the boss's hands. But while reasonable precautions make sense, too great an emphasis on secrecy implies that the only safe course for union supporters is to keep everyone else from discovering how they feel about the union. This means not discussing it on the job, not attending meetings, and not helping distribute union literature. This is not a good atmosphere for organizing, and makes especially difficult the essential task of building a functioning job branch on the shop floor.

Regardless of how much or how little you decide to emphasize confidentiality of names, you must devise the best possible security system for handling the names of union supporters. Maybe the Branch can elect two or three of its most trustworthy members to have custody of the membership records, reports on attitudes of contacts, and the like. Loose talk about who does or doesn't support the union can do no good, and may well jeopardize people's jobs. Let union supporters make their own statements.

Of course, you may well want to make a public showing of union support—particularly when that support becomes substantial. There's nothing like a sea of IWW buttons, a horde of workers descending on the front office to demand union recognition, or a shift-change picket or rally at the main gate to let the employers—and any of your fellow workers who may be wavering—know that you're serious. In the end, union and individual security are based not on the NLRB or the labor laws, but on your strength in the workplace.

House Calls

For employees with whom you have no other personal contact, house calls are very important. Try hard to contact personally all workers except those known to be absolutely hostile to the union. Making appointments for house calls shows consideration for both the employee and the person making calls, and probably assures more favorable circumstances for the call. One or two job branch members could make the phone calls to set up appointments and then match appointments to the free time of available house callers, with the most economical use of time and transportation. You may want to go in teams. If women living alone may be reluctant to let strange men into their homes at night, you may want to send women organizers or a man and a woman to call on them.

Take a look at yourself before you go knocking on strangers' doors in behalf of the union. You should be neat and clean. Don't make your job harder with a bad first impression. Above all, you should not only show but really feel respect for the employee and his/her family. Unless there is very high turnover on the job, relatively new employees (less than a year's employment) should not make house calls. They simply won't know enough about the workplace and they may not be accepted by long-time employees.

You need not be a glib, professional salesperson type to make house calls. In fact, don't go there to "sell," but to talk over an important matter of mutual concern. The person you are calling on is not only a fellow worker on the job, but also a complete individual whose real interests likely lie outside the job. If you can establish some communication, some common interest with that off-the-job person and his/her family, you will likely have more success with the on-the-job person. Accommodate yourself courteously to the home. Shut gates, don't track in mud. You may find the TV on and staying on, children running in and out. Accept these things and relax. If a person wants to talk sports or world affairs or gardening, talk these things. It is really a compliment that the person sees the individual behind the organizer. Later you will find a way to get back to the union and introduce your ideas.

How much can you accomplish with a house call? Don't waste your time on a person completely hostile to the union. You are not going to change a lifetime of prejudice and company loyalty in one evening. Wind up the call and leave. Don't butt heads in a knock-down-and-drag-out argument over some minor point. Even if you win the argument you may lose the union a supporter. because people usually won't be bullied into accepting an idea Turn the point at issue aside and go on to more important subjects. If you approach the people you call on with genuine respect for their persons and their ideas, the interview will generally go well. If the person

shows active interest in the union, encourage him/her to participate in the campaign, and ask for names of other employees who might welcome a visit from a union representative. Don't outstay your welcome. Leave before the family gets tired of you.

As soon as possible after leaving the house, write a brief report the the including an evaluation of the person's attitude toward the union, advisability of further contact, possible help in campaign, and anything else significant. Turn this over promptly to the committee (or person) in charge of keeping these records.

Publicity

While personal contact is generally the best way to reach people, printed propaganda such as leaflets and letters can help get your message broadly distributed. All written materials should be the result of a group, such as a publicity or outreach committee, working together. Several people arguing and discussing a leaflet together may not be the fastest way to get things done, but it helps clarify what you're trying to say and avoids careless blunders that can easily happen in the rush to get something out. No matter if one person actually writes the leaflet, it should express faithfully the ideas of the branch (and be approved by it). The branch knows far better than any single individual what is important to the rest of the workers and what they want information about. If one person then drafts the leaflet, take it back to the group for approval. Be very sure of your facts. Statements that aren't true undermine confidence in the union. Avoid excessive bad-mouthing, as it often creates sympathy for the person you are picking on.

LEAFLETS must do three things: get themselves read, convince the readers of something and move the reader to action. To get themselves read they should be neat, attractive and uncrowded, with a catchy headline or graphic, short paragraphs and plenty of white space. To convince the reader, they should begin and end with strong paragraphs, deal with only one or two ideas expressed in simple, clear language, depending on facts rather than emotion to convince. Do not talk down to people. Avoid dull, pedantic wordiness and hackneyed rhetoric that destroys credibility. Use as few words as necessary. Extra, dead words weaken the impact of your message. To move to action a leaflet should provide logical arguments for doing something reasonable: signing a petition, joining the union, attending a meeting.

All leaflets and letters should be signed, not necessarily by individuals but by the organizing committee or Job Branch. If you can assemble some examples of good organizing leaflets they might help to provide ideas. Some of the big unions have professional media people design packages of organizing material. Whatever you put out, each piece should be carefully thought out and produced as attractively as your resources will allow. A neat photocopied (or even mimeographed, if that's what you have available) leaflet can be just as effective as a two color printed job, provided it says the right things. A sloppy leaflet full of typos and bad grammar shows contempt for the readers.

LETTERS are really just extended leaflets in slightly different form. They, too, should be neat and attractive, with an appeal for the eye. They may be somewhat longer, and may emphasize issues of interest to the entire family, such as food prices and the paycheck, safe working conditions, and so on. Like leaflets, they should open and close with strong paragraphs, deal with a limited number of topics, and advance facts in clear and simple language to lead to logical conclusions.

Labor organizers cannot just shoot off their mouths. I learned this the hard way in 1970, when I got busted for extortion for telling a shopping center manager that we were going to flood his center with newspaper sellers until he stopped calling the cops on us...

There are many ways to say what we want to say and get away with it. For example, in a 1972 strike one of the things workers didn't like was the boss driving equipment when he was drunk. Rather than accuse him of this (risking a harassment lawsuit for libel), our contract demands included one that the boss not drive equipment while drunk. The press got hold of it and asked the boss; he went wild calling us liars, while I simply asked how anyone could oppose a demand against drunk driving. We were not making charges, but simply demanding that it did not happen in the future. There was nothing the boss could do about it.

