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# A Draft Proposal for the Founding of the International Working Peoples Association

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin

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1979

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# Contents

History of the IWPA . . . . .	5
Why Do We Need an IWPA Today? . . . . .	6
What is the IWPA? . . . . .	8
What Does the IWPA Stand For? . . . . .	12
Black Workers . . . . .	13
Women Workers . . . . .	16
Why Do Women Work? . . . . .	18
Who Are the Women Who Work for Wages? . . . . .	19
Where Do Women Workers Work? . . . . .	19
A Note on Clerical Workers . . . . .	21
Women-Organize . . . . .	23
Foreign Born Workers . . . . .	25
The Rank-and-File Union Movement . . . . .	27
Unemployed Workers . . . . .	29
What Is To Be Done?? . . . . .	32

can solve the Labor questions and serve the true emancipation of  
of working people.

This is merely a *survival program* for unemployment, the real answer is Social Revolution and Workers' Self-Management of the industry and the economy. It also shows the necessity and feasibility for a revolutionary Labor organization to organize unemployed workers as well as those who toil in industry and agriculture.

## What Is To Be Done??

Many Anarchists, Anarcho- and Revolutionary-Syndicalists, advocates of Workers' Councils, and other Libertarian Socialists, have made brilliant analyses of the workers' problems and come up with serious programs, but they continue to talk and dream instead of buckling down to work their ideas out in practice. They seem to be afraid to confront the workers with their findings; thus they become ideologues and theorists. The IWPA is a vehicle for the realization of those dreams and proving ground for those ideals. We must believe in applying revolutionary social theory to social reality; the oppressed social condition of the working class.

Libertarian revolutionists should not continue to remain in isolation, when here is an opportunity to build a mass instrument for social struggle and a way to unify our Libertarian forces on firm working class lines. The Libertarian Socialist movement should cast aside sectarian differences and begin to build this new working class organization. Only then can we dare call ourselves revolutionaries. The Libertarian revolutionary movement, along with Black, women, and foreign born workers, should meet in conference to work out the Constitution, program, organizational structure, and rules of the International Working Peoples Association. It is the most pressing need of the present. It cannot be stressed too much that only the right kind of organization of the workers can accomplish what we are striving for. Organization of the joint interests of the workers everywhere, irrespective of trade, race, sex, or country of origin, by means of mutual effort and united will—that alone

## History of the IWPA

The International Working Peoples Association was first founded by the German Anarchist, Johann Most, in 1883. Among its membership and two of its most active militants were August Spies and Albert Parsons, later hanged in the notorious legal lynching known as the Haymarket case. It was the IWPA which led the fight for the 8-hour work day, and against any employer discrimination towards women, Black, or foreign-born workers. It was a revolutionary labor organization which stood for the overthrow of Capitalism and reconstruction of society on the basis of Workers' self-management. The Libertarian Socialist movement in America at this time was split into various sections with diverse ideas on Anarchism. It was therefore, Most's foremost aim to bring them together under the wings of the IWPA, as well as to organize the workers. In 1883, a convention was held in October at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It was this meeting which issued the new historical Pittsburgh Proclamation with its declaration of the following six principal points:

“By force our ancestors liberated themselves from political oppression, by force their children will have to liberate themselves from economic bondage. It is therefore your right, it is your duty to arm: What we would achieve is therefore plainly and simply:

First: — Destruction of the existing class rule, by all means. i.e., by energetic, relentless, revolutionary and international action.

Second: — Establishment of a free society based upon cooperative organization of production.

Third: — Free exchange of equivalent products by and between the productive organizations without commerce and profit-mongery.

Fourth: — Organization of education on a secular scientific and equal basis for both sexes.

Fifth: — Equal rights for all without distinction to sex or race.

Sixth: — Regulation of all public affairs by free contracts between the autonomous (independent) communes and associations, resting on a federalistic basis.

Signed: October 16, 1883

The International Congress of Socialists”

The IWPA became the most militant Labor organization in America, especially when the Knights of Labor more and more began to sink into the swamp of reformism and class collaborationism, (even to the extent of the leaders of the Knights praising the execution of Parsons, Spies, and the other Haymarket frame-up victims). The organization had a short, but sweet life; it was crushed in 1888 with the Haymarket judicial murders and other State repression. Such Labor militancy was not again seen until the founding of the Industrial Workers of the World in 1905. We owe it to the memory of our martyred comrades, and for ourselves in this day and age to re-establish the organization. We must once again make Anarchism a working class doctrine.

## Why Do We Need an IWPA Today?

We need the IWPA today because the same social and economic conditions exist today as did in 1883, when the organization was founded. Blacks, women and foreign-born workers (now called “illegal aliens”) are still the most oppressed workers, and there is still the same contradiction between capital and Labor, demanding class struggle. This is not to say that nothing significant has

lead rent strikes or squatting, land and building reclamation, establish producer and consumer cooperatives, distribute food and clothing, and provide for other services. They would also establish neighborhood assemblies to deal with community social problems and issues of interest. They lead hunger marches and would support radical labor organizations like IWPA or workers who are on strike or are protesting against the bosses. The employed and unemployed must work together; that is the real lesson of the 1930s Great Depression.

Young, Black, Latino and women workers are hit the hardest and are bearing the brunt of the current depression; we should organize and join with them in fighting the Capitalist bosses of industry, and demand that everyone be allowed to work. Unemployment, we must realize, is a revolutionary issue, one that people will fight against if for no other reason than that their social conditions compel it. It would be sheer lunacy for a revolutionary labor movement to refuse to join in that fight. We demand:

- Full employment for all workers. (zero unemployment). Implement the 1946 Full Employment Act.
- Unemployment compensation at 100% of regular paid wage lasting the full length of a workers’ period of unemployment.
- Corporate and Governmental funds to pay for the bills, mortgages, and debts for any laid-off worker until he can work again.
- Establishment of a shorter work week so everyone can work.
- Workers’ Self-Management and Social Revolution.
- Full benefits (including stipend) for all unemployed workers and their families.
- No taxation of unemployed workers, including mortgage payments.

“normal” and nonsensically is considered by capitalist economists as “full employment”. But the government figures are intentionally conservative and do not include those who have given up actively searching for jobs, the underemployed (who can’t find a full-time or steady job). This would make the figures for the unemployed much higher. According to the February 10, 1976 Congressional Record, the the figures for the period 1973–75 would look something like this:

- 1973: 7.3 million or 8.7 percent unemployed
- 1974: 8.5 million or 9.9 percent unemployed
- 1975: 12.3 million or 14.5 percent unemployed

Clearly then, this is a crisis situation of broad proportions, but all the government is doing is juggling and hiding figures.

Unemployment has hit Black workers especially hard. The National Urban League reports levels of 25–40% for Black adults 25 or older, and incredible levels of 60–80% for teenagers and young adults 17–24 years of age, in its Hidden Unemployment Index. This is where we must begin to organize.

In every major city throughout the country (but even in small towns and rural areas as well) the IWPA should take the lead in forming UNEMPLOYMENT COUNCILS to fight for unemployment benefits and jobs for the unemployed. Such councils should be democratic organizations, organized on a neighborhood basis (to insure [sic] direct democracy, and against infiltrations and takeover by political parties), which would be federated into a city-wide, regional, and national organization.

Not only would they be a way of fighting for jobs and unemployment benefits, but also the Councils would be a way to community self-sufficiency and direct democracy, and possibly even the embryonic establishment of municipal Communes. It would be the Councils which would establish food and housing cooperatives,

happened in the labor movement since 1888 when the IWPA was crushed: the 8 hour day has been won; the Labor battles of the IWW to organize the working class in One Big Union; the CIO organizing drives of the 1930s; and so much more, until now over 20 million workers, one-third of the American workforce, are organized into unions. And there lies a large part of the problem, for the unions (with few exceptions) have lost their fighting spirit and are now mere “business unions,” pimps of the workers’ labor power, and at best serve as minimal protection against the employer’s assaults. The working class needs a return to the revolutionary labor movement which existed in the last part of the 1880s–90s and the early part of this century. The working class needs the International Working Peoples Association, with a program for today’s worker. We must organize the most oppressed workers, but it is also our responsibility to organize the entire working class, or more precisely, serve as a vehicle for their liberation, since only the workers can emancipate themselves.

Racism and sexism are the major obstacles to a united working class. We say that this must be overcome before Capitalism can be successfully overcome. Racism and sexism must be fought vigorously wherever they are found, even if in our own ranks, and even in one’s own breast. The traditional labor movement has used the workers to ensure the success of their organizing drives and to fill union coffers, and have then betrayed and discarded them. They are seeking an alternative; the IWPA must be that alternative and fight for their rights.

Union militants have formed rank-and-file caucuses in practically all of their major unions, and some whole union locals are militant hotbeds of rank and file agitation; they are seeking an alternative to the undemocratic, class collaborationist policy of the business unions; the IWPA must provide such an alternative and must link up with such rank and file caucuses. In addition, the IWPA must concentrate on organizing un-organized (non-union, foreign-born and unemployed) workers.

Finally, our objective is the overthrow of the Capitalist and political state, and its replacement with workers' self-management of the economy and society, i.e., Libertarian Socialism.

## What is the IWPA?

The International Working Peoples Association is a mass workers' federation of factory committees, autonomous workshop organizations, and independent unions, as well as Anarchist groups, based on Anarcho-Syndicalism. It is the North American section of the International Workers' Association (AIT), the trans-national revolutionary workers' organization. It is a revolutionary labor organization whose ultimate aim will be to nationalize the means of production and establish workers' self-management of industry and society. The IWPA will at all times resist the class collaborationist policies of the trade union bureaucracies and government regulation of the Labor movement. We will encourage our fellow workers to transcend narrow material self-interest and promote the widest solidarity with other rebel workers.

Anarchist-Syndicalism combines the daily revolutionary struggle for the economic, social and intellectual development of the working class within the framework of existing society, with the preparation of working people for self-management of production and distribution. Workers are encouraged to act on their initiative through organizations entirely under their control, and to support their fellow workers in their common struggle against the wage system. By constantly seeking to expand the ability of working people to direct their own lives, anarchist principles are shown to be relevant to contemporary problems and serve to counteract class collaborationist tendencies in the Labor movement. The IWPA will thus act as a catalyst to militant Labor struggles, as well as serve as Industrial Federations. *Direct Action* tactics such as strikes, wild-cat strikes, slow-downs, sit-downs (occupations), "gold-bricking,"

1. A thirty-hour week with forty hours pay immediately as an emergency unemployment measure;
2. Rank and file democratic control of the unions. Removal of all reactionary, class-collaborationist union leaders;
3. Complete independence of the unions from Governmental interference. Repeal of all anti-Labor laws;
4. An escalator wage provision in all union contracts to assure automatic wage adjustments to match rising living costs;
5. Eliminate racist and sexist practices in [the] Labor movement. Support Affirmative Action programs and passage of Equal Rights Amendment;
6. Full employment for all workers at union wage;
7. Payment of 100% of Social Security by boss and government.
8. Retirement pension at 100% of current union wage, to be fully paid by boss and government;
9. Elimination of the post of Foreman, Industrial Supervisor, or Steward, unless duly elected by the workers-at-large subject to immediate recall by the workers themselves.

## Unemployed Workers

Every worker has the human right to a job. Yet under the capitalist system workers are dismissed from employment in times of business crisis, over-production, or depression, or just to save labor costs through less workers and more speed-up. And then some workers just cannot find jobs in the Capitalist Labor market.

The official government unemployment rates around 11% or about 10,200,000 workers. Under Capitalism half that figure is



Where we have sympathizers at a workplace, they should (with the help of the larger organization and the local community) publish a newsletter to heighten the consciousness of the workers, and should also work to create COMMUNITY ECONOMIC WORKSHOPS as educational forums to propagate ideas about the necessity for Workers' Self-Management and concerning present working conditions. Later (when stronger) they should work to set up WORKERS' councils. It should be understood that a Workers' Council is a revolutionary, subversive organized instrument for class struggle, and we establish it to:

1. Create a dual power situation between workers and capitalists in the vital industrial sector;
2. Unite and organize workers regardless of union affiliation or craft jurisdiction;
3. Serve as an instrument of struggle, e.g. wildcat strikes, boycotts and other independent worker protests—all designed to undermine and weaken the authority of the reformist trade union leadership;
4. Take control of the industrial means of production at a *propitious revolutionary moment*, lock-out the Capitalist class, and establish Workers' Self-Management on a *permanent* basis;
5. link -up with Community Councils, Producer and Consumer co-operatives, syndicalist unions and other autonomous workplace and community organizations to create the administration for economic, industrial and social democracy, i.e., Libertarian Socialism.

The revolutionary Syndicalist unions, factory committees and workers' councils in the industrial plants for the future producers' cooperative society, but first we have to raise issues to rally workers now! Such issues as:

sabotage and other protest actions will serve as means of struggle, with finally the Social General Strike, expropriation of industry, and a lock-out of the Capitalist class.

The IWPA does not advocate "dual unionism," nor to establish a monopoly on industrial unionism; we owe a great debt to the Industrial Workers of the World as to ideology and tactics (though the IWW today is merely a pale shadow of itself, and is not even carrying on its own fighting traditions), but we are not a carbon copy of that organization. The IWPA believes that it makes no difference what or who the particular worker is: whether he or she is skilled or unskilled, whether he or she is mason, carpenter, machine operator, engineer or day laborer, whether he or she earns much or little. The interests of *all* are the same: all belong together and only by standing together can they accomplish their purpose. It means that the workers in the factory, mill or mine must be organized as one body; for it is not a question of what particular jobs they hold, what craft or trade they follow, but what their interests are. And their interests are identical, as against the employer and the Capitalist system of exploitation. We as a revolutionary Labor organization must show them their true interests.

It means first of all that not a single member of the Labor organization or union may with impunity be discriminated against, suppressed, or ignored. In other words, the Labor organization must be built on the principles of equal liberty of all its members. This equality means that only if each worker is a free and independent unit, co-operating with the others from his or her mutual interests, can the whole labor organization work successfully and become powerful. The Libertarian organization, formed voluntarily and in which every member is free and equal, is a sound body and can work well. Such an organization is a free union of equal parts. It is the kind of Labor organization that the Anarchists believe in.

We know what tremendous power Labor has as the creator of all wealth and supporter of the world. If properly organized and united, the workers could control the industrial situation, be the

masters of the economy. But the strength of the worker is not in the union meeting, it is in the office, shop and factory, mill and mine. It is *there* that they must organize; there on the job. There they know what they want, what their needs are, and it is there that they must concentrate their efforts and will-power. Every shop and factory should have its *special committees* to attend to the wants and requirements of the workers; not leaders, but members of the rank and file, from the bench and furnace, to look after the demands and complaints of their fellow workers. Such a committee could rally the whole workforce at a plant, mill, or mine, for instance, around safety issues or the shorter work-week, and other issues, especially where the unions are weak or “sweetheart” company unions. Such a Committee, being on the spot and constantly under the direction and supervision of the workers wields no power; it merely carries out the instructions of the workers. Its members are recalled at will and others elected in their place, according to the need of the moment and the ability required for the task at hand, or for their misconduct or failure to act. It is the workers who decide the matters at issue and carry their decisions out through the Shop Committee.

That is the character and form of organization that Labor needs. Only this form can express its real purpose, be its adequate spokesman, and serve its true interests. These shop and factory committees, combined with similar bodies in other factories, mills, and mines, associated locally, regionally, and nationally into the International Working Peoples Association, would constitute a new type of Labor organization which would be the virile voice and effective agency of those who toil. It would have the whole weight of the United workers at the base of it and would represent a power tremendous in its scope and potentialities. In the daily struggle of the proletariat such an organization would be able to achieve victories about which the conservative union, as at present built, cannot even dream. It would enjoy the respect and confidence of the masses, would attract the unorganized and unite

- End harassment and racist attacks by border vigilantes like the Ku Klux Klan, who have quasi-official approval by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.
- Allow free immigration to the U.S. for all who wish to work.
- Free all immigrants confined in Federal or State prison for mere entry into the country.

## **The Rank-and-File Union Movement**

Union militants have formed rank and file caucuses in practically all of the major trade unions (e.g. Teamsters for a Democratic Union, National Rank and File Steelworkers Committee, and others) and some unions are militant hotbeds of rank and file agitation. These unionists are fighting for better working conditions, but also are contesting the undemocratic, class collaborationist policy of the business unions. They seek an alternative, and the IWPA must provide an alternative, and must link up with such existing rank and file caucuses within the unions. There are the most militant members of the Labor movement and would make the best possible organizers for the IWPA since they are right there on the job with their fellow workers, at the point of production.

In fact, one of the major objectives of the IWPA should be to create militant rank and file caucuses within all the unions, to not only ensure greater democracy but also to influence the trade unions into a libertarian and revolutionary syndicalist direction, with the objective of pushing for a more class struggle stance against the bosses and for rank and file control of the unions. This can best be accomplished with the creation of a TRADE UNION EDUCATIONAL LEAGUE, made up of union organizers to agitate in the unions and educate the workers in the ideas of Anarcho-Syndicalism, as well as to organize them in IWPA.

tasks of the IWPA. We must actively seek to recruit, represent, and organize undocumented workers and other immigrants, and affiliate with the independent unions and immigrant workers' associations. The IWPA must fight for these workers' rights and against the racism and xenophobia conjured up by the government and the bosses. The IWPA must unite with foreign born workers and make their demands part of the demands of the entire working class for better working conditions and human treatment. Only by fighting for the most oppressed workers can we dare to call ourselves representatives of the working class. We must demand:

- An end to discrimination against foreign born workers.
- Union wage levels for all work performed.
- Improved working and living conditions, including being provided with union-approved low cost housing.
- All social and working benefits as native born workers.
- The right to organize Labor unions without employer or government interference.
- Disband agri-business conglomerates.
- Land to the tillers. Government should provide farmworkers with land and implements.
- Creation of an independent Farm Labor Commission to investigate the conditions of farm laborers and ensure that the living and working conditions meet Federal safety standards and do not violate Labor laws, or the Civil rights of the workers.
- End harassment and deportation by La Migra, the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

labor forces on the principle of the equality of all workers and their joint aims and interests. It would face the Capitalist masters of the economy with the whole might of the working class back of it, in a new attitude of class consciousness and strength. Only then would Labor acquire dignity, and the expression of it [would] assume real significance.

Such a Labor association would become something more than a mere defender and protector of the worker, but would become a vehicle for its emancipation. It would gain a vital realization of the real meaning of unity and the power of Labor solidarity. The factory and shop would serve as a training camp to develop the workers' understanding of their proper role in social life, to cultivate their self-reliance and independence, teach them mutual help and cooperation, and make them conscious of their social responsibility. They will learn to decide and act on their own judgment, not leaving it to leaders or politicians to attend to their own affairs and look out for their welfare. The shop and factory would become the workers' school and college. Not long would they be satisfied to remain a wage slave, an employee and dependent on the "good will" of his slavemaster whom their toil supports. They will grow to understand that present economic and social arrangements are wrong and criminal, and they will determine to change them: the shop committee, Syndicalist unions and Workers' Councils (Assemblies in the Anarchist sense) will become the field of preparation for a new economic and social system, for a new social life.

In addition to Workers' Councils, factory committees, and other autonomous workplace organizations on the job, there should be a Central Labor Federation in every city, town and region, which would unite independent union Locals, various factory committees and plant councils, for joint Labor action in a specific geographical area. After the Social Revolution, such federations will be the social and economic administration of society, along with the revolutionary Syndicalist unions, producer and consumer cooperatives and Community Councils. This replaces the functions of the decrepit

political State, but would not lead to isolation or dictatorial fiefdom because such local Federations would in turn be federated into a national organization of workers, and would still be in the hands of the worker rank and file, with total recall power of any delegate or “official.”

Finally, it can be said that the IWPA is an Anarcho-Syndicalist Labor organization, which is totally neutral in religion and politics, and actively opposed to racial and sexual discrimination in the Labor movement. It is a revolutionary Labor Confederation of independent unions, factory committees, Workers’ Assemblies and Councils, and other autonomous work-place organizations, acting as the North American branch of the International Workers’ Association.

## What Does the IWPA Stand For?

1. International workers’ solidarity and struggle against the capitalist class, East and West. The building of free workers’ unions.
2. For an end to Governmental control or influence over the unions. Repeal Taft-Hartley and all anti-labor laws.
3. For the right to strike, including wildcat strikes, without union sanction.
4. For full rights for Black, women and foreign-born workers. End discrimination. Organize the unorganized.
5. An end to class collaborationist unionism, and the adoption by the working class of class struggle unionism. The IWPA will form a TRADE UNION EDUCATIONAL LEAGUE, in order to form militant rank-and-file causes in all of the trade unions and to influence them in a syndicalist, class-struggle direction.

## Foreign Born Workers

Foreign born or undocumented workers have long been some of the most exploited members of the working class. Driven from their homeland in the search for higher wages and better living standards, they must emigrate or smuggle themselves into this country. Many times the United States is directly responsible for the depressed Labor and economic conditions due to imperialist exploitation, as in Mexico for instance. These workers are forced to perform the most menial, back-breaking labor at the lowest wages, jobs that the native-born workers refuse to do, such as migrant farm labor or in garment sweatshops.

Because of their delicate legal status as “illegal aliens,” they are subjected to bullying and slave labor tactics by bosses, and forced to live in scandalously inhuman conditions at exorbitant cost. But even with such conditions and ill treatment, foreign born workers are fighting back. Through strikes, demonstrations, boycotts, lawsuits and other protest actions, these workers are standing up for their rights against the intimidation of the employers and the State. It is the State who has led a racist, repressive campaign against “illegal aliens” and who has jailed and deported these workers, through its Immigration and Naturalization Service.

These foreign born workers are combative and militant, and make the best union members, yet no major Labor union will fight for them. The United Farm Workers Union has now withdrawn its support since it joined the reformist AFL-CIO.

This is not to say that there are no Labor organizations *at all* representing undocumented workers. 17% of them in this country are union members. In addition, there are independent unions and associations like the Texas Farmworkers Union, CASA-General Brotherhood of Workers, and the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, which represent immigrant workers. But the independent unions and associations are not united in a nationwide effort or allied with organized labor. That must be one of the major

Working class women can and must fight for equal rights and fight for their needs. Women must raise the consciousness of all working class struggles through their demands which challenge the particular oppression of the working class. The struggle will take many forms: perhaps including working women's leagues, caucuses, and independent labor unions. It must include building unity and repudiating racism and sexism. It must be revolutionary for reforms will not win women's liberation. Struggles which fight for women's immediate needs and grievances include: jobs, equal pay, an end to sexual discrimination, maternity medical coverage and job security, community controlled and free daycare, health programs and safe working conditions, the right to unionize.

Only a bitter struggle will wrest any concessions from the ruling class; the final liberation of working women will only come with the complete overthrow of Capitalism and the State.

The International Working People's Association is very much interested in women's workers: interested in *helping* to organize them, in fighting along with them for their rights; and in affiliating with such women's unions and workers' associations that now exist. Further, the IWPA will encourage women to organize a NATIONAL UNION OF WOMEN WORKERS in order to unite the various unions, associations, and tendencies in the women's movement who are concerned about working conditions and Union representation for women. Such a union of women workers would be an independent entity, with its own delegates and officers, and its own methods of workplace and community organizations. The IWPA would be willing to support it in every way, and would wish to formally affiliate with it because in the unity of the entire working class, there is strength. The IWPA is a Libertarian organization and would not wish to dominate or even affiliate with another labor organization against its wishes. We believe in freely associated Labor and Labor solidarity—class consciousness. We are not trying to build an “empire” or “swallow up” Brother or Sister labor organizations.

6. For full rank and file democratic control of the unions, including the right to recall union officers and delegates, and vote to ratify or reject contracts.
7. For direct action struggles against the bosses, including the Social Revolutionary General Strike to overturn Capitalism.
8. For the creation of Community Economic Workshops, Workers' Assemblies, plant Councils, factory committees, and other autonomous workplace organizations, to create dual power in industry, to educate and organize the workers to run the industries themselves, and to serve as vehicles for their self-emancipation.
9. For abolition of the wage system and capitalism; workers' self-management of society and the economy.
10. For the freedom of all political/class war prisoners.

