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A World To Win, A Hell To Lose

The Industrial Workers of the World In Early Twentieth Century New Zealand

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Abstract

In the early twentieth century the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) were influential in a series of disputes between labour and employers in New Zealand, culminating in what has become to be known as the Great strike of 1913. Although influential, little has been written about the ideology of the IWW in New Zealand and how it was adapted for New Zealand. An appraisal of their organisation, and the impact they had on their members and followers, and other organisations has also not been explored greatly in existing research.

This research begins with a brief illustration of the rise of IWW ideas in New Zealand, the formation of a number of branches of the IWW, and the group's relationship with the existing organisations in the New Zealand labour movement at the time.

The next section discusses the use of existing social movement theories to study an organisation such as the IWW, and highlights the need to use a specially devised framework, such as that drawn up by Fitzgerald and Rodgers (2000), to analyse a Radical Social Movement Organisation.

Using the Radical Social Movement Organisation framework devised by Fitzgerald and Rodgers, this research aims to gain an understanding of the organisation, ideology, tactics, and methods of communication of the IWW, and how they differed from the contemporaneous bodies of the New Zealand labour movement.

In the final section, different ideas of what constitutes success in terms of the aims of a social movement are examined, and used to assess the impact and influence of the organisation in New Zealand.

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CONTENTS

Page

List of Illustrations	iv
Abbreviations Used	vi
Introduction	1
Background and Context	4
A Land Without Strikes? The rise of industrial militancy.....	5
Methodology	29
Studying the IWW as a social movement organisation.....	30
Data Collection and Analysis.....	34
The Industrial Workers of the World in New Zealand	38
Organisation – “Hail The Rank and File”.....	39
Ideology – “The World For The Workers”.....	58
Tactics – “Wear your wooden shoes”.....	77
Communication – “Mental Dynamite”.....	94
Assessment – Success or Failure?.....	112
Conclusion – A World to Win, A Hell to Lose	134
Bibliography	138

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Page

Figure 18: The Boycott.....	87
Figure 19: "The most Revolutionary Paper South of the Line".....	97
Figure 20: "if the boss should happen to read down this column".....	98
Figure 21: Chunks of I.W.W.ism.....	101
Figure 22: Literature for Rebels.....	102
Figure 23: Auckland Midwives will do it for nothing.....	116
Figure 24: The I.W.W. or "The I Won't Workers".....	122
Figure 25: how Long.....	124
Figure 26: To Arms!.....	129
Figure 27: The Popular Scapegoat.....	131

ABBREVIATIONS USED

IWW – The Industrial Workers of the World

NZFL – New Zealand Federation of Labor

NZSP – New Zealand Socialist Party

PRU – Passive Resisters' Union

RSMO – Radical Social Movement Organisation

SDP – Social Democratic Party

SLP – Socialist Labor Party of America

SMO – Social Movement Organisation

TLC – Trades and Labour Council

UFL – United Federation of Labour

USSCo – United Steamship Company

INTRODUCTION

Speaking in 1919, the MP, William Downie Stewart, noted how the terms “class instinct, class-consciousness, class conflict, and the class war” had all become common parlance in New Zealand over the last two decades.¹ In contrast, a visiting French writer, Andre Siegfried had reported in 1904 that he had found very little evidence of class-consciousness among the workers of New Zealand. In his work entitled *the Democracy of New Zealand* (Siegfried, 1914), the English version of which Stewart prefaced, he wrote of the New Zealand worker that they showed scarcely any, or no class hatred, that they are not revolutionary, and only vaguely socialistic, adding that they have an innate admiration for money, and for the man who lives in a grand style. The New Zealand workers’ ambition, he found was to be only like the middle-class and imitate those who are more fortunate. Fifteen years later, when he re-visited New Zealand he asked Stewart for an explanation for the change that he found. “He was anxious to know where these revolutionaries ideas had come from, who had imported them, and how far they had taken hold”,² Stewart related. It is these questions that this research, with a particular focus upon the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), tries to answer.

The labour history of New Zealand in the early twentieth century has already been fairly extensively covered, notably in *Red Feds* (Olssen, 1988) and *Revolution* (Nolan, 2005). However, apart from a chapter in *Revolution* (Derby, 2005), which focuses upon the influence of William E Trautmann, the first general secretary of the IWW, and work by Francis Shor (1992; 2002; 2005), the IWW in New Zealand receives scant attention, except as part of the wider events, or coverage of the leading individuals in the movement and their interaction with the more moderate elements of the labour movement.

¹ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 8/8/19, p.8

² *ibid*

No in depth analysis of the IWW specifically has been carried out, although its influence is acknowledged. For example, Olssen has written “it is clear that the IWW became much more powerful in 1911-13 than historians have [previously] realised” (1988, p. 211). Little has been written about how they differed in their organisation to other bodies in the labour movement, and how their adoption of a non-hierarchical form was designed to empower and raise the consciousness of the working class through participation and direct action. Francis Shor briefly touched on the subject in writing about how “revolutionary syndicalism promoted a proletarian public sphere... in competition with bourgeois and respectable plebeian norms” (2002, p. 60), although few details are given on how the norms of the bourgeoisie were challenged.

Making use of the existing literature and original sources such as the IWWs newspaper the *Industrial Unionist* and other contemporary journals, it is the intention of this research to attempt to address these issues. The first section will place the IWW in the context of an increase in working class militancy experienced in New Zealand at the beginning of the twentieth century by giving a brief history of the labour movement up to 1913, culminating in a series of strikes that rocked New Zealand and collectively became known as The Great Strike. The methodology section that follows examines Fitzgerald and Rodgers (2000) contention that existing social method theories are inadequate as a framework to examine a radical social movement organisation (RSMO) and demonstrates their alternative framework. The second part of this section examines the problems and solutions faced when carrying out the historical research for this project.

The findings section has been presented in five sections, **organisation**, **ideology**, **tactics**, **communication**, and **success** as per Fitzgerald and Rodgers framework. Firstly the **organisation** of the IWW will be considered, particularly aspects of leadership and participatory democracy. Issues surrounding membership in relation to class, race and gender will also be

examined. The section on **ideology** will highlight the IWWs criticisms of capitalism, and the stance they took towards New Zealand's structures for dealing with labour issues, particularly, the arbitration court, the existing craft unions, and the fledgling New Zealand Federation of Labor (NZFL). Their relationship with other strata of New Zealand society will also be highlighted. Under the **tactics** section an examination will be conducted of the innovations the IWW brought to New Zealand in terms of carrying out their struggles to improve conditions and wages for the worker, and enhance the solidarity within this class. The IWW faced difficulty in gaining access to the mainstream media of the day, and the **communications** section will demonstrate how they met and surmounted the problems they faced in this area.

The final section will discuss notions of **success** and how it can be defined in terms of a RSMO. The discussion will consider whether the IWW in New Zealand could be considered successful in terms of leaving a long lasting legacy that influenced society after their demise.

Background and Context

A Land Without Strikes? The rise of industrial militancy

In order to fully understand the place of the IWW in the industrial landscape of New Zealand it is necessary to briefly discuss the events leading up to the Great Strike of 1913 to show the IWW role in the increased militancy of the time.

Noted British socialist, Tom Mann, after a visit to New Zealand in 1906 had described the country as the Britain of the South. He remarked that the class system seemed alive and well, and was demonstrated during the shooting season “when only the haw-haw Johnnie, who can afford the licence is allowed to shoot imported game which is fattened on the toil of the well taxed farmer, smacking very much of the tyranny of the privilege in the old country” (Simons, 1903, p. 495). However, during the nineteenth and early twentieth century New Zealand had developed a reputation as a modern socially equal and classless society. Melanie Nolan quotes a leading figure of the early socialist movement William Ranstead, as proclaiming

Here there is no aristocracy, no snobbery. There are no very rich people and no poor. I’ve not met a beggar ... or seen one destitute person. There are no slums here, no miserable starving women and no suffering children. Here no sober, industrious man need lack any of the comforts of life (2007, p. 114).

The governing Liberal Party had introduced a succession of progressive laws, such as female suffrage (1893) state-instituted compulsory conciliation and arbitration (1893), and an old age pension (1898), which, combined with the perceived egalitarian attitudes of the population, led to the promotion of New Zealand as an equal society, one which attracted considerable foreign interest. The American consul, J.D. Connolly, in an 1893 address in Auckland was moved to say “The fierce searchlight of the civilised world is turned full (sic) upon you” (Coleman, 1958, p. 229), and many foreign observers came to learn

from the New Zealand experience. Included amongst these visitors were British socialist reformers Sidney and Beatrice Webb, French commentator Albert Metin and the American progressive political analyst Henry Demarest Lloyd who in 1910 wrote the work *A Land Without Strikes* about his experience of New Zealand.

Perhaps it is the case that New Zealand did enjoy greater equality than other countries, but the early part of the twentieth century in New Zealand also saw an upsurge in the growth of trade unionism, working class radicalism and dissatisfaction with the Arbitration Act, especially from the larger semi-skilled unions such as the miners and seamen. In terms of numbers of workers who were members of a trade union New Zealand was the third most unionised country in the world, behind only Australia and Great Britain (Olssen, 1987, p. 82).

In the twelve years immediately following the passing of the Arbitration Act in 1894 there were no recorded strikes in New Zealand. However, 1906 saw the first instance of a strike since the passing of the Act, by the Auckland tramway workers, and over the next few years strike action became increasingly common. By the end of March 1913 there had been a total of 98 strikes.

1894 to 1905	None
1906	1
1907	12
1908	12
1909	4
1910	13
1911	21
1912-1913 (March 31)	35

Figure 1: Strikes recorded in New Zealand 1894-1913 (Rossignol, 1914, p. 293)

Influential early in the twentieth century was the New Zealand Socialist Party (NZSP). They represented most shades of socialist thought from Marxists, Fabians, and parliamentary socialists, to syndicalists and anarchists. The party's prime objective was the establishment in New Zealand of a co-operative society founded on the common ownership of the means of production. The first branch was set up in Wellington in July 1901, with other branches forming soon after in Auckland and Christchurch. At first its popularity and influence on the New Zealand labour movement was limited, and it could be considered little more than a debating society. However in 1906 the journal of the NZSP, *Commonweal*, changed its tone and began to present the ideology of the revolutionary industrialism of the IWW amongst its pages (Olssen, 1988, p. 3).

The first conference of the IWW had been held in the USA in 1905. This inaugural conference was attended by around 200 delegates from unions, and anarchist and socialist organisations, amongst whom were several New Zealanders, including New Zealand born William Trautmann, the founding General-Secretary of the IWW (Steiner, 2007, p. 2). The IWW was formed with the revolutionary goal of establishing a socialist society with workers controlling the means of production. They called for solidarity amongst the working classes, promoting the idea of workers being organised into 'One Big Union', rather than being divided along the lines of trade.

This idea did have some history in New Zealand. The first attempt at organising a union that had aims beyond merely representing a single trade came in 1893, when the Shearers' union changed its name to the NZ Workers' Union in an attempt to extend its appeal and gain the support of the previously unorganised urban worker. The city branches had little to do with shearing and became gathering points for the unskilled and semi-skilled workers such as labourers and watersiders, who were excluded from the craft unions. For a short while this union became a centre for radicalism and opposition to the existing craft dominated trade unions (Roth, 1976, p. 22).

The influence of the NZSP began to increase from this point, and received a boost in 1907 with the arrival in Auckland of Harry Fitzgerald from Canada. Fitzgerald was renowned as a particularly skilful orator for the cause of revolutionary socialism and industrial unionism. Described as a “a platform general with no equal” (Clayworth, 2010, p. 2) he regaled audiences with his own anti-capitalist stories such as a “*Trip to Hades*” where having been refused entry to heaven as St. Peter is struggling to quell a socialist uprising, the dead worker enters hell to discover a socialist utopia.

In an age where public meetings were a source of entertainment as well as enlightenment, such a gifted speaker was highly valued, and Olssen has described Fitzgerald as the “key figure in transforming New Zealand socialism” (1988, p. 17). Such was his effect that after delivering a lecture to the Wellington branch of the NZSP on 29th of December 1907, over 70 names were handed in response to an invitation to form a branch of the IWW. The following week the *Commonweal* reported that an IWW branch was launched with nearly 100 members and the help of local Waterside worker and renowned soapbox orator, John Dowdall¹.

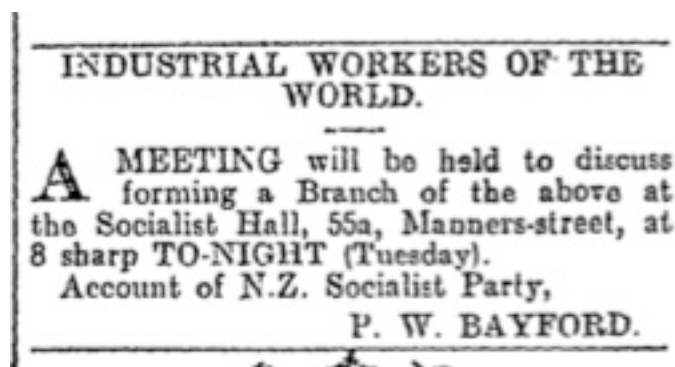


Figure 2: Advertisement for the first meeting of the IWW in Wellington²

¹ *Commonweal*, Vol. 3, January 1908, p. 3

² *Evening Post*, 31/12/07, p. 8

Fitzgerald also busied himself running a series of economics classes, helping to form a socialist choir, and hold a series of lectures. Such was the enthusiasm for this revolutionary zeal that when the NZSP held its first national conference in April 1908, in which it formally adopted the preamble of the IWW, the organisation now had branches in Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington, and numerous others in smaller towns such as Waihi. Tom Mann, talking about the NZSP, noted that branches were being set up at such a rapid rate that it would soon lead the Australian socialist party in "numbers of branches and aggregate membership".³ They had their own rooms, ran bookshops, organised weekly lectures and street meetings, and held Sunday schools in competition with the churches for children where socialism was taught (Olssen, 1988, p. 54), and there was an unprecedented membership of 3000 people (Takver, 1999, p. 1).

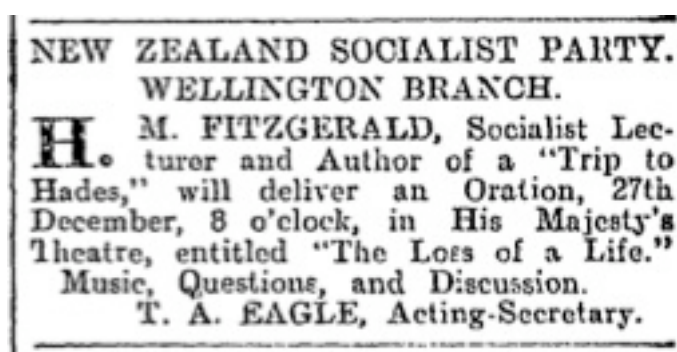


Figure 3:An advertisement for an oration by H.M. Fitzgerald⁴. "Music, Questions, and Discussion" gives an idea of the entertaining nature of these events

In the USA a debate over political action resulted in a split at the fourth IWW conference held in September 1908. The split emerged between a non-political majority, siding with co-founders Bill Haywood and Vincent St. John, and another of the founders of the IWW, Daniel De Leon, who was also a member of the Socialist Labor Party of America (SLP). The preamble adopted by the 1905 conference, and that which had been adopted by the NZSP, had a clause

³ *International Socialist Review for Australia*, 25/5/08, p. 5

⁴ *Evening Post*, 26/12/08, p. 6

stating that the working class must “come together on the political, as well as on the industrial field”, and it was this that De Leon maintained was the correct path to take to achieve socialism (notwithstanding it would also benefit his SLP). St John and Haywood argued that entering into politics was divisive, irrelevant and futile and won the support of the majority of the conference, resulting in De Leon leaving the organisation to form his own “Detroit IWW” and adopting the 1905 preamble. The remainder of the IWW, sometimes referred to as the “Chicago IWW”, revised the Preamble to remove all references to political action (Schmidt & van der Walt, 2009, p. 162). This split was to resonate throughout revolutionary industrial organisations worldwide, and this debate coloured New Zealand’s labour movement for the next few years.

A second branch of the IWW was set up in Christchurch in 1910, and highlights the tensions between the political and non-political positions. The literature committee of the local branch of the NZSP was asked to resign after they spent all their funds on literature in protest against being asked to pass them on to the branch committee to fund the upcoming election (Bailey, 1950). The Wobblies-to-be resigned, and formed the Christchurch IWW local. This branch eventually voted to become a recruiting body for the NZFL,⁵ however a second IWW local was formed in Christchurch, in September 1913 following a visit from Auckland IWW organiser Tom Barker.

Another influential figure in terms of spreading the doctrine of the IWW was John Benjamin King, who arrived in November 1911. Like Fitzgerald before him, he was a skilled and fiery orator. Unlike Fitzgerald, who supported political action in conjunction with industrial action, King belonged to the Chicago branch of the IWW, and repudiated political action. He had left Vancouver with two other Wobblies (Wobbly being an alternative title for a member of the IWW), Sullivan and Childs, and on the trip to New Zealand had met up with a couple of Englishmen, Alec Holdsworth and Charlie Blackburn, who became IWW

⁵ *Maoriland Worker*, 23/7/11, p.13

activists in New Zealand. With the help of the then secretary of the NZSP in Auckland, Tom Barker, they set up a branch of the IWW in Auckland.⁶ This group, which had an initial membership of 25 people,⁷ was formally recognised by IWW headquarters in the USA as local 175 (Davidson, 2011, p. 40), and launched a monthly newspaper, the *Industrial Unionist*, on 1 February 1913.

This influence of foreigners was an inevitable part of the migratory pattern of labour of the day. There were thousands of workers in New Zealand who were immigrants. Between 1900 and 1913 over 115 000 people entered New Zealand (Olssen, 1988, p. 39), and an unknown number travelled freely back and forwards between countries. This migratory movement of labour would have brought influences into New Zealand that reflected the contemporaneous international increase in socialist activity. In parts of Europe, South America, USA, Canada, and South Africa, as well as Australia and New Zealand, revolutionary doctrines of socialism and industrial unionism were proving increasingly attractive to a growing number of people (Olssen, 1986, p. 30). Italy, Argentina, Dublin, and Australia had all been affected to some extent or other by general strikes, and troops had been seen on the streets of Britain in response to waves of industrial unrest (Holton, 1976). This was echoed by a rise in the vote for socialist parties across Europe and the USA⁸.

Memoirs from political activists during this period demonstrate this exchange of people and ideas. New Zealand socialist, John A. Lee called New Zealand “one of the earth’s political crossroads”, with orators on their way to Australia and San Francisco stepping off ships and “onto the soap-box” (Lee, 1963, p. 22). Australian Wobbly, Beattie remarked in his memoirs how “IWW members were the most travelled section of the working-class” (Beattie, 1967), and Tom

⁶ A. Holdsworth to H. O. Roth, 18 July 1961 & 5 August 1961, MS-papers-6164-120, Alexander Turnbull Library

⁷ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/2/13, p. 4

⁸ *International Socialist Review for Australasia*, 26/10/07 p.15

Barker, of the New Zealand IWW, noting that the spread of ideas tended to come from the USA rather than Britain said

There was always a constant flow of people from the West Coast North American ports to New Zealand, some of them going to Australia, sometimes stopping over, and there was a bigger flow of education and that kind of thing from the Pacific than there was from Britain (Fry, 1999, p. 10).

As personalities like Fitzgerald and King left their mark in New Zealand, so to did other immigrant workers who, today are unknown or little known, but just as influential. Some of them arrived with a working knowledge of socialism, and continued to receive literature from their homelands. One such immigrant, Philip Josephs ran a bookshop in Wellington, which stocked a wide range of socialist and anarchist books and pamphlets, and Tom Barker had described how meetings held by Romanian, William Pierrepont Black, were influential in his path to becoming a Wobbly.⁹

To the press, the employers and the Reform party however, this exchange of ideas was an indication of their contention that the IWW was a foreign contaminant disrupting the previously peaceful New Zealand society. Prime Minister William Massey described the 1913 dispute in Wellington as not being between ship owners and watersiders but as one between “ship-owners and a foreign association...the leaders of whom are foreign” (Nolan, 2005, p. 27). The *Ashburton Guardian* described the IWW and the importation of its ideas as a “strange, wild doctrine”, which having been “hatched in despotic Russia, carried to Germany, from whence its exponents were expelled to America, was introduced from that country to New Zealand”.¹⁰ A month later, the same paper was remarking that “such talk may be well enough for the drunken half-witted

⁹ H. Roth, ‘Biographical notes – Tom Barker’, MS-Papers – 6164-007, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

¹⁰ *Ashburton Guardian*, 10/8/12, p. 4

desperadoes in the slums of Chicago or San Francisco. It is not good enough for New Zealand".¹¹ However it would not have been possible to stem the flow of ideas due to the openness and low cost of travel, with a ticket across the Tasman costing only £2 (Phillips, 2009). Answering the accusation that the dissemination of IWW ideas was the work of only foreigners the Auckland local noted how a local speaker was abused for being a foreigner, despite his obvious New Zealand accent.¹²

Regardless of the existing body representing craft unions, the Trades and Labour Council (TLC), which declared that "the American system of warfare was not suitable in a country where the working man's vote was of the same value as that of the managing director of the Waihi mines" (McAloon, 1994, p. 34), the popularity of IWW ideas spread quickly. The idea of a Federation of Labour had been under discussion since 1904, but the IWW talk of One Big Union, class war, and direct action, had given the idea a fresh impetus, which coincided with the increase in militancy.

When in 1906, the first strike in New Zealand since the 1890s occurred, it was notable because it sent a message to the Labour movement of New Zealand that it was possible to strike successfully. However, the biggest turning point in New Zealand's labour history thus far began in 1908 with a dispute in the mining township of Blackball over the length of meal breaks. Some of the most prominent trade unionists in Blackball, such as Pat Hickey, had recently come from USA, where they had come into contact with and been influenced by the IWW. It is thought that Hickey was likely to have attended the inaugural IWW conference in Chicago 1905 (Nolan, 2005, p. 291). Also a great deal of IWW literature had been bought and distributed amongst the workers on the West Coast (Hickey, 1980, p. 9).

¹¹ *Ashburton Guardian*, 10/9/12, p. 4

¹² *Industrial Unionist*, 1/2/13, p. 4

The dispute saw the union become the first to be fined under the Arbitration Act, with the court issuing a fine of £75 (the maximum it could be fined was £100). Hickey noted how the Arbitration Court was beginning to be seen as class biased and related how

An interesting incident occurred...our solicitor...referred to the 'crib' allowance of 15 minutes as being altogether short; his honour remarked with a frown that he thought 15 minutes ample time. He then glanced at the clock, noticed that the time was 12.30 and stated that the court stood adjourned for lunch till 2 p.m. (Hickey, 1980, p. 13).

Hickey further describes in his memoirs how this dispute had led many in the miners' union to become disillusioned with the Arbitration system, and to decide that the remedy was "closer organisation" (1980, p. 18). In June 1908, encouraged by the success of the Blackball strike, the state miners' union at Runanga campaigned to create a Federation of the Coal Mines of the West Coast, appointing Robert Semple as their organiser. Blackball followed suit with Hickey their organiser who viewed such a Federation as a step towards One Big Union along IWW lines. When created, they took as their motto from the IWW, 'The World's Wealth for the World's Workers'. In 1909 the West Coast Workers' Union was allowed to join the organisation. As a result the Federation of Miners saw fit to change its name to the New Zealand Federation of Labor (labor being deliberately spelt in the American and Australian manner). It was met with great acclaim from the *Commonweal*, who applauded the move towards

...One strong class-conscious body of working men and women, who released from the shackles and ignorant traditions of craft or sectarian unionism, will move forward in one solid phalanx against the presumption of privilege and in defence of their rights.¹³

¹³ *Commonweal*, Vol. 4, Nov. 1909, p. 2

The recognition that combining together in a Federation would create a stronger labour movement continued to gather pace during the next couple of years. At the 1910 Federation conference Hickey argued that

Relying on the strength of their combination, and with a full recognition of class solidarity, the workers can win for themselves conditions that the Arbitration Court would never concede (Roth, 1976, p. 30).

Initially the ideas of the IWW had great influence on the NZFL. At its 1910 conference it had adopted a number of objectives proposed by IWW supporters, including obtaining employment for members; fraternal sympathy with the workers of New Zealand and other countries; increase the workers' wealth; shorten the hours of labour; and to educate for the complete abolition of the present wage system and the substitution of the common ownership of the means of production. This conference also took a number of decisions that increased the rank and file's power in the organisation. It was decided to hold a conference yearly, and in a democratically revolutionary move for a labour organisation in New Zealand, it was decided that any decision by the executive could be overturned by the membership. A decision by the executive or a petition by a 1000 members could stimulate a referendum of the whole membership. Also a first in New Zealand was the decision that officers were to be voted for by the entire membership via a postal ballot. Previous bodies had empowered the conference or the executive to appoint officers (Olssen, 1988, p. 35).

However, in a move that took power away from the rank and file, the conference decided that affiliated unions lost the right to take industrial action without prior approval from the executive, and all disputes were to be placed in the management of the executive. This also was a first in New Zealand. In a further move to centralise power, the executive was granted the authority to issue instructions to affiliated unions without prior local ballots.

Quickly named the “Red Feds” by the press following the printing of circular in support of striking Wellington tram workers on red paper (Roth, 1976, p. 32), the NZFL grew quickly. In 1911 its membership doubled from 6,724 to 13,971 (Roth, 1976, p. 33), and by 1912 the Federation had 43 affiliated unions, with around 15,000 members, which represented over 20 per cent of the organised workers of New Zealand (Olssen, 1988, p. 107).

At the 1912 NZFL conference the IWW strove to increase its influence. Demands were made for the organisation to arrange along IWW lines with a number of industrial departments being organised into One Big Union, and the New Zealand IWW had ensured that each delegate at the conference had a copy of the IWWs manifesto. After some debate, the conference agreed to reorganise along IWW lines and voted J.B. King, with the second highest total of votes, as one of seven onto a committee to look into reorganisation (Olssen, 1988, p. 144). Further, it adopted a preamble taken almost word for word from the constitution of the IWW, which in itself was an almost literal transcription of Karl Marx’s communist manifesto. It must be noted however that the proposal to reorganise along IWW lines came with the caveat that it would only occur when the executive felt the time was right (Crowley, 1946, p. 174).

