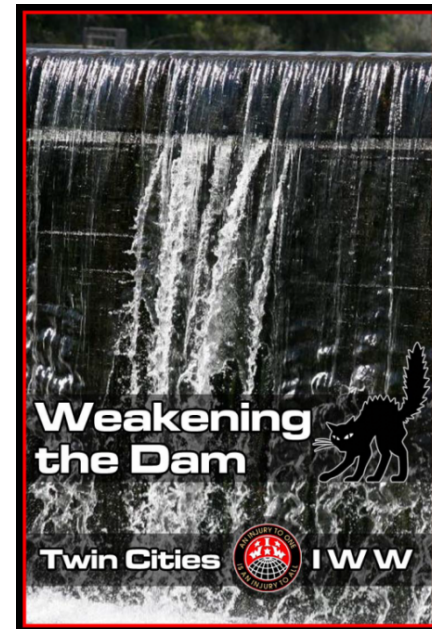


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# Weakening the Dam

Twin Cities IWW



Twin Cities IWW  
Weakening the Dam  
2011

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2011



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**Day 195** - Sympathetic but inactive supporters: 60 Campaign membership: 45  
Number of organizers: 8 Leaders involved: 10 Number of Delegates: 4  
Officers: Treasurer, Secretary

You begin to debrief with everyone who was at the training. You celebrate victories, agitate on issues, push the plan to win. Everyone continues to talk with coworkers. The group elects one more delegate, preferably from your pool of good organizers. You submit the bylaws you have been working on with a membership list put together by the secretary and the delegates to General Headquarters and petition for an Industrial Union Branch charter. Once you have this charter you need to hold a meeting and brainstorm what is going to be handled by the GMB and what is going to be handled by the Industrial Union Branch. Ideally the GMB handles solidarity work with other unions and allied causes, new member orientation, and organizer training. The IUB handles building the campaign, keeping members caught up on their dues and social and educational events for workers in the industry.

You talk to the Organizer Training Committee schedule a version of the OTC's Committee In Action advanced training, also known as the "Organizing 102" training. You schedule an IUB strategy and planning retreat for two weeks after that training.

start working on turnout as soon as date and time and place are figured out.

**Day 180** - Sympathetic but inactive supporters: 55 Campaign membership: 40

Number of organizers: 3 Leaders involved: 7 Number of Delegates: 3

Officers: Treasurer, Secretary

Two of the new organizers burn out and quietly leave campaign. If the branch is functioning well, they have had an IWW orientation and people in the branch reach out to them, they stay around. If the branch is not functioning well, they drop out and possibly quit the union.

You hold a committee meeting. The committee plans a shorter organizer training focusing on key skills, to increase the number of organizers involved. (Either one 4 hour session or two 2 hour sessions.) You also have each organizer pick two coworkers to target to teach how to organize on an individual basis by involving them in small group conversation, debriefing, and covering the basics. You prioritize turning workplace leaders into organizers. The group also elects two of the campaign's experienced organizers to attend the upcoming union-wide Training for Trainers, so the campaign can do better at trainings. You're one of the people elected. Then the meeting shifts gears. You discuss how the individual conversations are going and how to do turn out for the shorter organizer training. A few people are at the meeting who are not doing the individual conversation. A few people who are doing at least some individual conversations don't come to the meeting

**Day 194** – Shorter training

\*From this point on the organizers who have been around will begin to act like the experienced lead organizer who supports and pushes their coworker organizers. You will need to help them with this role and push them to really do it.

## Introduction: More and Better Organizers

The IWW's number one priority right now should be to build up the confidence, competency, and commitment of IWW organizers, and to organize to turn more workers into IWW organizers. This pamphlet is meant to offer some more resources for this approach. There are some more resources in the IWW's organizer training and in the higher level organizer training that the IWW is currently testing out. There are a lot more resources among IWW organizers, resources that are not written down but are in people's heads.

The particular material collected in this pamphlet includes selections from the Workers Power column that regularly runs in the Industrial Worker newspaper. All of the Workers Power columns are online at [forworkerspower.blogspot.com/](http://forworkerspower.blogspot.com/) After the selections from Workers Power are two check lists, one for developing people as active IWW members and another for developing people as workplace militants. After the checklist is a sample timeline for an IWW noncontractual organizing campaign.

### Historical Note

Here is a page or so of IWW history, to explain some of the perspective behind this pamphlet's goal of organizer development. The IWW was founded at a convention that started on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1905. The IWW founding convention resulted from a prior conference in January, 1905. The January conference resulted from an informal meeting and exchanges of letters between radical unionists in November of 1904. The January con-

ference produced a document called the Industrial Union Manifesto, which called for the June convention at which the IWW was founded.

In 1913 Paul Brissenden noted that “the Industrial Workers of the World is not the first organization of workers built upon the industrial form. Even its revolutionary character can be traced back through other organizations” such as the Knights of Labor, the Western Federation of Miners, the American Labor Union, the United Metal Workers International Union, the Brewery Workers, and the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance. The point is that the IWW did not drop from the sky. It was the result of a process based on earlier experiences and ideas. The Western Federation of Miners (WFM), one of the most important radical working class organizations of its day, played a very important role in the founding and early history of the IWW. The WFM itself grew out of a process. A number of miners’ unions merged in the early 1890s. Before they merged, they had to be organized in the first place.

There’s a point to all this history. Today is not June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1905. The world has moved forward, of course, but for many people in the working class we have moved backward. Our class is less organized. If anything, the present is as much or more like the 1880s than 1905.

It’s not 1905. Our present tasks are not much like the tasks of the people who founded the IWW. Our present tasks are more like the people who worked to form the initial unions who later merged to form the WFM. June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1905 is a long term goal. We need to begin a long-term process which will end with something like June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1905, and which will begin a new process like the one that was started with the IWW founding convention. As a first step toward that process, we need more confident, capable committed IWW organizers, recruited from the ranks of the working class through our organizing. Hopefully this pamphlet helps with that. There is much else that has to happen. We have so much to do.

plan that the group comes up with is awesome. You doing a march on the boss. The group lays out roles and people take assignments. You all check in to see who is doing their one on one conversations. You help anyone who is struggling, by having a role play and brainstorming.

**Day 154** – You check in that everyone did their part for the action

**Day 155** – Action. You march on the boss. You scare the hell out of the boss. It’s awesome.

**Day 157** – You hold a meeting to respond to management’s response to the action, if necessary.

**Day 166** - Sympathetic but inactive supporters: 50 Campaign membership: 35  
Number of organizers: 5 Leaders involved: 5 Number of Delegates: 3 Officers: Treasurer, Secretary

Your new organizers begin to get tired. One campaign member (preferably a workplace leader) that you have been working with begins to act like an organizer. The group elects one more delegate. You make a motion at the branch meeting to make sure the branch is training new delegates in how to report.

You have a big group meeting with everyone who is involved in the campaign. You hype your victories, discuss work issues to agitate people, assess campaign and lay out social map so far, lay out the plan to win, set goals, give assignments, and set deadlines. You check in to see who is doing their one on one conversations. You help anyone who is struggling, by having a role play and brainstorming. All of you continue conversations with co-workers.

**Day 168** – You hold a new member orientation to the IWW for the people in the campaign who have joined up. You get the branch to do this, not the organizer(s). The organizers handle turnout, not running the orientation or getting a space etc. You set a date or set the wheels in motion to set a date. You

are doing at least some individual conversations don't come. This bothers you, but you're fired up to see so many people working on the campaign. At this meeting you discuss difficulties people are having in their conversations with co-workers and brainstorm solutions. You set goals for continuing conversations.

You start spreading paperwork around in order to take administrative workload off of organizers. Your group elects another delegate to collect dues. The group decides to turn the previous delegate into the campaign treasurer. The group gets its own bank account and gives both delegates signing authority on the account. The new delegate becomes a campaign secretary, the secretary will take care of reporting to the branch on the progress of the campaign and fielding any questions from people not directly in the campaign. Both officers agree to report every month, with the campaign secretary reporting on membership and communications from people and groups outside the campaign and the treasurer continuing financial reports.

**Day 152** - Sympathetic but inactive supporters: 35 Campaign membership: 30

Number of organizers: 4 Leaders involved: 4 Number of Delegates: 2

Officers: Treasurer, Secretary

Your original core co-organizers burns out and quietly leaves campaign. If your branch is functioning well and reaches out to them, they stay around. If the branch is not functioning well, they drop out and possibly quit the union. Your campaign is at a big point now! After about five months, you're having a meeting to plan your first action. You talked to people around the union and did a lot of thought ahead of time so you arrive with a plan. You wanted to make sure, in case the group didn't have any ideas or any good ideas but you still engage everyone in a group brainstorm and discussion to plan together. The

## Lasting Lessons from the Class Struggle

“To build the new society you need new people and people can be transformed only in activity.” — Martin Glaberman, *Work and Working Class Consciousness*.

**March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004.** Over the course of a year a group of UPS loaders had developed a lot of comradery with one another. They had the power, and they openly expressed it by refusing to work at the speed demanded by the bosses. A new worker was brought in and management tried its best to isolate him from the activist group. When this fellow worker defied management and lined up with the rest of the workers, working at their pace, calling management “blue shirts” and spending his breaks with other militant workers, management brought even more pressure on him, pushing him to change and work faster or he would be fired. His coworkers responded after a break one morning by refusing to go back to work until a certain blue shirt, the one mostly responsible for the pressure brought on the new worker, was taken off of the line. It was a stand-off, and the tension was high, none of them having been involved in anything like this before. They won their demand, the supervisor was taken off the line, and they were threatened with firings if they tried anything like that again. Over the course of the next year they all began to leave the job, moving to other work, other shifts at UPS, or to other departments.

Roughly a year and a half after the action had taken place, two friends from the UPS job visit for the first time in awhile.

Chatting over a beer, one had quit UPS but the other still worked there. He relayed how he would bring the story up whenever he saw their old despised manager, how that blue shirt's face would turn red and he would storm off. Nostalgic for the old crew and their bold action at work, the worker who had since moved on called another former coworker. He too expressed pride in their defiance of the boss and added that he looked forward to the next time he could stick it to management to show 'em who was really in charge. Though the gains were long gone, the memory and experience still lingered, with the workers holding onto a desire to take action next time they have the strength.

**May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006.** Messengers from Arrow Messenger Service in Chicago gather for a special anniversary party at a fellow worker's home. Exactly one year ago, on a busy Thursday afternoon, they all had turned off their two-way radios messengers use to communicate to their dispatcher. Having been through three fruitless negotiating sessions with the company, this was their way of showing Arrow that if the bosses wouldn't meet their terms, the company wouldn't run. After a pitched battle during the ensuing month, the company agreed to the workers' demands.

As they gather at the anniversary party, make little drunken speeches and reminisce over last years drawn-out struggle, only three or four of them – out of twenty – still work at the company. Several were fired during the campaign, others quit in frustration, and others just decided to move on. There is virtually no organization left at the company and no existing struggle against the boss to speak of. In another year the union will be completely gone from Arrow and what will become of the gains made in Winter 2005 is anyone's guess.

But one thing is clear, no one there would have changed a thing. For some it was the greatest experience at work they had ever been a part of. There is consensus that the whole thing was nothing less than life-changing. Crappy work is no longer

drive – giving a report on the bank balance, and an account of how much dues was taken in and expenses.

\*From this point on you will begin to act like the experienced lead organizer who supports and pushes your coworker organizers. You also set a goal of making each of your campaign's key wobbly organizers train two or three more people to be committed and capable wobbly organizers just like yourselves. You use the checklists that accompany this timeline, and you give out copies of this pamphlet. You set up follow conversations with people to see what they thought of the pamphlet.

**Day 118** – You begin to debrief individually with everyone who attended the training. You begin one on ones with workplace leaders. Everyone at the training begins to have 3 conversations per week. With leaders, you expect 1/5 of these conversations to succeed. Since there are other areas of the workplace where you don't have leaders identified, you begin outreach to other workers in these areas, in order to identify leaders. You push everyone to do these conversations. You really expect only half of the people to do so, but it still bothers you that not everyone does this. You begin to have short role plays at your committee meetings as part of reportbacks on how the one on ones are going.

\*You make your own personal plan on how you will individually train the workplace leaders on organizing and how you will help them build relationships to other IWW members. You make this a central piece of your own work.

**Day 138** - Sympathetic but inactive supporters: 30 Campaign membership: 22  
Number of organizers: 5 Leaders involved: 2 Number of Delegates: 2 Officers: Treasurer, Secretary

The core organizers in the campaign are beginning to get tired. You hold a committee meeting to discuss how the individual conversations are going. You layout a plan to win including a campaign timeline. A few people come to the meeting who are not doing the individual conversations. A few people who



**Day 116 and 117** - Sympathetic but inactive supporters: 20  
Campaign membership: 12  
Number of organizers: 2 Number of delegates: 1 Officers: Treasurer

You host another organizer training. Some people have scheduling difficulties such as childcare needs, so your branch pays for childcare for them so they can attend. Some people have scheduling difficulties that you can't get around, like medical appointments, so you make a plan to catch them up on the content as best as you can. You decide to hold a 4 hour session later that focuses on A-E-I-O-U like the first part of the training. You ask the Organizer Training Committee and the Organizing Department Board to help you with this. They do. The training ends with a session where you create your plan to win, including immediate next steps and a timeline for the next piece of your campaign's plan. Your plan is awesome. You aim to have a committee equal to 15% of the total workforce at your target, and supporters equal to 65%. You don't get to cover all the details of how to get there so you set a date for a follow up meeting in two week's time. At this meeting you do social mapping, among other things, and push people to use the training. You emphasize talking to key workplace leaders and build a list of them by name/identifying information ("the one on nights who wears the Sox hat"). You know that workplace leaders are harder to move. You expect to succeed 1/5 of the time. Talk to all the identified leaders first before repeating a conversation with a leader who says no or isn't sure.

You identify one member of the organizing committee who is very organized personally, this person becomes your first delegate. You convince that person to start thinking about money. You start to get other members of the organizing committee to turn in receipts to the delegate. You have the delegate turn the receipts into the branch treasurer. You make sure they report at every meeting on the financial state of the organizing

something that must only be endured. It can be collectively resisted.

At first glance one can look at these shopfloor skirmishes and see defeat. Gains were eroded, and no lasting organization was ever built. But through struggle we produce more than better or worse working conditions, resolved or unresolved grievances, and union or no union. We produce new kinds of people. A major part of our organizing has to be a change in consciousness. This is why our tactics are so important. This type of change in outlook isn't facilitated as clearly through an NLRB election campaign. Direct action, where workers themselves are making the change, gives the feeling of power to us workers. Most members of our class have not felt this power, but once it has been summoned up it is much harder to push down.

When we workers act as a group we are making a statement to each fellow worker involved. This statement is clear, I am willing to stand here with you if you are here to stand with me. We may win this fight, or we may lose, but that statement always stays with us. It resonates with us as we go through our lives. When we organize and when we take action that effectively challenges our boss, we have the power to demand the changes we want to see. This is the key to understanding why these types of actions change our lives. In the UPS story, workers stood up, put themselves on the line for another worker. In the Arrow story, workers took action to strengthen their position and to make a clear point: we are united and without US you do not have a company. When we put ourselves on the line for one another, no one forgets what is possible afterward.

The concept of producing organizers at one company who scatter out to others companies has become a maxim for some IWW organizers in industry-wide efforts, and the concept is a good one, but there's something more to it. Not everyone is going to become an organizer but everyone is going to have to assess the fight they've just been through and draw con-

clusions for their own lives. When the dust settles from our action, as it inevitably does, we are left to consider what happened. We have seen the power we have as workers, a power unknown before. It may not occur to us immediately, but with any major change in our lives, there is a resonance — a white noise that does not go away. It could be a month later and we could be at the same job, or a year later and we could be two jobs down the road, but we will remember. And when we have the chance, we line up with, or maybe even lead, an effort to organize and take a stand against the boss. This time we do it with less hesitation than before, maybe with more foresight and with more vigor, because now we know exactly what it means.

The bottom line is this: our organizing needs to have as its byproduct a new increase in workers' willingness to resist — an increase in our propensity to act on our urges to resist the bosses — even if the resistance is individual. This is the revolutionary outcome. This will lay the groundwork for future organizing, in this industry or others. To “organize the worker not the job” as we say in this union, is to gradually create new kinds of people, people who are most likely to never again roll over and take the shit the boss throws at them.