—X326677

NEWSLETTERS can be put out periodically during a campaign, to keep workers informed and to sustain interest. Like leaflets and lepers, their contents should be decided by the Branch as a whole, and they should be produced with the same care. Producing and distributing newsletters targeted to workers in a company, industry or region can be a good way to get people involved with the branch or organizing committee.

A Word About Writing

Many rank-and-file workers feel that writing is difficult, a specialized skis they can't hope to become adept at. Anyone bright enough to become an active unionist, however, can learn to write effectively. It just takes practice. Write in the same tone and voice with which you speak. If you're having trouble with a paragraph, read it aloud to see if it sound okay. If you have a tape recorder handy, you might want to read into the mike and then sit back and see how it sounds. What doesn't sound natural to you may not be clear to others who read it either.

In writing for publication, the most important thing is to stress news. A news story comes in two parts—an introduction that gives the main facts (who, what, where, when, why, how) and, perhaps, an anecdote or story to grab attention, and the rest of the article, where you develop these points. If possible, you should explain what the IWW feels should have been done, or can be done, about the situation and how it fits in to broader issues.

Be brief and to the point, taking care to make your point clearly. If you have trouble writing what you want, stop. Say it to yourself aloud and in your own words. Write that down. If it's still not coming out, try talking about the situation to a friend or co-worker. Bouncing ideas off someone else helps clarify them in your own mind, and they may suggest some-

thing that helps tie the whole thing together.

Be careful to be accurate—don't write anything unless you have double-checked it. Credibility is vital in organizing; if readers find out you're spreading rumors or that your facts aren't together they're not likely to pay much attention to anything else you have to say, no matter how right you are.

While you shouldn't underestimate people's intelligence or ability to understand things, you should also take care not to over-estimate their stock of information. Clearly state any general or background information necessary to understand the story you're telling. Use identifying information such as names, places, companies, dates, tides, etc. Be specific. Avoid jargon. You should spell out names before abbreviating them. Abbreviations only make sense if you know what they mean. It's often a good idea to have someone not working on the campaign read it over to see if it makes sense, or if there are sections that could benefit from some rewriting.

In editing, the key thing to keep in mind is clarity. Don't get hung up on a phrase or sentence—what's important is how well the article works as a whole. Check articles for the point of view they put forward, and for the emphasis they place on different issues. If you've done heavy editing, it's only courteous to run it by the original author before printing.

Distribution

As important as the production of leaflets and newsletters, of course, is getting them to the workers. Sometimes this is done through meetings, house visits and the mails. Otherwise you'll want to distribute them at the workplace. In either case, as much attention should go into organizing distribution as goes into putting the literature together If you're leafleting the workplace, you may want to ask Wobblies who don't work at the job to help out—both to avoid identifying union activists to the boss unnecessarily, and for logistical reasons (you don't want to be late for work, giving the boss an excuse for disciplinary action). When organizing leafleting, make sure that all shifts and entrances are covered, and that you have enough leafletters on hand not to get overwhelmed by the last-minute rush.

Union literature cannot be distributed in working areas (except that under certain conditions—generally where these have been made available as a public forum—you may have a right to post union literature on company bulletin boards), or (by employees) during working time. You have an absolute right to leaflet on public sidewalks—though that won't necessarily stop the cops from arresting you—as long as you don't block the sidewalk or become involved in incidents of violence. Non-employees can generally distribute union literature on company property outside the plant (such as parking lots, and entrances to the factory) only if other organizations (such as the United Way or a local restaurant) are permitted such access. (It's an unfair labor practice to arrest union organizers under such conditions, which doesn't always stop employers, of course.) Otherwise you can be arrested for trespassing, which is a local criminal offense, though ordinarily you'll be told to leave first.

Employees have a legal right to distribute union literature in non-working areas (such as the parking lot, locker rooms, cafeteria, etc.) during non-work time (before and after work, break periods, or mealtime). Even off-duty or laid-off workers have a clear legal right to leaflet out-of-doors, non-working areas (such as parking lots) owned by the company. It is illegal to fire, discipline or arrest workers for exercising such rights. Enforcing your rights, of course, is another matter. The NLRB is no more effective a defense of workers' rights in this area than in any other. The best defense, as always, is an organized workforce prepared to use its industrial power.

News Releases

The place of news releases in an organizing campaign largely depends upon the circumstances. In a large city, you're unlikely to get any significant mention in the daily press without a job action or some particularly outrageous violation of workers' rights by the employer. In a smaller community, where the workplace is important to the area, the local press may give the campaign more coverage, and the news release might prove an important means of informing the community and neutralizing opposition to the union. Don't overlook weekly community papas serving parts of an urban area. A good release can be like a free ad, with the paper's reputation behind it, so it should be handled carefully.

History is not "news"; therefore a news release should be written in the future or present tense, and deal with an impending action or what is happening now (even if it's a response to something that happened in the past). The lead paragraph should be dramatic enough to get the reader's attention. The succeeding paragraphs should answer the questions: who? what? why? where? when? and how? They should be arranged in descending order of importance so that if the story is too long the least important part can be cut off the Again, the writing should be clear and simple. The story must be written "objectively." If the paper prints it, the story becomes the paper's reporting, not yours. No paper is going to say: "The X company is violently anti-union and has threatened to fire the most active organizers in the union campaign." But the paper might well say: "Betty Smith, speaking for the union organizing committee, charged today that the X company is violently anti-union and has threatened to fire the most active organizers in the union campaign." Whenever you want to get an opinion in a news release, make it the opinion of some person, as distinct from the facts in the release.

Be sure of your facts. If you burn the paper with stuff that isn't true, the paper will likely not print future releases. If the papa is a weekly, time the release so it is an up-to-date story to meet the weekly news deadline. If you give the same releases to radio or TV stations and newspapers, time them so that sometimes one will be able to release it first and sometimes another. Don't consistently favor one. To prepare a news release:

Type the copy double-spaced on one side only of a sheet;

Leave wide margins all around to allow the editor room for changes;

In the top right-hand corner place the IWW's name, and the name and phone number of the person making the release;

On the left above the beginning of the story, state the

time the story can first be used. Most stories are marked 'For Immediate Release.'

Begin the story one-third of the way down the first page, to give the editor room to write the headline and instructions to the typesetter.

If you have press clips from earlier coverage, these can make the story seem more important and give reporters background information.

Often, an "open letter" can be an effective way to place the spotlight on the boss - and a paper that won't cover you in their news columns might run it on their letters page.

Don't call press conferences unless you have something really big. This is a pretentious gesture, and takes a lot of time. If the campaign is hot news let the reporters come to you for additional information. Be sure that whoever deals with the press is well briefed, and able to stick to the issues the union wants to get out. If you're not sure how to answer a question, don't—you can always offer to get back to the reporter later.

Determine in advance who will speak to the press (whether in response to media inquiries, or on a picket line or at some other public event). You should always have someone who is prepared to talk to the media, and make sure reporters are steered to that person. Otherwise you lose all control over your message. Avoid rambling, it can only cause problems. Know the central point you're trying to make before talking to any reporter (and keep it simple; few reporters will take the time to master the intricate details of a drawn-out dispute), have some documents to back it up (if possible), and stick to it. Don't get dragged off onto side issues. But don't refuse to answer questions either; redirect them to what you want to talk about.

Weigh your words before speaking, with an eye both to what you're saying and how it will sound to others. (And if you're being interviewed by television, think about what's going to show up on camera as well. You want to look tidy, cool, collected, which is hard to do if you're being filmed on a freeway overpass with your hair blowing in your face and trucks roaring in the background.) If you raise a lot of tangential issues or are careless with your facts or start boasting about how some scabs came to a bad end, then you are inevitably going to end up looking bad in the newspaper or on the evening news. You can cry misquote or out-of-context distortion, but the damage will have been done (and that casual boasting could come back to haunt you not only in the form of bad press, but also in a NLRB hearing or in court). A short, focused interview minimizes the opportunities for problems. Unless you know the reporter pretty well, an hour-long conversation is a recipe for disaster.

Careless wording or an idle boast can also serve as a pretext for the boss to go running off to the NLRB to claim that you're threatening unfair labor practices, or to court using your words to bolster a claim for an injunction or to support a lawsuit for libel, extortion, racketeering or whatever. Most such suits are mere harassment, and will eventually be thrown out of court But in the meantime, you've had to divert time and resources (legal fees can mount up real fast) to defending yourself. The bosses don't file these cases to win; rather they are trying to scare off potential supporters, bankrupt you, and divert energy from organizing. They hope to win the war even if you win every battle in court. You can't always prevent the bosses from dragging you into court, but there's no point making it easy for them.

Publicizing an ongoing campaign or a union victory, if done right, can help boost organizing efforts and sustain morale. It can also alert workers at other shops to the IWW's existence, and inspire them to consider organizing as well.

Public Meetings

A meeting is one of the best means of explaining the union to the entire workforce, answering questions and encouraging discussion and communication among all employees about the campaign. The discussion can be a valuable guide in planning organizing strategy. But a public meeting is an uncertain undertaking. A good meeting can really help a campaign; a poor one, attended by only a few silent spectators, can kill it.

Before deciding to hold a public meeting, consider the atmosphere of the drive. Will many workers be sufficiently interested to attend? Do they live close enough to each ocher to be able to attend without transportation difficulties? Will they be sufficiently unafraid to take pan in questions and discussion? Do many of the contacts and supporters outside of the Job Branch want a meeting? How many could get their families to come and fine out what the campaign is all about? What possible chance is there of reprisals against participants? What do you hope to accomplish with the meeting? If you are not reasonably sure of success, don't plan a meeting.

If you do decide to hold a meeting, work as hard as you can to fill the hall. Do not use company premises, even if you could get permission. Get a proper size hall—better small and crowded clan large and empty. Get out plenty of good publicity and encourage families to attend. Plan for child care if necessary. Plan a good program, beginning with a poised, firm chairperson who can handle hecklers and keep control of the meeting. Choose the speakers to represent various elements of the workforce. Keep the speeches shoe, informative and honest. Leave plenty of time for questions and discussion from the floor, and close the meeting before people are tired of it. Have some good union literature on display for people to take home.

Maybe several smaller meetings would be better than a large meeting of the entire workforce. Some people find it easier to talk and ask questions in a small group of acquaintances. Consider breaking down the meetings into shifts and/or departments. Maybe several small meetings in private homes would be better attended than a large one. If the group is small and their homes are scattered, workers may prefer to meet right after work in a restaurant or bar down the street. Many of these have rooms available to give the group needed privacy. Small meetings can be run informally, but they

30 Years Before the NLRB

Maintenance workers at Long Island College Hospital voted for representation by SEIU Local 144 in July 1964. In May 1995 they were still fighting for union recognition and a contract. The hospital filed appeal after appeal with the NLRB and refused to bargain. The union won a second election in 1979, and a third in February 1995. Rather than relying on the Labor Board, these workers might have done better to try direct action...

should all be planned to include a good speaker who can explain the union, plenty of time for questions and discussion, and union literature to take home.

Community Attitudes

Sometimes, particularly in a small community where a handful of employers dominate economic and civic life, employers may well try to use prominent community people or a front organization to establish an atmosphere hostile to the union, and thus indirectly influence workers. If the workplace is a hospital or ocher essential public service, be prepared for hysterical charges that a union would have dangerous power because of the critical services its members render. But don't have too many preconceived notions about how the community will react. Be alert for how it actually is reacting.

In 1954, during the big campaign for state "right to work" legislation (barring union shops), the Machinists Union published a pamphlet, "'Right-to-Work' Laws: Three Moral Studies." It contains articles by a rabbi, a priest and a minister defending the union shop and the right to organize on moral and ethical grounds. This is an excellent pamphlet for people outside the union movement You might try to find it or comparable material, and prepare a package for distribution explaining unionism in this way (such material can often be found in your library, under "right-to-work").

If community attitudes seem likely to have an effect on your organizing efforts, try to secure personal interviews with prominent professional people to explain the organizing campaign, the legal right to organize, and the moral imperative to respect the right of workers to make their decision free from outside coercion. Don't expect a public statement endorsing the organizing campaign, but if you can get public statement calling for a free election and respect for the right of the employees you will have gained an important point.

As the campaign progresses, if you find reasonable community acceptance, you may want to air the subject on radio talk shows. Have several people prepared to call in with their own pro-union views—no canned stuff—so the station isn't immediately deluged with a string of anti-union calls.

Don't forget the religious, ethnic and racial organizations to which many workers may belong. The closer an organization is tied to workers' outside lives, the more important it is that that organization should understand and hopefully support what workers are trying to accomplish. Pastors, rabbis and priests of working-class congregations have frequently supported the labor struggles of their communicants.

The Employer's Reaction to the Campaign

The old-fashioned employer who used to confront a union organizing campaign head on with bluster and threats has generally become sophisticated. Large firms bring in their own labor relations experts, and small firms usually hire them. In either case, the campaign against the union is smooth—produced by professionals who spend their whole working lives as anti-union experts. These anti-union campaigns are often intended to disarm employees. rather than to intimidate them—although in recent years veiled and not-so-veiled threats to shut down and move to another state (or another country) if workers don't toe the line have become increasingly common.

Employers are used to, and prefer, Labor Relations Board elections—whether the lob Branch wishes to subject itself to this drawn-out, legalistic process is for the members to decide. It is possible—even legal—to fight for specific demands, or even to demand union recognition, without going through the NLRB.

It is essential that you have solid majority support (preferably paid up membership) before seeking union recognition. Some employers may try to defeat an organizing attempt by staging a rigged straw vote or calling for an NLRB election before the union has gained majority support.

When you have a solid majority, the time has come to demand union recognition. This can be done through a certified letter stating that a majority of workers have designated the union as their collective bargaining agent, and requesting the employer to recognize and agree to bargain with the union—but it might be better to let the employer know in a more direct fashion, perhaps by having the workforce visit and tell him so as a body. The boss may want to verify the union's majority status—under no circumstances should you turn over the names of union supporters. Instead offer to submit membership cards to a neutral party for verification of the union's majority. Don't be surprised if the employer refuses to recognize you.

There are essentially three ways to gain union recognition: voluntary recognition, independent election, or NLRB election. Any of these means of obtaining recognition has equal legal weight. Voluntary recognition includes situations where the employer—verbally or in writing—accepts the union's claim to represent a majority of employees or agrees to have a neutral, third party verify the union' s majority status through a card check (assuming, of course, that a majority is found). Even if the boss only recognizes the union as a result of a strike or other fob action, it's still considered "voluntary."

If the employer refuses voluntary recognition, the union has several options. A brief strike or other job action may be just the thing to bring your boss around. Alternately, the union may wish to propose an election, to be conducted by a neutral, third party (not the government), to establish majority support for the IWW. This has the advantage of sidestepping the NLRB and its delays, ensuring that the question of majority support can be quickly settled without recourse to a job action (which might be worthwhile in situations, such as a hospital, where community support is deemed necessary and might be alienated through what could be portrayed as a frivolous strike) and without giving the boss time to whittle way at your majority.

Faced with a demand for union recognition, however, most employers will insist on an election held by the National Labor Relations Board or a state board, whichever has jurisdiction. Ostensibly this will be for the workers' protection, to be sure they are not being coerced into the union. Actually, it's a delaying tactic to give the employer time to win them back (or, alternately, intimidate them). You can not be compelled to agree to an NLRB election—however, it is illegal to picket for union recognition for more than 30 days without filing for an NLRB election. (Purely informational picketing, or picketing aimed at improving wages or conditions—having gained union recognition voluntarily or through an independent election—is another question en-

tirely.) The decision on how to proceed, should the employer refuse to recognize the union, must be made by the job branch, taking into consideration the level of support for job action.

If you decide to go with the NLRB you might do well to talk to a friendly attorney first (IWW headquarters might know someone in your neck of the woods; otherwise check with the local National Lawyers Guild or with local movement groups for someone who might be willing to offer some free advice) to get the lay of the land.

In filing for recognition the union is required to define the bargaining unit it seeks to represent The employer may refuse to agree that it is an "appropriate bargaining unit," and try to force the matter to a formal NLRB hearing. This will automatically delay the election several months. And the NLRB has a tendency to favor multi-plant bargaining units and splitting skilled workers off from the rest of the workforce.

You should be prepared to respond to charges that the IWW is not a bona-fide union. In Canada, an IWW construction local was once refused bargaining rights because a labor board hearing officer ruled that the IWW Preamble proved we did not seek harmonious relations with the bosses. In Los Angeles, an employer similarly tried to quote the Preamble a few years ago to "prove" us a "communist" organization, rather than a labor union.

This sort of nonsense is easily refuted. IWW headquarters can provide abundant documentation from the NLRB, the US labor department, etc., recognizing status as a union. If someone gives you grief over the Preamble, you might respond with quotes from old craft union constitutions, or the AFL's old constitutional preamble which delineated the class character of the economic system (they dumped the preamble when they merged with the CIO). And at root, of course, this sort of red-baiting charge is an attack not on our status as a labor union but rather on our right to advocate our views; and as such urges violation of our right to freedom of speech

Contrary to the official Liberal-Labor myth, the right to organize and bargain collectively was not written into Section 7(a) of the National Recovery Act and subsequently the Wagner Act of 1935 out of love for labor. Rather, that legislation was passed to contain Labor's growing rebellion and to undermine Labor's increasing realization of its own economic strength. The Taft Hartley Act, passed in 1947, and the Landrum-Griffin Act, passed in 1959, were both specifically designed to further shackle Labor's economic strength and solidarity. Therefore, while you may occasionally encounter sympathetic examiners and attorneys in regional NLRB offices, you are being governed here by a hostile body of law.

Besides the election itself, all sorts of other delaying tactics are possible under the law. In filing for recognition the union is required to define the bargaining unit it seeks to represent The employer may refuse to agree to that as an "appropriate bargaining unit." If the union and employer can not reach agreement, the NLRB will hold a formal hearing to determine the bargaining unit. Automatically this will delay the election for perhaps several months. The NLRB has a penchant for multi-plant bargaining units (which can not be democratically administered in most cases), and for splitting craft workers off from the rest of the workforce. Both are, of course, unacceptable. History indicates that strikes or other job action can change both the employer's and the NLRB's minds. Before insisting on a formal NLRB hearing, the union should consider carefully what will do the least damage to the campaign—the concessions demanded by the employer in defining the bargaining unit (which can be overturned through direct action), or the delay the hearing will cause.

The employer is prohibited from committing unfair labor practices, such as the wholesale firing of union supporters, during the organizing campaign. But suppose the employer ignores the law and does those things? The union can file charges of unfair labor practices with the NLRB. The election will then be postponed until the charges can be heard and decided. As all decisions can be appealed up to the national board, this could easily delay the election for a year or more. Employers may even try to bait unions into filing charges through provocative actions. This really gives the union the choice of letting the employer run roughshod over workers' rights, or trying to force the employer to obey the law (already biased in his favor) and having the election postponed indefinitely. If you go the elections route, it's often best to document and save the unfair labor practice charges until after the election, and file them only if the election is lost. It is very difficult to hold a group together during long delays, so it may be better to overlook provocation and proceed with the election.

The NLRB can be of assistance, particularly when the bosses have started firing union activists and you're trying to pick up the pieces. But it can also screw you, and no IWW campaign has ever succeeded which relied on labor law as its primary weapon. Many a charge has been filed with the NLRB, resulting in a sweeping legal "victory" five or seven years down the road. By that time the union has almost certainly been busted and most union supporters have moved on to another job. A few such "victories" and there won't be a union left to celebrate them.

If no hearings or charges delay it, the election will be set perhaps a month ahead. During that time the employer will try to undermine the union in various ways, including:

1. Attacking the union as an outsider attempting to capitalize on an unfortunate situation (such as a temporary slump in the market). The workplace is a big family, and if there are misunderstandings they should be settled within the family.
2. Playing on people's sympathies for a decent supervisor. Supervisors are management's front-line troops in the battle against unionization (whether willingly or not).
3. Claiming that the union will destroy opportunities for advancement. "We want to reward deserving employees, but the union won't let us."
4. Charge that the union will impose arbitrary fees and fines, and force workers to strike.
5. Claiming that the company really would like to raise wages and improve benefits, but its financial condition simply won't permit such generosity. Unreasonable coercion by outsiders may force the company to cut back on production, payroll and so on, or to relocate the facility in another area.
6. Redbaiting. (In responding stress that both the IWW as a whole and the Job Branch are democratic, open, non-violent, and unconnected to any party or government—but don't try to deny the evident facts or become defensive.)
7. Claiming union dues are a financial burden. (Though IWW dues are low, and union workers on average earn much

more, 20% more, than non-organized workers.)

8. Exploiting fears of bureaucratic control and loss of individuality. (Stress the IWW's democratic character and protections against bureaucracy.)

9. Attempting to split workers by introducing a "respectable" union, the AFL-CIO. (Stress the advantages of IWW representation; if the bosses' support for the business union is obvious, you might point out that the boss evidently prefers a "union" that will do his bidding.)

An Organizing Success Story

Each organizing drive has its own little peculiarities and you have to choose your tactics to fit the situation. There's no formula which will work under all circumstances. I think the best we can do is share our experiences and let you and your fellow workers pick and choose what will work for you. So here's mine:

I was involved in organizing the University Cellar bookstore in 1978. It was an alternative store in many ways. Many workers were idealists, hoping to provide a real service to the community. But the management lost sight of that idealism early on. When I got there the store was three years old with about 70 employees. Wages were low, and the amount of worker involvement in decision making, which had been high at the beginning, was declining. We tried five organizing drives over the next six years before we were finally successful. So I guess my first bit of advice is be patient and keep trying in spite of setbacks.

The next is be a "good, hard" worker. If you're out front about what you're trying to do, and I think you'll be more effective if you are, the bosses may want to get rid of you. If they fire you for organizing, you have a shot at getting back wages and reinstatement after a long process of dealing with the NLRB. If you're breaking any work rules, that will be the excuse they use for firing you and your chances of winning are less. Rational bosses (there may be one or two) will realize that they risk alienating other workers by firing someone who does a good job. Another reason for having a good work record is to win over any workers who are pro-managment or concerned that unionizing might jeopardize their livelihoods. They're more likely to trust an organizer whose work record shows that he or she isn't the sort who would do anything which might put the source of their livelihood out of business.

In the successful drive we put out a weekly photocopied newsletter. Even before we started the drive it was a way to air our grievances. After a few issues we started getting feedback from other workers. We encouraged, even nagged, workers with grievances to write them up for the newsletter, and accepted submissions from any non-management worker. So the paper became a forum for debate; but more and more it became a Union paper as we won more and more workers to our side. We started talking Union, pointing out that if we unionized we could set up work rules the workers agreed to, rather than just accepting rules handed down by the bosses. We could negotiate a contract which protected the things we liked about the job and changed the things we hated.

And we started signing people up in the IWW, rather than just getting signatures for an NLRB election. It gave the workers a sense of doing something, of solidarity, rather than just the liberal feeling you get when you sign a petition. And it helped build a core of workers we could count on to support action on the shop floor even if another union had come in or we had lost the organizing drive. We held weekly meetings open to all non-management workers to talk about tactics. It made it difficult to do anything very secretive. Snitches who later took jobs in management were present and no doubt ran back to the bosses with reports. But it was important to not alienate people on the fence, most of whom eventually fell off on the Union side. One worker who didn't want any union challenged us for signing people up in the IWW. So one meeting focused on the choice of a union. Those of us with bad experiences in other unions ran them down at the meeting. We emphasized that the IWW would support us while leaving us alone to negotiate a contract and run our business as we wanted rather than be one more boss like other unions usually are. The workers who had already signed up were solid in wanting the IWW, so it won handily. As one worker who initially opposed organizing wrote in our newsletter just before the NLRB election, "The IWW is cheap. It's democratic, and it's us."

For those workers with the delusion that workers and bosses were all just one big happy family, we pointed out that we weren't hostile toward our liberal boss and department managers, but that we wanted to be able to negotiate from a position of equality rather than just accepting what was handed down paternalistically, no matter how benevolent it might have been.

When management started red-baiting I wrote a satire in the newsletter saying yes indeed, the devil from IWW headquarters had flown in on his broom with orders to organize and we were blindly following along. It was absurd enough to make all the workers laugh and the bosses back off.

Before we went to management for Union recognition we signed up two-thirds of the workers. They wouldn't recognize us, so we petitioned the NLRB for an election. We started pulling job actions in the meantime: brief song breaks for a few verses of "Solidarity Forever" in the store during business hours, with new lyrics which fit our situation; leaflets to the customers telling them what we were doing and encouraging them to express their support to management; lots of workers wearing Union buttons, T-shirts and caps and willing to take time to explain why to customers. Make it clear to management that you aren't going away and they might as well recognize you and negotiate so they don't have to deal with the day-to-day direct actions.

