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Introduction to Issue #1

Libertarian Labor Review

May 1986

Libertarian Labor Review was launched in May 1986, in conjunction with the Haymarket International Labor Conference and the Haymarket Anarchist Gathering in Chicago:

From the beginning there has always been a libertarian presence in the North American labor movement. While seldom dominant, even within the labor movement's left wing, anarchist and syndicalist activists have on many occasions made great contributions to and great sacrifices for their unions. Even today, though outnumbered by social democrats and leninists, there are a reasonable number of libertarian activists in the unions.

One problem we have is that only in the largest cities (and not even in all of these) are there enough of us to get together to compare notes and discuss what's happening – in our jobs, in our unions, and in the labor movement generally. To help solve this problem, this journal LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW is being launched. LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW will reprint articles from syndicalist and anarcho-syndicalist periodicals in Europe, Latin America and the Pacific as well as articles by U.S. and Canadian authors, giving its readers a broad perspective on the ideas and actions of libertarian labor activists around the world.

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The need for a journal like LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW is especially great now. It is decision time in the labor movement. The conservative don't-rock-the-boat policies of the AFL-CIO-CLC (and of the Teamsters and other unaffiliated pure and simple trade unions) have led to:

- Falling wages and benefits for union members for the first time in decades.
- Massive job losses and the rapid growth of nonunion companies in the industries that were once the heart of the labor movement
- A drop in the number of union members for the first time since 1934.

At the same time, our journal will have more to report than it might have had five or ten years ago. The upsurges of worker organization and struggle in Eastern Europe, the beginnings of a movement towards active – rather than rhetorical international labor solidarity, the re-establishment of revolutionary syndicalist and anarcho-syndicalist unions in many parts of the world are among the trends that the LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW editorial collective feels point towards a resurgence of the world labor movement, and of that movement's libertarian tendency.

The primary focus of LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW will be the revolutionary union movement. That is, unions such as the IWW in the U.S. and Canada, the CNT-AIT in Spain, the COB in Bolivia, the SAAWU in South Africa, etc, that seek revolutionary change through union action without the interference of politicians and political parties. At the same time, we recognize that the structure of labor relations in the U.S. and Canada makes it impossible in many workplaces to organize a majority into a revolutionary labor union. We will, then, include articles discussing how revolutionary unionists can act most effectively in a workplace where a conservative union has a majority.

How successful LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW is will depend on our readers. Without the support of libertarian labor activists, LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW will shortly become another of the many short-lived journals that come and go on the left. We need two things. First, we need translators (especially for Italian, German and Japanese, as well as for French and Spanish), and even more, activists who will write on current labor issues in the U.S. and Canada. We especially welcome responses to articles that LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW has published, since we believe that open discussion of current issues and events is important if the libertarian current in the labor movement is to grow. Second, as you've probably already guessed, is money. LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW will not make back the expenses of production and mailing through sales and subscriptions, and the small group of donors who have provided the money to launch LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW won't be able to sustain their contributions indefinitely. So, if you find this journal useful and interesting, if you feel it can be useful as a forum to discuss the prospects and activities of libertarian labor activists and the revolutionary union movement, please write, and donate to the LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW Publishing Fund!

LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW includes and continues the quarterly bulletin WOBBLE. All current WOBBLE subscribers will receive two issues (one year) of LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW.