

K. Workplace Organizing.

1. Industrial Networks.

Mike: Here's a brief run-down of the proposal that the WSA support the creation of industrial networks; this would take two forms, both the formation of rank and file committees within existing unions and the formation of assemblies that are currently without a union structure. One likely source of contention will be the relation of the networks to the WSA; the options are that they remain independent of the WSA, or that they be parts of the WSA, such that all members of a network are members of the WSA. One would think that affiliation with an explicitly anarchist organization would reduce the number of people likely to join in a network, but I don't think this is the case, given the experience of the DAM. DAM tried to form unaffiliated networks among dispatch riders, but the lack of affiliation didn't prevent this attempt from failing.

Ed: If the networks were affiliated, what would the status of members be? Would they know they're in an anarchist group? Would they come to a National Convention and having voting rights?

Mike: Yes, it should be open.

Ed: What percentage of the people Mike has worked with and organized would join an anarchist organization?

Mike: I've used the term "syndicalist", not "anarchist", and about half of the clerical and technical staff are interested; most sections in the IWA are propaganda groups and these haven't grown; we'll remain small without workplace organizing; we must transform ourselves from a propaganda group to a syndicalist organization.

Steve: One problem I have with this is the predetermined notion of going from a network to a union; this seems like one big unionism all over again; however, I'm enthusiastic overall.

Chris (Love & Rage): Affiliation is not too important; what is key is that workers become involved in practical activity; may well have to choose between being an anarchist section of the IWA and being a union; people just are not so political developed.

Ginger: We want anarchist unions, and so only such people would join; why promote anything else?

Mitch: Networks as such are necessary for anarchist organization, as they facilitate the spread of anarcho-syndicalist ideas; I'm less inclined to have the networks be directly affiliated because we'd be a bit of a front group, imposing a line and predetermining the course of things; our first call is education and helping the class struggle; also, we can't just jump into things; must read the DAM statement re: failure of the dispatch riders union; this likely failed because of the nature of the industry, and so one cannot use this to measure the effects of the lack of affiliation; there's not enough ground for more than non-affiliated networks; if we try to go beyond this, folks won't be committed, as with the machinery workers who had joined the IWW and then voted to disaffiliate in the 40's because they were concerned only with "narrow" economic interests.

Mike: There's no risk of one big unionism; it would not be a monolithic organization; it would merely put the WSA in the midst of the struggle, not capture the struggle entirely; we shouldn't be embarrassed if we fail; it will benefit the WSA if it works; re: the concern of "nonpoliticos" who join, we should remember that syndicates are schools; if we remain a propaganda group, we won't be able to educate; must educate on the job; one thing that is novel here is the idea of a militant group within a larger union structure.

Barry: What is the goal here? Shouldn't be a numbers game for the WSA, but just to enhance the power of the working class.

Thad: Most important thing is that workers build structures run on the principles of direct democracy; this will be enhanced if the networks are unaffiliated, as more are likely to become involved.

Ginger: What our actions are is most significant; have had experience with otherwise conservative individuals who were sympathetic to actions borne out of anarcho-syndicalist ideas.