The Missoula Floods were enormous landscape-changing events during the last ice age, some of which discharged 2.6 billion gallons of water every second, but they were only possible due to sudden small ruptures of the ice dam on the Clark Ford River. Small ruptures led to larger ruptures, they built off each other weakening the dam. In the IWW, our workplace committees, our campaigns, and our fights with the boss have ruptured production, only to have seen companies rebound and get back to business. But the true ruptures are the changed individuals that come out the other end of these fights. One day our years of struggles will turn these ruptures into a revolutionary flood that will forever change the landscape of the world's economy.

**Day 15 through 45** – You do research about your target online. You ask the people listed under Day 7 to help you with this. You also gathering contacts and social mapping as we talked about in the Organizer Training. You also focus on relationship building at work. You take good notes.

**Day 46** – You have a complete or almost complete contact list. You've talked to people outside your branch and people in your branch. You begin one on one meetings with your coworkers. You're a serious organizer, so you aim to do at least 3 conversations per week. You're a realist, so you expect to succeed in 1/3 of these. You decide to do these for the next 10 weeks or until you have a group of at least 10 people who are willing to attend an organizer training. You think to yourself, if people are unwilling to attend a 2 day training then you should not trust them with your and your co-workers' jobs.

**Day 67** – Campaign membership: 5 Number of organizers: 2

You hold a group new member orientation to the IWW for the people in the campaign who have joined up. You invite people from the branch to attend as well. Only some of them do. This annoys you. A few co-workers don't show up, this hurts your feelings. Those of you who are there have an awesome conversation about work and IWW vision. This excited you. Some new members can't attend the orientation as a group so you make a plan to get them oriented individually. You contact your GEB rep, ODB rep, and someone from the OTC to help you with orientation materials and curriculum, because your branch doesn't already have this stuff.

**Day 98** – Campaign membership: 8 Number of organizers: 2

You hold another new member orientation. You invite people who have already been to one to attend and help facilitate discussion. Some new members can't attend the orientation as a group so you make a plan to get them oriented individually.

## Sample Campaign Time-Line

**Day 1 and 2** – Campaign membership: 2 Number of organizers: 2

You and your fellow branch members attend an IWW basic organizer training, some of us like to call it the “Build the Committee” training, others call it the “101” training.

**Day 5** – You hold a small group meeting to pick a target. You do some preparation before the meeting, put your thoughts in writing and bring them to the meeting. If you can’t get a group together, you write up a plan on your own and you call someone in the branch and outside the branch to talk it over. (If the plan is to organize your own workplace you can skip to day 15, though you should still have the discussions with the branch. Also, you should always have a partner to organize with if at all possible. Flying solo as an organizer is a bad idea.) You make a plan to track the necessary information – contact sheets, spreadsheets/database, file cabinet, binder, whatever works for you.

**Day 7** – You email the to IWW email list, write a post on the members only web forums, call your GEB contact, and call your ODB contact to find out who else in the IWW works in or is organizing in this industry/company

**Day 14** – You hold an open meeting with anyone from branch who wants to attend. You present your plan and target. All of you have a discussion about needed roles and assign tasks. People aren’t as enthusiastic as you had hoped, but you still feel pretty fired up.

## Emotional Pressure and Organization Building

We want to do two things on the job at the same time: build organization and improve conditions. We could do these separately. For instance, we could build organization with no plan to improve conditions, like setting up a poker night or a knitting circle. Or we could try to improve conditions without building organization, by bribing or kissing up to the supervisor. Neither of those has much to do with being a union. Being a union means union builds organization by improving conditions, or improves conditions by building organization.

To build organization and improve conditions we have to take actions on the job. Action is the oxygen of a union. We start off by taking the existing informal organization on the job – the current relationships and communication and level of agitation – and directing this against the boss in the form of an action.

In planning an action, pick an issue that people care about. Ask, “*who has the power to change this issue?*” For instance, the nightshift supervisor in the receiving department at a factory probably can’t control the health insurance plan or introduce a new health plan. But they can control how they enforce policy on bathroom breaks and how respectfully they treat employees.

List the issues people want improved and who has control over each issue. List the lowest level boss with decision-making power on each issue. Generally speaking, the lower they are on the food-chain, the less it will take to make them

do what you want. This is important early on when you only have a small group. Five people in one department probably won't win much for all 100 people in the plant.

But they could win improvements in that department that can be used to recruit more people in order to take on bigger issues and do more outreach. That's building organization.

Early in a campaign it's useful to focus on what could be called emotional actions or emotional pressure. Here's what I mean. Work is a headache for us, and to a lesser degree it's a headache for our bosses. Generally it's more of a headache for the boss the lower they are on the food-chain at work. Emotional action is when we offer our boss a choice: make work less of a headache for us or we will make work more of a headache for the boss. This is easier the lower the level of the boss. If the boss is a supervisor we see everyday, then they will care more about our opinions and how we treat them.

When we collectively confront the boss about conditions that make our lives unpleasant, we give the boss an unpleasant experience. Think of this as sharing the wealth of misery that our jobs give us. By giving the boss a taste of their own medicine, making the boss take a helping of what our jobs force on us, we can start to force the boss to make small improvements on the job. That in turn helps us explain to our coworkers that we can improve our jobs by organizing together, and that if even more people get involved we can win even bigger improvements.

