

Preamble to the Constitution. The only regulations of the IWW are those necessary for the building and maintenance of an organized, effective and egalitarian working class.

As regards cooperatives specifically, there are only three very broad regulations in the IWW Constitution: first, that no member of a cooperative who has exclusive power to hire and fire may be a member of the IWW; second, that the cooperative may not be exploitative; and third, that the cooperative may not undermine wages. These regulations are meant to keep members of the IWW who are involved in collectives and cooperatives allied and aligned with a genuine working class movement.

The last two regulations could use some clarification. Many cooperatives, unfortunately, are exploitative to their own workers because of a lack of access to capital—access generally enjoyed by the employing class. Cooperatives will lower their wages to nothing to keep the project going. These are not the cooperatives targeted by the regulation, however. It applies more to cooperatives such as the ones in Mondragon which contract with privately held companies who exploit their workers.

The third regulation, prohibiting the undermining of wages, applies to cooperatives who exact charges for products and services well below the industry standard and affect the prevailing costs thereby. If a cooperative has a strong enough foothold in any particular economy and its prices are significantly lower than the industry standard, other company's executives will likewise have to lower prices to stay in business, and you can be sure that the cost for lower prices will be born by the workers, not the employers. Such price wars can only be justified by cooperatives who organize with other workers in their industry (e.g., through the IWW) to make sure that their wages are not adversely affected. Likewise, cooperatives which pay their workers low wages will tend to lower the prevailing wages of all workers in that industry. Once again, this applies primarily to large cooperatives which actually have a strong enough influence in their industry to affect prevailing wages and prices.

Basically, all regulations in the Constitution of the IWW stem from a wariness—exhibited throughout history by all lovers of freedom—of the concentration of power into the hands of a few. The Constitution is meant to distribute power as evenly and equitably as is practical, and to make sure that access to that power is enjoyed by all workers, not just the members of the Union.

“But what—in concrete terms—can the IWW do for us?”

The IWW was born out of the immediate necessity for food, mixed with a healthy appetite for lofty ideals (the most poignant example of this is the Bread and Roses strike of Lawrence, Massachusetts where some 27,000 garment workers went on strike and held high their banners demanding “Bread, yes, but roses, too!”). For almost a century now, the IWW has been at the work of achieving both for all workers. Experience has taught that we cannot reach our dream of an egalitarian, peaceful and sustainable society without tangible gains in our everyday lives. No union will ever be able

to attain its ultimate goals while promising salvation in the hereafter—this is what churches and long-haired preachers are for. So, you will often hear about the IWW engaged in traditional conflicts with bosses for better wages and working conditions. Without this, there will be no building of an organized working class to create the world we want to live in.

In some ways, the organization of workers into cooperatives has made this conflict unnecessary. These workers have taken a leap forward toward an egalitarian world. They have taken a leap forward, but they have not taken a leap out—out of the economic conditions that continue to enslave us all. No cooperative is an island. More than likely you have heard that “no one is free while others are oppressed” or that “an injury to one is an injury to all.” These axioms are true in a very real sense when it comes to worker solidarity. So long as there are workers whose wages barely pay for their daily bread, our wages will never be as high as they should be.

By organizing with other workers in your industry, whether they work in cooperatives or not, you will be increasing your chances of receiving a livable wage. As soon as the employers are forced to recognize the true value of labor and either pay themselves less or raise their prices, those of us in cooperatives will benefit. If the boss decides to cut his pay to give the workers better wages and working conditions (unlikely), all workers will have more access to capital, including cooperatives who need it to make their projects sustainable in this economy. If the boss decides to raise his artificially low prices, cooperatives will be able to follow suit and raise their wages accordingly. By allying ourselves with other workers, we will be able to share in the benefits that solidarity and militant unionism brings to all. There is no reason that cooperative wages should not be on par with union wages.

By organizing with other workers in other industries—particularly industries where your services are needed—to encourage worker control, your cooperative will garner more business and better chances at earning a living wage. Workers will be many times more likely to support your project if you support their efforts. Forging ties with employers may pay off—even handsomely—in the short run, but in the long term, as long as the cooperative is to remain controlled by its workers, it will lead to the stagnation of wages, as it has in Mondragon.

On the Green Front

Another goal of the IWW is that all will “live in harmony with the Earth.” The IWW has a green streak older than the organization itself. Likewise, most worker collectives and cooperatives have made some commitment to an environmentally sustainable world. Perhaps you work in a collective grocery and advocate local and sustainable agriculture, or perhaps you work in a human-powered delivery cooperative and would like to see the transportation sector weaned off of its fossil-fuel habit; perhaps you work in a collective print shop and have made a commitment to recycled paper products and non-toxic inks; perhaps you work with a tree-planting coop

and advocate for sustainable logging practices; perhaps you have formed a carpentry coop and make an effort to use untreated and recycled lumber whenever possible; perhaps you work in a recycling collective and are concerned with diverting the waste stream away from landfills. And usually, we go about affecting these changes by doing work in accordance with our ethics and attempting to create demand for our services through advocacy work. That advocacy work is generally focused on the consumer, but unfortunately, it is rarely focused on the producers—the workers in our industry who often perform much the same work we do, but with less of an eye toward environmental sustainability—not because they don't care about environmental issues, but because their boss values his salary and dividends over the natural environment around him, or more accurately, the environment around *you* (when a toxic waste dump has to go somewhere, guess whose neighborhood it ends up in?).

In the short term, a focus on the consumers of our services and products as cooperatives and collectives is necessary, but a shift toward others in our industries who endanger themselves and their planet is desperately needed. Grocers and food-handlers must deal with unhealthy pesticides on a routine basis, transport workers must deal with toxic fumes, solvents and highway deaths, graphics workers must deal with ozone and solvents, timber workers must deal with toxic herbicides and unsafe working speeds, construction workers must deal with routine injuries and toxic materials, and municipal waste workers must deal with growing landfills that will eventually end up in their back yards.

On top of that, bosses are more concerned with making money than with making any product or service to sell. They can make more money by just moving their capital around, buying and selling other companies, than they can by providing anything to the public. Because of this, employers in this country are not interested in pursuing innovations that will make for cleaner, more efficient industry. That burden, then, will fall on employers in other lands. Domestic workers will suddenly find themselves without useful skills while their jobs are being performed overseas by recently relocated peasants working under bosses who are many times more brutal than the ones found here.

Because of all these things, it is imperative that we shift the focus of our organizing toward our fellow workers. It must be made clear that all workers have a vested interest in environmentally sustainable industry for their health and for their security. Only when workers take control of the machinery of production will that machinery cease to kill our fellow workers and sully our planet. We cannot expect the employing class to take that initiative. They have made it clear that their priorities lie in their pocketbooks and nowhere else. Our fellow workers will have no job security while their work remains unsustainable. In this respect, the working class must organize for conversion of our economy to a sustainable one through vocational retraining and worker control. Worker collectives and cooperatives have made some significant headway in this area, but until we join in the One Big Union of all workers, those gains will soon prove to have been for naught.

Join the IWW

No BUREAUCRATS—aside from the modestly paid General Secretary/Treasurer, the IWW has no paid officers. The General Executive Board is elected annually by the entire membership, and its job is to oversee the running of union affairs, not to set policy. All officers may be recalled at any time by referendum.

REAL DEMOCRACY—All policy decisions are made by the members themselves by referendum. All branches maintain full autonomy on matters within their respective jurisdictions. Job Branches (IWW groups composed of workers at a single job site) set their own demands and strategies in negotiations, free of meddling internationals or sell-out business agents.

Low DUES—Our dues are structured on a sliding scale basis. Workers with a monthly income under \$1,000 pay \$6 per month, \$1,000–\$2,000 pay \$12, and \$2,000 and over pay \$18. Workers in financial distress or with extremely low incomes can pay as little as \$3. Initiation fees for new members equal one month's dues. Thus a very low-income worker can join for as little as \$6.

To JOIN—Fill out the form below and send a copy with your check or money order (in U.S. funds only) to: I.W.W., 103 West Michigan Avenue, Ypsilanti, MI 48197.

- I affirm that I am a common worker without direct power to hire and fire.
- I agree to abide by the constitution and regulations of this organization.
- I will study its principles and make myself acquainted with its purposes.

Name _____

Occupation _____ Industry _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

Total amount enclosed: _____

Initiation: _____ Dues: _____

When you join the IWW, you will receive a free subscription to our newspaper, the Industrial Worker, in addition to your membership card, constitution, button, and the One Big Union pamphlet which describes the structure and function of the IWW in detail. You will also get a monthly publication for members only called the General Organizing Bulletin, which contains Board motions, financial reports and members' discussion of various internal matters such as upcoming referenda. Also, if you have e-mail, you will be invited to join a growing network of IWW members engaging in on-line communication.

IWW Preamble

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There will never be peace so long as hunger and want are found among the millions of working people and the few who make up the employing class have all the good things in life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

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 to 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 has interests in common with its employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interests of the working class itself upheld only by an organization 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 and 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 organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially, we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

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Beyond Cooperation



An Introduction to the Industrial Workers of the World for Worker Collectives and Cooperatives

"We don't have a boss, what do we need a union for?"

This is a common and legitimate question often posed to members of the IWW. Worker cooperatives are excellent examples of the power of workers themselves to direct an economy. They are models of the control of workers over their own livelihoods and conditions. There are no bosses in a cooperative, at least not institutionalized ones. The traditional conflict between bosses and workers is not evident within cooperatives, and so the role of a traditional union—to help the workers fight the bosses for better wages and conditions—does not make sense within the setting of a cooperative.

So, what use, then, is a union to a cooperative? Well, there are a couple of reasons. First of all, not all of us are so fortunate as to work in a cooperative—most of the workers on this planet are still forced to work under at least one boss, and usually many more. If our goal is worker control in every workplace, we have a long way to go, and we must be organized to get there. Unlike many unions, this is also the goal of the IWW. While many unions call for a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, the IWW goes farther to demand the abolition of the wage system and control of the means of production by the workers themselves. The IWW as an organization has a great deal of experience with organizing workers to take control of their livelihoods—not just members of cooperatives, but all workers.

Secondly, as long as there is a class of people in this world who owe their livelihoods to other people who do all the work while they make the "big" decisions, the rest of us will continue to have less than we deserve. As long as there are bosses who profit by skimming off the proceeds of workers' labor, the rest of us will live in relative poverty. As long as there is an employing class who can grow rich by building enormous economies of scale on the backs of their workers, the rest of us will never earn a living wage. Privately owned companies can make plenty of money while still charging artificially low prices only by exploiting their workers. As long as these workers remain exploited, the prevailing prices in the economy will never support a decent wage for *anyone*, whether they work in a cooperative or not. The only way in this prevailing system for a worker to make a decent living is either to demand more from the boss class (by seizing the means of production or demanding better wages and conditions) or to steal from other workers.

An interesting example of the latter is the much-vaunted Mondragon Cooperatives in Spain. When Spain opened its economic borders to the rest of Europe, the new globalized economy would no longer support the wages of the Mondragon Cooperative members. Rather than organizing with workers in other parts of the economy to force exploitative companies to charge prices that reflect the true costs of supporting workers, they chose instead to



contract with those same exploitative companies in other parts of the world to save their own salaries at the expense of others'. This is the sort of thing that joining and organizing with the IWW would guard against.

The Working Class and the Employing Class have Nothing in Common

The IWW is often criticized for the first sentence and the major premise of the Preamble to its Constitution: "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common." This is not to say that we don't all breathe the same polluted air or drink the same polluted water (although it's a hell of a lot cleaner up the hill). It is to say that in so far as one considers there to be a working class and an employing class, those two classes have nothing in common—they have fundamentally opposed interests. Workers making compromises and deals with bosses benefits only the bosses (and *some* times *some* of the workers, but only for a while) as we can see in the example of the Mondragon Cooperatives. This is often a difficult thing for members of cooperatives to come to terms with because they straddle the line between the two classes. However, even if the distinction is blurred within a cooperative, it is nevertheless crystal clear in most of the economy.

This blurring of distinctions has been exploited in the past by people with less than noble intentions. Both Mussolini and Franco were strong advocates of worker cooperatives precisely because they tended to erase or smooth over class conflict without fully addressing the economic forces which give rise to that conflict. Radical syndicalism, on the other hand, was a genuine threat to the powers that be because it advocated not just worker management, but real worker control and an organized working class. The IWW is a part of this radical tradition.

Cooperatives in the IWW

The IWW is the only union in the United States which recognizes cooperatives as a legitimate organizational form for workers, let alone *encourages* that form of organization. The IWW is the direct action union. This means that the IWW does not advocate begging employers for better wages and conditions, it does not go to legislators to beg for more labor-friendly laws, it advocates the use of the might of an organized working class to take what it is entitled to: that is, all that it creates. This sort of initiative and self-starting attitude is at the core of the cooperative movement.

Another criticism of unionism is that it tends to constrict the activities of its membership. This is not true with the IWW. Rank and file control is always paramount, as is the autonomy of all constituent bodies of the IWW. There is no micromanaging of any of the concerns of local and industrial bodies. The only mandate of the IWW towards local branches and job shops is that they adhere to the constitution (set up primarily to provide a consistent framework, reliable lines of communication and to insure rank and file democratic control) and the principles of the union as set forth in the