



VIEWS & COMMENTS

A Tiny Publication of Philly Metro WSA

Philadelphia | August 2022 | Issue #2

Welcome to Views & Comments!

Comrades, welcome to issue #2! Issue #1 has now been shared on a few shop floors, in bookstores, community spaces, and prisons. Feedback has been positive so far.

Clarissa, our branch member, is known for asking us to consider, “Who is our audience?” So, regarding her question, we share the following story from a comrade who distributed copies of V&C at his workplace:

He has two friends, one who is also a syndicalist, and one who is just interested in politics of all kinds. The syndicalist friend thought issue #1 was great, and wanted to help distribute it to people they know. But the other friend read over it and said, “This looks fine, but... what the [expletive] is anarchist syndicalism?” This story brings us right back to Clarissa’s question about audience.

In honor of our friend who asked this good question, we end with a short explanation.

The word syndicalism is derived from *syndicat*, the French word for trade union. Anarchism is a revolutionary movement which believes that both capitalism and top-down government should be opposed, and replaced by workers’ direct democracy. So “Anarchist-Syndicalism” wants to see a new society, where we the working people operate our workplaces for the good of all. We would make decisions democratically for a new society without a class system.

And how do we get to this new society? By building revolutionary labor unions in the here and now. These unions can fight for our rights in the present; in the future, they can also come to replace capitalism and the state with cooperation, and create a new culture of freedom and solidarity.

WSA Discusses Reproductive Activism

By Rose Pesotta

On Saturday, July 2nd and Sunday, July 3rd, the Philadelphia chapter of Workers’ Solidarity Alliance hosted Working Class Bodies Under Threat: An Intersectional Discussion of Abortion Rights from a Labor Perspective, a series of online talks regarding the recent Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v Wade*.

On the first day, Alexandra gave a brief history of the right to choice in America, as well as an explanation of reproductive rights as a labor issue.

Danielle discussed access and activism among sex workers, and the importance of acknowledging them as fully-fledged members of the working class. Clarissa discussed health and activism among the Black community, highlighting how racial inequality seriously affects access to reproductive healthcare, rates of prosecution, and mortality rates.

On the second day, Alexandra discussed the current situation in red states—states that, being conservative-leaning, have banned abortion already or plan to in the future. She also discussed activism in Poland, another country with strict limits on reproductive rights, and what Americans can learn from their tactics and advice. Danielle discussed Queer access, and how the marginalization of the LGBTQIA+ community impacts their access to reproductive healthcare. Finally, Clarissa spoke of what to do next, and solid answers—sharing keen insights regarding things to consider going forward, and how to resist in a way that’s both effective and inclusive.

After each series of talks, there was a discussion session where all who attended could ask questions, share insights and concerns, and discuss experiences and emotions relating to the current situation. This served not only to further share information, but to highlight the importance of mutual support and solidarity with each other, as activists, during this time.

These talks will be recorded as part of a special edition of Philly WSA’s Impulse podcast, available soon.

Child Labor is Alive and Well at Hyundai

By Hanna Waldman

On February 3rd of this year, a thirteen-year-old girl was reported missing in Enterprise, Alabama. When she was found, she allegedly explained that she had run away because she didn’t want to go to work anymore. It was uncovered that she and her brothers—aged twelve and fifteen—were not attending school, and instead spending their days on the factory floor of a metal stamping facility which is owned by Hyundai, the automotive manufacturer. Investigative journalists who spoke to employees discovered that the factory—which has a lengthy history of violating health and safety codes—employs dozens of child laborers, some of whom are as young as eleven or twelve. According to federal employment laws, no worker under the age of 18 may be employed for dangerous work such as metal stamping, which carries the risk of crushed or amputated limbs. Investigators were not yet able to determine exactly how many children were employed at the facility, and Hyundai itself has denied any knowledge of wrongdoing.

STRIKE NOTES

Starbucks Coffee

Having unionized over 200 stores, the Starbucks Union is going strong. Five stores in the Boston area, as well as stores in Buffalo, Minneapolis, Jacksonville, and more, have gone on strike. This included the location at 12th and Walnut here in Philadelphia, which struck on July 22nd. Boston-area workers say they plan to strike indefinitely. The workers are demanding higher wages, better hours, and protesting egregious union-busting efforts by the corporation.

British Rail Strike

Rail workers in Great Britain are undergoing the biggest strike of any kind the country has seen in 33 years. Members of the National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers walked out after talks collapsed between them and several major rail companies. The strike has affected over 80% of commuter and industrial rail services in Great Britain. RMT workers plan to continue striking in August, and they have been joined by members of Transport Salaried Staffs' Association and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen.

Views & Comments is a publication of the Metro Philadelphia Chapter of the Workers' Solidarity Alliance, an anarchist-syndicalist activist group with members from all over North America. WSA has Friends status with the International Workers' Association (IWA-AIT).

Philadelphia Metro WSA can be found on Twitter @wsaphilly

Or online at philly-wsa.org

For Workers' Solidarity Alliance on a national level, please visit workersolidarity.org

For the IWA-AIT, please visit iwa-ait.org

Questions, comments, and suggestions may be sent to: Philly-Metro-WSA@protonmail.com

Anarchist Education and the Syndicates

By Pete M. Reclus

An ongoing project of our WSA branch has been working to update theories of anarchist education, and centering these into workers self-education and the syndicates.

Not long ago, branch member Hanna Waldman organized a WSA May Day event for the children of workers, and wrote:

“My dream is a little communal school with a bunch of anarchist parents teaming up to teach all the kids together, with a focus on autonomy, human rights, and good quality education.”

This interest in anarchist education goes back to our comrade Adrianna Ko, in the early '90s, in the New Jersey Anarchist League. She studied Francisco Ferrer's Modern School movement, and gave a talk on the French anarchist-syndicalist Fernand Pelloutier. She pointed out that Pelloutier identified workers' self-education as a revolutionary force, and saw workers' syndicates not only as centers of radical democracy, but also as potentially a workers' self-university.

Later, our branch member, Clarissa Rogers, was in Philadelphia, researching the history and ideas of anarchist pedagogy. Adrianna was very interested in Clarissa's work, especially on Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, and considered incorporating her ideas into her own work on syndicates. Clarissa wrote that pedagogy can help us “be strategic about challenging systems of oppression. Creating revolutionary change requires activism, but at its core is also a pedagogical project.”

Every aspect of Anarchist Education also relates to a strategy or tactic. Branch member Danielle Kulp has proposed the idea of syndicates including agricultural education and food production, in part as a tactic for supporting extended strikes, and preparing, one day, for the revolutionary general strike.

Labor Notes Conference 2022

By May Huntley

This year's Labor Notes conference—the first since 2018, due to the pandemic—was held from June 17th to 19th in Chicago, Illinois, with a debrief teleconference meeting on June 30th. Labor Notes is a grassroots movement to further the cause of labor. It helps employees form unions and wield the power of those unions effectively. Organizers said this was the largest conference in the 45-year history of Labor Notes, attended by over 4,000 worker activists from 25 countries. Among the speakers was Chris Smalls, president of the Amazon Labor Union. “It doesn't matter what industry you're in,” he said, “we're all in this together.”

Vermont senator Bernie Sanders attended and spoke at the event as well, making use of his continued popularity to draw attention to the labor movement and workers' issues. His speech included an impassioned condemnation of corporate greed throughout the pandemic.

The conference also fell on Juneteenth, creating a timely opportunity for the celebration of Black worker activists and discussions of how labor as a whole can contribute to the fight for racial justice.



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