## **Black Workers**

The demand for Black Labor has been the central economic factor in America. Beginning with slave labor in the South on plantations, farm labor, migration to the North and work in mills, mines and factories, and on down to the present day, Black labor is extremely important. Almost from the beginning Black workers have organized Labor unions and workers' associations to represent their interests: the National Colored Labor Union in 1869, the National Colored Labor Alliance (Populist) in the same year, and on down to the present day with such unions and associations as the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the United Construction Workers Associations, the Black and Puerto Rican Coalition of Construction Workers and others. In addition, there were 90,000 Black workers in the Knights of Labor and at least

100,000 in the IWW, and there are millions in the AFL-CIO and other labor unions today.

In fact, the trade unions wouldn't even exist today if it were not for the assistance and support of the Black worker. Trade Unionism was born an effective national movement amid the great convulsion of the Civil War and the fight for Black freedom, yet Black workers were excluded from unions like the American Federation of Labor. Only militant Labor associations like the Knights, IWPA, and the IWW would accept them on equal terms or at all. This continued for many years, until the founding of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and its campaign of strikes, sit-downs, and other protest actions to organize the unskilled industrial workers. Black labor was pivotal in these battles, yet has never fully reaped the benefits. In fact, they were betrayed.

About 11 million Black men and women are today part of the workforce in the United States. About 3 million Blacks are in basic industry, such as steel and metal fabricating, retail trades, food-production, and processing, meat-packing, railroading, medical services, and communications. Blacks number one-third to one-half of the basic blue-collar workers. It would be criminal or racist to ignore these fellow workers. Yet there is no Labor organization in America today which gives full representation and equal treatment to Black workers. They receive many fewer union benefits than white workers, and are trapped into the most tedious and dangerous jobs, even though during the 1960s they made considerable economic gains.

Because of the role they play in production, Black workers are potentially the most powerful sector of the Black community in the struggle for Black liberation. 96% of the Black masses are workers. As the victims of inequality in the economy, Black workers have already begun to organize for their interests and protect their rights on the job.

Of course, the unity of Black and white workers is indispensable to combat and overthrow Capitalism. But where White workers

In major cities around the country, there are the beginning rumblings which point to a revolt among office workers and a determination to organize together to fight for their rights. The conditions of work themselves produce anger and frustration against the bosses, and the militancy and consciousness of the women's movement has highlighted the blatant sexual discrimination and humiliation that keep women in the lowest paying, bottom jobs. There is a time bomb in the offices of monopoly capitalism. To fight back, women have organized independent unions like "9-to-5" in Boston, Women Office Workers in New York City, Women Employed in Chicago, UNION WAGE in the California Bay Area, and others, to fight for their rights on the job and to win them respect as workers and equal human beings.

## **Women-Organize**

Women have everything to gain from organizing to fight for their rights and everything to gain from revolution. For those dedicated to the complete liberation of women, for serious revolutionaries, Labor is a necessary area of struggle. The enthusiasm and power of an organized and aroused working class movement is a major weapon of the people. The major trade unions however have proven their indifference to the needs of women workers. For over 40 years women have been ignored by organized labor. That is why they have had to organize their own unions and workers associations like the Coalition of Labor Union Women and the UNION WAGE. Women must organize women workers, but organizing women workers will, of course, mean organizing men too, for even in areas where women make up 60 to 98% of the workforce, men workers are also highly exploited, and the unity of all workers is necessary. But women must organize in ways which encourage the shattering of traditional roles and will build unity and confidence among working women.

ance companies, multinational corporations, and public employment centers are more like factory work than anything else.

Office work has become manual labor—highly mechanized, repetitive, and routine, with an increasingly menial division of labor which reduces more and more the functions of judgment or thought. Women workers are tied to business machines, working on a flow of paper. The drive for speed dominates, and the pressure is constant. It's enough to make anyone a nervous wreck, and usually does.

The Labor market for clerical workers is increasingly the same as that for factory workers, in terms of education, family background, etc.—except for one significant distinction—the division along the lines of sex. In 1971, factory work was composed of 9 million men and 4 million women, while office work made up of 10.1 million women and 3.3 million working men.

The notion that office work is a “middle class job” is a hangover from the days at the turn of the century when office work was more like a craft. And this idea is perpetuated as part of an attempt by Management to sell workers as a dream, by convincing clerical workers that they are in the same job category as engineers, managers, or professors, that they have escaped the punishing conditions of factory work, that they are “white collar” and therefore not a part of the working class. Frequently they are fooled into believing promises of promotions and gradual increases of responsibility. Fancy and inflated titles like “administrative assistant” and “word processing specialist” are lies that cover over the grim reality of dead-end, repetitive, highly exploited work. Clerical work is the special product of the new stage of monopoly capitalism. Huge enterprises which carry on their work mainly through clerical labor, have developed. In addition, corporations which themselves produce goods or services have grown their own huge office sectors. In many industries, marketing and the accounting or transforming of value takes on proportions which rival the labor used in actually producing the underlying service or commodity.

are privileged and Black workers are penalized, Black unity must precede and prepare the ground for Black-White unity on a broad scale. Black caucuses in the Unions can fight against discrimination in the unions themselves, such as the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. Where they are part of organized Labor, they should strive to democratize the unions, regenerate their fighting spirit, and eliminate white job-trust practices. These Black caucuses in the unions should demand:

1. Rank-and-file democratic control of the union.
2. Equal rights and treatment for all Black unionists, and elimination of all racist practices in the Labor movement.
3. Affirmative Actions programs to redress past racist employment practices. Preferential hiring and advancement of Black workers and free access to apprentice training programs, the skilled trades, and higher-paying supervisory posts. End racial discrimination based on seniority and other ploys.
4. Full employment for Black workers (and *all* workers) at union wage.
5. A thirty-hour week with no reduction in pay; 30-for-40
6. The right to strike, including wildcat strikes without union sanction, and on-situs picketing of construction sites which discriminate against or exclude Black workers.
7. Speedier and fair grievance procedures.
8. An escalator clause in all union contracts to insure automatic wage adjustments to keep up with the rising costs of living.
9. Full payment of Social Security by employer and government.

10. Full unemployment compensation at 100 percent of base pay (union wage level) to be paid by the employer and the Government. A worker should be paid until re-employed at full salary in his or her line of work.
11. A Public Works program to rebuild the Black Community and provide employment for Black workers.
12. Workers' self-management of industry by factory committees and Workers' Councils, elected by the workers themselves.

The IWPA should encourage the Black workers to form their *own Union*, the BLACK WORKING PEOPLES ASSOCIATION, to represent and protect the rights of Black workers, and most importantly to organize in the Black community, because *only Black workers can organize other Black workers* and because Anarchists believe in the self-determination of all peoples. Although we will encourage and support the creation of such an organization and would wish to formally affiliate with it, this would be an *independent organization* with a life of its own. It can form its own locals, elect its own delegates and officers, and organize in the Black community and at the workplace in its own way. We can only ask it to participate in the IWPA on the grounds of workers' solidarity; we cannot interfere in the functioning of such an organization or try to "give orders." Such is not the libertarian way.

## Women Workers

Working women's liberation is a necessity. Millions of women work at the lowest paid jobs, and also at the unorganized (non-unionized) jobs. Whatever the job, women earn far less than men, and are some of the most oppressed and exploited workers.

A successful strategy for social revolution and for the liberation of women will necessarily be deeply rooted in the needs and

live and work in the Southeast. These are workers who most often work for other women.

*The overwhelming percentage of women work at non-unionized jobs.* Only one in eight women workers belong to a union. Although women are entering the workforce in increasing numbers, the percentage of organized women has dropped from 17% to 12% of the total number of women working in the 15-year period 1958–1973. Although 21% of all union members are women, only 4.7% of all union office-holders are women. Almost no major union has a strategy to "organize the unorganized," and women and Third World people are the unorganized.

## A Note on Clerical Workers

By 1890, the typewriter was accepted into the business world. By 1970, the census counted nearly 15 million clerical workers—a category equal in size to factory workers, though the median wage for full-time clerical work is lower than that in every type of so-called blue collar work.

Today vast pools of office "girls" work crammed in rooms with poor ventilation and heat, horrible noise levels and fire hazards, suffering back aches and eye trouble, nervous tension and headaches, and the humiliation of work under capitalism. Women office workers are treated as children and required to act docile. The sexual demands of bosses or supervisors are frequently a condition for getting a job and keeping it. In many offices there is evidence that the electronic machines and the air conditioning systems send particles of asbestos and fibrous glass into the air. Clerical workers resort to tranquilizers and aspirins. This is the nature of the working conditions considered "soft" and "white collar" in popular mythology. In truth, only farmworkers and domestic workers earn less than clerical workers. The nature of the work and the conditions for women office workers in floor after floor of the giant insur-



and TECHNICAL workers. ( $\frac{2}{5}$  of whom are teachers.) 1 million women are DOMESTIC workers.

Over  $\frac{1}{3}$  (34.9%) of working women are CLERICAL workers. This is more than in any other occupation. 36.7% of these are white. 20.7% are Black and 30% are Spanish-speaking. 75% of Clerical workers are women. Clerical work is concentrated in areas of insurance, finance, real estate and government. Clerical workers include typists, stock clerks, receptionists, postal clerks, payroll, and timekeeping clerks, office machine operators, telephone operators, file clerks, bank tellers, cashiers, stenographers, secretaries, and bookkeepers. 24.4% of Third World women are Clerical workers.

The number of women SERVICE workers has more than tripled since 1940. 16.6% of women workers are Service workers. 25.2% of Third World working women are Service workers. Service work includes: food (waitresses, cooks, kitchen and counter workers), health (attendants, practical nurses), laundry and dry cleaning, beauty and hair-dressing, housekeeping and cleaning (outside of domestic work), stewardesses, etc. 63% of service workers are women.

Women who work in FACTORIES increased by 28% but declined relative to other categories. 13.9% of women workers work in industry.