When we had the NLRB election, we maintained the same percentage of workers as those we had signed up in the Union. You usually lose a lot with authorization cards; so if you're going that route, make sure you have a strong majority before you go for an election. Hopefully the boss will face reality when you show the list of members and dealing with the NLRB won't be necessary. It's a long, tedious bureaucratic process. If most workers are militant you can strike for recognition. That speeds up the process. But workers are often worried about getting fired or losing wages. I've found that actions on the job are less threatening to them.

Being open is best. If some of you are willing to be up front about what you're doing and you don't get fired, it will encourage others to stand up too. Of course, if you do get fired it could have the opposite effect. Until you're ready to go to the boss for recognition and start negotiating, I'd sug-

gest you let the more timid among you join up but keep their membership secret. Tell them you aren't going to let management know who's involved until you have the weight of a clear majority and the law behind you. Get them as involved as you can, but give them the room to grow at their own pace.

Sources of Labor Law

In the United States, most labor law is federal. The National Labor Relations Act limits your rights to form unions and to bring effective pressure to bear against your employer to win your demands. But the NLRA does not cover local and state government employees, farm workers, domestic workers and some other workers. Airline and railroad workers are covered by a separate federal law. In most states public sector workers are covered by state public employee laws modeled after the NLRA. California is among the handful of states with laws covering agricultural workers. Uncovered workers retain their rights to strike for recognition or over grievances, to call for secondary boycotts, etc.

The Fair Labor Standards Act limits child labor in most industries (notable exceptions are farm labor and newspaper delivery), requires employers to pay a minimum wage, and requires overtime pay when workers work more than 40 hours in a week. Most, but not all, workers are covered. The US Labor Department is charged with enforcing the law. Most states have parallel state laws and agencies, some of which offer broader protections.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act requires employers to meet minimal safety standards, entitles you to information as to toxic substances you are working with, and prohibits retaliation against workers for filing OSHA complaints.

Other federal laws regulate pension plans, prohibit discrimination on race or sex grounds, require employers to provide unpaid leave during personal or family medical emergencies, etc.

State laws govern workers compensation claims if you get injured on the job, and sometimes go beyond federal laws in limiting child labor, overtime (in Illinois, for example, you cannot be asked to work more than 13 days in a row, though the state waived this in a recent IWW campaign), etc. Some states restrict employers' "right" to fire workers without cause, or offer protections against harassment beyond those available through federal civil rights law. Many states also have laws governing access to personnel records, employee privacy and related issues.

Most states have agencies to help workers collect unpaid wages. Some states have laws against the importation of scabs, though these are rarely enforced. information on applicable state laws can be obtained from the State Department of Labor. Handbooks on state labor law are sometimes available as well.

Part 4: The Union's Response

Don't be put on the defensive, spending all your time answering the employer's attacks. Make your own positive statements containing the facts the employer is distorting. Deal with specific abuses and demands in a reasonable tone. Avoid the kind of attacks on the employer which can generate sympathy for the underdog. Rabid personal attacks on the boss won't persuade anyone; better point out that employers have different interests, interests that conflict with those of the workers. Emphasize the union's program, let workers find out for themselves how fair the employer is.

Coupled with arguments against the union, the employer will often try to bribe workers with wage raises, correction of grievances, and improvement of the workplace environment. These concessions are responses to the present or potential strength of the workers, and the threat which unionization poses. These bribes are also unfair labor practices, according to the law, but the union certainly can't oppose them. Rather, it should anticipate them, and prepare workers for these bribes. The union should point out that the employer's actions show how much he/she is prepared to give to avoid having to deal with the union. This proves the union's contention that workers can really gain through organization. Greater gains can be anticipated with union recognition and collective bargaining.

Stay one jump ahead of the employer. Plan your strategy like a chess game. If the union does or says this, management's counterattack will likely be that. Don't be caught flat-footed. In spite of your excellent program, you won't encourage confidence in the union if management makes you look like a bunch of dummies. Warn workers to expect bribes and threats from the employer, not because management is mean or malicious, but because it just doesn't want the union for valid (from its standpoint) economic reasons. By anticipating the employer's moves, you can greatly minimize the damage they do.

Informational Picketing

Informational picketing is directed at consumers, not at employees of a workplace or other sympathetic workers. The goal might be, for example, to educate shoppers regarding working conditions at a store. Workers are not asked to refuse to cross informational picket lines, and it is not considered a violation of union principles to work behind these lines. Many unionists believe that informational picketing, when union people are still on the job behind the lines, confuses the public and diminishes the significance of a picket line. Therefore, they are reluctant to use the tactic.

But in some organizing situations informational picketing might be considered

* If the employer directly serves consumers who would be sympathetic to the union and refuse to patronize the establishment, so the employer would realty be hurt economically;
* If the union has formally demanded and been refused recognition;
* If you're going the NLRB route and there's a long interval before the election;
* If the weather, available pickets, hours of business and location of the employer's premises wilt not make picketing too much of a hardship; and If you are very sure you can keep it up at full strength unfit you win your point;

If these factors are not all present, don't try it. If you do picket, failure to gain recognition could damage morale. You can't afford to let the employer win such a skirmish.

Should the employer start firing union activists in the midst of a campaign, before you've built up the strength to carry out effective job action, an informational picket might be just the ticket.

Striking for Recognition

A strike for recognition is serious business, and should not be ventured unless you have no other alternative or are sure of success—in which case you might want to consider going beyond mere recognition to demand better wages and conditions. (There are legal implications to such a move, though. You may forfeit rights to get the NLRB to order rehiring should the strike be declared an unfair labor practice and be defeated. Of course, if you're really certain of winging this may be irrelevant.)

Suppose the employer fires one or more key activists in the organizing drive. If the union ignores this provocation and doesn't support the activists, it will lose workers' respect and crust. Here is an urgent situation, that can not wait until after an NLRB election. Maybe you should strike. There are, again, legal implications. If you restrict the strike to union recognition or unfair labor practices, it should not significantly affect the NLRB elections process (scabs hired after the strike began would not be eligible to vote). Evaluate carefully the economic impact of a strike on the employer. If you strike, you should strike to win—the NLRB ruses really matter only if you lose.