This conference saw a debate that reflected the schism in the IWW in America between those following the De Leonite line who viewed it as essential to play a part in the political process, and those who saw this as a deviation from the revolutionary path. The Waihi miners submitted a motion for the NZFL not to become involved in political action, and King represented the IWW view when he said, “Workers are not robbed in parliament. They are robbed in the field, the factory, and the mill.” However, whilst conference voted to end any relationship with the NZSP, they did vote narrowly to allow any local union to nominate members of the NZFL to run for election (Olssen, 1988, pp. 146-147).

The 1912 conference was held with a strike in Waihi casting a shadow over the proceedings. The strike had begun in May 1912 after the NZFL affiliated Waihi Trade Union of Workers protested at the formation of a company inspired breakaway union for engine drivers, which would result in arbitration settlements being forced upon the other workers. The IWW had some influence amongst the Waihi miners. In the previous year the *Maoriland Worker* had reported that IWW pamphlets were “finding a ready sale”,¹⁴ and Wobbly J.B. King was now working there, running an economics class, enrolling about 30 members to an IWW local (Derby, 2009), and being elected to the local strike committee.

With the commencement of the Waihi strike, King, in calling for the NZFL to give support by calling for a general strike, outlined the importance of this dispute and its wider implications

According to the constitution...an injury to one is an injury to all.

Therefore the grievances of the Waihi workers are the grievances of all the members of the Federation, and they are also the grievances of the whole working class. The miners at Waihi are fighting to maintain solidarity, and their fight is in accordance with industrial unionism. They are trying to prevent a scab union being formed (Olssen, 1988, p. 139).

The NZFL executive however was not overly supportive of the strike because they had not officially sanctioned it - executive member Peter Fraser claimed that they had only learned of the strike three days after it had started (Olssen, 1988, p. 141). They initially refused to issue strike pay (although this was paid from June) and prevaricated over a response to the calls for a general strike in support of the Waihi miners, offering only to meet with the employers for talks, and proposing to send fraternal greetings congratulating them on their solidarity, both suggestions being passed by the conference.

¹⁴ *Maoriland Worker*, 25/8/11, p.4

Huntly miner, J.E Duncan, who had also been vocal in support of the IWW during the conference,¹⁵ highlighted the difference between the IWW and the executive

While the delegates are sitting here doing nothing, the [Waihi] men are being starved into submission. A very vital principle is at stake. It is a class fight of organised Labour against organised Capital (Olssen, 1988, p. 137).

The Waihi strike proceeded without incident until September, when the strikers were feeling confident of victory. There was still a strong belief that the NZFL would call a general strike in support of them, and the water levels were reaching such heights in the unmanned mines that they could be irretrievably lost. However the dispute was about to escalate to the detriment of the strikers. In *Paradise Reforged*, New Zealand historian James Belich, suggests the involvement of the state, and the decision of the employers to re-open the mines using strike-breakers under the protection of the state (2001 p.89) were reasons for the escalation of the strike.

The state's involvement escalated when in July 1912 the Liberal Government fell in a no-confidence debate. Several Liberal MPs crossed the floor to vote with the conservative Reform Party that took power. Under the new Prime Minister, William Massey, the government wasted no time in intervening in the Waihi dispute. Massey decided to appoint the Commissioner of Police, James Cullen, to oversee the events in Waihi, despite the Thames District Police Inspector, A.H. Wright, maintaining that not one act of lawlessness had been committed that could be linked to the strike. Wright even went so far as to comment how the Strike Committee had "assisted the police in warning the men to conduct themselves properly" (Hill, 1995, p. 284). This was backed up by

¹⁵ *Evening Post*, 27/5/12, p. 3

Waihi's Police Sergeant Wohlmann, who had talked of the strikers' "admirable self-respect and restraint" (ibid, p. 283). On September 7th Cullen led 80 officers into Waihi (this being some ten per cent of the police force of New Zealand) and strikers began to be arrested for acts as small as whistling the 'Red Flag'. Over the next two months some 82 men were prosecuted, resulting in 72 convictions and the imprisonment of 65 men in Mount Eden prison (Olssen, 1988, p. 155).

Cullen's correspondence of the time highlights how he allowed confrontation to develop between strike-breakers (with the support of the police) and strikers. In a letter he seemed to delight in retelling how the strike-breakers had "dealt out many cut faces, bleeding noses and black eyes...It was very laughable to see the...strikers running at the end in all directions" (Belich, 2001, p. 90). According to the accounts of the strikers involved in the running battles, and other evidence, at least some of the police, particularly the mounted men, sided openly with the strike-breakers who were doing the attacking. Some accounts even recorded Cullen himself as having attacked a miner, one Oliver Noakes (Hill, 1995, p. 287).

The violence in Waihi culminated in November with the violent death of a striker, Frederick George Evans. There have been many versions of what happened, but it is certain that Evans was hit by the baton of Police Constable Wade during violent scenes that occurred when the strike breakers attacked and forcibly entered the Miners' Hall. Wade received a gunshot wound during the melee, and some testified that Evans delivered the shot, while others maintained that Evans was clubbed before the shot was fired and that the shot came from a strike-breaker. Wade's injuries proved to be slight, whilst Evans died of his injuries in a police cell that same day. His body was taken to Auckland where a large crowd followed his remains to the cemetery. Such was the size of the procession that Wobbly Tom Barker reminisced, "literally the whole of the working class in Auckland marched that day" (Fry, 1999, p. 13). Evans was laid to rest with a tombstone inscribed "he died for his class" (Hill,

1995, p. 289). With the promise of police protection for employees the union reopened the mine and the strike was lost.

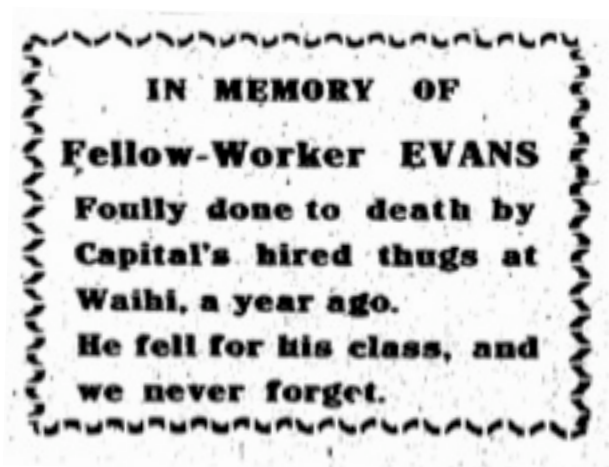


Figure 4: A memoriam to Fred Evans printed in the *Industrial Unionist* on the first anniversary of his death¹⁶

In response to the Waihi defeat the NZFL's leaders called a conference of all unions, whether affiliated or not, to figure out the best way to proceed in light of the new government's obvious hostility to the Unions. The IWW were, at first not invited, but after some pressure from delegates, received an invite. However, in their paper, the *Industrial Unionist*, the IWW claimed that they did not receive the invite until the conference was nearly over, and so did not attend.¹⁷

Some 80 organisations with a membership of 27,000 attended the Unity conference in January 1913, only about one third of which were actually affiliated to the NZFL. The conference approved proposals to create two new organisations, the United Federation of Labour (UFL) representing the unions, and a Social Democratic Party (SDP), to work in the political arena. A second conference was called to offer the chance of those not present to give their views. Although this second conference, in July, exceeded all expectations,

¹⁶ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/11/13, p. 1

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 1/3/13, p. 3

with 391 delegates from nearly 250 different organisations, representing over 60,000 workers attended, the IWW again never attended. They had been highly critical of the Unity plans, its compromise with moderate elements in the labour movement, and its invitation to representatives of the Employers Federation to attend. They expressed their disbelief that the same NZFL leaders who had been swift to condemn a similar plan proposed by the TLC over the last eighteen months were now happy to join up to such a scheme.

Such was the enmity that had once been displayed towards the American W.T. Mills, who had been the instigator of the original Unity scheme in 1911, and was later accused by Auckland Wobbly Tom Barker of serving the ruling class of New Zealand through his campaign against the Waihi miners,¹⁸ that a motion had been passed at the 1912 NZFL Conference instructing the executive to “communicate with all...Labour Organisations throughout the world...the alleged Labour advocate W.T.Mills...[has] spread dissension and disunity in the rank of organised Labour” (Crowley, 1946, p. 180). The IWW noted that criticisms of the Unity scheme had been called for but argued that it was pointless giving them now when the same people now arguing in support of it had already listed them all, and those who were originally strongly against compromise with moderates, politicians and employers were now painting such compromise as the only way forward. In their own inimitable language, and borrowing a phrase from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, they wrote of the Unity scheme “Verily it hath an ancient and fish like smell”.¹⁹

This conference formally created the UFL (with the spelling of Labor now reverting back to the anglicised Labour), and, by only a narrow margin, rejected the IWW preamble reflecting the NZFL leadership’s desire to tone down their rhetoric for fear of creating disunity with their new, more moderate, partners. To the IWW this rejection of the preamble was no reason for regret, as they considered that an organisation that was willing to invite employers to the

¹⁸ *Direct Action* 5/2/16, p. 3

¹⁹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/6/13 p .2

conference could no longer truly “endorse a preamble which proclaims the Class Struggle in the first sentence”.²⁰

Pat Hickey, at the time in support of the unity proposals, belatedly questioned this move to moderation years later, when he wrote

I have frequently asked myself whether a grave mistake was made when the two Unity conferences were called, that caused the Federation to open wider its doors to permit the enrolment of elements into the organisation that possessed neither the knowledge nor the spirit of those organisations that had been associated together for so long. It is an interesting speculation as to what would have been the end of the Federation if the Labour Movement had remained divided industrially” (Roth, 1976, p. 36).

Before the new embryonic organisations could truly develop a second major conflagration occurred in the industrial workplaces of New Zealand, when, according to Belich, a “strike fever spread like a huge epidemic wave” and the series of strikes that became known collectively as the Great Strike began.

On 6 October 1913, 16 Huntly miners were been laid off, including three prominent union officials, allegedly due to a seasonal shortage of work. This dispute led all 560 miners to stop work a fortnight later. On the 22nd October a stop work meeting was held by Wellington’s Waterside Workers to discuss a dispute involving their shipwright allies, which was a result of the United Steamship Company’s (USSCo) refusal to uphold a 30-year-old practice of giving a travel allowance to workers. The employers held a meeting and decided that the workers were in breach of an agreement signed the previous year, and chose to lock out Wellington’s watersiders. By the next day riotous scenes were occurring in the capital. Such was the mood that on the 26th of

²⁰ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/8/13 p. 2

October the workers responded to the Mayor's refusal to give permission to use the Basin Reserve for a meeting by purportedly tearing down the gates and holding the meeting regardless.²¹

As Belich suggested, the strike spread throughout the country like an epidemic. On 28th October the Auckland wharf workers struck in sympathy with the striking miners of Huntly. By November, in Auckland, around 10,000 people had joined the strikes and the city was described as being at a virtual standstill (Belich, 2001, p. 93). Such was the mood of militancy that inmates of an old persons' home struck to protest about the quality of the food, and inmates at Lyttleton Gaol formed a union and tried to affiliate to the UFL (Olssen, 1986, p. 41).

As the strikes and demonstrations proliferated, the New Zealand state gathered together the biggest display of strength seen since the New Zealand Wars. Marines and machine guns were landed at Wellington's wharves, and the huge guns of a Royal Navy warship were pointed at Auckland. Referring to these guns, socialist activist Harry Scott Bennett, in correspondence to his mother, wrote, "You would imagine that Auckland was in a state of civil war" (Belich, 2001, p. 93). As had been done in the strikes of 1890 the government recruited thousands of volunteers to help defeat the strike and to re-open the wharves. Many of these were recruited from the countryside and enrolled as 'special constables'. Armed with specially made batons that exceeded the normal length of those issued (Hill, 1995, p. 320), and some with their own firearms and horsewhips, they became known as Massey's Cossacks. The situation was developing as such that in Australia, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the strike represented a "modified civil war between town and country."²²

As in Waihi, there is evidence that the police were encouraged to use force to deal with strikers. Cullen advised his men "If they don't go, ride over the top of them", and Colonel Chaffey of the Mounted Rifles urged the specials to "let the

²¹ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 27/10/13, p. 5

²² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31/10/13, p. 8

first charge be a lesson to the workers of New Zealand. Pick your man and put force behind your blow, and, if you have to shoot, shoot straight” (Roth, 1976, p. 37). It was not uncommon for people to carry revolvers in this time as it was not made illegal to do so until 1921, and many men on both sides of the dispute carried guns (Belich, 2001, p. 93). Wellington gun shops sold out of stock, and journalists gave accounts of gunfights. Belich quotes a *Dominion* journalist as reporting “The sinister note of a revolver”, and how “through the darkness firearms flashed and thundered”, and that during the disturbances two strikers and one special were wounded by gunshot (2001, p. 94). One striker, J.P. Hassett, allegedly fired shots at the Police Commissioner, Cullen, but missed. Although a jury found him not guilty of this charge, he was still unfortunate enough to receive the maximum sentence of two years imprisonment with hard labour for having taken part in a riot.²³

Over 3000 Specials were enrolled in Auckland and Wellington alone, trained and protected by the military in both cities (Hill, 1995, p. 316). The extent of military involvement during the dispute is not fully known, but there is evidence that they played a significant part (Hill, 1995, p. 321). General Godley, the Commander of the New Zealand Forces, wrote proudly of his army who, disguised as police, helped keep an eye on the strikers.

At Wellington, the Mounted Rifles...made short work of the strikers. Mounted and armed with stock whips, they rode through the town, and not only effectively dispersed riotous gatherings but pursued the rioters into the houses and then dealt with them in such a manner that they had little stomach for a continuance of law-breaking (Belich, 2001, p. 93).

When Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty was later asked why he had departed from traditional policy in letting the military be involved in an

²³ *Evening Post*, 7/2/14, p. 6

industrial dispute he explained that the action had been taken at the express wish of the New Zealand Government (Roth, 1976, p. 39).

During the Great Strike, the IWW, while never actually leading a strike, were always around supporting the strikers. They increased the production of their paper from monthly to three times a week. The paper was full of encouragement and praise for the strikers, and appeals to those not striking to join in. They would check facts published in the daily papers and publish their own version of events. Out on the streets they were organising, agitating and attending meetings, demonstrations and giving speeches. For example, The *Marlborough Express* reported a “new and disturbing factor” had arrived in Wellington in the form of IWW organiser Tom Barker, who had given speeches advocating sabotage and urged the workers to organise as a class as the bosses were organised as a class.²⁴

It was such a speech that led to Tom Barker being arrested on a charge of sedition, along with three other leading figures of the labour movement, Harry Holland, Robert Semple and George Bailey, the then secretary of the NZSP. Barker reported as evidence of the solidarity amongst the workers of this time that they were treated as honoured guests by sympathetic prison officers (Nolan, 2005, p. 44). His charge of sedition was eventually dropped, and he was instead found guilty of breach of peace. He was remanded in custody until sureties of some £1500 could be found, finally getting released in January the next year (Fry, 1999, p. 18).

The strike did not last, and by the 18th November, most of the ports in Wellington were open again, and the UFL conceded defeat the next day. In Auckland the strike lasted 5 days longer, but before the end of December the majority of the country’s workers were back at work. The Huntly miners stayed out until 6 January 1914, but returned to work when farmers began working the

²⁴ *Marlborough Express*, 27/10/13, p. 5

mine. The victory did come at a cost however. It took 58 days for a more or less complete return to work. The estimated cost to employers was approximately £1,000,000 (Roth, 1976, p. 39), equivalent to around \$150 million in 2011.

When looking back at the events of late 1913 it is possible to view the strikes as badly misjudged. Roth points out the rashness of sending the workers into a battle for which they were not prepared (1976, p. 37). It was a poor time of year to begin such a battle too. It was early in the farming year, so not only were the rural population free to come into the cities to act as special constables, but the wharves were in the quietest period of the year in terms of loading produce.

However, many historians of this period, such as Hill and Roth, (Anderson, 2005, p. 152), have come to a uniform conclusion that the employers were determined to crush the militants before they had chance to grow any stronger, and they manipulated the trade unions involved into a fight they were unlikely to win, and were supported by a Government who was determined to use all means necessary to support the employers.

Fairburn has argued though that there is no proof for this. He has pointed to the Government's response not being consistent. For example, unions who had struck illegally prior to 1913 had not been fined. To him that suggests that the Government was not of a single mind to crush the strikers. He also claims that the employers had not demonstrated any wish to have a fight with the unions. In fact they had been incredibly tolerant of the various wildcat stoppages that had occurred throughout 1913 (Fairburn, 2005). However, as early as 1908, it was reported that the Employers' Association of Wellington had proposed the setting up of "a bureau to recruit scabs" and was establishing a blacklist against union men."²⁵ Hill has also noted that at the second Unity Congress in 1913 the delegates heard how the employers' federation was "raising a huge fund to fight

²⁵ *International Socialist Review for Australasia*, 27/6/08, p.14

the organised workers” (2005, p. 83). This defence fund was established “to Combat Socialism, Syndicalism and Anarchy” and a manifesto was issued stating the intention to “oppose extreme agitation, syndicalisers, and revolutionary socialists; [and] to promote unity of the genuine workers and the employers” (McAloon, 2005, p. 232). In August the employers had met secretly to establish reserve forces of strike breakers (ibid).

Fairburn (2005) further claims that it would have been impossible for the Government to plot a showdown with the UFL as it was not possible to predict where such a showdown would take place, or when it would take place, or what the plans of the unions were. Hill dismisses this argument by pointing out that there is evidence to show the police had infiltrated the inner most circles of the unions. The Wellington police force Superintendent, J. W. Ellison reported the fact that this surveillance had taken place, and suggested that the detectives had acted as agent provocateurs in stirring up the strikers and their allies (2005, p. 86).

In addition to this, during 1913 parliament had passed the Labour Disputes Investigation Act that could force compulsory arbitration on the parties involved, thus making acting outside the arbitration system effectively illegal. Penalties for striking were increased, and the definition of striking was widened to include the refusal to sign a new contract in order to secure an increased benefit. Furthermore the Police Offences Act was amended to outlaw aggressive picketing and the harassment of strike breakers (ibid, pp. 232-233). All these actions could be taken to suggest that the employers and government were lining up for a fight with the militants.

The defeat of the militants in the 1913 Great Strike had a profound effect on New Zealand’s labour movement, with the IWW suffering greatly as an organisation. Auckland Wobbly, Frank Hanlon, described how “the scattering

far and wide of the most active members nearly killed the organisation”²⁶ with many of its most prominent supporters fleeing New Zealand main cities to go abroad or to the rural areas of New Zealand. Meanwhile, the UFL continued its swing to moderation. At the 1914 conference, the secretary-treasurer of the UFL, Mark Fagan, went so far as to say that those who had preached, “Sabotage, anarchy, and syndicalism...should have their heads chopped off”,²⁷ and the new president, Dan Sullivan, praised Semple and Hickey for being willing to moderate their views, and expressed his pleasure that the IWW had been unable to influence the conference.²⁸

Having described the influence of the IWW in the events leading up to the Great Strike of 1913, the next section will describe the methodology proposed for further study of the IWW, particularly focussing on the necessity of distinguishing a revolutionary organisation such as the IWW from its reformist counterparts in the New Zealand labour movement, so as to fully understand the differences between them, and to assess the nature of the legacy left behind by the IWW in New Zealand.

²⁶ *Direct Action*, 10/8/14 p. 2

²⁷ *Evening Post*, 18/7/14, p. 9

²⁸ *Poverty Bay Herald*, 16/7/14, p .8

METHODOLOGY

Studying the IWW as a Social Movement Organisation

The previous section has given an outline of IWW activity in New Zealand during the first half of the twentieth century. However to understand the ideology and motives behind their actions and how they differed from other labour groups of the time, it is necessary to design an appropriate methodology.

O'Leary (2010, pp. 88-89) talks of research design as containing methodology, methods and tools, and as a way of moving from research question(s) to answers. The methodology is a "macro-level" framework providing both the strategies and grounding for the conduct of a study. She describes methods as "micro-level techniques used to collect and analyse data, whilst the tools are the devices used in the collection of data."

To answer the questions raised at the beginning of this thesis, it is possible to study the IWW with the use of social movement theory, but first it is necessary to define a social movement organisation (SMO) and consider whether the IWW can be defined as such.

There are a number of definitions of what consists a SMO, and though they may differ in terms of emphasis most are based around collective action, change-orientated goals, and activity taken outside the existing political institutions. Snow, Soule and Kriesi (2004, p. 11) proffer the following

Social movements can be thought of as collectives acting with some degree of organisation and continuity outside of institutional or organisational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organisation, society, culture, or world order of which they are a part.

Thus the IWW, with its revolutionary aims of instigating and organising the mass mobilization of the working class to take control of industry, with the intention of ending the capitalist system of production, distribution and control that they are part of and ruled by, can fit this definition and be considered as a social movement.

A variety of theories have been developed over time to explain how SMOs, such as the IWW, function and aim to achieve their goals. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the dominant theory for studying social movements was the resource mobilization framework (Fitzgerald & Rogers, 2000, p. 574). This theory measures social movements in terms of material resources and a base of supporters. Material sources are taken to mean such items as knowledge, money, media, membership, legitimacy, and internal and external support from an existing authority elite. To be successful it is argued, an organisation has to develop a structure and leadership that can rally supporters and raise the material contributions necessary to develop into a movement. This emphasis on resources can offer an explanation why some groups are successful, and others are not (Fitzgerald & Rogers, 2000).

This model cannot, however, account for SMOs that achieve success despite a lack of resources. To counter this Eisinger (1973) developed a political processes theory whereby the idea of political opportunity could be used to explain the success of a SMO. In this framework a SMO will be successful, not only because of resource mobilisation or lack of, but because the political timing is right due to a change in the political environment, for example a government decision to cut welfare payments due to external events, or the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament reacting to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, or merely the sense of an opportunity (Beck, 2008, p. 1569).

Fitzgerald and Rodgers (2000, p. 576) recognise that political process theories add cultural and social components to analyses that are missing from resource

mobilization theories, and may explain the timing of the emergence of a SMO. However, they still neglect to consider those Radical Social Movement Organisations (RSMO) whose goals lay outside the existing political system, such as the IWW.

Fitzgerald and Rodgers have expressed the opinion that generally social movement theory has presumed a reform orientation, that skew definitions of success and failure towards a reform based hegemony. To truly be able to define, explain, and understand an RSMO they need to be looked at and treated on their own terms, rather than imposing definitions that are not necessarily relevant. They have argued that all previous approaches have been “inadequate for understanding radical social movement organisations, that they exhibit class bias and, because of the emphasis on bureaucratic organising, only moderate groups interested in being part of the existing political process can be explained” (2000, p. 574).

To enable RSMOs to be studied on their own terms Fitzgerald and Rodgers developed a framework that provides ideal type characteristics (Figure 6). In this way a RSMO, such as the New Zealand IWW, can be judged in terms of the ideology, and structure specific to them, avoiding the pitfalls of attempting to analyse them through comparison with more moderate organisations, and reform orientated ideas of success.

	Moderate Social Movement Organisations	Radical Social Movement Organisations
Internal Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchical leadership; • Formal bureaucratic organisation; • Development of large membership base for resource generation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonhierarchical leadership; • Participatory democratic organisation; • Egalitarian 'membership' based upon involvement.
Ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform agenda; • Emphasis on being a contender in the existing political system. • National focus • Support government military involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radical agenda; • Emphasis on structural change; • Radical networks. • Global consciousness and connections • Antimilitaristic stance
Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonviolent legal action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct action • Mass action • Innovative tactics
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to rely on mainstream forms of communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignored/misrepresented by the media; • Reliance on alternative forms of communication (music, pamphlets, etc.)
Assessment of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for plentiful sources; • Manipulate resources for the self-interest of the organisation; • Success measured in terms of reform of existing political economic system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited resources; • Contribute to larger radical agenda; • Subject to intense opposition and government surveillance

Figure 5: Ideal type characteristics of moderate and radical social movement organisations. Source: (Fitzgerald & Rogers, 2000, p. 578)

Data Collection and Analysis

A historical research project means that one is deprived of the opportunity to carry out a survey, conduct interviews or observations. Therefore, this project is both the study of the past through an examination of others' work on the subject, as well as primary source historical works and documentary evidence. The challenges this presents include knowing what you are looking for, how to find it, whether it can be trusted, and knowing what to do with it in terms of the research question.

O'Leary (2010, p. 218) writes that when using text it can be quite easy to overlook the fact that you need to be sure of what it is you are looking for, and to approach the text with the same rigour you would put into developing a questionnaire for a survey or interview. Bearing this in mind I have used Fitzgerald and Rodger's framework discussed above to shape my data collection. I have looked for information regarding the organisation of the IWW, their ideological issues, tactics advocated and actually employed, how they communicated with the public and their members, and the impact they had on working class communities.

I have used a 'snowball' technique to gather information about relevant documents. That is I have been following up references and documents mentioned by a previous work.

One major difficulty that has been experienced during the research has been a lack of surviving evidence. The IWW was a more aural and oral based movement, involving itself with participation rather than record keeping. Organisations such as this, who may adopt or pronounce illegal methods, often discuss or carry out activity in secret, which is another factor in the relatively little factual evidence that remains. However, through reference to

contemporary newspapers articles, and sources such as novels, and relating them to known activities of Wobblies in other places and times, it has been possible to build up a picture of the IWW activists' life. For example, it is known that the IWW were enthusiastic in regards to the education of the worker, and there are several references to this in the *Industrial Unionist*. The IWW in other countries were known to be keen scholars of literature and politics, so it is probably safe to presume that at least the most prominent Wobblies were self-educated. This can be backed up by further evidence of economic classes, and socialist Sunday schools being well attended. More evidence can be added by reference to other works. For example, New Zealand writer Robin Hyde's autobiographical novel, *The Godwits Fly*, where she describes her IWW supporting father as having "...spent even his tobacco money on books" (1970, p. 41).

Published works such as books, pamphlets, newspapers and journals, such as the *Maoriland Worker* and the *Industrial Unionist*, have been a key source. These have been accessed via the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington. Additionally, the National Library has an increasing number of newspapers of the period digitalised on their Papers Past website¹, which is searchable by the use of phrases and keywords.

A method for analysis involves searching historical records and literature in order to create data with a view to explaining the behaviour of individuals and groups. I have adapted a procedure from the works of Pitt (1972) and Punch (2009), which takes in the following points

- Assembling of material, what are the major sources of evidence in previously published studies. In focusing upon the *Industrial Unionist* I appreciate that they had a message to get across thus, it is likely that their writings would unlikely to have been objective. However I have

¹ <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast>

accepted this and viewed their writings as one side of an argument and presented the facts as they presented them, as this conveys the message that they wanted to get across. Where they have discussed particular events I have been able to check this with other contemporary newspaper reports or other accounts (while noting they too are likely to have their own subjective slant on reporting of matters, in terms of readership, ownership, and sponsorship).

- Isolating Issues, topics and themes, identifying the key terms, places, and names. Here it needs to be considered about which activities are considered important, and by whom.
- Identifying other participants, organisations and individuals, and comparing different accounts. It has been difficult here to uncover the activities and thoughts of the rank and file members of the relevant organisation. Mostly what is reported are the words and actions of the most prominent members of the period. However, a careful perusal of newspaper reports has uncovered some of the activities of the less well-known individuals of the time.
- Integration of results.
- Analysis of the detail and context of the text to detect patterns of meaning, and any contradictions, and inconsistencies.

The next section will make use of the framework developed by Fitzgerald and Rodgers and the methods of data collection and analysis described to discuss and analyse the successes and failures of the IWW in New Zealand, and their differences to the other contemporaneous bodies in relation to ideas and actions surrounding organisation, ideology, tactics and communication, culminating in a discussion revolving around the ideas regarding the notions of

success, and whether the IWW could be said to have left a lasting influence on New Zealand's labour movement.

The Industrial Workers of the World in New Zealand

- organisation, ideology, tactics, and communication -



Organisation - “Hail The Rank and File”

The IWW fit into Fitzgerald and Rodgers framework of an RSMO because of its belief in a democratic organisation being a crucial aspect of the organisation's ideology. They rejected the idea of relying on strong leadership, and viewed the change to a socialist society as only being able to be driven by the ordinary working people.

The IWW saw the need for strong organisation in response to the strong organisation of the Employers who themselves had combined in a Federation. The fact that the employers had formed an organisation along class lines, that is, it was only open to employers, convinced the IWW of the increased necessity to respond with a class based organisation of their own.¹

A series of articles for the Auckland IWW newspaper the *Industrial Unionist*, written by New Zealand Wobbly, Frank Hanlon,² though borrowing heavily from a pamphlet by the General Secretary of the IWW in the USA, Vincent St John,³ gave a description of how a future industrial union organisation in New Zealand would look. He considered that the level of organisation of New Zealand workers meant that no more than a skeleton outline was possible due to the necessity of being flexible in response to any unforeseen changes and developments that may occur in capitalist production, but he stressed the importance of at least a skeleton framework being in place if the workers are to discuss organising into one big union.

¹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/4/13, p. 1

² These articles were later reprinted in a pamphlet entitled *INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM Aim, Form and, Tactics of a Workers Union on I.W.W. Lines* (1913), reprinted by Rebel Press (Steiner, 2007).

³ *The I.W.W. Its History, Structure and Methods* (St John, 1911)

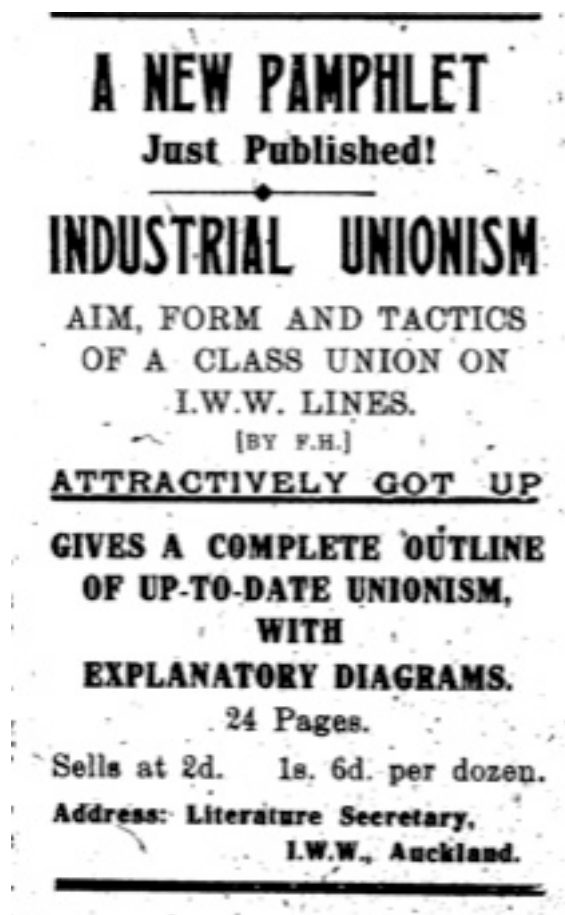


Figure 6: Advertisement for the New Zealand published pamphlet *Industrial Unionism* based on a series of articles by Frank Hanlon that appeared in the *Industrial Unionist*⁴

This one big union was to consist of six main departments reflecting the divisions of industry. These were

- Agricultural, fisheries and water products;
- Mining;
- Transport and communication;
- Manufacturing and general production;
- Construction;
- Public Service.

Each of these divisions would be further subdivided into the different branches of production as a whole. For example the workers grouped in the construction

⁴ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/6/13, p.1

department would consist of groups such as painters, plumbers, scaffolders, and electricians. In this way they would all belong to the same one union rather than a variety of separate unions representing their individual crafts and trades.

Each industrial department was to be composed of a national industrial union, which would be branched into local industrial unions, made up of the workers in one industry in one district; district councils made up of delegates from all industries in one area to combine communications and action; and shop branches of an industrial union, which would enable workers to respond to local conditions.

The local industrial union was the basic unit of organisation. When the workers were highly organised there would be several of these, all affiliated to the same national executive (as was the case of the miners on the West Coast of the South Island). For these to be able to liaise locally with each other, one elected representative from each union would attend the district council. This council was to be of crucial importance, as the role of it was to promote local solidarity, direct action, guard against over-centralisation, and, most importantly, educate the workers in revolutionary philosophy and direct action tactics.

According to the IWW, a miners' strike that began in Blackball in August 1913 failed precisely because a lack of a district council meant that there was no co-ordinated action on the West Coast, and the Blackball miners had been left without support. The IWW argued that organising locally was essential, as relying on national executives was too slow and inflexible, even if they could be trusted to provide the necessary support.⁵ Similarly, during the Waihi strike, they believed that a national executive that was scattered throughout the country had proved to be too slow in acting. The IWW argued that the Waihi Miners' union should have been in a position to deal with each contingency as it

⁵ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/11/13, p. 4

arose, rather than referring each vital matter to a body that required at least a week to assemble.

Hanlon borrowed an organisational chart (Fig. 7) from St John's pamphlet to illustrate the IWW's ideas for the organisation of the Industrial Union, although he made a small change in the numbers, from 21 to 12, required to form an executive board of a national union in recognition of the small size of some of New Zealand's industries.

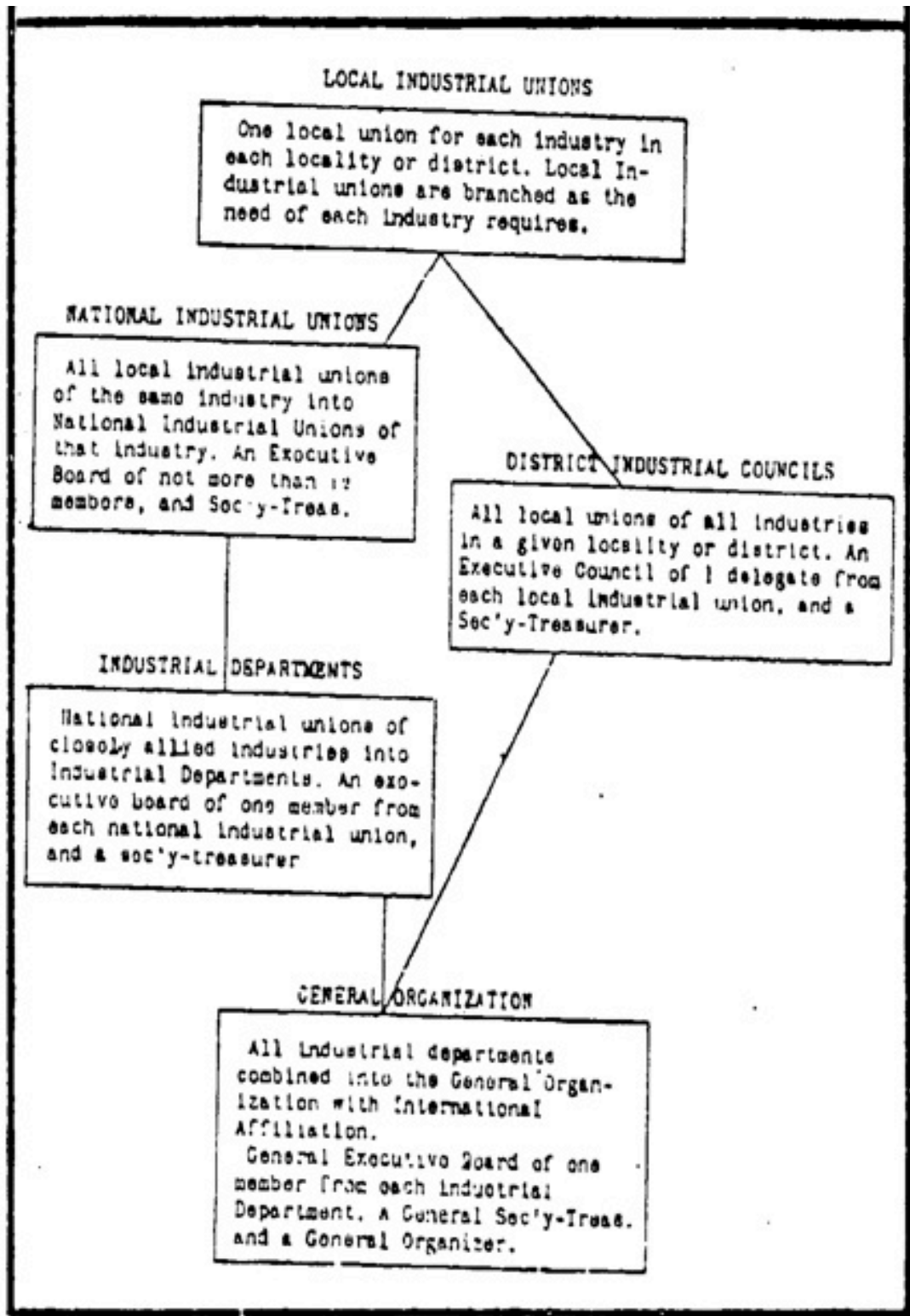
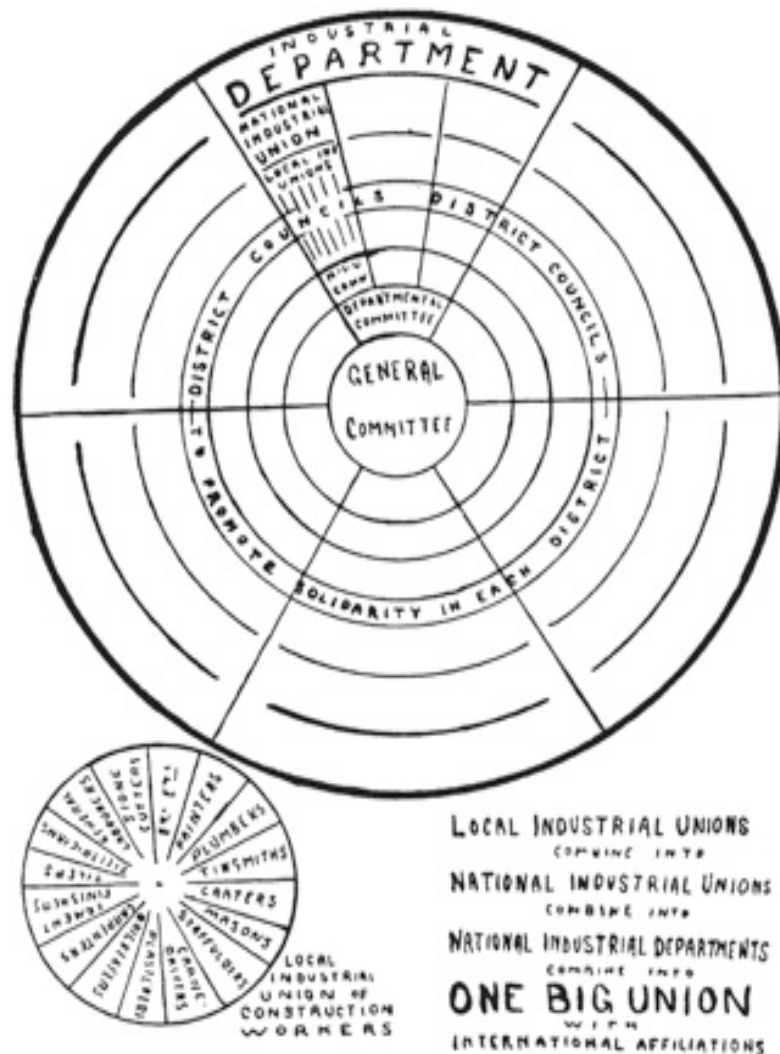


Figure 7: Structure of the IWW⁶

⁶ (Steiner, 2007, p. 21)

Hanlon also provided a simplified version of the 'IWWs wheel'⁷ to explain how all the different industrial departments fitted together in to the 'One Big Union' (figure 8).



19

Figure 8: Hanlon's wheel⁸

⁷ The original IWW wheel was a chart of industrial organisation designed by founding member of the IWW in the USA, Thomas J Hagerty, who was also credited with being the author of the IWW preamble (Dubofsky, 1988, p. 91)

The large circle represents the one big union, with a single industrial department written in as an example. This itself contains three national unions. These would be bound by a single departmental convention and committee and further bound to the general committee. The District Councils are shown as a continuous circle to represent that they cut across and represent all industries. The smaller wheel is used to represent all the occupations in a single industrial union.

Hanlon added that whilst the organisation was being built it would be necessary to have local propaganda branches, known as mixed locals, for the dissemination of information, education, and recruitment. They appreciated that the majority of the working class in New Zealand were aware of the class struggle, “but only dimly”, and it would be a waste of valuable time and effort to attempt to deal with the issues of industrial organisation “when so much remains to be done.”⁹

It was intended that a local union would be in charge of its own affairs, and elect its own officers, and send delegates to the annual, or preferably semi-annual national conference. The local would also elect all district delegates and officers of the national union. Members of a department would elect departmental officers, and officers of the general committee and international delegates would be elected by the whole membership.

Although this level of organisation is seemingly highly centralised, Hanlon stressed that this constitution would throw the control of the whole organisation into the hands of the membership. Although there was to be a centralised administration, it would be without centralised control in the hands of a few individuals. As a further safeguard to help prevent an elite leadership clique

⁸ (Steiner, 2007, p. 19)

⁹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/2/13, p. 3

developing, the IWW called for a reduction of official's salaries to a minimum. Writing in the *Maoriland Worker* in an article entitled 'a plea for the IWW', T.H. Marshall, The President of the Waikato Miners Union, argued that

No official should receive a higher wage than those he serves. Higher wage means higher position; higher position means above, hence leader, autocrat.

He added that unfortunately the New Zealand labour movement was not free of those who enjoyed being "hoisted on the pedestal of pride."¹⁰

For the IWW, the talk of "better pay, better men" was dismissed as "twaddle" in a revolutionary movement, and it was emphasized that an earnest revolutionary would not work solely for monetary gain.¹¹ Additionally, frequent changes of officials would not only prevent the development of a leadership circle, but it would also have the benefit of giving the rank and file workers more experience of decision making, something crucial to developing the confidence of all members of the Union. The Auckland IWW itself held semi-annual elections of all of its membership for its unpaid posts.

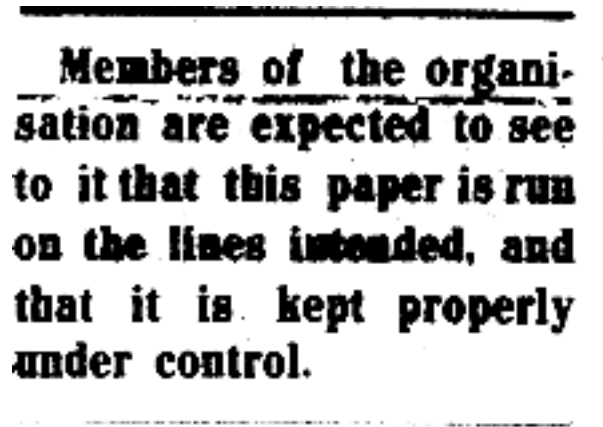
In a call for "eternal vigilance" from the rank and file the IWW alerted their members to be aware of individuals who "pose as revolutionary heroes in order to bolster their own standing."¹² They stressed that the executive should not be allowed to be anything more than an executive. Officers should not direct but be directed. A common criticism of the NZFL was that its leaders had excessive power and rewards. The publication of the NZFL accounts just prior to the 1912 conference created a storm of condemnation of the seemingly extravagant wages and expenses paid to the executive (Olssen, 1988, p. 136). In comparison, the Industrial Unionist Committee prided themselves on the fact

¹⁰ *Maoriland Worker* 3/5/12 p. 9

¹¹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/3/13, p. 2

¹² *ibid.*

that they received no pay for their efforts on the paper, and when the IWW did appoint an organiser, Tom Barker, he received little, if any pay.



Members of the organisation are expected to see to it that this paper is run on the lines intended, and that it is kept properly under control.

Figure 9: Address to the members: In the spirit of rank and file democracy and appeal to be eternally vigilant, the following statement appeared in bold in the first few issues of the *Industrial Unionist*

It was crucial to the whole democratic philosophy of the IWW to fight against centralised power, leadership, and those that aimed for such, and Fitzgerald and Rodgers (2000, p. 579) stress that this is a strength and key characteristic of RSMOs. The IWW considered a reliance on leadership as fostering dependence amongst the working class, it would prove to be inflexible, and created a danger of a movement being tied to one symbolic leader. Their anti-leadership philosophy was exemplified when the defence committee of two IWW members in the US, Etter and Carrusso, contacted them to help raise funds by selling medals featuring an image of Bill Haywood, a co-founder and prominent organiser of the USA IWW Bill. The New Zealand IWW refused to sell the medals, stating that this “local has no use for hero worship”. However, they added they would still raise money but without the medals.¹³ In contrast, to

¹³ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/3/13, p. 2

the editors of the *Maoriland Worker*, Bill Haywood was something of a hero and often had his articles reprinted in the paper (Derby, 2005, p. 293).

The IWW viewed the New Zealand labour movement as being cursed, and hampered by all those who stood as leaders, and they considered these to be only those who excelled the rank and file in “brassness of neck, strength of lung, and love of power or limelight, but not in intelligence”. There was a time perhaps when leadership was necessary, they argued, but now the working class is literate and able to think and read for themselves it is no longer true.¹⁴ To the IWW the true creativity, intelligence and passion necessary for a revolution lay with the workers. They considered that

an almost unlimited amount of ability and talent is latent in the Working Class, but it remains undeveloped through lack of self-reliance and initiative in individuals and because of the superstition that we must have leaders, or in other words, we must let someone else do our thinking.¹⁵

Even if mistakes were to be made through a lack of knowledge or experience then this was considered to be no bad thing, “better that the membership of an organisation should conduct a fight themselves and meet defeat”,¹⁶ they maintained. In this way experience is gained and lessons in self-reliance learned, all helping to increase the self-confidence of the workers.

During the Great Strike, the IWW were critical of the main trade union leaders for not being more open with the strikers about their plans, even though it was the rank and file who had started the disputes and were carrying out much of the organising. In accusing them of damaging the spirit of solidarity, which otherwise was outstanding, they asked the Central Strike Committee why they assumed that they considered the “collective intelligence of twenty men is

¹⁴ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/3/13, p. 2

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 3

¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 2

superior to...[that] of ten thousand". They pointed out that such behaviour was leading to rumours of deception and suspicions of incompetency, and that while delegates were necessary to discuss co-ordinated action in meetings they should not lead but be led by those they had been elected to represent. The only way to have a successful strike, the IWW said, and to maintain solidarity was to allow the rank and file to have the fullest amount of control possible.¹⁷

Not only were proper organisation and rank and file democracy important for industrial struggle and the overthrow of capitalism, but importantly, it was also planting the seed of the future socialist society. No longer was the dream of a socialist world to be an abstract imaginary utopia, instead it would have its roots within the class struggle that preceded it. The federation of the working class was the very blueprint for the future society. Not only would capitalism be overthrown but the democratic grass roots nature of the organisation would see the end of the state too. Instead society would be based around local community bodies based on the local union organisation that had been created to fight for the overthrow of capitalism.

In addition to creating a non-hierarchical democratic organisation, Fitzgerald and Rodgers also see as crucial the attempt to instil egalitarian attitudes throughout the organisation. At the IWW founding conference in Chicago, Bill Haywood, declared that the organisation "recognises neither race, creed, colour, sex, or previous condition of servitude" (Dall, 2011). What they did recognise was class, and membership for the New Zealand IWW was restricted only to wage-earning members of the working class. This was a logical result of the divide of the class line that splits society into the exploiter and the exploited, with all employers being the exploiters, and all wageworkers the exploited.¹⁸ Although they were firmly against bourgeois sympathisers becoming members, Roth has noted that the reality was that it was very rare that a university

¹⁷ *Industrial Unionist*, 21/11/13, p.1

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 1/5/13, p.4

graduate or professional person was associated with socialism in New Zealand in the early twentieth century.¹⁹

Application No. _____

Membership Card No. _____

Date _____ 191

Application for Membership

Do you agree to abide by the constitution and regulations of this organisation? _____

Will you diligently study its principles and make yourself acquainted with its purposes? _____

Name _____

Occupation _____ Industry _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State or Province _____

The above applicant, having subscribed to the principles of the preamble, and having answered in the affirmative to the questions, expresses his desire to become a member of the **Industrial Workers of the World**.

Figure 10: Application form for membership of the IWW as printed in the *Industrial Unionist*²⁰

Until the *Industrial Unionist* appeared in 1913 little effort had been made to build links with the Maori in New Zealand. The NZFL had virtually ignored Maori and possibly paid the price for this neglect when Maori volunteered as strike breakers during the 1912 and 1913 strikes. To illustrate this point an article in *the Bay of Plenty Times* reported how the local “natives” viewed the strike as affecting them adversely and were “anxious and willing to assist in the suppression of the strike” by signing up as specials.²¹ In fact the NZFLs attitude to the Maori people was reflected in the following article printed in May 1912

It is stated that at a meeting of the Young Maori Party a resolution calling upon the Government to make no exemption for military training among the aborigines was greeted with cheers. Since the Maoris are at most but a couple of generations removed from cannibalism, it can be

¹⁹ *Industrial Workers of the World, Bert Roth Collection, MS-Papers-6164-120, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.*

²⁰ *Industrial Unionist, 1/5/13, p.4*

²¹ *Bay of Plenty Times, 5/11/13, p. 5*

understood why they would cheer the prospect of brain-scattering throat-slitting per medium of militarism.²²

In keeping with their egalitarian ideas and recognising the importance of building links with all workers the *Industrial Unionist* uniquely for a workers' newspaper published a series of articles in the Maori language. In July 1913 the first appeal to Maori in their own language appeared. Translating the Industrial Workers of the World as "iuniana o nga kaimahi o te ao", it was entitled Ki nga Kaimahi Maori (To Maori working men).



Figure 11: Ki nga Kaimahi Maori (to Maori working men). The heading for the first article addressed to Maori as members of the working class²³

In total there were seven articles written by New Zealand Wobbly Percy Short, who was a member of the *Industrial Unionist* Committee, and a licensed Maori translator,²⁴ having previously worked in giving lessons in Maori in Feilding.²⁵ Gathered together, the articles provide a remarkable attempt to present Maori with access to the IWW beliefs with the use of Maori philosophical and cultural values.

A later article during the periods of strikes in November 1913 sought perhaps to redress an unintentional neglect of women, Ki Te Iwi Maori Katoa (To all Maori

²² *Industrial Workers of the World*, Bert Roth Collection, MS-Papers-6164-120, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

²³ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/7/13, p. 4

²⁴ H. Roth, 'Biographical notes – Percy Short', MS-Papers-6164-092, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

²⁵ *Feilding Star*, 10/7/08, p. 3

People). It appealed to the Maori not to allow themselves to be recruits as special constables or strike breakers. Translated it ran

MY FRIENDS,

This is a message to you to explain the reason the workers of New Zealand are striking and to show that this strike concerns you. The top bosses of the shipping companies and the Government mean to destroy the unions of New Zealand workers, so that they can succeed in lowering the wages of the workers. The newspapers are concealing the most important point. These bosses are looking for people to act as policeman to fight us. Not one of you should participate in these treacherous dealings. This is disgusting work. We and you are workers together and we all suffer from the same affliction. It was these bosses who confiscated your land, they who shot your ancestors in days gone by. This thieving gang is your enemy - people without feelings. You are our dear friends. And so, we must always hold fast to our mutual love. All workers should be of one mind regarding this battle. Therefore do not help our mutual enemies. We are all workers together, We are ever one tribe - the tribe of workers²⁶.

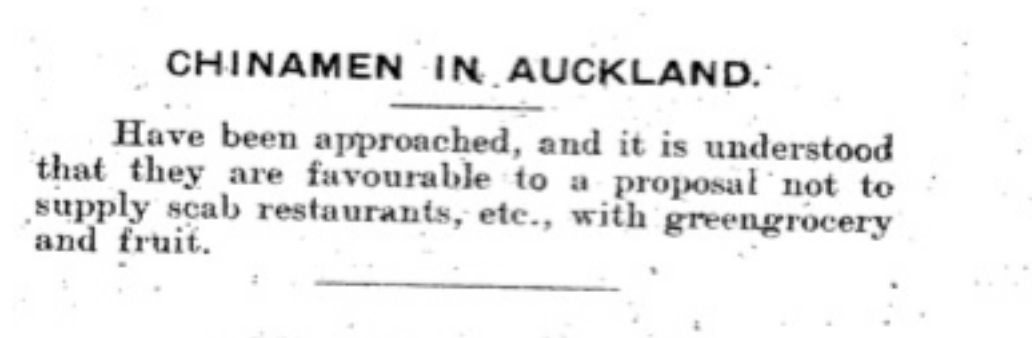


Figure 12: "Chinamen in Auckland". The IWW reached out to all members of the working class without distinction of race.²⁷

The fact that the IWW mentioned race and gender was unusual at this time, but while their attitude to race can seem straightforward, that is, if you're a worker

²⁶ *Industrial Unionist*, 13/11/13, p. 2; translation taken from <http://redruffians.tumblr.com/post/2631159407/ki-te-iwi-maori-katoa>,

²⁷ *Industrial Unionist*, 15/11/13, p. 1

then you are a member of the working class, their positions on women were perhaps a little more ambivalent. In the USA women had been at the forefront of the IWW since its inception. While the number of female representatives at their inaugural Chicago convention (around 12 in total) was quite small, the issue of gender equality was always at the front of the organisation's agenda, and quite a few of the early pioneers of industrial unionism were women. Those who spoke at the inaugural conference included Mother Jones, a powerful advocate of miners' rights, and campaigner against child labour, and Lucy Parsons, an anarchist and widow of one of those killed in the Chicago Haymarket massacre of 1886, when a number of striking workers were shot by police. Luella Twining, who later managed Bill Haywood's speaking tours, was a voting member (Gonzales, deFilippis, & Fallon, 2011).

The IWW continued to attract female revolutionaries throughout their first few years most notably Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (to whom American Wobbly Joe Hill dedicated his IWW song 'Rebel Girl') and Matilda Rabinowitz. The IWW in the USA went on to organise chambermaids and, remarkably, prostitutes who, in 1907, went on strike in New Orleans. In a study of the place of woman in the IWW and their literature, Ann Schofield concluded that the IWW "vigorously and effectively organised women" and sincerely included them into the organisation (Burgmann, 2009, p. 92).

The masculine character of the IWW in New Zealand has been the subject of some debate. Olssen talks of the "vision of manhood" which flowed through the ideology (1988, p. 47), and how there was a "constant talk of manhood" (ibid, p. 97). Francis Shor expanded this idea and talked of a "virile syndicalism" running through the IWW. He points to a passage in the New Zealand produced pamphlet 'A Chunk of IWWism' where the author A.H. (probably A.H. Holdsworth, a member of the Auckland IWW) writes that, "A man who won't stand by his mates is no man at all"²⁸ as evidence of the appeal to

²⁸ *Chunks of Iwwism*, (1913, p. 9)

manhood that disregarded women workers (2002). However Nolan (2005, p. 238) has argued that the New Zealand IWW was not particularly virile, and more generally the wave of radicalism led to an increase in women's groups. She does grant that both sides of the dispute painted a certain picture of masculinity. For example, Massey painted the special constables as heroic and a fine example of a man describing them as "lean, sinewy, brown men from the country";²⁹ whilst the supporters of labour, such as the example given by Shor, would denigrate the manliness of the strike breakers and dignify those on strike as true men.

While not necessarily being a demonstration of support for revolutionary socialism, Nolan (ibid p. 240) also notes that women were radicalised enough for the press to be reporting them to be found on the streets in support of the strikers during 1913 in "splendid solidarity". An example of this can be found in a *NZ Truth* report entitled "BUCKLE-ST. EMBROGLIO",³⁰ whereby a crowd of protestors were forcibly made to move by mounted special constables and "...two women, stubbornly and with loud protests, refused to budge from the positions they had taken up on the footpath. This was enough to encourage the crowd— the valiant women defying what had been euphemistically termed "law and order." Similarly, Olssen writes how Industrial Unionism gave men *and* women a "sense of their power and dignity" (1988, p. 57). Similarly court reports for a single day told how two separate cases were heard involving woman involved in the strike related violence. Agnes Udall was charged with being part of an unlawful assembly, and a Mrs Florence Nelson was charged with affray and wilfully destroying one window and two lamps in the Royal Tiger Hotel.³¹

²⁹ *The Argus (Melbourne, Victoria)*, 3/10/14, p. 4

³⁰ *NZ Truth*, 8/11/13, p. 5

³¹ *Evening Post*, 12/11/13, p. 7

A report in the *Evening Post*³² mentions that the strike committee advises strikers to stick with the “organised women” who will make sure the children don’t go hungry, suggesting that women were certainly active supporters part of the labour movement. The IWW had at least one active female member. A certain Mrs. Chapman was the newspaper commission agent in 1913³³, and they advertised a meeting solely for women in November 1913, although there was no suggestion as to what the meeting was for.

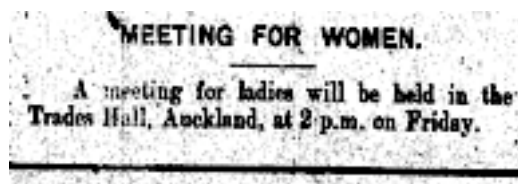


Figure 13: Meeting for women advertised in the Industrial Unionist³⁴

Nolan also points out the appeal of the IWW to women was perhaps limited. In terms of numbers, women formed a relatively small part of the paid employees of New Zealand, they were also over represented in occupations that had remained non-unionised, such as clerical workers and domestic servants (2005, p. 241). A study in the inner city area of Auckland, Freeman’s Bay, at the end of the 18th and beginning of 19th centuries revealed that three quarters of women in paid work at this time were employed in domestic work such as servant or waitress (Husbands, 1994, p. 19).

Ultimately though the question of the IWW’s attitude to female workers is based on class. In the USA, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn in a work entitled ‘*The IWW Call To Women*’ wrote “To us society moves in grooves of class not sex. Sex distinctions affect us insignificantly. It is to those women who are wage earners or wives of workers that the IWW appeals. We see no basis in fact for feminist

³² *Evening Post*, 1/11/13, p. 6

³³ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/8/13, p. 4

³⁴ *Ibid*, 20/11/13, p. 4

mutual interest, ...nor of any possibility or present desirability of solidarity between women alone. The success of our program will benefit workers regardless of sex” (Humphries, 2002). In other words the struggle of the working class and women was seen as one and the same thing. To illustrate this, the *Industrial Unionist*, in a short comment on the suffragettes in Britain, congratulated them on their use of the tactics of direct action, but then appealed for them to do the same to benefit the working class.³⁵

Despite the rhetoric of organising democratically and along egalitarian lines the IWW recognised the reality of their situation, and were under no illusions that Industrial Unionism had not been truly attempted thus far. They pointed out that since the May 1912 NZFL conference, when the IWW Preamble was adopted and the constitution amended to create Industrial departments, there had been numerous opportunities to put this into practice at Waihi, Auckland, Timaru, amongst others. The executive had merely collected money for the Waihi strikers, when it was industrial support that was primarily needed. The principle of “an injury to one is an injury to all” had been forgotten, and general strikes of the industrial departments were never called for, resulting in what they termed organised scabbery - one group of workers remaining at work while others in the same field struck.

The IWW congratulated the NZFL leadership over the fact that during the last few years they had bought together a large number of workers under one umbrella. Ultimately, though, they asked, for what purpose? What is the use of unity without solidarity? The very fact the IWW existed in New Zealand was proof that the NZFL was, despite being “a promising organisation” just two years ago, had failed to bring the working class closer to emancipation. The IWW predicted that the future of the new UFL would be one of compromise with the SDP, and suggested that such compromise would mean the death of a revolutionary movement. They warned that the movement would lose its

³⁵ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/4/13, p. 3

revolutionary focus instead merely focusing on reforms, on overthrowing the Massey Government, amending the Arbitration Act, and the introduction of a single tax. The time had come, they declared, for the workers to make a choice between Industrial Unionism with the goal of abolishing the wage system, or a Unity scheme that could only lead to piecemeal reforms.³⁶

Despite the arguments for organising along IWW lines by some leaders of the NZFL it appears only the IWW were willing to put trust in the grass roots and remain true to the idea of a non-hierarchical organisation as described by Fitzgerald and Rodgers. Doubting the revolutionary commitment of the NZFL leadership the IWW suggested that the adoption of the IWW way of organising by the NZFL was just a device for efficiency of the organisation's workings³⁷, and what they had in truth was merely a federation of craft unions. Certainly the NZFL displayed the tendencies that Fitzgerald and Rodgers described as defining a moderate SMO, in so much as they desired a strong executive reliant on the charisma and drive of a few well known names, which insisted that all action be placed in their hands. There had been a number of disputes that had occurred without the executive's permission, and the Executive had seen fit not to support the workers striking. In Auckland on August 17 1913, at a joint meeting of the newly formed UFL and SDP, Pat Hickey insisted that if strikers acted unconstitutionally, that is not refer any dispute to the executive, then they could expect no support. He demanded that, "The executive must be obeyed". The *Industrial Unionist*, in mocking this dictatorial attitude, asked if the employers refer a matter to the executive of the employers' federation before they "sacked, suspended or locked out" workers.³⁸

³⁶ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/9/13, p. 2

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 4

Ideology – “The World For The Workers”

Fitzgerald and Rogers argue that one general assumption that is often shared by RSMOs is their scepticism that the existing structures of society are unable to change and meet their aims (2000, p. 581). This view separates the RSMO from the reform orientated SMO, which is usually satisfied to accept and work within these structures, and accept credibility from the ruling elite, which they believe is essential to obtain the reforms they aim for. As the RSMO rejects the existing power structure they do not need nor do they seek this credibility and so are open to explore new ways of organising and setting goals to achieve. In New Zealand the IWW was especially antagonistic towards the industrial legislation they were expected to work with, and critical of the existing trade unions.

The ideology of the IWW not only encompassed change at the work place in terms of wages and conditions. They also had a wider view of changing society as a whole, in contrast to the existing craft unions, which rarely voiced a global consciousness or adopted an issue larger than the immediate concerns of their members.

The IWW Preamble, which appeared in every issue of the *Industrial Unionist* and all the literature they produced succinctly summed up the ideological position of the organisation in just a few sentences

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

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system.

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

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

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

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

Unionist. The IWW itself produced no groundbreaking ideas or theories of revolution, but what they did was to use the existing theories and make them relevant to the actual world. They provided an explanation and proposed a solution for the problems faced by the working class that was grounded in the every day life experiences of their audience, their beliefs were firmly rooted in what is, not what should be.

Their ideas came from Marx in relation to class struggle and surplus value. Darwinism and Marxism provided an answer for the evolution of society and the struggle between the classes. Bakunin and the anarcho-syndicalists of Europe offered the tactics of Direct Action to carry out the fight where the exploitation of the employee by the capitalist took place, the point of production (Dubofsky, 1988). The *Industrial Unionist* carried numerous articles on Marx's economic theories and articles from Europe on syndicalism.

They reasoned that the 'law of change' in nature supported and gave scientific credence to their idea of societal change. Adapting Darwinism and echoing Marxism, they argued that as all things adapt and change in response to their environment, so do societies; and as all things must grow old and die then so do societies. They are not fixed but consist of a 'chain of different epochs', each succeeding and" springing into life from the womb of the society preceding it".¹

The IWW followed the Marxist line that the "history of all hitherto existing society is a history of class struggles" (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 34) and that it is the conflict between the classes in a society in any given historical epoch that drives change. They viewed the struggle of the working class as that class's "Historic mission to overthrow capitalism" (Steiner, 2007, p. 15), and the future society as not only desirable, but inevitable. But what kind of society did they want? Many commentators have stated that their idea of the future society can

¹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/2/13, p. 4

be found in the novel, *Looking Backwards* by Edward Bellamy, which was admittedly highly influential on the labour movement at this time. However, it is more likely that William Morris's novel *News from Nowhere*, which was written in response to Bellamy's imagined highly centralised, authoritarian and disciplined future, was more influential. Morris instead painted a picture of a harmonious commonwealth with people living in an unregimented anarchical state (Buhle, 2005).

What they certainly did not want was a form of state socialism. NZSP organiser, Harry Scott Bennett argued that the IWW brand of socialism was opposed to the idea of state socialism. What socialism did not mean was the "regulating and licencing and managing the lives of people by a set of bureaucrats in a...society in which slavery still exists" (Olssen, p.114). Their view was that state socialism did not free the workers, it merely swapped one set of bosses for another, and became another form of capitalism and wage slavery. Writing some years later for the Australian IWW paper *Direct Action*, Tom Barker argued that

It is no consolation for the worker to know that the state exploits him now in the place of his former capitalist employer...there is no hope for the working class in state ownership (Burgmann, 1999, p. 381).

In Marxism the IWW found the economic ideas to explain the fact that the workers were in poverty, while the capitalist lived in relative opulence. The theory of surplus value explained that the worker was being robbed because they did not receive the full value of the product they made, and the perpetrator of this robbery was easily identified, the employer.

Using Marx's idea of class, the IWW viewed society as divided into two great classes, the capitalist, who owns the means of production and employs labour; and the worker, who owns nothing but their labour, which they sell in order to survive. There was a third class, the petit-bourgeoisie, who owned the means

of production, but did not employ labour. They stressed that the work of emancipation could only be the work of the working class itself, and this is why they condemned the 1913 Unity Conference for inviting representatives of the employers' federation to attend. In the preamble the very opening line said, "the working class and the employing class have nothing in common". The *Industrial Unionist* explained whenever an employee asks for a rise the capitalist had to oppose it. The capitalist, because of competition from others of that class, must always strive to maintain, and increase their share of capital. Even when the workers manage to snatch a small improvement for themselves, the capitalist, by increasing the cost of their goods, retrieves it.²

In an article signed by A. Rebel, the New Zealand capitalist class came under a virulent attack. They were described as "battered and fattened upon the fruits of other men's labour...drunk with riotous living and wasteful, useless lives", and went on to add

There is nothing to vile and mean and sordid for the bourgeois of New Zealand. Their god is surplus value; their ambition, to live without working³.

In contradiction to the IWWs view was New Zealand's global reputation as a social laboratory and a workers' paradise (Nolan, 2007, p. 114). In particular the Arbitration Act was lauded as being a spectacular success in creating a land without strikes. However, in the eyes of the more radical members of the working class in the first decade of the twentieth century the arbitration system had proved a failure. One of the most prominent leaders in the NZFL, Paddy Webb, wrote that over the past 15 years "prices had risen twice as fast as wages, the rich had grown richer and the workers poorer" (Olssen, 1988, p. 47). In an address to the NZFL conference of 1910, Hickey pointed out that since the passing of the Arbitration Act wages had increased 17.5 per cent, while the

² *Industrial Unionist*, 1/5/13, p. 2

³ *Ibid*, 6/11/13, p. 2

cost of living had increased by 19 per cent. During the same period the employers' profits had increased by 180.2 per cent.⁴ The Arbitration Court had always ruled that high profits were no justification for an increase in wages, and was sympathetic to employers who claimed they could not afford wage increases. In fact the court stated outright that it did not view its role as to be settling wages on a profit sharing basis (Roth, 1976, p. 24).

In an attack on the system of arbitration, Scott Bennett wrote

Pull shoulder to shoulder against arbitration. Defy the courts on all occasions; throw aside the legal machinery that is binding the workers down as they are bound in older countries. For better is the 'old-time strike', with all its misery and distress, than to throw yourself on the mercies of a class-biased court (Olssen, 1988, p. 112).

The mainstream press were appalled by the attacks on the Arbitration Act. In the *Maoriland Worker*, Ted Howard, who was a prominent figure in radical Trade Union circles and regular contributor to the *Worker*, often writing under the name 'The Vag', wrote how the mainstream press was talking "about these ignorant men daring to attack an Act which had been quoted all over the world as a blessing to the working class."⁵ Hickey reminiscing a decade later in the *Maoriland Worker* wrote that to criticize the Arbitration system was "like a good Mohammedan doubting the existence of the Prophet's whiskers" (Roth, 1976, p. 29).

Fitzgerald and Rodgers note that because of their revolutionary stance RSMOs will reject the existing structures as they will see them as being to the benefit of the ruling class and fostering dependence on working within the limits imposed by the state. Indeed a few years earlier Ramsey MacDonald, the British Labour leader had remarked that

⁴ Ashburton *Guardian*, 29/4/10, p.1

⁵ *Maoriland Worker*, 2/2/12, p.10

A Trade Union in New Zealand exists mainly to get an award out of the Arbitration Court...they cannot strike, it is no good their grumbling; they simply pay their dues into the union funds because they are legally bound to do it, and they take little interest in trade unionism as an industrial and political factor (Roth, 1976, p. 25).

The IWW themselves viewed the arbitration system as fostering dependence on officials and encouraging docility amongst the workers.⁶

Of the existing structures, it was not just the Arbitration system that was considered to being a hindrance to workers aspirations. Harry Scott Bennett had written

Craft unionism grants a license to its members to scab. Industrial Unionism declares in language unmistakable that an 'injury to one is an injury to all'. Craft Unionism believes it can see a harmonious relationship existing between the leech and its victim. Industrial Unionism is out to abolish the condition that makes leeches possible. Craft Unionism cries Peace!...Industrial Unionism cries Fight!⁷

In *Why Strikes Are Lost and How To Win* (1909), the New Zealand born General Secretary of the USA IWW, W.E Trautmann, expands on the problem with the existing trade unions. Formerly a craft was determined by the tool used for the job, but as the tool gave away to large machinery the distinction changed to reflect the role the worker played. Thus in the building of a machine you may have separate unions of patternmakers, moulders, foundry workers, machinists, and metal polishers. This pattern of distinction could be applied to almost every industry, and each separate union jealously guards its own interests, even if this

⁶ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/7/13, p. 3

⁷ *Social Democrat*, 24/11/11, p.1

is to the detriment of other groups of workers. The result of this is that no concerted action is possible when fighting a dispute with the employer, making it easier for the employer to dictate terms to the worker. Solidarity, he suggested, was vital for the simple reason that without it that the workers far outnumbered the capitalists, and if they were all together they could not be defeated.

In echoing this need for solidarity, the *Industrial Unionist* pointed out that just two per cent of the world owned practically everything, “That is a lot of (wage)-slaves and a very few slave owners”. However, if a fight between the two was held right away then the workers, who include the police, the army, and scabs, would turn on themselves, and the fight would be lost. “With solidarity”, however, “all the tyrannical forces of capitalism become as helpless as an un-layed (sic) egg,”⁸

The existing craft unions were threatened by the new militancy of the emergent industrial unionists. They felt that this attitude was imperilling many laws “that has greatly improved the position of many of our workers”.⁹ Their attitude can be summed up by TLC representative Jim Young who said that his body “considered arbitration the only civilized method of conducting industrial strife” (Olssen, 1988, p. 37). A French observer, F Challaye, told how the TLC had informed him that arbitration was “part of our religion” and that New Zealand’s Trade Unionists rejected the “old and barbarous system of strikes” (Roth, 1976, p. 21).

⁸ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/3/13, p. 4

⁹ *Ashburton Guardian* 12/7/12 p. 4

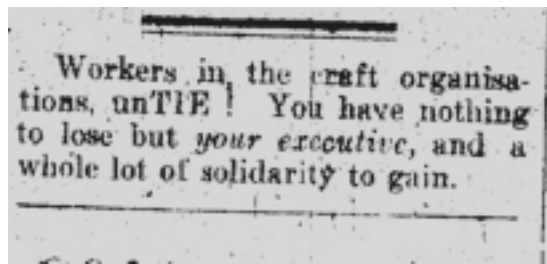


Figure 15: The IWWs stance was summed up in their first issue of the Industrial Union, “Workers in the craft organisations, unTIE! You have nothing to lose but your executive, and a whole lot of solidarity to gain”¹⁰

Although they were revolutionaries first and foremost, the IWW had a two-fold mission. Firstly it was necessary to improve the workers’ conditions day by day and to support them in their struggles to achieve this, but without ever compromising the revolutionary ideals of the organisation. The *Industrial Unionist* pointed out that the existing trade unions had not aimed higher than protecting their individual crafts. Their only ideal was “a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay”. Outside of this, the employees were expected to work harmoniously with their employers. They insisted that if progress was to be made in improving the workers’ conditions new unions should be along class, not craft, lines. Organised with the intent for protection today but “to abolish wage slavery tomorrow.”¹¹

Fitzgerald and Rogers note that the radical nature of a RSMO leads them to develop alternative structures to those already existing in society. The IWWs ideas of organisation built around rank and file democracy and rejection of the capitalist mode of production, would see the development of the new structures necessary for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, and the running of the new commonwealth society, as they sprung up in response to the exploitation and oppression carried out by the ruling class.

¹⁰ *Industrial Unionist* 1/2/13, p.1

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 4

Through these struggles, victories *and* losses against exploitation, the worker would also receive lessons and give them confidence for the day of the final struggle. The IWW believed that the oppression felt by the worker in their struggles opened their eyes to the “sordid, bloodthirsty, brutal nature of capitalism”,¹² and in Waihi, perhaps for the first time, many workers were shown that the state was the natural ally of the employer.¹³

The state’s action during the Waihi dispute led many in the labour movement conclude that political action was necessary to remove the Massey government. However, to the IWW this was the wrong interpretation. In a further refutation of the existing structures in society, they confirmed their rejection of the parliamentary route to socialism.

The question of taking political action had been debated over the preceding years. In 1908 at the Socialist Party conference, A. McMahon, in arguing against sending members to parliament, referred to two ‘socialists’ in Britain. John Burns who entered Parliament ended up dining with the King, whilst the other, Tom Mann, who remained outside of parliament, ended up in prison but having added thousands to the socialist ranks. Burns, McMahon contended, had achieved nothing for socialism through parliament. Furthermore, McMahon argued that taking a pro-parliamentary stance encouraged “a most undesirable class of membership” referring to those who view a political party as a means for building their own career¹⁴.

The IWW Constitution laid down that “the IWW refuses all alliances, direct or indirect with existing political parties and anti-political ones”¹⁵, stressing, in a move to disassociate themselves from claims they were anarchists, that they

¹² *Industrial Unionist*, 13/11/13, p. 2

¹³ *Ibid*, 1/2/13, p. 2

¹⁴ *Evening Post*, 21/4/08, p. 3

¹⁵ *Preamble and Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World, 1908*,
<http://www.workerseducation.org/crutch/constitution/1908const.html>

were non-political not anti-political. Individual members could have political views but they were irrelevant to the IWW, a side issue much like race and religion. All that mattered, they repeatedly emphasised, was the struggle in the workplace for that is where the worker was robbed. They pointed out that the bulk of their membership was against political action (but noticeably not all).¹⁶

The influential American journalist, Louis Fraina had written in the *International Socialist Review* that the issue of political action pitted socialist against syndicalist, and industrial unionist against syndicalist, and wasted valuable time and resources (1914). The Auckland IWW themselves had little time for politicians, political parties and the governmental process, and agreed that the supporting of a political party was divisive and unnecessary because it is the capitalists who dominate society and they are able to ignore any law they see fit if necessary, because they hold economic power. Furthermore, they argued, the capitalist class only allow parliament to exist because it allows exploitation to be legal. Economic power is where the real power lay, not parliament, they reasoned. They summed up the futility of attempting to achieve change through parliament by asking, "Parliament is a mirror reflecting conditions outside. When your face is dirty, do you wash the mirror?"¹⁷

To the IWW the whole idea of entering the political field led to the revolutionary ideal being compromised. It was noted how the Labor party, in New South Wales, Australia, supposedly a workers' party, had imprisoned striking workers in Lithgow, and broke strikes in Sydney. Furthermore, supporting political parties contradicted the IWW belief in self-reliance and participatory democracy. Whatever good is done by parliamentary action is always outdone by the bad, they argued, "fostering as it does, the ideas of leadership and the tendency of the workers to lean on someone else".¹⁸

¹⁶ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/4/13, p. 3

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 1/3/13, p. 1

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 1/4/13, p. 3

In comparison, it appeared that the ideas of political action as well as union activity still held sway amongst the majority of the NZFL leaders. For example, Pat Hickey, said that the NZFL was not against politics, but that it regarded politics and political parties as spineless, and that no political party was worthwhile of the Federation's support (despite him being a member of the NZSP) (Hickey, 1980, p. 32). While this was one of the more extreme views expressed by any of the leaders of the NZFL, it certainly did not rule out any future support of a political party, a position that totally contradicted the IWWs stance. The NZFL put two of its leaders forward as candidates in the 1911 elections, both of whom adopted reformist platforms. Additionally the organisation never saw any problem with working with government and sent frequent deputations to government ministers. Indeed, writing in the *Maoriland Worker*, Hickey in an article entitled 'Is Unity Possible?' bought the idea of the necessity of a labour political party, which would be open to all, not just wage earners, to the fore.¹⁹ In a further indication of the political stance within the leadership of the NZFL, Robert Semple was quoted as saying that the desired change "can only be achieved by political action directed by the workers organised in Industrial Unions".²⁰

At the 1912 conference Hickey had warned of the dangers of ignoring political action saying that if the political field was left to the Labour Party, the NZFL would be in danger of losing all influence on New Zealand politics. J.B. King, in sticking to the IWW line dismissed this argument, saying that if the workers had the power to "take and hold the industrial field" then they would not need representation in Parliament (Olssen, 1988, p. 146).

Fitzgerald and Rodgers see a RSMO as being part of the broader radical movement in existence in a society (2000, p. 582), and by refusing to endorse political parties the IWW did not cut themselves off from their potential audience, who in all probability would have had a distrust and dislike of

¹⁹ *Maoriland Worker*, 4/4/12

²⁰ *Greymouth Evening Star*, 1/2/10

politicians. In fact the IWWs attitude would probably have brought them closer to the people they were trying to appeal to. Furthermore, the ideology behind an RSMO does not rule out coalitions with other radical groups. Fitzgerald & Rogers (ibid) point out that many RSMOs have a single focus of analysis but can at the same time not be single-issue organisations, and, although the IWW was primarily a trade union they fought on many fronts at once, attempting to form links with others, forming an especially strong bond with the anti-conscription movement.