16% of Black women and 23.7% of Spanish-speaking women workers work in factories. Women factory workers are concentrated in areas of "women's work" such as garment and textiles, and food processing. Women who entered heavy industry, such as auto and steel, since enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation of 1972, have suffered severe job losses during the current economic crisis.

There are over one million DOMESTIC workers in the U.S. The median income for a private household worker who works 50–52 hours per week during 1969–1973 was \$1,500. 97% of all household workers are women.  $\frac{2}{3}$  of domestic workers are Third World. 14% of these workers are over 65 years old. Half of all domestic workers

struggles of working class women—the overwhelming majority of women—who own nothing but their labor power which they must sell to survive. The demands and needs of working class women are pushing forward the historic choice for the women's movement of building either an essentially bourgeois feminist movement or organizing a women's movement based in and led by the working class. The initiative and unity of Black and Third World women is leading the class stand of proletarian women, challenging the poison of racism, challenging patriarchy, and defining true class consciousness based on equality.

It will require a tremendous organizing campaign to organize women workers, since Capitalism has such an enormous stake in maintaining the current exploitation of women workers. This struggle will liberate the great potential of women workers and thereby strengthen the struggle for emancipation for the whole working class. Working women—in their day-to-day struggles for jobs, a living wage, health and safety conditions, daycare and paid maternity leave, opposition to racism and sexism—are fighting to get organized. There is great power in an organized workforce, and women work in places which are strategically vital. In fact, in all of the most rapidly growing sectors of the working class, women are the vast majority of the workers. Women workers present a potentially explosive threat to the capitalist system. Without the labor of women, the Capitalist system could not function. Capitalism depends on and thrives on the exploitation of women workers. Even TIME magazine estimates that if women were paid wages equal to men, it would cost the employers \$109 million per year. The pay gap has actually widened 9% in the years between 1955 and 1977. The median wage for women workers is 59% that of men. For example, women with one-to-three years of college education make less than men with eight years of schooling. 45% of women workers earn less than \$5,000 per year. (Only 13% of men workers make as little). Ninety per cent of the women in the United States work outside the home sometimes during their lives. Women ac-

count for  $\frac{3}{5}$  of the increase in the civilian labor force in the last decade. For over a hundred years, the percentage of women entering the workforce has steadily increased. Beginning with the work of Black women slaves and indentured servants, the ruling class has forever sought ways to steal the fruits of women's labor without paying them. This continues in the "invisible" and lonely work of housekeeping and child raising, which is essential to the continuation of the patriarchal nuclear family and society itself. The Capitalists get two workers for the price of one. Yet in addition, women serve as the largest reserve army of monopoly capitalism.

## Why Do Women Work?

Women are forced into the official force by sheer economic necessity and the demand for labor; they are pushed out of the workforce or held to the lowest paying jobs according to the needs of profit. Women work in spite of the lack of daycare facilities, lack of maternity provisions, lack of health and retirement benefits, and lack of training. Women work despite the "double shift" of housework which remains at the end of the official working day. Women work even though their jobs are the lowest paying with the least security. And of course, women also work to escape the isolation of housework, to be productive, for independence and interest. But survival is the decisive reason why women work at such low paying, menial and repetitive jobs. Women make up 40–45% of the U.S. workforce.  $\frac{2}{3}$  of all women workers are single, divorced, widowed or their husbands make less than \$7,000 per year. Women are the sole breadwinners in 10% of all white families and 35% of all Black families. 55% of all U.S. families include working men and women, because increasingly the working class needs to have two or more family members working in order to get by. Yet women are, along with Third World workers, the last hired and the first fired.

## Who Are the Women Who Work for Wages?

*40–45% of the workforce are women.* There are 35 million working women in the United States. 49% of all women 18–64 years old are in the workforce now.

*Black and other Third World women are more likely to be in the workforce.* They are more likely to be working wives and mothers, and more likely to be in the low wage occupations.

*Married women work, women who head families work, and single women work.* The number of married women in the labor force increased by almost 12 million between 1940–1967, a rise of 279%. 39% of married women, with husbands present in the home, are in the labor force; 49% of Third World women work. 64% of women who head families are in the labor force. The number of women-headed families increased by one million in the last three years to 25.3 million families. The median income of these families is  $\frac{1}{2}$  the national median. Nearly 45% of these families are poor, even by the government standards.

*38% of all mothers with children under 18 work.* These women constitute 38% of all working women.

*Almost half of all women workers are 40 years old or older.* Almost  $\frac{2}{3}$  are 45 or older. This reflects an almost continuous rise in the median age of women workers throughout the century. The average age of women workers is 40–41 years. There is a recent rise of young adult women (25–34 years old) in the labor force—from 35.9% in 1960 to 42.8% in 1968.

## Where Do Women Workers Work?

*Half of all women workers are concentrated in 31 occupations which are the lowest paying in the U.S.* 12 million women are CLERICAL workers. 5 million women are SERVICE workers. 5 million women are FACTORY workers. 4.5 million are PROFESSIONAL