

One Wob's View of the Chicago Conference

First of all, I am very glad I was there. If the conference lacked greatness it had more to do with who was not there than with who was.

The outstanding achievement of the organizers, considering the small number of people involved in helping to organize the event and the relatively small amount of cash they had to work with, was the involvement of delegates from outside the I.W.W. The embarrassment, in my opinion, was in the absence of I.W.W. members and rank-and-file participation from the labor movement in general.

The topics chosen to discuss were very good and could have been more fruitful with greater participation. Nothing should have drawn people to Chicago more easily than honoring May 1-4, 1886, with all that entails. Foreign delegates and the IBM Resisters delegate came at great inconvenience to share what I felt was invaluable information. But only a handful of people with only a teaspoonful of input came to the conference to take advantage of this opportunity to communicate and to build a movement.

The Anarchist conference, by comparison, was much more successful. I have no figures, but every session I attended had overflow crowds, lively discussion, and a broad range of participation. This in spite of, or maybe because of, an absence of speakers from such places as South Africa and Solidarnosc in Poland.

In a city that has the second largest Polish population in the world, our conference drew two dozen people to hear Marek Garztecki speak. In a city where anti-apartheid ranks high in movement issues, even fewer than two dozen came to hear the SAAWU speaker from South Africa. While our session on organizing drew about a dozen people, the Anarchist session on the same subject drew an overflow crowd of over 100 "unorganized" Anarchists, and this in spite of the fact that the Anarchists had hundreds of other participants attending simultaneous workshops at another building. The difference in my opinion was that the Anarchists involved as many groups as possible in their planning.

My impression is that while the I.W.W. conference was valuable in the information brought to us by many of the delegates and speakers, and while I got emotional satisfaction just visiting historic battlegrounds, the I.W.W. conference cannot be labeled anything but a failure in terms of communicating our ideas and building a revolutionary union.

Although I attended only a few sessions, my impression of the Anarchist conference is that while they were more successful in the numbers of people participating, in communicating and in building an ongoing network between themselves, they, too, failed