

Alliance

"We have done this because we love liberty and hate authority." - Voltairine de Cleyre





RESIST, REBEL, RECLAIM

www.libertyactivism.info

Table of Contents

A Note From Z's	1
The Wobblies and Free Market Labor Struggle	2
How Can Labor Unions Help the Free Market?	13
Wobbly in a Cubicle	16
ALL Wobbly	21
Wobbly, And I Won't Fall Down	30
Anarchism and the Labor Movement	35
On Donning the Mask	40
Anarchism – What's in a Name?	44
Six Questions with Gary Chartier	46

A Note From Z's

This issue is overdue and I apologize. That's out of the way. I'm really happy with the articles in this issue. Further, I'm please that my co-editor James Tuttle came up with the idea to put together an issue discussing the relationship between radical labor movements and the libertarian left.

I've been fascinated with the IWW for the past ten years. My introduction to anarchism came through my readings on the free speech fights. The direct action techniques of the Wobblies (as IWW members are called) were a refreshing change to the electoral activism that is so often taken for granted as the way to make systemic change. The insanity of the later strategy seemed apparent from my study of history and political movements.

Electoral movements don't build long term systemic change. Rather, they create short term surface change at best. Too often the problems they are supposed to correct are often worsened. This frequently happens when workers attempt to organize. Either the employer spends a lot of money, the government, or both, to squash the movement. Or (but often and) the desire to organize is co-opted by establishment unions friendly with the employer or (but often and) the government.

The various articles in this issue of ALLiance address radical unionism and its relationship to libertarianism. Thanks for reading and as always, feel free to contact us:

alliancejournal@gmail.com
www.alliancejournal.net

PO Box 442353
Lawrence, KS 66044

The Wobblies and Free Market Labor Struggle

Kevin A. Carson

At first glance, the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies) might strike you as an odd subject for a consideration by libertarians. Most self-described free market libertarians and market anarchists are more likely to condemn unions than to praise them.

But in a stateless society, or at least in a society where labor relations are unregulated by the state, the Wobblies' model of labor struggle is likely to be the most viable alternative to the kinds of state-certified and state-regulated unions we're familiar with.

And for those of us in the libertarian movement who don't think "God" is spelled B-O-S-S, or instinctively identify with employers and gripe about how hard it is to get good help these days, the question of how labor might negotiate for better terms is probably of direct personal interest. Some of us, working for wages in the state capitalist economy, have seen precious little evidence of marginal productivity being reflected in our wages. Indeed, we've been more likely to see bosses using our increased productivity as an excuse to downsize the work force and appropriate our increased output for themselves as increased salaries and bonuses. And many of us who are employees at will aren't entirely sanguine about the prospect that our bosses will be smart enough to have read Rothbard on the competitive penalties for capriciously and arbitrarily firing employees.

In fact, I have a hard time understanding why so many right-leaning free market libertarians are so hostile in principle to the idea of hard bargaining or contracts when it comes to labor, in particular.

It's not in the rational interest of a landlord, competing with other landlords, to capriciously evict tenants at will for no good reason. But I still like to have a signed lease contract specifying under exactly what conditions I can be evicted, and enforceable against my landlord by a third party. It's probably in the long-term competitive interest of banks not to raise interest rates without limit on existing balances, if they want to get new borrowers—but they seem to do it, anyway, and if you don't consider it a comfort to have contractual limits on the interest they can charge you've got a lot more faith in human nature than I have.

Contracts are accepted with little question or thought by libertarians, in most areas of economic life, as a source of security and predictability—in all areas except labor, that is. When it comes to labor, Hazlitt or somebody has “proved” somewhere that the desire for contractual security is a sign of economic illiteracy.

Likewise, the labor market is apparently the one area of economic life where bargaining by the selling party is not considered a legitimate part of the price discovery process. Apparently the dictum that productivity determines wage levels means that you're supposed to take the first offer or leave it—no haggling allowed.

I doubt many of us who actually work for wages find the right wingers' labor exceptionalism very convincing. Most of us, in the real world, find that the credible threat to walk away from the table gets us higher wages than we would otherwise have had. Most of us, in the real world, would rather rely on a labor contract specifying just causes for termination than to rely on the pointy-haired boss having the sense to know his own best interests.

And most of use who have some common sense can see how ridiculous it is to assert, as do many right-wingers, that strikes are only effective because of the forcible exclusion of scabs. Such people, apparently, have never heard of turnover costs like those involved in training replacement workers, or the lost productivity of workers who have accumulated tacit, job-specific knowledge over a period of years that can't be simply reduced to a verbal formula and transmitted to a new hire in a week or two.

And when mass strikes did take place before Wagner, the cost and disruption of employee turnover within a single workplace was greatly intensified by sympathy strikes at other stages of production. Before Taft-Hartley's restrictions on sympathy and boycott strikes, a minority of workers walking out of a single factory could be reinforced by similar partial strikes at suppliers, outlets, and carriers. Even with only a minority walking out at each stage of production, the cumulative effect could be massive. The federal labor regime—both Wagner *and* Taft-Hartley—greatly reduced the effectiveness of strikes at individual plants by transforming them into declared wars fought by Queensbury rules, and likewise reduced their effectiveness by prohibiting the coordination of actions across multiple plants or industries. The Railway Labor Relations Act, together with Taft-Hartley's cooling off periods, enabled the federal government to suppress sympathy strikes in the transportation industry and prevent local strikes from becoming regional or national general strikes. The cooling off period, in addition, gave employers time to prepare ahead of time for such disruptions by stockpiling parts and inventory, and greatly reduced the informational rents embodied in the training of the existing workforce. Were not such restrictions in place, today's "just-in-time" economy would likely be even more vulnerable to

such disruption than that of the 1930s.

Far from being a boon to workers, or making effective unions possible for the first time, Wagner suppressed the most effective tactics and in their place promoted the kind of union model that benefited employers.

Employers preferred a labor regime that relegated labor struggle entirely to strikes—and strikes of decidedly limited effectiveness at that—and coopted unions as the enforcers of management control on the job. The primary purpose of unions, under Wagner, was to provide stability on the job by enforcing contracts against their own rank and file and preventing wildcat strikes.

Far from being a labor charter that empowered unions for the first time, FDR's labor regime had the same practical effect as telling the irregulars of Lexington and Concord "Look, you guys come out from behind those rocks, put on these bright red uniforms, and march in parade ground formation like the Brits, and in return we'll set up a system of arbitration to guarantee you don't lose all the time."

Bargaining with the boss over the terms on which one *enters* into the employment relationship is only a small part of the bargaining process, and is arguably less important than the continual bargaining over terms that takes place *within* the employment relationship.

In fact the labor movement's dependence on official, declared strikes as the primary method of labor struggle dates only from the establishment of the Wagner Act regime in the 1930s. Before that time, labor struggle relied at least as much on labor's bargaining power over conditions *on the job*.

The labor contract is called an “incomplete contract” because, by the necessity of things, it is impossible to specify the terms ahead of time. As Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis describe it,

The classical theory of contract implicit in most of neo-classical economics holds that the enforcement of claims is performed by the judicial system at negligible cost to the exchanging parties. We refer to this classical third-party enforcement assumption as exogenous enforcement. Where, by contrast, enforcement of claims arising from an exchange by third parties is infeasible or excessively costly, the exchanging agents must themselves seek to enforce their claims....

Exogenous enforcement is absent under a variety of quite common conditions: when there is no relevant third party..., when the contested attribute can be measured only imperfectly or at considerable cost (work effort, for example, or the degree of risk assumed by a firm's management), when the relevant evidence is not admissible in a court of law...[,] when there is no possible means of redress..., or when the nature of the contingencies concerning future states of the world relevant to the exchange precludes writing a fully specified contract.

In such cases the ex post terms of exchange are determined by the structure of the interaction between A and B, and in particular on the strategies A is able to adopt to induce B to provide the desired level of the contested attribute, and the counter strategies available to B....

Consider agent A who purchases a good or service from agent B. We call the exchange contested when B's good or service possesses an attribute which is valuable to A, is costly for B to provide, yet is not fully specified in an enforceable contract....

An employment relationship is established when, in return for a wage, the worker B agrees to submit to the authority of the employer A for a specified period of time in return for a wage w. While the employer's promise to pay the wage is legally enforceable, the worker's promise to bestow an adequate level of effort and care upon the tasks assigned, even if offered, is not. Work is subjectively costly for the worker to provide, valuable to the employer, and costly to measure. The manager-worker relationship is thus a contested exchange.¹

In fact the very term "adequate effort" is meaningless, aside from whatever way its definition is worked out in practice based on the comparative bargaining power of worker and employer. It's virtually impossible to design a contract that specifies ahead of time the exact levels of effort and standards of performance for a wage-laborer, and likewise impossible for employers to reliably monitor performance after the fact. Therefore, the workplace is contested terrain, and workers are justified entirely as much as employers in attempting to maximize their own interests within the leeway left by an incomplete contract. How much effort is "normal"

1 "Is the Demand for Workplace Democracy Redundant in a Liberal Economy?" in Ugo Pagano and Robert Rowthorn, eds., *Democracy and Efficiency in the Economic Enterprise. A study prepared for the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER) of the United Nations University* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994, 1996), pp. 69-70.

to expend is determined by the informal outcome of the social contest within the workplace, given the *de facto* balance of power at any given time. And that includes slowdowns, "going canny," and the like. The "normal" effort that an employer is entitled to, when he buys labor-power, is entirely a matter of convention. It's directly analogous the local cultural standards that would determine the nature of "reasonable expectations," in a libertarian common law of implied contract.