- Attend a Union-wide Event (and report back to the GMB at a meeting and/or by email)

- Deliver a report (speak publicly) as a representative of the branch at a union-wide event (and report back to the GMB at a meeting and/or by email)

- Participate in a committee of the international (and report back to the GMB)

- Start organizing in their workplace (and therefore go through the other checklist)

*Goals: build relationships between new member and other IWW members, educate members so they can understand and make use of IWW procedures and democracy, build people's sense that being an IWW member is part of who they are*

- Attend branch social event
- Attend GMB meeting
- Attend new member orientation
- Report at GMB meeting about IWW activity at their job or that they're otherwise involved in
  - Attend some local public event with the IWW (picket, demonstration, speak out, etc)
  - Attend 3 GMB meetings
  - Give a report at a branch meeting about an IWW activity somewhere else (this involves calling at least one person in another branch and having a conversation with them about what's going on in their branch/campaign)
    - Participate in a branch committee
    - Chair a GMB meeting
    - Attend a meeting about organizing (either long term drive or short term issue/workplace action) other than in their own workplace, debrief afterward
      - Read and discuss IWW literature and pamphlets
      - Attend 6 GMB meetings
      - Deliver a report or otherwise speak publicly as a representative of the IWW at a local event/meeting (and report back to the GMB at a meeting and/or by email)
      - Write something for the branch newsletter (or, have someone else interview this person and turn it into a co-written article)
      - Play a key role at some local public action with the IWW – picket captain, hand out leaflets, etc, (and report back to the GMB at a meeting and/or by email)
      - Write something for the Industrial Worker (or, have someone else interview this person and turn it into a co-written article)

## Talking to Bosses: Stick to the Script!

We have nothing in common with them as a class but sometimes we need to talk to our bosses. When we confront our bosses, for instance, we need to talk to them. A lot of bosses seem to have an instinct for turning the tables on us, and a lot of us workers have a habit of letting them do so. We spend so much time following their orders and they spend so much time giving orders that when we speak up it can be almost as disorienting for us as it is for them. That can make it easy for the boss to take back control in conversation.

For us to keep control in conversation with the boss we need to know what we want to have happen. We can't get our way if we don't know what our way is. If we don't have a plan then things can't go according to plan.

Let's say we're going to confront a boss about making someone stay late. Here are some ways the boss might respond: justify the decision ("we had more work, someone had to do it"), bring up some other issue ("well, you all are out of uniform"), try to guilt you in some way ("you do this after I got you that nice coffee maker for the break room?"), bring up the way you raised the issue ("you shouldn't bring this up in a group"), point you to someone else or somewhere else ("you should bring this up at our team meeting," "you really should go through Human Resources"), or question your right to bring it up at all ("this is a private matter between me and that person, it's none of the rest of your business.") There are other possible responses. The

point is, you should think about the different ways your boss will respond, and know how you will reply in each case.

The goal in replying to a boss's response is to come back to your issue and your goal. Don't get side-tracked. Don't argue. At most, acknowledge what they said, ("we appreciate the new coffee maker", "we tried to bring this up with HR"), but don't let them turn the conversation to be about that. State your issue again, and what you want. "You make us work late and it causes problems for us. Will you stop that?" If they keep bringing up other things, and they probably will, say "This isn't about that, we're here to talk about you making us work late." Then re-state your issue and what you want.

The over all point is that our issue and our demand is not up for discussion. We are not going to be talked out of feeling like a problem at work is a pain in the neck and we are not going to be talked into having our demand disregarded. We are making clear that the issue is a problem and we are presenting our demand to fix it. If you have to, just say "we're not here to debate with you or to discuss other things. We want to know if you will stop extending people's hours or not. That's all we want to talk about. Will you stop?"

Stick to the script and you can turn the tables on the boss.

## Workplace Organizing and Member Development Checklist

Below are two checklists we can use to help us be systematic and deliberate about developing our fellow workers into good wobbly organizers.

### 1. Checklist for people we're working with in an organizing campaign

*Goals: Make this person committed to the campaign, make this person join the IWW, make this person into an organizer, make this person become a good wobbly*

- Have an organizer do a one on one with them
- Attend an organizing meeting (meeting to plan an action, meeting to discuss goals, etc)
- Attend a short Organizer Training (OT)
- Attend a two day OT
- Go with an organizer on a one on one and take the co-pilot role, debrief afterward
- Go with an organizer on a one on one and take the lead role, debrief afterward
- Set up a one on one with a co-worker on their own
- Hold a one on one with a co-worker on their own
- Participate in a job action
- Join the IWW (and do the stuff on the first checklist, the member checklist)

### 2. Checklist for people who just became IWW members

When we use this method, we call into question certain assumptions about 'tactics' that might seem self-evident. Do we come up with a tactic—"Let's put out a press release!" "Let's picket!"—then dream up our goals from what we think we can win? Or might we plan out a strategy and selectively choose tactics that will build workers' power effectively? This method also puts to the test certain so-called 'principles' and makes them prove their usefulness as 'tactics' rather than sacred truths. "We don't have paid staff!" "We have extremely low dues!" "We don't sign contracts!" "We allow anyone to join on the spot!" "We don't affiliate with political groups!" "We don't have mandatory anything!"... Whether we do these things or not should be because they are effective tactics in a plan to get to our goals, not because we read it in some bible somewhere.

First goals—to determine what we really want tomorrow and what we think we can get today. Then strategy—to plan out the campaign to achieve our goals and build the power and confidence of workers. Then tactics—to take concrete steps that demonstrate our resolve and alter the balance of power.

## **Know the Union, Hear the Union, See the Union**

On a 100 degree summer day I was in Stockton, at the Sikh temple meeting room. A middle aged trucker with a long, flowy beard asked me "How do we show the other drivers who weren't at our meeting today what the union is and why they should join?" I struggled to give him a good, clear answer on this one. I improvised an analogy on the spot. I think it paints a picture of our Solidarity Unionism organizing model in practice: "Know the Union, Hear the Union, See the Union." Let me break it down.

First you give the whole saying: "Here's how our organizing works. Some workers will know the union, some will hear the union, but others have to see the union." If you have a marker and paper, draw three circles around each other (like a bulls eye target). In the middle one write "know," the next "hear," and the outer most circle "see."

You'll get a raised eye brow or maybe a "huh?" look on the faces of folks, which usually translates to "What the hell is this crazy IWW organizer trying to tell me now?" Don't worry, this is actually good. If you get this reaction it means people will be interested to hear the explanation. Point to everyone in the room. Tell them that they are the workers who know the union. Point out that they are the workers that have attended meetings, are initiating the organizing and maybe have already taken out a red card. From experience or being fed up, they already know collective action is needed to fight for change on

the job and that this is the definition of a union. Usually this group is small, but it's the starting point for every campaign.

The people who know the union talk to other folks. Some of the people they talk to will be quickly convinced. They're the ones who hear the union. Maybe they won't come to the first meeting or they might want to know that it's a legit effort and not the malcontents of the month, but once they are asked they will participate. This is usually the first layer of workplace leaders that are brought into an organizing committee.

Most workers are in the third camp, ones who need to see the union. They won't be meaningfully won over to the organizing effort simply by telling them something. These folks are skeptical that collective action by workers can win. They're probably scared of losing their jobs or maybe had a bad experience with another union.

Here's how we move the workers who need to see the union in action. The workers who know the union organize and build relationships and leadership among the folks who hear about the union. Together both groups take action to change small issues. This demonstrates in practice what a union is. Other workers see the union in action and start to understand that change is really possible.

For myself this is one of the most useful concepts when beginning to organize. Organizing starts with those who "know" the union, they bring in the folks who "hear" about the union and together they take action to move the workers who need to "see" the union. How this plays out in the long run is that workers move from "seeing" to "knowing" the union through becoming involved in the organizing and action. This process builds the IWW and builds a conscious and militant working class.

sary. The point is to demonstrate to the boss your unity and resolve. If management remains stubborn, then a 'sick out' or a slow down might be next.

The point is to have the workers on the shop floor decide on a tactic and take action together. If our actions rely too heavily on a 'third party'— the media, lawyers, negotiators, or even the so-called "community," we might still achieve the pay raise. But whose skills, confidence, and power are we building and demonstrating? If we're doing our job right, every small victory we achieve is a boost to workers' confidence in themselves.

When workers are accustomed to demanding concessions through the use of our power at the workplace, we see that we have strength. When workers feel this power, we shift from "bread and butter" demands to broad political demands that represent our aspirations. If workers in the agriculture and food stuff industry world wide get good at demanding control over their jobs, pretty soon they'll demand control of food itself.

This was just one example. Can you see how it all fits together? This way of looking at the work we do can be applied to almost anything. From planning a strike to printing branch t-shirts, the 'goals, strategy, tactics' method helps us look more closely at our activity.

Ever wanted to do a tactic that conflicts with your—or has no—strategy? Often this is a problem of unstated goals. For instance, you might want to walk out immediately but the "5 Year Plan" calls for organizing quietly. In this case, responding to a particular offense, and the temporary freedom that comes from action, might be the real goal and the far-off revenge of industry-wide standards doesn't seem worth the wait. The unstated goals of many tactics are some form of satisfaction. It is important to recognize this and balance a patient strategy with our irrepressible desires.



## Goals. Then Strategy. Then Tactics. Part II of II

Last month we talked about goals, strategy, and tactics. We called forth our visions—our ultimate goals. As an example, we said: “Free food for every human being.” Then we came up with intermediate goals: “Workers domination of the agriculture and food stuff industry.” But to feed ourselves this week, our immediate goal was a pay raise. Next, we planned out a strategy—both to get us that pay raise and to set us on our way to our dreams. We designed our strategy to unite around immediate necessities and build our strength to achieve the impossible. Our strategy groups workers into shop floor and industrial committees. Workers group together in many ways, however, so we’ll work with what the situation calls for. To implement this strategy, we’re going to select tactics.

Tactics are the concrete actions taken to further a strategy. Our tactics must demonstrate our resolve to transform the food stuff industry. The effort to get a group of food stuff workers a pay raise relies on workers’ collective mass action. The shop floor and industrial committees choose tactics that build confidence and successfully demonstrate to food stuff workers their power “€at the point of production.”

A scenario might play out like this: Workers sign a letter and present it to the boss in a group. Everyone wears a special t-shirt. If the boss refuses, then they all participate in a ‘cold-shoulder day’ to let the boss know nobody’s happy. Workers leafleting customers, vendors, transportation workers, workers at neighboring businesses, and investors might be neces-

## Know the Union, Hear the Union, See the Union: Still Good Advice

Some time ago Workers Power ran a column in which a Fellow Worker promoted the idea of “Know the Union, Hear the Union, See the Union” as way of explaining how a healthy campaign sustains itself and grows. Having participated in some organizing, I found myself often re-reading that piece as a source of inspiration and advice. I hope to expand the “Know the Union...” organizing approach by offering my thoughts on how to put it into practice.

In any workplace there are going to be some workers who will quickly be attracted to an organizing drive. Perhaps they’ve been involved in organizing before; perhaps they have some level of ideological agreement; or perhaps they simply have a high level of grievances. In any case, these workers “know the union” and typically come together to form the initial organizing committee.

For other co-workers, they’ll have to be persuaded to join the campaign through a series of one-on-one conversations. They need to “Hear the Union” to get agitated about workplace issues and realize they don’t have to face them alone.

Most workers, however, fall into the third camp: “See the Union”. They’ll have to see the power of collective action before they get involved. As our Fellow Worker summed up in the previous column:

“Here’s how we move the workers who need to see the union in action. The workers who know the union organize and build relationships and leadership among the folks who hear about the union. Together both groups take action to change small issues. This demonstrates in practice what a union is. Other workers see the union in action and start to understand that change is really possible.”

For our friend, “Know the Union...” proved helpful when organizing slowed and workplace militants got frustrated at the pace of growth. “Know the Union...” encouraged workers to get ‘back to the basics’ of successful organizing: one-on-one conversations and group meetings to plan and undertake winnable direct action grievances. It also demonstrated the role the existing leadership should play in instituting a continual process by which co-workers are led up the “hear, see, know” ladder until a culture of solidarity and collective activity is instituted in a workplace.

There’s another important lesson to take away from this: many self-identified radicals have little real-world organizing experience. This is okay. Like anything else, organizing takes practice. What we do have, however, is a wealth of grand arguments supporting class struggle and a vision for a post-capitalist future. Because of this there’s a temptation to ‘intellectualize’ the organizing process. Speaking from personal experience, I know what it’s like to feel unsure about doing something new, especially when it comes to organizing. It’s tempting to fall back on something we’re more comfortable with—like making the argument for why we need a revolutionary union.

Reality, however, is much more complicated than a well-phrased argument. Instead of trying to ‘win the organizing argument’ we’re much better off building relationships of trust with our co-workers. Through this relationship, we engage our co-workers in small scale winnable actions. These actions, in

Given that workers’ power is the strategy, we’ll need to develop the skills and experience of individual worker-organizers in the industry. Expanding leadership capabilities to more and more workers increases the power of each sub-body in the industry. Therefore, part of our strategy has to be actively training workers and building an ever-increasing pool of experienced and dedicated organizers. Remember our goal was free food for every human being? Getting to this goal will likely mean having to develop our organizers into conscious revolutionaries. Even more likely is that these worker-organizers will, through strikes and struggles, become more radical than the teachers of revolution. Therefore, that individual development must be part of the strategy. Our strategy calls for building workers into organizer and organizers into revolutionaries. We form shopfloor and industrial committees which help push the struggle forward. Next month we’ll talk about what tactics uppity agriculture and food stuff workers might employ. What do you suppose are the tactics that will multiply our power, deepen our resolve, increase our confidence, expand our consciousness, and set the stage for achieving our dreams?

up the price—to keep food “€profitable.” If workers held the whole operation, from the farms to the stores, we could decide how to produce food and distribute it—freely, democratically the world over. We could feed the world for free and shorten the workweek in the process! The intermediate goal is workers’ domination of the agriculture and food stuff Industry. If we run it, start to finish, we can do with it what we please. The immediate goal—what’s necessary to feed ourselves today—might happen to be a pay raise for a specific group of food stuff workers. The immediate goal doesn’t have to be directly connected to the larger goals. Workers need things to survive and thrive and we demand these things on a daily basis. We use the immediate goals to prepare for the bigger goals. How do we do it? Strategy!

The strategy is workers’ power. Workers power on every farm, in every processing plant, around every terminal and warehouse, at every grocery store and fruit stand. Workers’ power. We want the fighting spirit on every “€shop floor.” We want that power coordinated across the entire industry worldwide. We want the power to change conditions and dominate an industry so that nothing happens in that industry unless the workers agree to it. To build power locally and industrially, workers will need shopfloor and industrial committees to make collective decisions and coordinate actions.

Getting a pay raise for a group of food stuff workers doesn’t mean capturing the industry. That pay raise only advances our movement if food stuff workers won it themselves. If someone else won it for the workers, then their confidence and power has not increased. This workers’ power extends past the organization itself. It outstrips a simple “union” and moves into a generalized and internalized culture of resistance where workers realize our power and act using that power constantly. We want agriculture and food stuff workers to be arrogant, ungovernable, and explosive. We want them to feel entitled to run the world. (Someday they’ll have to!)

turn, lay the groundwork for larger struggles and deeper conversations.

To put it another way, workers—conscious of it or not—undertake individual anti-capitalist acts all the time. Workmates, however, often need to see collective activity in action before they’re willing to join a union. From there, it’s involvement in collective struggle that opens a space for us, as radicals, to begin having discussion about class, capitalism, and the labor movement.

As organizers, “Know the Union” not only helps us not only to remember that organizing is a process, but forces us to recognize that many times “action precedes consciousness”. The most important thing organizers do is not winning arguments or making rousing speeches, but actually building the relationships that form the basis of any successful campaign.

## Charting

Anyone who works out regularly knows that results in physical fitness pretty much come from only two things: persistence and time. The same thing is true in organizing. Organizing gets results when it's persistent over the long haul. Persistent long term organizing must be systematic. A key to being systematic is putting things in writing.

In recent times the IWW has mostly organized relatively small workplaces or small units within larger workplaces. With small groups of people it's pretty easy to remember everyone's name, what they do, what experiences we've had with them. As a result, many of us have gotten into the habit of keeping a lot of information in our heads. This works in smaller settings. This won't work once we get much beyond 20 or 30 people, because it all gets to be too much to remember. What's more, when we make a habit of storing information in our head, it's harder to assess what's really happening at work, because our feelings shape our perceptions of what's in our heads even more than what's in writing. Depending on whether we're feeling optimistic or pessimistic, this can lead us not to see real progress, or to overlook important steps that we fail to take.