They viewed agitation against militarism as part and parcel of the struggle against capitalism, but always pointed out that the only way to end conscription was to overthrow capitalism, as it was the capitalist class that owned New Zealand and was “taking the youth to train to fight their wars and shoot the sons of other workers in other countries.”²¹ Often IWW members would speak at anti-militarist demonstrations in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch, and the *Industrial Unionist* regularly featured news items on the Passive Resisters’ Union (PRU), which had been formed in 1912 and pledged to “resist coercion, conscription and compulsory military training” (Bodman, 2010, p. 10). They affectionately nicknamed the PRU the Plucky Rebels Union, promoted their monthly paper *Repeal*, and held joint meetings with them. Although they admitted the PRU monthly was “attractive”, they did have one criticism in that it did have an ad for the “militant capitalist paper, “La Squeak du Travail” (a reference to the moderate Labour paper the Voice of Labour).²² The PRU, perhaps with influence from the IWW, were no strangers to taking controversial action. On one infamous occasion they removed a Boer War Gun from Victoria Square in Christchurch and dumped it into the River Avon.²³ The link between the PRU and the IWW can be further demonstrated by the fact that E Kear was

²¹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/5/13, p. 1

²² *Ibid*, 1/6/13, p.2

²³ *Industrial Workers of the World, Bert Roth Collection, MS-Papers-6164-120, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington*

listed as secretary treasurer of the Christchurch local in 1914²⁴ and had been one of the PRU delegates to the Unity conference in 1913.²⁵

Similarly, in recognition of their NZSP roots the IWW held out a hand of solidarity to the proletarian socialist party member who was active in the work of propaganda, and they maintained good relationships with them and others whose primary concern was the emancipation of the working class. They themselves wrote that their attitude to existing struggles was uncompromising regarding their revolutionary aims, but they were ready to offer their support to any branch of the working class involved in a struggle with capitalism. In paraphrasing the Communist manifesto they said “we have no interests apart from the working class” and will always support that class because, “we are of, and still in, the working class”.²⁶

Being aware of the importance of reaching out to all the wage-workers of New Zealand, the IWW made appeals to not only farm labourers, but also the small-farmers who, because of the indebtedness of many of them to mortgage companies, were in reality working for capitalists not themselves. The IWW called upon them to realise that they were on the same side as the proletariat in the cities and towns. The countryside residents lack of consciousness to the nature of capitalism was, the IWW felt, explained by the fact they lived many miles away and isolated from the strike areas and had to rely on the facts supplied by the “journalistic prostitutes of the capitalist press” to gain their understanding of a situation, and the IWW expressed sympathy for their plight as “overworked and much exploited”.²⁷ They warned the farmer that hard times were coming their way, and that capitalism would eventually ruin the majority of them. They pointed out that large companies such as Loan and Mercantile were buying up the land in large quantities; the cost of freight was

²⁴ *Direct Action*, 22/8/13, p. 2

²⁵ *Evening Post*, 8/7/13, p. 3

²⁶ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/9/13, p.2

²⁷ *Ibid*, 1/7/13, p. 2

rising because of the increasing monopolisation of transport by a few large companies; most importantly, they pointed to increased competition from countries such as China, Argentina, and Russia, who were beginning to farm vast acres of previously untouched land. All this they predicted would seriously affect New Zealand's share of the world markets and force many farmers into unemployment. Then they would appreciate why the workers are battling capitalism in the cities.²⁸

Although they did say that they had no argument with the farmer, the rural dwellers' actions in strike breaking would lead the IWW to view them as a class enemy, and be treated as such. In response to a Farmers' Union declaration that they would come into the cities in the event of any industrial trouble, to load their produce onto ships, the IWW warned that then they would be considered a 'social enemy' and declared the following

If the farmer and his son are going to carry on distribution and production, then the IWW proclaims that it is the duty of the working class to go landwards and look after the farms...If you do dirty work Mr. Farmer, you will get a dirty deal. Stay at home and mind your own business.... If you value your stock, your herds and your house....²⁹

The *Maoriland Worker* had previously warned the farmers of the possible consequences of their actions in retelling a story from Australia, which was very much in the IWW tradition

On being refused a meal at a farm an itinerant worker "gave a meaningful look at the grass which was long and dry, and said "tell the missus Bryant and May ain't dead yet" (Bryant and May being a brand of match).

²⁸ *Industrial Unionist* 1/6/13, p. 3

²⁹ *Ibid*

This was followed with a warning that such fiery spirits existed in New Zealand.

³⁰ Issuing a similar threat regarding the stables where the special constables' horses were kept saw an *Industrial Unionist* contributor, George Bailey, being arrested in Wellington and charged with inciting incendiarism during the Great Strike.³¹

The relationship with the farming community however was not so black and white as perhaps it is sometimes painted. It has been recorded that many farmers who had come to the towns with an opinion of the strikers as hot-heads and a menace to the country actually returned to the countryside with a different attitude about them and their cause (Hutchinson, 1916, p. 117), and it appears that there was some sympathy for the strikers in 1913 in the rural areas. The *Evening Post* reported that many countryside dwellers had offered to billet children of strikers until the troubles were over,³² and there were other reports of small farmers being supportive of the strikers. For example, The *NZ Truth* reported a Mr Fox of the Farmers Union declaring that there was much support for the strikers, and more would be done in support "but unfortunately they were in the grip of the moneylenders".³³ Another farmer was quoted as saying

We did not want our butter to rot...we came to Auckland for that purpose only...[however] we found that we had to do ordinary police duty...I have had my eyes opened now, and realize that we have been made use of by the merchants of the city to crush the workers in their effort to obtain fair treatment (Hutchinson, 1916, p. 116).

International links were also important, as the IWW saw themselves, in common with other socialists in the labour movement, as part of the wider international

³⁰ *Industrial Workers of the World, Bert Roth Collection, MS-Papers-6164-120, Alexander Turnbull Library*

³¹ *Evening Post*, 29/11/13, p. 9

³² *Ibid*, 1/11/13, p. 6

³³ *NZ Truth*, 15/11/13, p. 5

working class. They wrote in the first issue of the *Industrial Unionist* that they were not “merely a medium for the expression of the opinions of any small group existing in a particular locality”, rather they were a “local and national mouthpiece of an international movement”.³⁴ Wobbly Frank Hanlon explained the international nature of capitalism and the importance of the response of the working class to this phenomenon

The extent to which capitalism stretches its tentacles around the globe is illustrated by the fact that steel rails have been imported from China to America, the land of steel rails. No one country is independent of this...all are bound together economically” (Steiner, 2007, p. 14).

Thus if capital was international, and the employing class was international, then it follows that the interests of the working class are international also. Returning to the steel industry they printed an article from *Solidarity*, an IWW journal from the USA, which told how, after setting up the International Steel Trust one of the ‘steel kings’ had remarked that they had “an organisation more powerful than any government in the world.”³⁵ The IWW pointed out that this demonstrated the importance of organising globally. An internationally organised Industrial Union could also be more powerful than any government. The correct, and only possible, response to an organisation such as the Steel Trust, which pits worker against worker, beyond national boundaries, is to organise, as one, in every single steel mill in the world.

To this end the New Zealand IWW forged links with others abroad. Close links were maintained with Australian and American fellow workers, and those further afield. For example an appeal from Swedish workers was printed in the *Industrial Unionist* to help free imprisoned fellow Swedish workers. An appeal for a boycott and blacklisting of Swedish ships and goods was issued with a reminder that the yellow and blue of the Swedish flag represented only the

³⁴ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/2/13, p. 2

³⁵ *Ibid*, 1/3/13, p. 2

capitalists of that country, not the workers. They reminded their readers that there are "...only two nations-the capitalist class and the working class."³⁶

The IWWs ideology saw them holding a unique position in the New Zealand labour movement of the day. Using Fitzgerald and Rodgers framework they can be viewed as perhaps the sole radical labour organisation of their time. Although the NZFL leadership used revolutionary rhetoric, their lack of desire to challenge all the existing structures for dealing with labour matters, and their tendency for compromise was evident. Although admittedly hostile to the arbitration system, they were happy to get involved in the political system. They stood for elections, and often worked with politicians in trying to settle labour disputes. Ultimately, it was this stance, more than any other, that led the IWW to turn their backs on this organisation, and attempt to strike out solely on their own, with an attitude of no compromise of their revolutionary ideals.

³⁶ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/6/13, p. 1

TACTICS – “wear your wooden shoes”

Fitzgerald and Rodgers point out that RSMOs tend to be inventive in their tactics. This is in response to normal legalistic avenues being closed to them, either because of existing mainstream social structures will not accept them, or their ideology prevents them being acceptable to the organisation (2000, p. 583). Indeed the IWW tended to regard it as essential that its methods were flexible and open to adaptation and invention by individual agitators in the field. RSMOs often set precedents with their tactics, which are then later adopted by other organisations, the IWW in the USA, for example, used the first sit down strike at the General Electric Company in 1906. Such tactics are crucial for the IWWs ideas of direct action involving the worker and building their experience and confidence. The idea of direct action involved the worker usually taking action at the point of production and covered such acts as strikes, passive resistance, sabotage, and ultimately the General Strike. In poking fun at more moderate unionists the IWW said direct action did not mean doing “ Maori hakas on the platform, rattling collecting tins, [and] selling concert tickets”.¹

The idea of direct action instead of parliamentary action profoundly highlights the beliefs of the IWW. Long debates over abstract socialist doctrines, or time spent petitioning others to make changes on your behalf was anathema to the IWW, activity itself was paramount. As Justus Ebert, a prolific writer for the IWW in the USA put it

Workingmen on the job don't care a whoop in hell for free love...they are not interested in why Bakunin was fired from the International by Marx...nor do they care about the co-operative commonwealth; they want practical organisation first, all else after (Dubofsky, 1988, p. 159).

¹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/5/13, p. 2

Instead of sitting waiting, the IWW wanted things to happen immediately. Tom Barker put it this way, “an ounce of direct action is worth a ton of Parliamentary string-pulling and trades Council chin-wag”.²

In print and in voice the IWW spoke boisterously of the tactics that could be used, but rather than advocating violent tactics they often placed emphasis on restraint and passive resistance. The notion of passive resistance (often termed passive action) appeared in IWW literature before the more inflammatory language of sabotage (Salerno, 1989, p. 134). During the Great Strike of 1913, rather than encouraging their own supporters to act violently, they used the perceived threat of violence from the state in the form of the police, the specials and the military, as a means of highlighting the brutality of the capitalist state when it was threatened. They recognised that by inciting violence they would be beaten. They appealed to the strikers to defend themselves but not to start anything; “Don’t take the initiative. Don’t exasperate the police by yelling at them”³ they appealed. The *Industrial Unionist* issued a call for strikers to maintain self-discipline and not to drink. In an article entitled “Turn it Off” they wrote that “a half-handle is just sufficient to make some do something silly enough to cause the beginning of a defeat”, and ended with a plea not “to swill just now”.⁴

The workers were congratulated in an article entitled “the War of the Folded Hands” on their “magnificent attitude” for not responding to extreme provocation from columns of “armed men whose very appearance ends to inflame the blood”.⁵ The article continued that indiscriminate rioting belonged in another century and that sound organisation renders it unnecessary.

² *Maoriland Worker*, 6/10/11, p. 6

³ *Industrial Unionist* 6/11/13, p. 2

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ *ibid*, 13/11/13, p. 2

Despite appealing for passive reaction, the IWW were by no means pacifists. Tom Barker warned, in the speech that saw him facing sedition charges, “every economic question is settled by force and it is a question which side can exercise most force”.⁶ They were ready to admit that they would not be scared to answer violence with violence. They argued, “it is not the subject class that dictates whether violence [is used]... but it is the class in power that dictates this”, adding, “if this is what they want we will cheerfully accept it and meet them to the best of our ability”.⁷ Even the more moderate Holland on occasion was driven to express the following advice “If they hit you with a baton, hit them with a pick handle, and have something at then end of it” (Roth, 1976, p. 38).

However, rather than out and out violence, they called for more subtle use of direct action like “tissue bags of cayenne” that “are not well received by prancing police horses⁸”. In another example of disruptive action the *Industrial Unionist* reported how a train due to leave Palmerston North was found with couplings out. As a result the train, with 300 farmers who were heading to Wellington to act as Special Constables on board, was delayed for some hours.⁹ The press further reported that the windows of the train were smashed with bottles and stones, and the line blocked by milk cans and a barrow, signal wires were cut and points had been interfered with. A fire seen on the horizon was at first thought be burning of the Tokomaru Bridge, although this was not the case.¹⁰

Direct action against property could also take other forms. A call was issued that workers should visit properties of farmers, who have ventured to town to break the strike, and sow blackberry and sorrel in their fields (both are fast growing weeds that are particularly difficult to get rid of). A later issue declared,

⁶ *Wanganui Chronicle* 13/11/13, p.5

⁷ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/2/13, p. 1, p. 4

⁸ *ibid*, 1/11/13, p. 1

⁹ *ibid*, 6/11/13, p. 1

¹⁰ *Poverty Bay Herald*, 3/11/13, p.3

perhaps with a slight exaggeration, “Blackberry and Sorel...are fetching monopoly prices!”¹¹

There did appear to be a difference of opinion on the appropriate response during the strike. On a number of occasions, through the pages of the *Industrial Unionist*, Frank Hanlon appealed to the Auckland strikers to increase their resistance to the specials, and, take a leaf out of the people in Wellington’s book, where violence against specials was seemingly more widespread. He said that some people were considering that the “be very quiet dope” had been overdone, and as a result the specials (or the invaders as he put it) were increasingly bold and growing more insolent, and that the Wellington people had dealt with such insolence with the appropriate attitude. Further he added that there were reports of food being taken into the homes of the “fat” (the capitalist classes) in Remuera. Anywhere but in Auckland, he wrote, would have long overturned the carts and taken the food for themselves.¹²

Tom Barker gave a description of some of the action he was involved in Wellington, describing how a squad of cyclists acting as lookouts gave advance warnings of farmers riding into town along the Hutt Road to sign up as specials and scab labour. Barbed wire, which was used as fencing between the sea and the road, was stretched across the road and the farmers were showered with stones. The farmers were not prevented from making the city, but that didn’t stop the attacks upon them. Barker described how a raid on a compound of specials aroused them from their sleep and led to a mad panic on horseback out of the compound, only to met by a road littered with nuts and bolts from the nearby railway yard, making the horses stumble and fall, spilling their riders. Marbles were also used to upset the horses, as was a rope passed between the horses legs which when yanked caused the horses to fall (Fry, 1999, p. 15). Barker also described a raid where a yard used to make batons for the specials was burned down. The press on 29 October duly reported a suspicious fire

¹¹ *Industrial Unionist*, 8/11/13, p. 3

¹² *Ibid*, 1/11/13, p. 4

burning down the Stewart Timber and Hardware Company in Courtenay Place, and it was known that this mill had been making batons for the specials.¹³

The manufacture of these batons seemed particularly contentious, and there were many reports of railway workshops refusing to make the batons. One account from Hamilton suggesting the foreman of a firm, Ellis and Burnand, had refused to take on the order was particularly notable. The *Industrial Unionist* revealed that the foreman was a relative of Fred Evans, the striker killed at Waihi by a similar sort of weapon.¹⁴

The term sabotage only first appeared in IWW literature in September 1909 (Thompson & Murfin, 1976, p. 46), but of all the ideas espoused by the IWW it was perhaps sabotage that the organisation became most linked to, and created the most outrage. The press latched onto tales of sabotage, real or otherwise, committed abroad in the name of the IWW as a warning to its New Zealand readership to the apparent nature of this organisation, and such accounts were used to undermine the IWWs serious political message. For example, the *Wanganui Chronicle* warned its readers that the IWW were “fanning the flames of discontent by resorting to sabotage, mutiny, treason, anarchy, revolution, and murder....”, and it pointed to a story from the USA where IWW affiliated timber workers had allegedly killed several mill employees during a labour dispute. The paper did mention that all ten of those accused of murder were acquitted, but presumed that this was because of an intimidated jury.¹⁵ The *Marlborough Express* wrote of sabotage being encouraged, and explained that this would cover everything from “such devilish work as tampering with railway points, and ships’ compasses...to the destruction of property and frequently of human life”.¹⁶ The *Thames Star* warned New Zealand of the threat it faced when it described the Waihi strike as being a fight

¹³ *Evening Post*, 29/10/13, p. 6

¹⁴ *Industrial Unionist*, 6/11/13, p. 1

¹⁵ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 6/1/13, p. 4

¹⁶ *Marlborough Express*, 20/9/12, p. 2

between “strikes, violence, and sabotage...against political action, the ballot box, peaceful reform, and arbitration. Terrorism, brutality, ignorance versus reason and intelligence.”¹⁷

The *Industrial Unionist* was continually exhorting its readers to carry out sabotage and ran many articles extolling its virtue and explaining its methods. In particular, they featured passages from Emile Pouget’s classic work, *Sabotage* (1913). In their first decade the IWW saw sabotage as a legitimate and important weapon in the class struggle against the employer, and as a way to force concessions without striking and losing wages. The IWW foresaw that as workers got more organised, unions were going to be larger, strikes longer, and harder to finance. So it was considered important that sabotage increasingly became the first weapon of choice in order to avoid strikes where necessary. The *Industrial Unionist* repeatedly called for the workers of New Zealand “...to start wearing wooden shoes”¹⁸, the term coming from an association with French workers who, in the early days of the industrial revolution, would use their wooden shoes (sabot) to damage machinery. The most called for action was the ‘go-slow’. This they explained was effective because

The Faster you work, the Fewer Men it takes to do the work. That means More Men Looking for Work. That means Lower Wages. Get Wise. SLOW DOWN.¹⁹

Tom Barker claimed that their calls for a go-slow had been so successful that between 1908 and the start of the Great Strike in 1913, employers had complained that their employees were working 15 per cent slower.²⁰

¹⁷ *Thames Star*, 10/8/12, p. 2

¹⁸ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/9/13, p. 1

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 1/8/13, p. 2

²⁰ *Direct Action*, 27/11/15, p. 3

In calling for a go-slow the IWW argued they were merely following the example of the capitalist, who, when business is slow, controls the supply of their goods by slowing down production. Thus, when there is high unemployment, does it not make sense to control the supply of labour by working slow, they asked, further remarking “any worker who does not understand this will work himself out of a job.”²¹

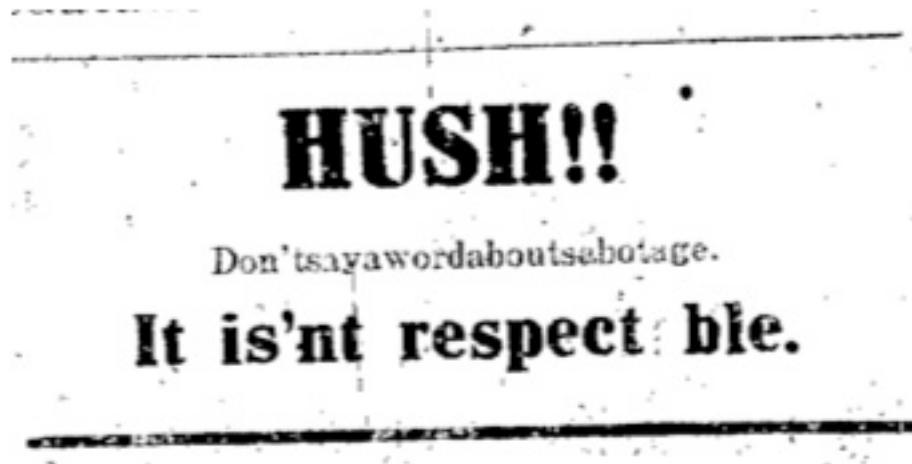


Figure 16: Sabotage...isn't respectable²²

Many different definitions of sabotage have been given. To the mainstream press it meant destruction of property, adulteration of produce, and even harm to human life. The Wobblies attempted to dispel these images. The *Industrial Unionist* explained that sabotage doesn't mean “poisoning soup, putting ground glass in bread, dynamiting buildings and the like”.²³ They stressed that it is not aimed at the consumer, but at the employers' profits. Writing in 1912 Ford and Foster further described sabotage as a “term used to describe all those tactics, save the boycott and the strike proper, which are used by workers to wring concessions from their employers by indicting losses on them through the stopping or slowing down of industry, turning out of poor product, etc.”. They explained that sabotage could take many forms and noted that often two or

²¹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/2/13, p. 3

²² *Ibid*, 1/4/13 p. 3

²³ *Ibid*, 1/5/13, p. 4

more kinds of sabotage were used simultaneously and in conjunction with the strike (Ford & Foster, 1990). Following on from this, the New Zealand IWW explained that sabotage “can be made drastic in different degrees-adjusted to meet the degrees of stubbornness shown by the employer.”²⁴

A full list of the methods of direct action and sabotage was given in the *Industrial Unionist*²⁵. Taken from the IWW US newspaper *Solidarity*, these methods were listed as

A The Strike

B Boycott – calling upon workers and others to withdraw patronage from the employers’ commodity

C Passive Resistance Strike – obeying rules and regulations to the letter while working

D Sabotage-an act by one or more workers in the interest of all concerned, directed against the employers profits, not primarily against the consumer or public

- i) Returning bad work for bad wages. E.g. In Harvey, Illinois, labourers whose wages were reduced 50 cents per day, cut their shovels in half. The former wages were restored;
- ii) Misdirecting perishable or other matter;
- iii) Temporarily rendering the means of production useless so as to prevent the scabs from working

E “The Open Mouth” - whereby the workers eagerly and frankly volunteer information regarding the *true* quality of the goods they produce.

Pouget stressed that sabotage had to be used intelligently,

²⁴ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/10/13, p. 10

²⁵ *Ibid*, 29/11/13, p. 4

Sabotage can be practiced only by the most intelligent and the most skilful workers who know thoroughly the technique of their trade, as Sabotage does not consist in a clumsy and stupid destruction of the instruments of production, but in a delicate and highly skilful operation which puts the machine out of commission only for a temporary period. The worker that undertakes such a task must know thoroughly - the anatomy of the machine which he is going to vivisect and, by this fact alone, puts himself above suspicion (1913, p. 8).

Such was the thinking behind the methods and uses of sabotage that the IWW considered that if it was not going to be used intelligently then it would be better to be put aside. Instead it should be considered a science and studied as such.²⁶

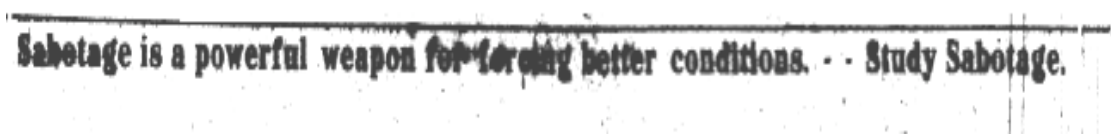


Figure 17: Sabotage is a powerful weapon for forcing better conditions - - Study Sabotage exhorted the *Industrial Unionist*²⁷

As Fitzgerald and Rodgers stated, innovation in tactics is necessary for the RSMO where existing channels for negotiation are either unacceptable or failing to reach a satisfactory conclusion. In looking for alternatives to strike action and arbitration the IWW suggested that Auckland tram workers, who were in dispute, should look to IWWs lessons on sabotage and adopt the tactics of the 'passive resistance strike' that was gaining popularity in America and Europe. The IWW demonstrated its effectiveness with an example from England. In 1905 in Newcastle, the workers were victorious in a dispute while remaining at work, by following the company's own rulebook literally. In short all the trains were not started until every passenger was safely on board and all doors safely

²⁶ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/11/13, p. 2

²⁷ *Ibid*, 1/9/13, p. 2

shut. The speed limit was scrupulously observed, even when the train was late. The result was a hopelessly disrupted service, yet no rule had been broken.

Other innovative ideas of selective sabotage ideas were frequently hinted at so as to hit the employer in his most vulnerable part—"the pocket book". Railroad clerks were advised to misdirect the loading instructions on freight, and freight handlers were asked to put on the wrong tags of destination on the cars. After all, if the worker is to be treated as if they have no brain, then why not "withdraw that brain" and paralyse industry and force the employer to negotiate conditions favourable to the employee.²⁸ In fact there were many ways of hitting an employer with sabotage. A typical IWW story was reproduced in the *Industrial Unionist*, involving striking orchard workers in Washington, USA. The employer secured a gang of workers to replace the strikers. However the IWW had already approached the replacement workers, and the farmer saw the results when he went to inspect their work and found 1000 young trees planted upside down, "their roots waving to the breeze as mute evidence of solidarity and sabotage."²⁹

Occasionally the target of sabotage could be different to the employer, though a class enemy nonetheless. The *Industrial Unionist* relayed a rumour that it had heard in July 1913 that

A constable, who was known to have been particularly active with the baton in the Waihi Strike, found that his household effects had been delivered in two widely distant parts of N.Z., when removing recently.³⁰

The boycott was another tactic resorted to, particularly during the Great Strike. To this end the *Industrial Unionist* would regularly print names of people or

²⁸ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/6/13, p. 1

²⁹ *Ibid*, 1/5/13, p. 4

³⁰ *Ibid*, 1/7/13, p. 2

companies they considered to be guilty of contributing in any way towards weakening the strike. For example, it was reported that

One of Nathan's storemen was seen going to Otahuhu with stores on one of A.B. Wright's wagons... [for those] who are scabbing.