Be sure of your strength. Most unions won't strike with less than a two-thirds strike vote, and you wilt need at least that much solid support If you are sure you can win, strike. A strike is war. Go into it with all your intelligence, energy and resources.

Use Your Imagination

Whatever strategy you choose, be creative. If you use the same tactics over and over, the bosses wilt learn how to respond. Better to do the unexpected, and keep them off balance. Avoid long, drawn-out strikes wherever possible. Better to pull back and return to work without conceding defeat (and try on-the-job tactics and regroup for another day) than to allow the bosses to get all the union supporters off the job and off the payroll. If you are forced into a long strike, develop means to help strikers keep food on their tables and a roof over their heads. Talk to other unions; look for short-term, casual jobs for strikers; organize a solidarity committee to help people deal with the inevitable crises.

In a strike situation that lasts more than a day or two, it's important to get a strike newsletter out to all striking workers. Encourage strikers to write their own stories and observations. Involve as many people as possible. Provide accu-

rate, up-to-date information on negotiations, solidarity, and how the strike is impacting the company. Make sure to send strikers to talk to other unions (teamsters and other workers who make deliveries and pick-ups, and anyone else in a position to show some effective solidarity) to develop that solidarity. The more pressure you can bring to bear quickly, the sooner you can win your point.

A Competing Union

Suppose you're in a three-way NLRB election: with the IWW, another union, or no union all on the ballot It may be tempting to turn your attack on the other union. This is generally not a good idea. Workers aren't half as interested in jurisdictional warfare as they are in how a union can improve their jobs. Ignore the other union and concentrate on explaining your program. Attack the boss—the class enemy—rather than sincere bureaucrats and fellow workers who comprise or support the other union.

No employer really wants any union on the premises, but sometimes employers—recognizing that Unionization is inevitable and preferring accommodation and peaceful coexistence—favor the business union that intervenes in an IWW election. If this is the case, emphasize the basic premise that only a union recognizing the fact of the class struggle can be effective. If the employer prefers the other union, the IWW must be best for the workers. Do workers want an organization of their own, or one the company believes it can dominate?

A majority of votes cast is necessary to win an NLRB election. If no proposition receives a majority, a runoff will be held between the two highest Suppose the runoff is between the two unions. The same principle applies—concentrate on your own program and don't initiate an attack on the other union. If the other union attacks you, keep the reply low key and make the point clear that this is a class war, not a jurisdictional war. Never accuse the other union of selling out unless you have absolute proof. The key objective to keep in mind is the need to build effective solidarity on the job floor—to build the basis for effective industrial action. This requires that you keep your sight un the real enemy, no matter how irritating the other union may be.

But suppose the runoff is between the other union and no union. Which do you choose? Which will make the job better? Which offers the best hope for sustaining the Job Branch, and eventually winning majority support? Should you stand aside or throw your support to the other union? This will take a hard look in each individual campaign. the other union—if it wins—will negotiate a contract requiring all workers to join it in order to keep their jobs. There's always the danger that it may turn a blind eye to the employer's efforts to get rid of IWW activists. Once it's certified by the government, dumping an unsatisfactory union—or getting out from under a worthless contract—is immensely difficult. ID the long run, you may welt be better off without a business union entrenched on the job. Should you decide that a business union is better than an unorganized job, try to reach some sort of agreement guaranteeing certain rights for IWW members on the job.

Whatever the decision, you need to maintain an IWW presence on the job. IWW members on any job are leaven in the loaf. They help to win and keep good conditions on the job, and to make business unions as effective and democratic as possible. And a visible Wobbly presence serves as a reminder of what is possible, laying the groundwork for future organizing efforts.

Sometimes you may be organizing a job where another union already has collective bargaining rights. In this situation, you need to carefully consider both what function that union actually plays on the job, and how it is perceived by your fellow workers. If the other union is actively working as a tool of the employing class, and you can prove it, it probably makes sense to point this out. But the focus of your campaign should still be aimed at the enemy—the employers—and the battle to wrest better conditions on the job.

Timing During the Campaign

An important point to keep in mind throughout the organizing campaign is timing. The employer is much more vulnerable during busy periods, when there's a lot of work. In general, it's not a good idea to strike in the midst of layoffs, or when the employer has a large inventory on hand. Under such circumstances workers are easily replaced, or starved back to work. When seeking "voluntary" union recognition, it's clearly best to approach the employer when he's most vulnerable, and thus has little choice but to accept the union. Similar considerations apply in single issue campaigns.

Employers generally try to force confrontations on their own timetable, when they have the best chance to win. If the employer is dearly trying to provoke workers into a strike, careful attention should be given to ocher options—in particular to direct action on the job. Direct action is most effective when intelligently applied. A great deal can be won by an organized work force that acts at the right moment—to strike, to slow down, or to refuse to tolerate unacceptable conditions any longer.

Momentum is also important in a campaign. Frustration and despair can easily set in, eroding your base of support—particularly during the final stages of a campaign. This is one of the reasons employers prefer working through the NLRB, and so frequently avail themselves of the opportunities it offers for delays. Keep in personal touch with union supporters. A union picnic or social, a union button day, a victory (even a small one) on the shop floor—all can help keep up morale, and keep the organizing drive on trade.

NLRB Elections

Should the Job Branch decide to go the NLRB route, timing slips from your control. The Board, not the union, decides when the election will be held—subject to the employer's delaying tactics. During the intervening period the union has to maintain its support, continue efforts to win over the uncommitted (you will lose some votes through turnover, illness, fringe, and employer pressure), and work to line up new employees. Once the election date is set, the campaign has to be carefully planned to peak just before the election.

You have two major tasks: to hold your majority with your own positive program and to anticipate and counter the employer's campaign. The employer may well wait until just before the election before his big move. Most union elections are lost in the final day or two before the vote. Expect a captive meeting (held during working hours) or a devastating letter to confuse everyone. Time your last mass contact be-

fore election day so as to best offset the employer's expected move. Warn workers that the employer may try to stampede them at the last minute, against their considered judgment. Have a telephone system ready to activate after the employer's last shot, to try to win back chose whom the employer may have influenced, and talk with as many union supporters as possible.

Shortly before the election, the Job Branch will need to elect union observers. These should be firm union supporters, respected by their fellow workers. The Job Branch should make detailed plans to get out every union vote. Have transportation and child care available. Divide up the responsibility for seeing that people get to the polls. If more clan one shift is involved, use the off shift for telephoning and transportation while polls are open. Check off the union supporters as they vote, and contact those who have not voted before it is too late. Contact the absentees from work to arrange a way for them to vote. Get out every union vote you can. Even if you are assured of a majority, the bigger the win the more credible your strike threat in the coming negotiations.

Suppose you lose the election? It happens to unions with far more resources at hand clan the IWW every day. The business unions preach the conventional wisdom that if an NLRB election is lost, the campaign is over (perhaps to be revived at a later date, if the potential dues base is attractive enough). Their organizers pack up and go away, and their funds and resources are withdrawn. The IWW, however, doesn't base its hopes on the NLRB and NLRB elections. We see the loss of an NLRB election as only a temporary setback. Should you be defeated, take a long look at the campaign see why worker voted against the union. If you can figure that out you may be able to regain your majority.

The main consequence of losing an NLRB election is that it gives the employer a ready-made excuse to refuse to deal with the union. The Job Branch is now more important than ever. You need your strength to try to protect union activists and other workers from discrimination, and to try to win improvements through on-the-job action. If management is smart, it will treat workers well for awhile. If not, a situation may arise around which you can organize and win a single-issue campaign, laying the groundwork for once again seeking union recognition.

Organizing a Long-Term Process

Organizing is a long-term process. It requires patience and months or years of ground work. While it is often possible to win some immediate improvements fairly quickly, establishing a permanent union presence on the job takes time. The myth of the "professional" organizer blowing into town, giving a few speeches, handing out some leaflets, calling a meeting and leading the workers out on strike is just that—a myth. No lasting union was every built on such a flimsy foundation.

Unions cannot be built with smoke and mirrors. It takes work and perseverance. You need to have the patience to listen to your follow workers and speak to their concerns. If they're not ready to join the union, find out what they might be ready to do and start from there. Maybe a petition against some particularly obnoxious supervisor, maybe a demand that some dangerous work area be cleaned up, whatever. The point is to get people accustomed to working together around their common grievances (and, of course, to get those grievances taken care of).

Sometimes people are ready to move, and they flock to join the union. More often it takes time and work. Don't be discouraged if your first or second effort doesn't succeed. Learn from it, and move ahead. And remember, even unsuccessful organizing drives usually leave better conditions behind in their wake. The trick is to demonstrate that those improvements weren't the result of the boss waking up one morning and deciding to be nice, but rather were a response to your organized efforts to win better conditions.

The Point of Production

We've talked about various mechanics of putting an organization together, union structure, obtaining recognition and so forth. But a union is going to live or die based upon its how effective it is at exploiting the employer's weaknesses. At all times throughout the organizing campaign you must be on the lookout for opportunities to let the employer know how much he depends upon an efficient workforce in order to get things done.

You and your fellow workers are on the job every day, and control many aspects of the work. The process of the work itself is vulnerable to workers control and disruption, just as it moves efficiently only when workers are responsive to the needs of that process. Look around you. Figure out where the bottlenecks in production are, which processes are most vulnerable, how your particular workplace interacts with other workplaces. What is your boss's likely reaction to a work stoppage or slowdown? Could he farm the work out to another facility? What sort of communications and transportation links does he have—with other employers, or with distributors? Where do the products go? Who are the major suppliers, particularly for vital materials? What's the most likely pool of strike breakers? At which points in the production process would a slowdown or stoppage be most immediately felt? A Worker's Guide to Direct Action, published by the IWW, is a good source for ideas.

Jobs are usually covered by a bunch of rules, standing orders and regulations which are ignored, since workers who obey all the rules can't get much work done. Perhaps you should consider scrupulously obeying the company's rules or relevant laws. Service workers often find that they may end up hurting consumers more than the bosses by using some of the tactics that work in manufacturing. One way around this is to provide the public with better or cheaper service at the boss's expense.

These are some of the questions that you're going to have to ask throughout the organizing campaign. It's important that sympathetic workers from throughout the entire workplace are involved in these sorts of discussions, so that you can understand and affect the entire production process. Not only will such planning make the job branch more effective in winning your immediate demands; this sort of planning should increase the confidence your follow workers have in their ability to run production without the bosses.

Fighting Back for our Future

When Stevenson College IWW members learned that management planned to lay-off 30 workers, they responded with a single-issue campaign. While the officially recognized unions prepared to lie down and negotiate away people's jobs, the small IWW branch issued a leaflet: "Not One Redundancy!" and began collecting signatures on a pledge to strike should any worker be let go. When about 10 percent of the workforce had signed the pledge, administrators quickly buckled under and announced that there would be no compulsory redundancies.

This victory dramatically raised the profile of the small, growing IWW branch there and illustrates the possibilities of mounting effective resistance even without majority support.

Part 5: Conclusion

Workers are increasingly becoming convinced, and for good cause, that the AFL-CIO business unions are incapable of stopping the current world-wide employer offensive against labor. Several strategies have been tried as alternatives—rank and file groups, union reform, corporate campaigns, political parties, electing new officers, and reform of labor laws. While all of these indicate a rebel spirit, none of these approaches has been effective.

The Industrial Workers of the World has demonstrated that a labor movement can be controlled by workers, win immediate improvements, and make major steps towards social change. Our experience shows that strong, fighting unions can be built in workplaces large and small, that workers can unite across ethnic and skis lines, and across national borders. As the old Wobbly saying notes, "Direct Action Gets the Goods."

The IWW is practical, democratic, and up to date. While the AFL-CIO and kindred organizations limp along with structures, ideas and tactics forged in the 1800s (and obsolete even then), the IWW recognizes that class collaboration is a dead end, and that the employing class and those they hire (the working class) have interests as different as those of any group of buyers and sellers in the market place. IWW unionism looks toward the future, building on the lessons of the past.

The time has come to return to the tried-and-true methods of revolutionary industrial unionism. Growing numbers of workers are turning to the IWW, both to win better conditions from their bosses and to help build a brighter future for all workers. Whether or not the IWW takes root at your workplace and in your industry will depend upon you and your fellow workers, and the effort you're willing to put into building the IWW.

This organizing manual is intended to help you get started.