One key activity to systematic organizing is charting regularly. By "charting" I mean when the organizers on a campaign get together and do a written assessment of our current presence on the job. Start with one sheet of paper. List all the facilities or departments in our campaign. Then list all the IWW members in each facility or department, followed by the names of other people we have contact with, and the total num-

## Goals. Then Strategy. Then Tactics. Part I of II

First we dream up our goals. Big goals and small Goals. Our "ultimate goals" are visionary. They are the grand ones written on the wall and they stare at us. They are our inspiration. Our "intermediate goals", are the stepping stones. These goals create the conditions for the grand ones. They lead us to the right path. Then we have our "immediate goals"—day-to-day demands. These goals are the victories we achieve once a week or once every five years. Winning these demands makes our lives better and demonstrates our power, both to our enemies and to ourselves.

Next we draft a strategy. This strategy takes us to our goals. Our strategy is practical but anticipates huge possibilities. Our strategy aims us through the day-to-day goals on our way to the bigger ones. If our strategy builds workers' power then we are unleashing the possibilities to achieve anything. However, if our strategy is aimed only at the day-to-day goals, without the stepping stones, we'll never realize our grand vision.

Lastly, we select tactics. These tactics fit our strategy like a glove. By taking these actions as a group, we prepare for bigger things. Remember—goals. Then strategy. Then tactics. That's the dope! Now let's put them together in a fun example. The big goal is free food for every human being. No one should starve while there is food. No one should pay for a basic human right. We already have the ability to feed the world's population yet the captains of industry stand in our way. They withhold food from the market in an effort to keep

Industrial Organizing Committee meetings. I know its gonna be tight with your schedule but we're gonna help you fit it in. You have to be there or this thing doesn't move." We need to help others break out and step up. It's a sign of respect to ask people to do difficult things.

Train your replacement for an officer position: "Hey, Mei, you got a second? Has anyone talked to you about becoming the chair of the Committee? I'm going to be stepping down at the end of my term and you're everyone's pick for this position. Put some thought into it. Meanwhile I'll start showing you what the job entails." If we train new officers properly and regularly, we can avoid crust and dust in our leadership structures.

Encourage other members to read what you've read: "For those that didn't make it to the Summit, Maxine did a killer presentation on the legal barriers to organizing in her industry. It totally reminded me of this thing I read in an old One Big Union Monthly. So I ran off some photo copies of that article for y'all to check out. I think it will help us come up with some good strategies we can try." In making IWW history and principles accessible, you cut down on the knowledge monopoly and pass on valuable lessons and experiences.

Introduce people to each other and have them exchange phone numbers: "Tenaya, have you met Steve yet? Steve, this is Tenaya. Yeah, you guys both work in the same industry and would have some awesome stories to tell each other. You two ought to collaborate and submit something for the next newsletter." By introducing and ensuring info exchange, you avoid 'Ol Boys Clubs' and now information doesn't have to go through you.

The task that we have as IWWs is to build working class leaders everywhere we go. We are constantly looking for opportunities to teach others what we know so that they could do what we do without us.

ber of people in each place. Next to every name, write down whether or not someone has done a good one on one with them, when this was, and how it went. There will be more to say that doesn't go on the chart, of course, as people talk about what worked and didn't work in their one on ones. (This is also a good opportunity to do a roleplay about what the organizer might have said differently, but that's a subject for another time.)

The process of charting helps us make decisions about who to talk to – the people we haven't talked to in a long time, the people who are slipping, the people we haven't talked to at all. That can sound obvious, but charting tells us exactly who those people are. It also helps us identify the gaps in our knowledge. ("I just realized, I don't know how many custodians work third shift. We should find out.") Getting that information is a task that someone new to the campaign could take on with the help of a more experienced organizer.

On another sheet of paper, write down the tasks that have come up based on the chart. Write down who is going to do each task, and who is going to check in with everyone to make sure they did their task.

Written charts and task lists should be kept after the meeting, and ideally they should be typed up. The next time the organizers chart, get out the old ones and compare. Get out the task list too, to make sure everyone did their tasks, and to discuss how the tasks went. This helps show progress – "In the last month we've talked to 15 more people, this means we have talked to half the workers by now!" – which can keep our inspiration going. It also helps show patterns we might not have noticed – "We're talking to a lot more of the white workers, and to day shift workers, let's figure out how to break out of those networks and talk to more people" – which can in turn help us identify new tasks.

Unless organizing is systematic, it will most likely rely too heavily on the social groups at work that we are most comfort-

able with. Charting is not the only part of organizing systematically, but it's one key piece of the puzzle.

## Replace Yourself

The primary task of an organizer is to build more organizers. We need more and more working class leaders and the way to do this is to constantly replace yourself. Here's a few easy ways to help you build up your successors:

Reveal your sources so others can think with you: "I had a long talk with MK recently. He really convinced me that we should reorganize as a shop committee instead of having one or two 'stewards'. He gave me this awesome article on how IWW shop committees used to work." Telling others where you got an idea from demonstrates that you think of them as equals. You also provide an opportunity for them question your sources.

Show others how it's done and take them through the process: "Hey Keith, has anyone showed you how to post an article to iww.org? I'm going to post that write-up on the strike right now. Let me show you how to do it. We need another person who can post." Pass on the technical know-how so others can be 'experts' just like you.

Encourage people because you believe in them and you know they can do it: "We really need this message to get to the people upfront. Can you have a talk with Shannon? She respects you and you're the best person to talk to her." You run faster for coaches that want to win. We've got to show that what we do matters and that we believe in each other.

Ask people to do things that are difficult. Move them to take on responsibilities outside their comfort level: "I'm glad you've been talking things up so much at your shop. You're one of our best guys, Jerm. The next step is for you to start coming to the