And

Mansell, the grocer, of Eden terrace has been recognised as a "special".³¹

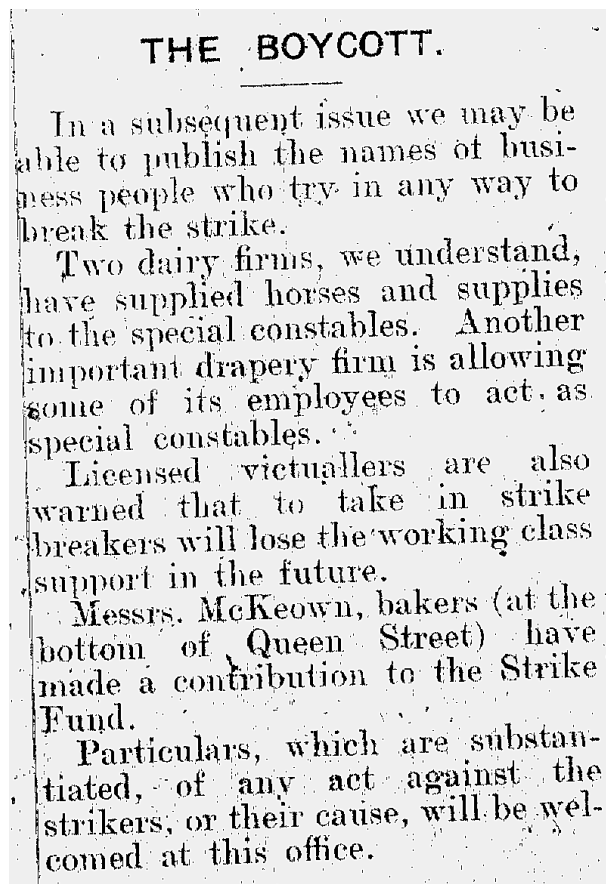


Figure 18: The Boycott - Articles listing those businesses who were acting against the strikers (and those contributing to the strike fund) appeared regularly in the *Industrial Unionist* throughout November 1913³²

³¹ *Industrial Unionist*, 11/11/13, p. 4

³² *Industrial Unionist*, 8/11/13, p. 4

During the Great Strike of 1913 the IWW recognised that many smaller unions were prepared to break ranks and defy calls to strike, but the IWW called upon individual militants within these unions to make good use of the tactics of sabotage. A report from Christchurch announced that “rebels” were getting employed as specials to see that “£300 worth of damage could be caused at any time”,³³ and the IWW warned the employers that they had a weapon that will penetrate their “fat-encased heart” in the shape of “two thousand staunch adherents” of whom at least two-thirds “are prepared to use that weapon – sabotage - and use it well.”³⁴

Calls for sabotage came from other quarters. For example, Harry Holland, who was at the time the editor of the *Maoriland Worker*, urged a crowd in Wellington’s Post Office Square to take the names of the specials and “when the strike is over...look after their goods...see the packages don’t fall overboard” (Olssen, 1988, p. 184). Sometimes advice on sabotage came from even more surprising corners! The *Industrial Unionist* could not hide its delight when the *New Zealand Herald* printed a scientific article on the fact that only if a small amount of sugar, is mixed with cement, the cement will not set. They proclaimed

We have known rebel papers to point out that paint peels off after drying when salt has been added, and that varnish containing castor oil cannot be expected to dry...but for rascality in the audacious advocacy of Sabotage the NZ Herald seems well to the fore.³⁵

The issue of sabotage and its link with the IWW had truly come to mainstream attention in New Zealand during 1912 when the economics class run by J.B. King, became the focus of some controversy. Newspaper reports and questions in Parliament about King’s alleged teaching of sabotage led to Prime

³³ *Ibid*, 16/11/13 p. 4

³⁴ *Ibid*, 20/11/13 p. 2

³⁵ *Ibid*, 22/11/13, p. 4

Minister Massey to promise an inquiry into King's classes. It was reported that King had been advising his class to only work when the employers were watching, to carry emery powder for dropping into machinery to destroy bearings. It was also alleged that he told workers to carry a chisel at all times to drop in machinery in order to damage cogwheels. Additionally, to further the workers interests by damaging as much of the employers' property as possible, he was reported as advising a plug of dynamite as a useful adjunct.³⁶ Fearing for his liberty, and after being asked to leave by the miners union in Waihi, King left New Zealand for Australia (Olssen, 1988, p. 132).

The issue of sabotage was repeatedly used against the IWW, and the *Industrial Unionist* wondered whether the press would manufacture situations so they could denounce 'outrages' allegedly caused by the IWW. For example, on 18th November 1913 several daily newspapers reported what Olssen has described as the only serious attempt to sabotage commercial transport during the great strike (2005, p. 43). It was related that a number of plugs of gelignite fitted with detonators were found on a railway line just before the passing of the mainline express between Auckland and Wellington (which incidentally was carrying Tom Barker on his way to Wellington for his trial on charges of sedition).

The *Industrial Unionist* noted that several members of the employers federation were recent arrivals from the USA, where the tactic of employing "some half-witted or ignorant worker" to plant dynamite, only to arrange for its discovery just in time, had been used on more than one occasion. A similar plot in Lawrence, Massachusetts had failed when one of the conspirators confessed. The *Industrial Unionist* expressed grave concern about this possible development, and figured that only the amateurishness of the plot meant the newspapers did not make much of deal of it, which, perhaps surprisingly, they did not. For example, *The New Zealand Herald* had quickly dropped the story, only reporting four days later that a 75-year-old hawker had been charged with

³⁶ *Ashburton Guardian*, 10/8/12, p. 4

the offence. At his trial it transpired that the explosives had actually been left in the toilets of Green Lane Station. In sentencing the hawker, the Judge reflected that the offence had been “due entirely to the weakening of his mind with advanced years”, but still saw fit to send him to prison for 5 years.³⁷

Until the day came that the workers were all organised into One Big Union the IWW were active in organising, supporting and encouraging workers to better their conditions. To do this it was necessary to sometimes employ the more conventional tactic of strike action. In the interests of working class solidarity the IWW would always support a strike even if it was not revolutionary, and even if it looked like a lost cause it was a matter of principle to give their all once they were committed to action. Writing to *Solidarity*, the eastern USA IWW publication, Tom Barker said, “A workers’ fight is always RIGHT, always, always, ALWAYS! Get in and win, and by every means.”³⁸

The value of strikes lay in the fact that not only could they win improvements in conditions, but also they gave an opportunity to teach valuable lessons to the workers. During a strike the importance of solidarity could be taught, demonstrated, and understood. A strike gave the workers a feeling of power and confidence, and demonstrated the employer could be challenged and defeated. When a conventional strike was not feasible or wise, then the worker could use the weapon of a one-day strike, or a wildcat strike, called before the boss was prepared for it. The capitalist press, the *Industrial Unionist* ironically pointed out, could see the value of strike action, despite their virulent condemnation of strike action that ran through their pages. They reported how the *New Zealand Herald* called for the boycott of the report of Australian NSW Assembly proceedings after a spat with the Speaker of the Assembly. The *Herald* said that by not reporting the proceedings the speaker would soon be

³⁷ *Industrial Unionist* 18/11/13, p.1; *Hawera & Normanby Star*, 8/12/13, p.7

³⁸ *Solidarity*, 14/9/12

forced to apologise. The *Industrial Unionist* pointed out that in other words “all the press has to do to gain their ends was to go on strike.”³⁹

To make a further point regarding how actions taken by the workers were no different to that taken by the capitalist, the IWW looked to the New Zealand dairy farmer. It was argued that the farmer maintained a high price for butter by only allowing a certain amount onto the New Zealand market, the rest being sent to export. This, they argued, was no different to workers limiting the supply of labour, which is effectively what they do during a strike. Admittedly it was the scab who benefitted at first, but if not enough scabs could be found, then it followed that if the workers remained solid then they would have to be re-instated at a higher rate of pay.

Strikes were like sabotage, a tactic to be used wisely and sensibly, and the IWW used the term strikeology⁴⁰ to describe this careful consideration of the action. They considered that once a strike was called it was better to go back seemingly beaten, but with your organisation still intact and the workers still solid and ready to strike again or practice sabotage on the job. Better this than lose your job to a strike breaker.

They condemned those at Waihi, and in other disputes, who, as soon as the strike was called, left their work places to seek work elsewhere. They argued that it is important to stay at your post and go hungry if needs be. Better this than to scab on yourself, and be condemned as such. While a good organisation could manage effective victories, a better one recognised a temporary defeat, which, by a change of tactics, could be turned into a victory. A good example of such a victory is to be found in Pouget ‘s work Sabotage. He described how in 1889 striking Glasgow dockers, who were forced back to work by the use of imported farm labour, adopted the level of work displayed by the farm labourers, who had not proved very adept at the work, although the

³⁹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/3/13, p. 3

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.2

employers had declared themselves satisfied with the level of work. Within a few days the dockers had been awarded the pay rise that they had struck for.

It was from examples such as this that the IWW learned, and they argued that the Waihi strikers should have returned to work when the employers restarted working the mines. They stated that lengthy strikes were wrong in the modern age, and it was pointless resigning yourself to raising money to keep the strike going, as no matter how much money was raised, the capitalist would always have more.⁴¹

Knowing when to return to work was important, but so was picking the moment to hold a strike. Proper timing, such as when the employer was busiest, or unemployment low, could maximize the effects. The Auckland Exhibition was due to be held in late 1913 and the IWW pronounced that such one-off events were an opportunity that did not come along often, and were the ideal time to call a strike. “Just imagine”, they wrote, thousand of visitors and “no cars, no lights, no bread supply, silent wharves, no shops open, nothing doing.”⁴²

The term general strike was much abused, and often used against the IWW as a demonstration of their menace to society. To clear up confusion over the term General Strike, a pamphlet by Arnold Roller⁴³ made the difference clear. *The Social General Strike* was reprinted almost in entirety in Issues 12 and 14 of the *Industrial Unionist*. Roller wrote that the term General Strike leads to misunderstandings “because it is applied to different general acts”. It was used to designate the strike of all branches in one trade (for example, a general strike of miners) or a general strike in one city or province in demand for such things as better working conditions or wages. The Social General Strike was the final act of a revolutionary movement, and cannot be called until the day comes

⁴¹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/2/13, p. 1

⁴² *Ibid*, 1/5/13, p.4

⁴³ Arnold Roller was the pen name for Siegfried Nacht, a noted activist in international anarchist circles.

when all workers are organised into One Big Union, and educated, ready for the takeover of society. Haywood described that on that day

All they [the workers] have to do is to stop working and the capitalists will go bankrupt. Their hope rests in a general strike that will paralyse industry. When that day comes, control of industry will pass from the capitalists to the masses and capitalists will vanish from the face of the earth (Dosch, 1913, p. 416).

Ultimately, despite the scaremongering of the press and all the talk of industrial sabotage, the truth appears to be different. Barker has claimed he knew of no occasion when anything of the sort was ever carried out. Those who had worked in the USA and seen such activities passed on the talk, but in New Zealand it was essentially used by the IWW as a warning to potential strike breakers and employers.⁴⁴ However, the fact that they gave consideration to its use demonstrates a difference in thinking between the IWW and the NZFL. As Fitzgerald and Rodgers argue the difference between a RSMO, like the IWW, and more moderate groups, when it comes to tactics, lies in the fact that the RSMO demonstrates thinking beyond the orthodox, and bypassing the structures that society has designed to control grievance and revolt (2000, p. 583). The lessons taken from the Waihi dispute can highlight this. To the NZFL it was a reason to increase activity in the political field and increase the strength of the executive. The IWW though, saw it as lesson in the futility of lengthy strikes in the modern age. Instead they called for more thought to be given to actions taken and an increase in the use of tactics of sabotage and carefully planned strike action.

⁴⁴ *Industrial Workers of the World, Bert Roth Collection, MS-Papers-6164-120, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington*

COMMUNICATION – “Mental Dynamite”

Fitzgerald and Rodgers note that RSMOs experience much difficulty in getting attention and fair and accurate reporting of the issues they raise. One reason is because of the contradiction between the deliberate lack of leader in the organisation, and the desire of the press to present someone as ‘in charge’. Furthermore, the bias of the capitalist owned press can be a cause of misinterpretation (through deliberate action or a lack of knowledge or misunderstanding) of the arguments presented by the RSMO (2000, p. 585).

Fitzgerald and Rodgers observe that this precarious relationship with the mainstream media mean that a group espousing radical ideas like the IWW have to turn to alternative methods to communicate with their target audience (ibid.). To pursue this the New Zealand IWW printed their own paper, pamphlets, held street meetings, economics classes, and even dances where they could get their message across.

In New Zealand the press had given the IWW a less than friendly welcome since its first branch meeting in 1908. The *Grey River Argus* gave an early taste of the attitudes the IWW could expect from the capitalist press. Feeling especially angry against a motion which was passed to expel the press because it was unlikely they would give impartial reports, The *Argus* thundered “Usual experience of the gentlemen who cry aloud against a biased and unfair press...generally comes from men of a more or less eccentric nature.”¹ Another description in the *Observer* was more scornful

The agents of the self-styled Industrial Workers of the World are seldom men who toil. For the greater part they are either callous adventurers or weak-minded dupes, who have never followed a useful occupation.

¹ *Grey River Argus*, 20/1/08, p.2

Spreading the Satanic doctrine of murder and destruction is their chosen occupation, and the unthinking type of worker is the tool they select to carry out the most dangerous part of their mission.²

In turn the IWW viewed the press of New Zealand as “rags” that were “owned and controlled by men whose material interests must for ever conflict with the interests of the workers, hence, therefore, the misrepresentations, the hypocrisy, and bare-faced lying.”³ Indeed the history of the New Zealand press at this time was one of being owned by differing business men and groups, each with their set of political ideas and agenda (J. Taylor, 2005, p. 144). The *Dominion*, for example, portrayed itself as being objective and neutral, with the editor stating that in regard to the 1913 strike, “we must enable the public to arrive at a just and intelligent decision on the rights and wrongs of the matter”.⁴ However, in his autobiography, a *Dominion* journalist, Pat Lawlor, described how he was not allowed to publish his report of strike activities in Wellington. He describes how he heard the “sinister note of a revolver” emanating from the specials who were reacting to an attack on their Buckle Street quarters. When he tried to report that the shot came from the specials he was pressured by the editor C. Earle and the Commissioner of Police to believe he was mistaken. He wrote his story as he believed to be the truth, but when it was printed he was “heartbroken” to find that it had been changed to be “all in favour of the police”. Lawlor, despite his initial indignation, describes how he came to accept such “discretion” as necessary though (Lawlor, 1935, p. 21). It seemed to be true that as the *Industrial Unionist* said, even though there are reporters who wish to honestly report the facts, unfortunately, in reference to the practice of editing articles, “blue pencils are cheap enough”.⁵

² *Observer* 9/12/16, p. 3

³ *Industrial Unionist*, 13/11/13, p.2

⁴ *Dominion*, 23/10/13

⁵ *Industrial Unionist*, 15/11/13, p. 2

When they could, the IWW would expose the press's reports as being untrue. For example, they followed up a report in the *New Zealand Herald* that 40 men were still working on the Auckland Exhibition site during the great strike by carrying out a check at the site, actually only finding one special and one boy at work. They were happy to relate that despite reports to the contrary the exhibition workers were still as solid as a "constable's baton".⁶

The IWW themselves were, however, not opposed to putting across their own misinformation and exaggeration as a political strategy. They reported a typhoid outbreak had occurred in the Specials camp at the Auckland Domain. Whether this was true or not is unclear, but this would have created a real concern for those thinking of joining the specials, as the threat of infectious disease was a very real threat in 1913.⁷

The *Industrial Unionist*, "the most revolutionary paper south of the line" was published by the Auckland IWW local, and first appeared as a monthly in February 1913, with the intention of it becoming a weekly as soon as possible. The paper was sold mostly on the streets or at meetings, although apparently some sympathetic shopkeepers stocked it (Olssen, 2005, p. 43).

During the Great Strike of 1913 the paper was issued almost every second day. The editor's name during this period was A. Block (an actual Block of wood kept on a chair in an office, who would be introduced to any visiting police officers if the need arose). Although this was a serious revolutionary paper, this was typical of the current of irreverent humour that ran through every issue.

⁶ *Industrial Unionist*, 15/11/13, p.1

⁷ *Ibid*, 20/11/13 p1

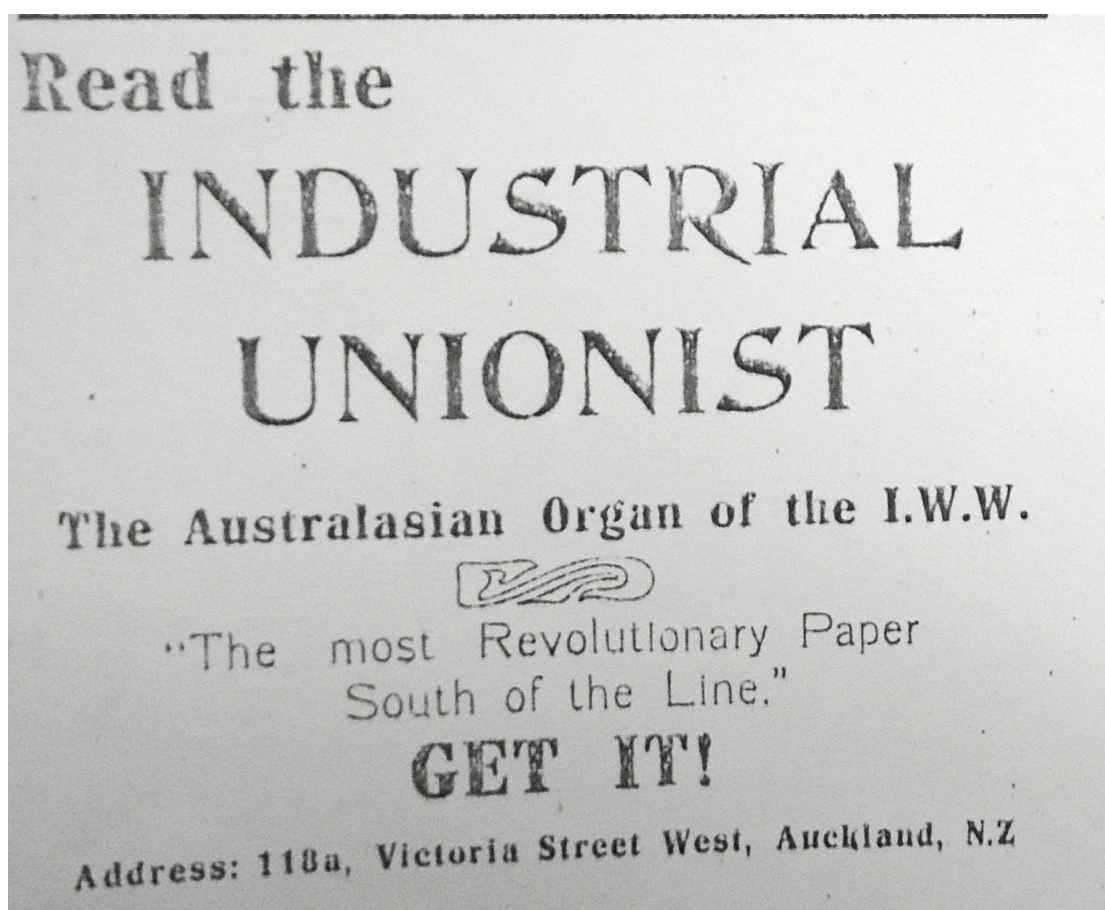


Figure 19: "The most Revolutionary Paper South of the Line"⁸

In the first issue of the *Industrial Unionist* the importance of a working class press was stressed and the hope was expressed that in future "a hundred working class newspapers will be founded in New Zealand and Australia."⁹ The IWW considered the situation in this regard as deficient, and pointed out that organs of this kind were necessary to organise the fight against capitalism. Such was their ambition for the paper that on the occasion of the *New Zealand Herald's* 50th birthday special issue, they regretted they could not shake the "silly old woman's hoary old hand" because they hoped to soon replace it as the best selling daily.¹⁰

⁸ *Industrial Workers of the World, Bert Roth Collection, MS-Papers-6164-120, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington*

⁹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/2/13, p. 2

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 18/11/13, p. 4

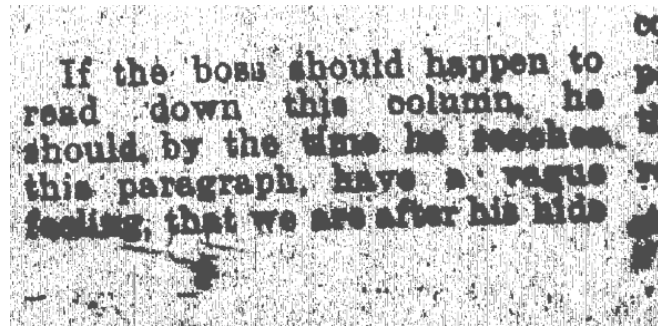


Figure 20: “if the boss should happen to read down this column he should, by the time he reaches this paragraph, have a vague feeling, that we are after his hide”. A typical example of the type of irreverent humour found running through the *Industrial Unionist*.¹¹

The paper, having presented itself as a weapon in the fight against the capitalist, strove to catch the attention of the worker, with articles written by workers themselves. Olssen has cast doubt on whether the followers of the IWW were ideologically driven at all. He writes “visions of class solidarity and industrial unionism appealed to miners not for intellectual reason, but because it gave coherent expression to the logic of their everyday working experience” (1988, p. 3). Although some may see that as an intellectual reason, Olssen adds later, in the same work “probably few of those rank and file revolutionaries had much knowledge of syndicalist and anarchist ideology” (*ibid.* p. 86). However, the simplicity of the presentation of the IWW ideologies helped the workers understand the nature of the capitalist system. On the pages of the *Industrial Unionist* were boldly printed statements, short and straight to the point, breaking down the theory of class war and industrial unionism into memorable and easily repeated slogans. Slogans such as ‘an injury to one is an injury to all’ gave a lesson on the importance and necessity of worker solidarity in just a few words. The *Industrial Unionist* itself saw the beauty in simplifying a political theory. Of the preamble itself it said that it was

¹¹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/7/13, p.2

remarkable for its condensation of a whole philosophy in so few words. There, in language too plain for a standard 1 child to misunderstand, is stated the economic position of the Working Class, the nature of the struggle and the remedy¹²

The simplicity of the argument did indeed appeal to many workers. Ted Howard, who contributed many articles to the *Maoriland Worker* under the pen name 'The Vag', wrote that

the idea of organising all the industrial workers of the world into one union, and then by someone pressing a button, stopping the wheels of industry and starving the damned capitalist out, seemed as [easy] as falling off a log.¹³

However, along with the slogans there were articles of a lengthy nature that expounded theories and lessons on relevant subjects such as economics and sabotage techniques. Also mixed into its page were news items, not just about New Zealand, but activities from fellow workers in Australia, America, and Europe. A regular article updated readers about activities in the Sandwich Islands. There was no place for sports or advertising, nor there was room for "over the tea cup columns" or society section, unlike the *Maoriland Worker*. The people writing and printing the *Industrial Unionist* worked entirely voluntarily, and being anti-capitalist they would not take advertising from capitalists with a clear conscience. They directed the worker to note that

The fact that this newspaper, being free from advertisements, contains exactly the same quantity of reading matter as one twice its size which is half full of advertisements.¹⁴

¹² *Industrial Unionist*, 1/8/13, p.2

¹³ *New Zealand Worker*, 4/3/25

¹⁴ *Industrial Unionist* 1/2/13, p. 1

This was another veiled swipe at the *Maoriland Worker*, where many businesses did advertise and the revenue from advertising was actively sought. Indeed, the member of the *Worker's* board, Robert Semple would spend much of his time soliciting adverts (Olssen, 1988, p. 44).

Throughout its short lifespan¹⁵ the circulation of the *Industrial Unionist* increased steadily, and by July 1913 it was selling 4000 copies of each issue, which compared well with the more established *Maoriland Worker's* circulation at the time of 10,000 (Nolan, 2005, p. 34). During the strike period of November they reported they were selling an average of 5000 copies a day.¹⁶

Pamphlets were a vital complimentary propaganda tool to the newspaper. "When speakers are scarce and papers fail, the handy pamphlet is always available as a silent propagandist", proclaimed the *Industrial Unionist*.¹⁷ Among the range of pamphlets advertised for sale in the paper was a self-published one-penny pamphlet entitled *Chunks of I.W.W.ism*, written by A. Holdsworth. Consisting of a collection of articles from the *Industrial Unionist*, it was advertised proudly as the first I.W.W. pamphlet published in Australasia. It sold at least 1500 copies while another self-published pamphlet, the previously mentioned *Industrial Unionism* by F. Hanlon, was reported to have sold in the region of 2000 copies.¹⁸

¹⁵ The final edition was published on 29/11/13. There were 20 issues in total

¹⁶ *Industrial Unionist*, 8/11/13, p. 4

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 1/8/13, p.4

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

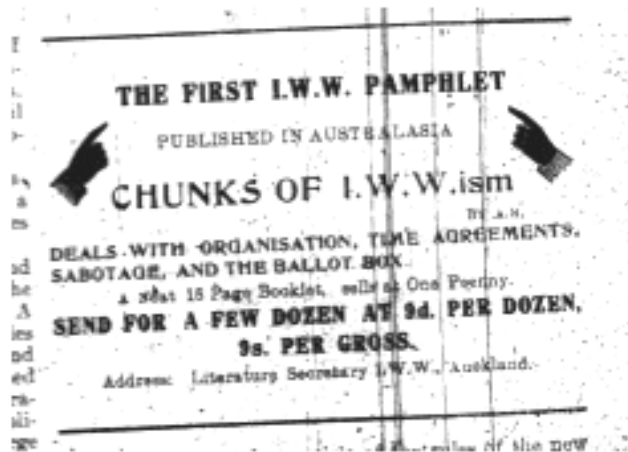


Figure 21: Chunks of I.W.W.ism. The first I.W.W. pamphlet published in Australasia¹⁹

They sales announcement was given with an apology for making a 25 per cent profit on each pamphlet sold. Lest anyone considered the IWW to be capitalists in revolutionary clothing, it was explained that this money was used to build up the literature department. The source of pamphlets that were not printed in New Zealand could be precarious. An IWW member would meet any boat from the USA to see if any fellow worker was aboard with an “appropriate swag”. A further source was an anarchist group in Auckland who could offer syndicalist and anti-parliamentary literature.²⁰

¹⁹ *Industrial Unionist* 1/5/13, p. 3

²⁰ *Industrial Workers of the World, Bert Roth Collection, MS-Papers-6164-120, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington*

Literature for Rebels.

Are you a live wire desirous of pushing propaganda in the most effective manner?

If so, become an agent, and communicate with the Lit. Secy. I. W. W. corner Swanson and Albert Streets, Auckland.

The following publications supplied post free:—

I. W. W. Its History, Structure, and Methods.	3d.
Eleven Blind Leaders	3d.
Why Strikes are lost and how to win	2d.
The Farm Labourer and the City Worker	2d.
Industrial Unionism	2d. each, 1s. 6d. per dozen
The Right to be Lazy	3d.
Economics of Labour	1d.
Social General Strike	2d.
Industrial Unionism the Road to Freedom	3d.
Direct Action and Sabotage	3d.
Wage Labour and Capital	1d.
Chunks of I. W. W.ism	1d. each 9d. per dozen, 9s. per gross

Figure 22: Literature for Rebels, publications for sale by the IWW²¹

²¹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/8/13, p. 2

Other silent propagandists were stickers that were placed on walls, lampposts, billboards and in workplaces. They were described as measuring 2 inches by 2.5 inches and bearing text such as²²

**HOW TO MAKE YOUR JOB
EASIER
GET WISE TO I.W.W. TACTICS**

**Don't Be a Pacemaker.
Someone has to be Slowest-Let
It be you.**

**Don't Be a Bosses Man by Trying
To Do More Than Other Men.
Faster Workers Die Young.
Live a Long Life.
JOIN THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS
OF THE WORLD,
THE FIGHTING UNION.**

**MAKE
MARGARINE WAGES
MEAN
MARGARINE WORK.
JOIN THE I.W.W.**

It was reported that these appeared all over Wellington during the Great Strike with the initials IWW printed boldly at the top²³.

²² *Marlborough Express*, 6/11/15, p. 4; *NZ Truth*, 9/10/15, p.13

In addition to a newspaper, pamphlets, and stickers, meetings held in halls or in the open-air were crucial to counteract the misinformation distributed by the mainstream press. John A. Lee described the New Zealand waterfront as a political university (1963, p. 23), and speakers professing Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and Socialism were frequently seen on the streets of Auckland, addressing crowds numbering in their thousands. Particularly renowned were Tom Barker, Edwin Sayes, Fred Williams, and John Desmond.²⁴ Olssen (1988, p. 118) mentions one Jack Harris who cycled around the whole of the Auckland province delivering the revolutionary message, and “Grandma Green” who was described as by the Auckland branch of the NZSP as the “grand old woman of the revolutionary movement.”²⁵ One such meeting saw Fraser and McLennan give a talk on the Waihi Strike in May 1913. The *Industrial Unionist* reported it as an “instructive address to those depending upon the capitalist sheets for their news”.²⁶

In the first 6 months of 1913 the IWW had held over 100 outdoor meetings in Auckland, and in June they were reporting that they were running an average of four outdoor meetings a week (in spite of the inclement weather).²⁷ In the same issue the first social held by the Local was reported to have been a great success, and a full timetable of the upcoming activities was advertised, amongst which emphasized the importance of outdoor speaking as Speakers’ class were held every Thursday. There was also a promise for more debates and educational classes. These activities followed on from the traditions begun by the Auckland branch of the Socialist Party, which, in addition to its meetings and lectures, offered its members an active and vigorous social life. The party was known to have arranged informal teas every Sunday, and dances once a

²³ *Poverty Bay Herald*, 28/10/13, p. 6

²⁴ A. Holdsworth to H. O. Roth, 18 July 1961 & 5 August 1961, MS-papers-6164-120, Alexander Turnbull Library

²⁵ *Social Democrat*, 22/3/12, p. 3

²⁶ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/6/13, p. 1

²⁷ *Ibid*, p.4

fortnight. It also organised May Day Parades, fancy dress balls and picnics, all with a healthy dose of a socialist message. Tom Barker, shortly after arriving in Auckland remarked that he did not know “where this kind of education was so consistently and regularly done as in Auckland in those days” (Olssen, 1988, p. 114).

A column from the October 1913 issue of the *Industrial Unionist* paints a picture of outdoor meetings in this era, when it wasn't just socialists lecturing in the street, but a whole variety of different people representing different ideas

After missing two meetings the Local appointed Fellow-worker Jim Sullivan as city organiser. He was soon on the job whipping lazy speakers into line, result: very good meetings. Sunday night, September 7, doubtful weather caused the outdoor chairman to close the street meeting, accept Fellow-worker Kotgen's offer of a talk inside and Seand invited the audience up to the room. Several went and listened to an interesting talk on Syndicalism, followed by a lively discussion. Sunday afternoon, September 14, Charlie Reeves and a chairman held a big crowd at the foot of Queen Street; likewise at night, with other speakers assisting. Sunday afternoon, September 21, Reeves again held forth, and held a big crowd for an hour and a-half, in spite of an eloquent single-taxer on one corner and Wild Willy the Woolly prohibitionist on another; he was followed by F. Hanlon, who gave a short, but trenchant talk on Constructive Industrialism, mentioning Sabotage too. At night a splendid meeting was held near Grey Statue. Fellow-worker F. Williams, after a long absence from the "box" delivered a telling half-hour talk, the enormous crowd never moving. W. Murdock (sic) and others followed.²⁸

To add to the flavour, overseas visitors would often speak at the meetings. The IWW Auckland branch frequently had IWW members from America and other

²⁸ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/10/13, p, 4

countries who would give lessons from their struggles in the USA. The international characteristic of the IWWs visitors was reflected when it was reported that in the past week E.J.B Allen from England (who had actually come to reside in New Zealand), two French workers from San Francisco, and George Hardy from Australia had all visited the branch.²⁹

Songs were an important weapon in the IWWs armoury of propaganda, both in New Zealand and abroad. They were easily remembered and so were useful in spreading the revolutionary message. When the IWW were originally considering producing a songbook in the USA, its chief proponent J.H. Walsh, a national organiser for one of the strongest locals in Spokane, Washington, pointed to the ease with which the popular songs of the day would sweep the country and remain in the memory (Brazier, 1968, p. 96). Tom Barker has described how IWW songs were catching on and would be sung at meetings between speakers to keep hold of the audience (Fry, 1999, p. 14). In the USA the IWW had printed its own songbook known as the 'Little Red Songbook', and these were for sale in New Zealand. The ex-Labour MP John A Lee recalled in the *New Zealand Herald*³⁰ how at meetings the IWW would sing the IWW refrain

Work and pray, live on hay
You'll get pie in the sky
When you die

This is the chorus from a Joe Hill written song in 1911 that was a parody of a hymn 'In the Sweet Bye and Bye'. The parodying of hymns and popular songs of the day was a common feature of IWW songs, and a way of subverting what the bourgeoisie held to be respectable. Typically the lyrics of the songs ridiculed the ruling classes and their structures and held up the exploitative nature of capitalism for examination, with the aim of stirring up a revolutionary feeling within the workers. They dealt with aspects of life that the worker could readily

²⁹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/5/13, p. 4

³⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 30/3/14

identify with. The songs were not only of protest, but also spoke of hope for a better future. For example, the first verse of a song entitled the Commonwealth of Toil, written by American IWW activist, Ralph Chaplin, declared

But we have a glowing dream
Of how fair the world will seem
When each man can live his life secure and free.
When the earth is owned by Labor
And there's joy and peace for all
In the commonwealth of Toil that is to be (I.W.W., 2003, p. 34)

New Zealanders produced their own examples of IWW songs. The miners of Waihi had their own version of God save The King, which said God Save J.B. King instead (Olssen, 1988, p. 157). Even as early as 1909 the *Evening Post* reported the IWW in New Zealand as having their own songs that were written by the organising secretary T. Park. The *Post* wrote that one song, which was set to the tune of the well-known hymn “Beulah Land”, had a final verse that ran

The creed that held you long in thrall
The boundaries fixed by knaves, shall fall
When Yellow, Brown and Black and White,
The workers of the world unite

It was described how all six verses, and a “formidable chorus” could be heard ringing out from their meetings at the Socialist Hall in Manners Street.³¹

To help spread the IWW message the Auckland local would send speakers around the country. In his diaries, union activist, Jack McCullough wrote how heard an IWW speaker sent from Auckland whilst he was in Wanganui (Nolan, 2009, p. 263). In 1913, Tom Barker embarked on a trip to the South Island with

³¹ *Evening Post*, 3/12/09, p. 6

“a bundle of potential rebels in his bag – a pile of *Industrial Unionists*.”³²

Naturally, as befits a truly proletarian organisation he didn’t travel first class unlike the “responsible union leaders” of the NZFL. Instead, it was announced that he was “more likely to be seen emerging from underneath a tarpaulin on a goods wagon.”³³ A couple of months later Tom Barker wrote up his experiences. Mostly his report was positive (although he was arrested for obstruction when conducting a street meeting in Christchurch and fined 10/- with 7/- costs). He reported that both Wellington and Christchurch had received him enthusiastically, and that workers in Christchurch had formed a Local and he fully expected another 6 locals to have been formed by Christmas time.³⁴ Other places where he was received keenly included Greymouth, Runanga, Blackball, Westport and Paparoa. In Waiuta he met with his finest reception. At a meeting organised by I.W. Parrot he met P. Scholland, T. Stonbridge, J. Bond, and D. Jones, all of whom he described as direct actionists. Not only did he hold a meeting there that lasted 3 and a-half hours, but he sold all his literature too.

As the year 1913 progressed, and partly in consequence of the gathering strength of the anti-conscription movement, the IWW, in common with branches throughout the world, were increasingly getting their outdoor meetings stopped by police. Additionally the *Industrial Unionist* reported of “vague hints and threats floating through the daily press in regard to deporting soapbox agitators”, and they expressed their fear that a bill was being considered in parliament that would limit free speech and the right to picket during times of strike. In preparing themselves for the possible coming battle they warned that they were ready to resist any attempt to suppress free speech.³⁵

³² *Industrial Workers of the World, Bert Roth Collection, MS-Papers-6164-120, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington*

³³ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/8/11, p. 3

³⁴ *There were already in existence a number of informal IWW groups around New Zealand in places such as Huntly, Waihi, and Denniston (Davidson, 2011, p. 39).*

³⁵ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/8/13, p. 2

The issue seemed especially problematic in Christchurch. Local 2, the newly formed IWW branch in the city, reported that prosecution for street speaking was increasing, and that a Mr. P. Fletcher, an anti-militarist, had gone to jail for street speaking. On the same night the “Starvation” (or more commonly Salvation!) Army, who were speaking on the same street on the same night, escaped any attention from the local constables. The *Marlborough Express* reported in fact that the Christchurch council turned down an application for a permit to hold street meetings by the local IWW yet granted permission to the Salvation Army and the Plymouth Brethren.³⁶

Fitzgerald and Rodgers (2000, p. 586) highlight the dangers that a RSMO face that once they put things in print, or have been recorded as saying something, then they are open to the danger of prosecution and oppression by the state. Certainly, not just the IWW, but leaders of the trade union movement in general faced this ordeal with the charges of sedition being brought against some of the main organisers during the 1913 troubles. This increasing suppression of free speech was merely a small taste of the increased repression of the IWW around the world at this time, and was an indicator of how the IWW would find it increasingly difficult to broadcast its message over the next few years.

As previously mentioned, Hill (1995) highlighted how police spies were regularly monitoring union meetings, and there is no reason to suppose the IWW were treated any different. Additionally, the IWW was under a consistent and sustained attack by the press. Various scandals were reported from overseas in an attempt to discredit the IWW in the eyes of the New Zealand public, and the most prominent members were individually held up for inspection, even ridicule. For example, after being earlier fined £1 in a court case involving a charge of disrupting a school drill with cries of “turn your heads you cockatoos”,³⁷ Charles Reeves, who had been described in court as a

³⁶ *Marlborough Express*, 9/2/11, p. 3

³⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 29/11/13

“prominent exponent of the IWW doctrine”, found his occupation as an oyster opener, mocked by the *Observer*.³⁸

After 1913, various regulations were imposed and legislation passed with the intent of outlawing the IWW and its literature. In 1915 an amendment to the 1913 Customs Act prohibited “the importation into New Zealand of the IWW newspapers *Direct Action* and *Solidarity*, and all other printed matter published or printed by or on behalf of the society known as the Industrial Workers of the World” (Davidson, 2011, p. 66). In Australia *Direct Action* thanked the New Zealand government for this tribute to its strength and recognition of its influence.³⁹ However being caught in possession of such literature, which was described by John Salmond, the Solicitor General of New Zealand, as “a public mischief and a public evil” (Davidson, 2011, p. 18) could bring a lengthy jail sentence. In 1917 Charles Johnson, who was described as being prominent during the 1913 strike when he had been convicted of striking a special constable, was sentenced to 12 months hard labour for being in possession a large amount of such literature.⁴⁰

Two months after this law was passed the Post and Telegraph Department reported that it had withheld “14 single copies of *Direct Action*”, and “six bundles of *Solidarity*”. Correspondence from known activists was examined, censored and confiscated. One such example was Syd Kingsford who a police memorandum reported as “appearing to be an agent in Christchurch for the distribution of ...IWW literature” (Ibid, 2011, p. 78).

Furthermore, the 1918 Immigrants Exclusion Act gave the state the power to ban entry to anybody deemed disloyal and disaffected to prohibit the immigration of anyone, such as IWW supporters, considered a subversive (Harris, 1975, p. 36). Workers who were suspected of being IWW supporters

³⁸ *Observer*, 13/12/13, p. 16

³⁹ *Direct Action*, 9/10/15, p.1

⁴⁰ *Evening Post*, 20/10/17, p.7

could be excluded from the wharves as a danger to shipping, under wartime regulations. Sidney Fournier, who was a prominent unionist, was one such victim who was not allowed to work after an IWW membership card and literature had been found in his home following a police search.⁴¹

This repression seriously hindered the IWWs activities, and ultimately could be said to have contributed to the IWWs failure in its bid to change society and the attitudes of the working class. However, the next section will develop Fitzgerald and Rodgers argument that normal standards of success and failure cannot always be applied to a RSMO (2000, p. 586).

⁴¹ *Evening Post*, 10/5/19, p.5

Assessment – Success or Failure

When considering the levels of success of a RSMO, it has to be borne in mind that any chance of success will have been hindered because the organisation is likely to have been under a sustained and consistent attack (Fitzgerald & Rogers, 2000, p. 586). Further, attempting to determine the success of a RSMO is fraught with difficulties in terms of defining success. Similarly, the consequences of actions of any SMO can often be indirect and unanticipated. Furthermore, such consequences can be short-term, long-term, or both (Giugni, 1998). For example, increased repression by the state is often an unintended short-term consequence of the actions of social movements, but in the long-term this may have an effect of mobilizing more people, and legitimizing forms of protest. Tarrow (1989) has described how the increased repression in Italy, following protests in the 1960s and 1970s led to an enhancement of the quality of democracy in that country. Thus it is incorrect to paint measures of success as strictly black and white. Movement outcomes should be examined with regard to the broader societal impacts, and looked at along a continuum (Amenta, Dunleavy, & Bernstein, 2003). It has been argued that movements have a greater effect on the culture of a population rather than just in the political field, and that in making use of existing societal structures, they transform them. These effects are more extensive and permanent than any policy changes (Saeed, 2009). Morris and Clawson (2005) give an example of this when they highlight how the Civil Rights Movement in the USA during the 1960s transformed many people's opinion as to the previously perceived inferiority of African-Americans. Such an effect may elude the traditional measures of success or failure.

In addition, a SMO may have an impact on other organisations. The failure of one movement can leave lessons for another future one to learn from, and increase its chances of success. Movements can highlight other problems, and

generate other movements in the same period or in the future. The experiences and knowledge learnt by individuals can be taken into new struggles (Saeed, 2009). In all these ways an organisation that may have been considered to have failed, in terms of meeting their aims or collecting resources, could actually be considered successful.

Perhaps even more difficult to measure is the transformation, by a movement, of an individual's outlook on political and socio-economic ideas. However some possible measures are that even if a SMO declines the individual may continue with the struggle, or it may have left a permanent impact on their personal life. Their activism may be continued by them aligning with other movements (Meyer & Whittier, 1994).

Previously social movement theories have attempted to locate the success of a particular SMO in terms of the impact the group has had on social and legislative change. Other traditional measurements of success also point to acceptance by the mainstream and the ability to become a contender in the political system (Fitzgerald & Rogers, 2000, p. 587). However for a RSMO such as the IWW such an idea is not only anathema, but, with their views on taking part in the political system, impossible. Admittedly they supported actions that immediately benefit the working class within the existing system, but their ideas of success are more long-term. To quote one of the founders of the USA IWW Eugene V. Debs "...no strike was ever lost...I lost the strike of the past that I may win the strike of the future" (Debs, 1908, p. 455).

Similarly, the concept of lack of resources in terms of finances and membership numbers has dominated much of the discussion around the failure of RSMOs. Hickey in the early stage of the NZFL was quoted as saying that "the argument as to the numerical strength carries little weight; the matter of prime consideration is the activity displayed" (Olssen, 1988, p. 37), and, in terms of the IWW, while they were never large enough in terms of members to lead a strike, they were always involved supporting and encouraging in any dispute

they could through organising meetings and through the pages of the *Industrial Unionist*.

It can be argued that the importance of Industrial Unionism in New Zealand was in terms of an idea, rather than an organisation. The IWW never had the time to build into a mass movement, but as important to them was getting the idea across, not membership. It was possible to be a Wobbly without a membership card and even without a large scale organisation to back them up, it was possible for an individual, or individuals, to act as agitators on their job.

Furthermore, the lack of finances, instead of a being a measure of failure, can be seen to be a result of deliberate action in that the RSMO does not want to take money from sources that do not match their principles. Additionally, for the IWW, although they were short of finances this was seen as a benefit in that it acted as a safeguard against the development of an elitist leadership clique within the organisation, and kept the organisation and its organisers rooted to the membership. Also, the very independence from moneyed sources means that the IWW did not have to compromise its revolutionary principles.

In spite of this a report in the August issue of the *Industrial Unionist* appeared to demonstrate the IWW Auckland local in fairly sound financial health. The report of the half yearly general meeting found “all reports satisfactory”. The secretary reported that finance was encouraging; money was raised from pamphlet sales and donations at open-air meetings, and they were able to hand a sum over to the financially stricken *Industrial Unionist*. They had also moved to “larger and more commodious premises¹”. The report’s vagueness, that is it did not give exact monetary figures, may have been intended to hide the perilous nature of the IWWs finances, but certainly they were generating some income. Although the paper was struggling financially, pamphlet and literature sales were healthy. Their two self-published pamphlets had almost sold out, with over 1,000 of the

¹ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/8/13, p. 4

2d pamphlet being sold. However if, as previously mentioned, they were making 25 per cent profit on each, then they would have made only around £2 on these. This would be the equivalent of about an average weekly wage for a manufacturing worker (Greasley & Oxley, 2004, p. 34), and was not enough to ensure the *Industrial Unionist* could be debt free. In the year after its demise the Wellington branch of the NZSP was discussing whether they could pay off its debt and relaunch the paper.²

Fitzgerald and Rodgers have argued that to properly measure a RMSOs success it is necessary to look in terms of internally derived measures of success, that is the organisations own definitions of what they would consider a success. RSMOs have a realistic measure of their goals, and without the yardstick of reforms achieved; any idea of success has to be measured contextually. For example, if we look in terms of the IWW being successful in their revolutionary aims of the organisation of fully class-conscious workers into One Big Union, then their period of activity in New Zealand can only be considered one of total defeat. The organisation was too small, and, although it was growing, the defining battle came too early in its history.

However, if we look for ideas that the IWW would have considered a success then a different picture can be painted. For example, they, amongst others, helped successfully spread the ideas of solidarity among the working class. The *Industrial Unionist* reported many instances of solidarity between workers, especially during the Strikes of 1913. Among the reports of different unions and bodies offering support to the strikers both in terms of finances, strike action and in other ways, were sea-men who refused to work with strike breakers on the USSCo owned *SS Maunganui* and walked off the ship (and were arrested and prosecuted for desertion). Similar occurrences were seen aboard the *SS Corinthic* and *Opawa* (Anderson, 2005, p. 104). The *Industrial Unionist* further

² NZSP, Wellington branch, Minutes, 25/2/14

reported that 5 sailors from the *HMS Pyramus* had been imprisoned due to a refusal to carry out duties in relation to the strike.

In fact, support went beyond the unionists and striking workers. Cronin (1979) has described how strike actions can often come to affect broader segments of the working population than those immediately involved in the strike, and during the dispute shopkeepers, publicans and restaurateurs refused service to strike breakers and specials, and as mentioned, a number of small farmers offered support. In Wellington people who lived in the slum areas such as Te Aro joined in the demonstrations and pickets too (Belich, 2001, p. 93).

Offers and displays of worker solidarity were reported frequently in the *Industrial Unionist*. For example, Auckland Midwives and Nurses announced that three of its members had declared their willingness to attend, without pay, the wives of any strikers expecting confinement and some barbers offered to shave strikers free of charge³.

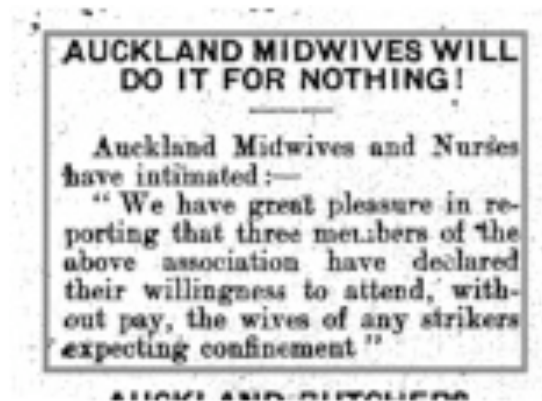


Figure 23: An example of solidarity shown amongst the working class during the Great Strike⁴

The IWW stressed the importance of the lessons being learnt during the Great Strike when they wrote

³ *Industrial Unionist*, 6/11/13, p. 2; *Ibid*, 8/11/13, p. 1

⁴ *Ibid*, 6/11/13, p. 2

Thick-headed littleness has been conspicuous by its absence among strikers, Union officials, and Labour men of all kinds during the Auckland strike. Many, who three weeks ago, passed each other with a stony stare, have been seen cordially congratulating each other upon Labour's remarkable loyalty...

Men who would have heatedly called an I.W.W. man a ranting extremist, and fellows in the IWW who would have sneered about the 'reactionary' now eagerly, scout together, eat together, joke together, and discuss the situation...

The strike is a victory if we go no further than that. Such is the spirit of Solidarity that shall soon weld Labour into an invincible army⁵.

Hill (1995) provides some evidence that the regular police had sympathy with the strikers, and they had made some attempt at unionising. The *NZ Truth* also remarked upon this appearance of solidarity between the strikers and police when it commented that it had considered the police's performance during the first weeks of the strike as "perfunctory", and if no serious breach of the laws was committed then they were happy to turn a blind eye. In return the strikers were seen to be assisting the police and helping remove those who were creating a nuisance.⁶ The Chief of the New Zealand Defence Forces, Colonel Edward Heard, was also driven to remark that during the great strike he viewed some of the police officers as being in sympathy with the strikers, and being reluctant to act against them (Crawford, 1991, p. 80).

The shows of solidarity could be said to demonstrate the existence of some level of class-consciousness amongst the workers of New Zealand. However, some historians have casted doubt about the role class has had to play in New

⁵ *Industrial Unionist*, 15/11/13, p. 2

⁶ *NZ Truth*, 1/11/13, p. 5

Zealand's past. For example, New Zealand historian W.H. Oliver has written that while the rhetoric of class has not been absent from New Zealand it is inappropriate and irrelevant for New Zealand. He asked whether "we have or have had a bourgeoisie and a proletariat, and a struggle between the two" (Moloney & Taylor, 2002, p. 13). Olssen has stated "two social systems existed, one in urban and the other in rural New Zealand" (1978, p. 2), and Nolan has posited that "...class was, perhaps, at most, pertinent to city life, a sub-culture but not a norm" (2007, p. 4). However, it has to be recognised that New Zealand at the time was a capitalist society, and to the IWWs this meant that society was divided as such along the lines of employer and employee. What mattered in terms of class was not a person's occupation, status, attitude, or income, but what was their position in relation to the capitalist mode of production.

The evidence of a class divide was very much in evidence and the workers saw it with their own eyes every day of their lives, at work, on the street and at home when the landlord came to collect rent. A contributor to the *Industrial Unionist*, signing themselves as C.B., related a typical account of an unemployed worker's daily quest for a job where they see "motorcars rushing past towards the aristocratic part of town, and reclining in them are well-dressed women, and portly, comfortable looking men". He goes on to ask himself "There must be something wrong somewhere. I'm willing to work and cannot get it so I'm down and out, but these rich folk never work and they never go short...why should they have it all and me none".⁷

There were some very wealthy people in New Zealand at the time. A study by Le Rossignol and Stewart showed that in the opening decade of the twentieth century a number of wealthy people had died leaving large sums of money behind. Jacob Josephs, Archdeacon Williams, and W.W. Johnston, had all left sums ranging between £300,000 and £500,000 when they died (1910, p. 299).

⁷ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/6/13, p. 3

The same authors calculated that between 1903 and 1904 half of one per cent of the New Zealand population owned 33 per cent of its wealth (ibid, , p. 300). The term class itself became a rallying cry, and this was reflected in the emergence and growth of a popular, radical working class organisations such as the IWW. Many workers' consciousness of class had possibly been changed forever, and, a new resolve to fight for better conditions had been fostered. Even the capitalists were aware of the growing emergence of class consciousness, which can be highlighted by the General manager of USSco, describing that what occurred in 1913 was a strike not "for wages so much as an incipient class war" (Shor, 2002, p. 69).

Importantly, any thought that the Liberals were the natural party of the workers had been smashed, the arbitration court even when treating workers fairly in the establishment's eyes, had become a symbol of an unjust class-ridden system, and there had been a profound shift in Labour politics itself. The number of people belonging to a trade union, particularly amongst the unskilled, increased. The old TLC was discredited, and the vast majority of Union leaders claimed themselves to be socialists. Indeed the term socialism itself had been more defined, and a sense of them and us not only referred to the employer and working classes, but also amongst the working class itself.

Culturally too a RSMO can leave behind a legacy long after their existence has passed. They are often committed to producing a long-standing cultural change through their ideas and propaganda (Fitzgerald & Rogers, 2000, p. 588). The IWW agitated and questioned in areas wider than just industrial unionism. The IWW had a goal not only to better the conditions of the workers, but they wished to embody a cultural change in people's accepted beliefs. They revelled in being labelled extremists. To them the extremist was the pioneer of social change, people who shaped history through the introduction of new, and fresh ideas that

were bravely proceeded with despite the derision hurled at them at the time.

“Are the IWW extremists?” They wrote, “We should smile.”⁸

Shor has written how revolutionary unionists develop "counterpublics" whereby the hegemony of bourgeois and "respectable" working class values are challenged by a competing set of values in the public sphere (2002, p. 60), and the IWW continually asked the worker to question what was considered to be normal and respectable. They demonstrated how the ruling class maintain their hegemony, through the “hypnotism“ of the working class, and the fact that they do it so well they rarely have to turn to the structures of coercion and oppression, namely judges, police and soldiers, they have in place. They argued that the system was constantly fooling the worker into giving their consent to be robbed, making them slave-like, and destroying their ability to act in their own interests. Those who perpetuate the ruling class ideology, the teachers, the historians, the writers, all needed to earn a wage, so had an interest in teaching what the ruling class wanted to be taught.⁹

The IWW considered that from the moment the worker is born the system works its hypnotism on them. Pre-school, the child is given dolls and toy guns to play with, reinforcing stereotypes. At school the history teachers teach a false bigoted nationalism. Reading lessons bolster honesty (namely property rights), and contentment with one’s lot in life. The flag is saluted, and hymns and patriotic songs are sung. Upon leaving school, the worker is faced with a daily drip of lies and misinformation from the media. This all wears away resistance to oppression as “dripping water wears away a stone.”¹⁰

Cultural changes are difficult to quantify, particularly where there is little written evidence remaining for study, but by making people aware of the fallibility of the present system, a change can occur osmosis like throughout the general

⁸ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/8/13, p. 2

⁹ *Ibid*, 1/3/13, p. 4

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.1

population (Fitzgerald & Rogers, 2000, p. 588). People may no longer accept that those in authority necessarily know best, or are acting in their best interests. The IWW had helped give a voice to those previously unheard in New Zealand, and many ordinary working people now wanted more, not just financially, but in terms of respect. Early evidence of a shift in attitudes could be seen in the press reports of the day. The *New Zealand Observer* complained that even the factory worker and tram conductor were swelling out their chests and styling themselves as producers of wealth.¹¹ Another commentator, protested in total disbelief at the new scheme of things that the worker is typically saying that “we will do as little as possible for our wages...and they are cheered by the hundreds on a Sunday afternoon” (Olssen, 1988, p. 77).

The whole question of the nature of work was being questioned, and this highlighted the new creed’s rejection of traditional bourgeois values. The true wages of work under capitalism were viewed as premature death.¹² Instead of the right to work, the working class should be calling for “the right to leisure.”¹³ Instead of a ‘fair day’s pay for a day’s work’, the call was for “a poor day’s work for a poor day’s pay” (Burgmann, 2009, p. 130). The length of hours was held up as an example of what was wrong with the wages system. They repeatedly called for a shorter working week of 40 hours. The IWW advised the tramway workers to reflect that rather than working forced overtime instead, perhaps in reflection of the cultural standards of the time, “you might be taking your wife or girl out for a walk, or to a picture show”.¹⁴ They urged the go-slow to increase employment, and they marketed a pamphlet by Paul Lafargue, entitled the ‘Right To Be Lazy’, where he argued that the proletariat must forgo the long standing lesson that they should work hard, and, in a return to natural instincts they must accustom themselves “...to working but three hours a day, reserving the rest of the day and night for leisure and feasting” (1908, p. 30).

¹¹ *Observer*, 17/2/12, p. 3

¹² *Industrial Unionist*, 1/3/13, p. 4

¹³ *Ibid*, 1/9/13, p. 3

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 1/3/13, p. 4

Such was the questioning of the work ethic, that IWW was often reported to stand for 'I WON'T WORK'. Instead of taking this as an insult the *Industrial Unionist* accepted it and asked,

"I Won't Work...long hours, under unhealthy conditions, at an unorganised ill-paid task. No, who will?...I will work necessary hours, under healthy congenial conditions, granted my every need is satisfied. Now who won't."¹⁵



Inquisitive: Say, mister, what is the meaning of I.W.W.?
One of Them: That's the "I Won't Workers." They're the boys.

Figure 24: The I.W.W. or "The I Won't Workers"¹⁶

¹⁵ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/3/13, p. 1

¹⁶ *Observer*, 15/6/12, p. 5

New vocabulary reflected the cultural change whereby that which was previously held up as esteemed was now mocked or not considered important. The Presbyterian Minister in Waihi had been driven to complain to the commissioners who visited the town during the strike that the trade union had not lowered the union jack flag over their hall when the king died, and neither raised it for the ensuing coronation (Olssen, 1988, p. 153).

Other examples saw icons of the status quo and respectability, variously referred to with new titles, such as the mare (mayor) of Auckland; capitalists were addressed as “fat”, members of the church dismissed as “sky pilots”. Moderate labour leaders were referred to not only as fakirs but also responsables and respectfults in recognition of the media lauding them as such. The IWW themselves often referred to themselves as irresponsibles, and one frequent contributor called himself The Irresponsible. Farmers, amongst many other titles were variously referred to as Henry Hayseed, and cow charmers. The Federation of Labour often went by the initials F.O.O.L. The capitalist system as a whole was called the octopus in view of its tentacles reaching into every country and across borders.

Their artwork often reflected class feeling, and mocked the non-worker elements of the dominant culture. Typically the worker would be drawn as either a noble warrior of the class war or as a downtrodden half starved victim of capitalism.

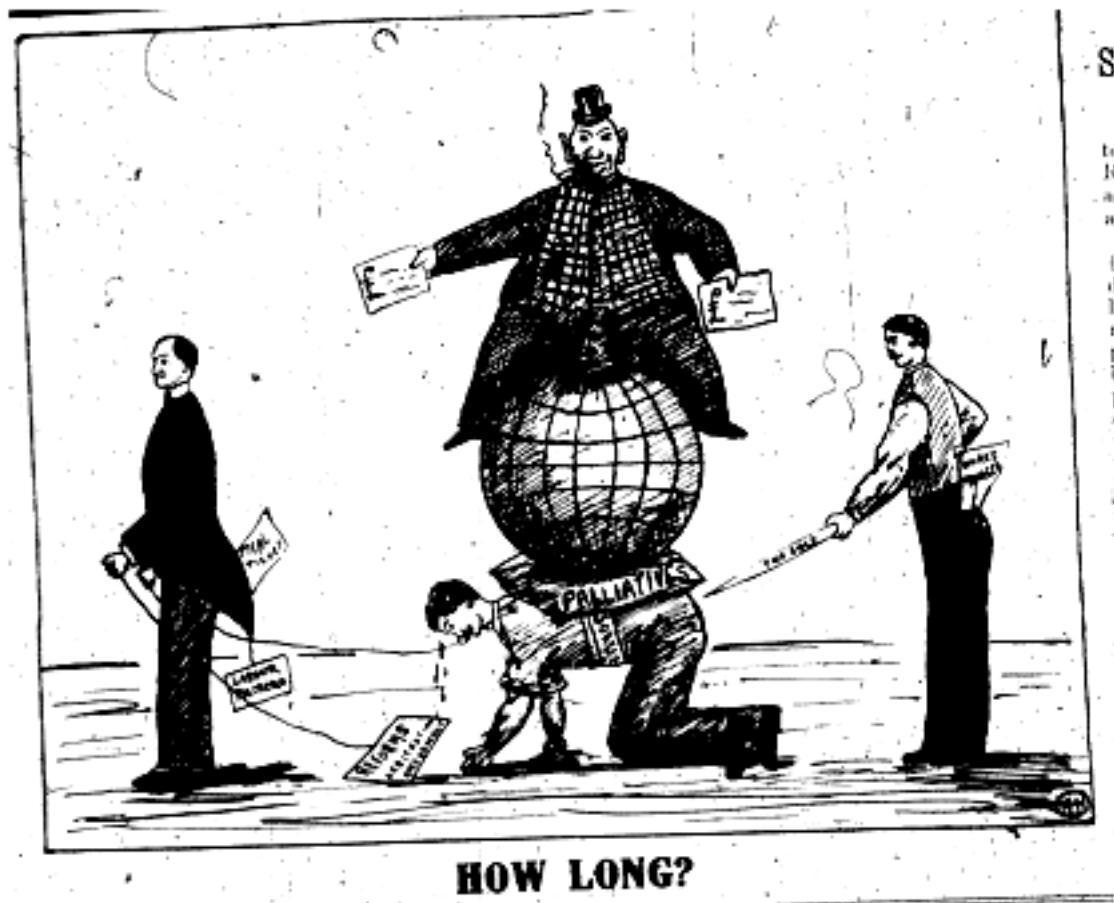


Figure 25: The worker typically being crushed by the capitalist, who is often overweight in IWW art¹⁷

Although it is easy to focus on prominent names, such as Tom Barker, or J.B. King, as leaders of the IWW, as has been discussed they were profoundly against this. They were determined that workers should be educated and empowered, as workers' emancipation could only be possible through the acts of a radicalised educated working class themselves. To this ends the IWW in New Zealand continuously encouraged the workers to educate themselves and to participate in decision-making. "What a monster is that thing ignorance! Work for its abolition!" ran a typical exhortation in the *Industrial Unionist*.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/5/11, p. 1

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 8/11/13, p. 2

Despite the claims of commentators, such as Olssen, that the rank and file knew little about Marxism and syndicalism, the evidence suggests otherwise. Across the world Wobblies were lauded for knowing their Marxism, and, as previously mentioned, the *Industrial Unionist* carried many in depth articles on theory. The *Internationalist Socialist Review*, which had a readership in New Zealand (Bennett, 1999, p. 38), carried serious heavyweight articles. The members of the IWW that wrote the articles for the *Industrial Unionist* were self-educated members of the working class. Charlie Reeve, for example, is described as having “a love for and a knowledge of the Humanities, and was capable of giving faithful resumes of the writings of Carlyle, Tolstoy, Voltaire, William Morris, and Thomas Paine” (Burgmann, 2009, p. 73). This appetite for literature amongst socialists of all hues was not unusual during this period. Hickey in his memoirs relates how the future treasurer of the NZFL John Dowgray landed in New Zealand with “15 -/s in his pocket and with two tons of books” (1980, p. 27) and Robin Hyde’s (1970, p. 41) description of her IWW father spending all his money on books has previously been mentioned.

Typical of the dedication to education was the fact the IWW ran economics classes (such as King’s in Waihi). Another early Wobbly George Farland, who himself was widely read, had a passionate belief in the value of education, considering the union library just as valuable as a strike fund (Olssen, 1988, p. 1981). Barker himself described how the class war would be fought with “mental sticks of dynamite.”¹⁹ The *Industrial Unionist* continually exhorted its readers to contribute to their paper, and their contributions came in the form of poetry, and cartoons, and articles. One such piece was a poem by Auckland Wobbly Alec Holdsworth entitled *The Ballad of The Agitator*. It described the workers’ struggle in all four corners of New Zealand. Its final verse ran

Whilst remains a breath, twixt the earth and sky
To unfurl our ensign red

¹⁹ *Maoriland Worker* 11/10/12/p4

Whilst the hand of toil bears the brand of shame
Whilst the children cry for bread
We will make no pause. We'll defy the laws
Till the last of us be dead²⁰

One of the factors mentioned for judging success of a RSMO is its influence after its demise. It has broadly been considered that the end of the influence of the IWW in New Zealand occurred at the same time as the end of the Great Strike of 1913. For example, Steiner (2007, p. 7) considers that there is no evidence of the IWW continuing to operate after the last issue of their newspaper the *Industrial Unionist* was published on 29th of November 1913. That last issue declared that the strike was going strong and workers were holding out, but a few days later the strike was lost. After the strikers were defeated most active prominent IWW members left the country abruptly to avoid the subsequent state repression and threat of imprisonment.

In 1914, Frank Hanlon, now residing in Wellington, wrote that levels of militant activity were low, and he lamented the decline of the radicalism of the local branch of the NZSP, which he described as once being like an IWW local, but was now chiefly "...composed of philosophers who play poker...and teach each other the tango."²¹ However, evidence of the IWW, and IWW influenced direct action tactics, still lingered. The Australian IWW journal, *Direct Action*, in 1914 carried an article by H.J. Wrixton, who described himself as the secretary of the Wellington IWW local (Davidson, 2011, p. 45), and there were reports of locals existing in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Denniston (Taylor, 1994, p. 168). Additionally, *Direct Action* received orders, letters, and donations from a number of places in New Zealand, not just the major population centres, but outlying areas like Bulls, Paengaroa, and Ngakawau, amongst others.²²

²⁰ *Industrial Unionist*, 1/7/13, p. 2

²¹ *Direct Action*, 1/8/14, p. 2

²² See for example *Direct Action* 15/11/14, p. 4; 15/3/15, p. 3; 6/11/15, p. 4

Some IWW inspired workers set up a 'Workers University' in Auckland in late 1915. Documents seized by the police in a raid on IWW rooms in Australia uncovered a letter from the "Workers' University Direct Action Group". It was signed by W.Bull, J. Neitz and W.Fillop, and sent from Auckland, requesting help to get a circular printed as it was impossible in New Zealand. Newspapers reported that Neitz, as a German, had since been interred on Somes Island, under wartime regulations.²³

In the circular it was announced that "many revolutionaries" had decided to form the group to

Bring the university to the workers' back door by leaflets couched in the simplest language possible, disrobed of the technical and metaphysical terms so much used by labour fakirs, fakirs on newspapers, and professors in the pay of the moneyed classes. By such means to educate the mentally lazy and those who by overwork are shamefully robbed of that nerve-force or energy so necessary for educational achievement

They went on to write

Our education scheme will deal with economics, biology, physiology, and scientific sabotage, etc.... our ideas will be given out showing how a few individuals here, and a few there, on different jobs, can on any day and at all times by incessant silent sabotage, and, without the knowledge of the boss. Without the knowledge or approval of the mentally sluggish and the indifferent, ignorant and cowardly majority, wring concessions- particularly the shorter hours so necessary to enable the unemployed to become absorbed.

²³ *Thames Star*, 23/10/16, p.8

Only “live wires” were wanted to join, as “spittoon philosophers and blowhards” impeded the fight. They claimed that they already had 50 livewires as members.²⁴

The *Evening Post* reported that this group was disbanded after the police reported their activities to the landlord, and simultaneous actions were taken on similar groups across the country, which can be taken as suggestive of a police spying operation. The *Post* went on to say that meetings were still being held in private houses, lamenting that the press were not, unsurprisingly perhaps, admitted. In the same article it was noted that IWW literature is still being distributed in Auckland, and stickers bearing go-slow messages were still appearing.²⁵

The above suggests that the IWW were being more clandestine in their operations, the repressive tactics adopted by the government towards the IWW, and the continued hysteria of the press, understandably forcing them to go ‘underground’ and not openly declare themselves as IWW members. Hanlon also commented that the outbreak of war in Europe had seriously disrupted activities.²⁶ As a result it is difficult after 1913 to detect evidence of IWW activity in New Zealand. Sporadic reports of activity do appear in the press however over the next decade. Stickers and posters still appeared, in fact the Wellington branch of the NZSP was driven to complain to the local IWW secretary about the IWW stickers that were being placed on the Socialist Hall walls, and to inform him that a board would be put up for IWW literature.²⁷ Wellington was also seeing posters advertising IWW literature for sale in 1915.²⁸ One infamous example involved a Tom Barker designed poster (for which he was imprisoned in Australia) smuggled in from Australia. Based upon an army-recruiting poster it read, TO ARMS! Capitalists, Parsons, Politicians, Landlords, Newspaper

²⁴ *Colonist*, 28/10/16, p. 3

²⁵ *Evening Post*, 21/10/16, p. 3

²⁶ *Direct Action*, 22/8/14, p. 2

²⁷ *NZSP, Wellington Branch, minutes*, 12/8/14

²⁸ *Evening Post*, 5/6/15, p.13

Editors, and Other Stay-at-Home Patriots, your country needs you in the trenches!! Workers, Follow your Masters. This was inflammatory enough for a judge to suspend the court with a demand for their removal when they had been posted outside the Supreme Court Building (Davidson, 2011, p. 41).



Figure 26: The Poster that caused the suspension of the Supreme Court
(Davidson, 2011, p. 41).

Throughout the rest of the decade newspapers were complaining of the IWW tactics such as the go slow and boycott being used more and more by Unions.²⁹

²⁹ see for one example *Evening Post*, 7/2/19, p. 8

In 1918 IWW men were blamed for a house fire in Runanga.³⁰ Even as late as 1925 the *Evening Post* reported that Bluff had been placarded with IWW posters.³¹ However, it must be noted that it is a possibility that the IWW links to activities were possibly the press using their name to remind their readers of the ever-present threat of the revolutionaries still at large. The tendency to blame mishaps on the IWW was summed up in a poem printed in the *NZ Truth*³². Its first verse ended

Should a boiler blow up, or a steamer go down,
Or somebody curses the cross or the crown,
A scapegoat they'll find, so don't let it trouble you-
Put it all down to the IWW

³⁰ *Evening Post*, 12/4/18, p. 8

³¹ *Ibid*, 3/7/25, p. 8

³² *NZ Truth*, 29/9/17, p. 1

THE POPULAR SCAPEGOAT.

"J.B.H." sends along the following jingle:

There's a very old saw: "Give a dog a
bad name,
And then you may hang him and no
one will blame;"
And another says: "Drowning men
throw up their claws
Though there's nothing to grasp at but
one or two straws."
So folk in a funk, without rule, rhyme
or reason,
Trace present-day troubles to toilers'
vile treason.
Should a boiler blow up, or a steamer
go down,
Or somebody curses the cross or the
crown,
A scapegoat they'll find, so don't let it
trouble you—
Put it all down to the I.W.W

If Allen or Massey feel bitter and sore,
As to who "blew the gaff" on their
"nineteen year" score,
Or Sir Joe of Finance, once known as a
wizard,
Gets laid up again with "gold in the
gizzard":

Or should Bobby Stoush, with much
pain be troubled,
Through pumpkin in jam—that profits
be doubled—
Or Wowser Wright's waterpipe goes
with a "bust,"
Or he can't sleep in church through the
fleas and the dust;
To find out the cause, oh, don't let it
trouble you,
Put it all down to the I.W.W

Figure 27: "The Popular Scapegoat, by J.B.H." describing the situation regarding the IWW being considered the root of all troubles as it appeared on the pages of *NZ Truth*.

After 1913 Olssen has claimed that direct action as a tactic was discredited and the workers were now looking for politics to solve their issues (1988, p. 221), but there were sizeable groups who believed that only incompetent leadership had prevented their success (*ibid.*) and throughout war-time, workers, often in defiance of their union leadership, took direct action. Although the employers tried to blacklist militants after the strike this proved difficult, as it was a rank and file movement and impossible to separate the militants from the non-militants. By 1915 the arbitrationist unions set up by the employers to break the strikes had been taken over by militants, many of whom had been bought into break the strike in 1913, and, as the *NZ Truth* described, since been "...soaking in IWW philosophy and are now carrying out IWW methods."³³ The notion of the class war being fought at the point of production had apparently become ingrained into the minds' of many workers (Hutchinson, 1916, p. 119). The lessons that strike action was not always necessary, and indeed could be harmful, had been learnt. Direct action became a standard part of the arsenal of weapons used by Trade Unions. The go-slow, wildcat strikes and stop-work meetings all became common in the workplaces of New Zealand (Olssen, 2005, p. 51).

The influence of revolutionary unionism, spread not just by the IWW admittedly, could be found further afield than the main population areas due to the fact that many of those who had been blacklisted moved to rural areas and smaller towns (Olssen, 2005, p. 55). This lead Tom Barker to remark how "many a special constable wondering how things happen unluckily on the farm since the strike."³⁴ In 1917, Wanganui, Gisborne and Napier, small provincial towns that had not joined the strike in 1913, all saw industrial trouble, which led to farmers manning the wharves (Olssen, 1988, p. 220).

Indeed such was the level of activity that historians have talked of a "second wave of syndicalism." The setting up of the Alliance of Labour in 1919 with its

³³ *NZ Truth*, 11/9/15, p. 7

³⁴ *Direct Action* 27/11/15, p. 3

aim of one big union, and belief in direct action, was decried as the IWW in disguise,³⁵ and a report from the *NZ Truth* made the Alliance membership sound very much like they were inspired with IWW beliefs with reports of the jeering of Labour MPs and them being harangued for being job conscious and not class conscious.³⁶

In the final analysis, in its short life the IWW can justly claim to have been successful in terms of the legacy it left. It can be said that the organisation has had an effect on the Labour movement of New Zealand. Although, the major union organisation that remained after the Great Strike was principally reformist, it had been modernised. The need to organise along industrial and not craft lines had been understood, leaving it more suited to face the challenges of a capitalism that was becoming more organised and more demanding of its work force as work became more routine and dull. The rank and file had been given a lesson in direct action that they took on board gladly, and the centre of working class politics was as likely to be in the streets and work places, and not just Parliament. A change in the way of thinking towards establishment figures had left a distrust of leadership meaning that much industrial action was in future the result of the rank and file, leaving the executives struggling to contain disputes, and stay in control of the organisations they felt they should be in charge of.

³⁵ *Evening Post*, 15/4/22, p. 9

³⁶ *NZ Truth*, 28/4/25, p. 7

Conclusion - A World to Win, A Hell to Lose

The fact that the working class of New Zealand face many of the same problems today as they did 100 years ago, in terms of poor housing, low pay, unemployment, and inequality, is perhaps proof enough that the IWW failed in their lofty ambitions. They neither transformed society nor raised the consciousness of the workers as a whole class, and the gap between rich and poor still remains today with the richest 1 per cent of the population owning three times more than the combined cash and assets of the poorest 50 per cent¹. However, if we wish to broaden our horizons in looking at what defines success and failure, can it be said that the IWW left a legacy that activists can look back on and serve as an inspiration for struggles against the capitalist system now and in the future? If we view them in the narrow context of their time, they tend to be seen as a romantic fiction, a proletarian warrior in shining armour from a mythological past. Perhaps that in itself could be inspiration enough for some, but can it be argued there are more concrete lessons to be learned?

As forecast by the IWW, a Labour Party in New Zealand has been one of a history of compromise with capitalism and anti-working class action. The IWWs ideas of the conservative and corrupting pressures that are bought upon labour representatives within parliament have largely been observed to be true. Jim Edwards, the son of the leader of the Unemployed Workers Movement of the 1930s, described the excitement felt that accompanied the election of the first Labour Government in 1935, "The revolution was happening" he reminisced (Parker, 2006, p. 11). The Labour Party immediately set about with plans designed to increase the lot of the working class. The unemployed received a Christmas bonus, wage cuts were restored and state housing and national health schemes were implemented. The excitement felt by Labour's first

¹ *Dominion Post*, 18/11/11, p. A1

electoral victory in 1935 didn't last though. Josephine Milburn (1960) highlights the drift away from ideas of socialism with three quotes from Peter Fraser, Red Fed leader in 1912-13 and Labour prime minister 1940-49.

In 1913 Fraser was writing: "Industrial Unionism plus revolutionary political action, in my opinion, provide the most effective and expeditious means of reaching [socialism]." By 1918, Fraser had moderated his views. Instead of revolution he called for "the peaceful and legal transformation of society from private to public ownership and the increasing of democratic control over land and industry". By the early 1930s Fraser saw Labour's main objective as a simple one: jobs for the unemployed (pp. 172-173). Even on the night of their victory, Michael Joseph Savage, the then leader, assured the country that Labour was not going to represent any particular section but would govern in the interests of all the people (Whitmore & Ferguson, 2006, p. 8). One of the co-founders of the New Zealand Communist Party, Alex Galbraith, later expressed his dismay at how the leaders of the Labour Party, in particular Robert Semple and Fraser, had become a pillar of the capitalist system and were being used by the ruling class to attack the working class. "From class against class to servile bootlicker of the bourgeoisie", he wrote of Semple (Nunes, 1994, p. 121).

The Labour Government struggled to control the workers, who, to the new managers of capitalism, seemed to have a never-ending list of demands. In 1945, a Labour Minister, Bill Parry, was driven to remark that he didn't understand why people were asking for more when "everything has been done" (Parker, 2006, p. 11). The movement of the Labour Party away from their roots culminated in the Rogernomics of Lange's 1984 Labour Government. In the year 2011 it is exceedingly rare to hear any member of the Labour Party talk of socialism, instead they adhere to the ideals of neo-liberalism.

Not only were they critics of their time but, the IWW left us with a vision of freedom, of a world without bosses, without politicians, without a coercive state,

that even in small details intrudes more and more into our privacy, deteriorating our quality of freedom. In a world where the labour movement officials seem to have given up striving for the ultimate goal, and are happy just to snatch a few crumbs from the master's table, remembering the IWW can be a reminder that there can be an alternative.

Rather than the IWW being seen as an idea from a bygone era, their ideas and actions seem more relevant and modern than the ideas that pulled the rug from under their feet one hundred years ago. The Old Left of Social Democracy, and State Capitalism, under the guise of communism, have been tried and much discussed, and found to be wanting. The ideas of an international organisation for the working class is probably more needed now where wages are being forced down globally as multi-nationals shift businesses from one part of the world to another in pursuit of the cheapest operating costs.

After 100 years of being let down by politicians and trade union officials, perhaps the IWWs argument about not trusting leaders and politicians has proved to be true. The IWW would have viewed the unions, with their relatively well paid bureaucracy of self-serving officials, continual attempts to control the rank and file, and links with the politicians of the Labour Party, as having contributed to the decline of a once vibrant rank and file movement, that confronted capitalism, to a movement that is mostly docile, demoralised, and demobilised. Instead of a vision of the world's wealth for the workers, the unions settled for reformism. Capitalism has been viewed as something to manage and work with, not overthrow. The result has been the collapse of any sense of the class struggle that challenges the legitimacy and values of capitalism.

The IWW can still provide symbolism and inspiration if we care to look that a different way of organising society is possible. Parliamentarism has proven to be inadequate in the fight for the socialist society. Instead the fight could return to the point of production, using the whole range of tactics the IWW bequeathed

us. Certainly, the anti-union legislation passed in the last three decades has left the working class hamstrung in what actions they can legally take. This makes industrial unionism and direct action as preached by the IWW more relevant today. Although the nature of work has changed since the early days of the twentieth century, the increased numbers of workers in employment in the service industries leads workers in an ideal place to practice direct action. In an increasingly competitive market for the capitalist, any delay or disruption in providing a service to the customer is highly damaging. A simple strike of “folded arms” would be enough to prove this point.

Wobbly Charlie Reeves who, after leaving Auckland, found himself later imprisoned in Australia, wrote the to his mother in 1919 that it was “useless waiting for heaven born leaders, saints or prophets, in our hands, lies the remedy”. In forecasting the revolution he added

There will come a time, when we, the workers, will put our arms around the world, and make it a playground for all humanity, when each will give his best, and all the evils that now exist, will be swept away; with the light of gladness in our eyes, with the song of freedom, singing in our hearts we will march to the haven of reality, of life, see our children happy, our wives, equal mates, and love, sunshine, flowers, songs, ours, all ours, because we have striven...we have a world to win, a hell to lose (Burgmann, 2009, p. 273).

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