If libertarians like to think of "a fair day's wage" as an open-ended concept, subject to the employer's discretion and limited by what he can get away with, they should remember that "a fair day's work" is equally open-ended. It's just as much in the worker's legitimate self-interest to minimize the expenditure of effort per dollar of income as it's in the employer's interest to maximize the extraction of effort in a given period of time.

For the authoritarian "libertarians" who believe "vox boss, vox dei," this suggestion is scandalous. The boss is the only party who can unilaterally rewrite the contract as he goes along. And it's self-evidently good for the owner or manager to maximize his self-interest in extracting whatever terms he can get away with. Oddly enough, though, these are usually the same people who are most fond of saying that employment is a free market bargain between equals.

For most of us who know what it's like working under a boss, it's a simple matter of fairness that we should be as free as the boss to try to shape the undefined terms of the labor contract in a way that maximizes our self-interests. And most of the Wobbly tactics grouped together under the term "direct action on the job" involve just such efforts within the contested space of the job relationship.

Further, these are the very methods a free market labor movement might use, in preference to playing by Wagner Act rules.

The various methods are described in the old Wobbly pamphlet "How to Fire Your Boss," and discussed by the I.W.W.'s Alexis Buss in her articles on "minority unionism" for Industrial Worker. The old model, she wrote—"a majority of workers vote a union in, a contract is bargained"—is increasingly untenable.

We need to return to the sort of rank-and-file on-the-job agitating that won the 8-hour day and built unions as a vital force....

Minority unionism happens on our own terms, regardless of legal recognition....

U.S. & Canadian labor relations regimes are set up on the premise that you need a majority of workers to have a union, generally government-certified in a worldwide context[.] this is a relatively rare set-up. And even in North America, the notion that a union needs official recognition or majority status to have the right to represent its members is of relatively recent origin, thanks mostly to the choice of business unions to trade rank-and-file strength for legal maintenance of membership guarantees.²

How are we going to get off of this road? We must stop making gaining legal recognition and a contract the point of our organizing....

2 "Minority Report," Industrial Worker, October 2002
<<http://www.iww.org/organize/strategy/AlexisBuss102002.shtml>>.

We have to bring about a situation where the bosses, not the union, want the contract. We need to create situations where bosses will offer us concessions to get our cooperation. Make them beg for it.³

And workers make bosses beg for cooperation through the methods described in “How to Fire Your Boss”: slowdowns, working to rule, “good work” strikes, whistleblowing and “open mouth” sabotage, sickins and unannounced one-day wildcats at random intervals, etc. The beauty of these methods is that, unlike regular strikes, they don't give the boss an excuse for a lockout. They reduce the productivity of labor and raise costs on the job—rather than “going out on strike,” workers “stay in on strike.”

Workers are far more effective when they take direct action while still on the job. By deliberately reducing the boss' profits while continuing to collect wages, you can cripple the boss without giving some scab the opportunity to take your job. Direct action, by definition, means those tactics workers can undertake themselves, without the help of government agencies, union bureaucrats, or high-priced lawyers.

Some of the forms of direct action described in the pamphlet, especially—e.g. working to rule—there's no conceivable way of outlawing ex ante through a legally enforceable contract. How would such a clause read: “Workers must obey to the letter all lawful directives issued by management—unless they're stupid”?

3 "Minority Report," Industrial Worker, December 2002
<<http://www.iww.org/organize/strategy/AlexisBuss122002.shtml>>.

The old Wobbly practice of “open mouth sabotage,” better known these days as whistleblowing, is perhaps the single effective weapon in the Internet age. As described in the pamphlet:

Sometimes simply telling people the truth about what goes on at work can put a lot of pressure on the boss....

Whistle Blowing can be as simple as a face-to-face conversation with a customer, or it can be as dramatic as the P.G.&E. engineer who revealed that the blueprints to the Diablo Canyon nuclear reactor had been reversed....

Waiters can tell their restaurant clients about the various shortcuts and substitutions that go into creating the faux-haute cuisine being served to them.

The Internet takes possibilities for such “open mouth sabotage” to a completely new level. In an age when unions have virtually disappeared from the private sector workforce, and downsizings and speedups have become a normal expectation of working life, the vulnerability of employer's public image may be the one bit of real leverage the worker has over him--and it's a doozy. If they go after that image relentlessly and systematically, they've got the boss by the short hairs. Given the ease of setting up anonymous blogs and websites (just think of any company and then look up the URL employernamesucks.com), systematically exposing the company's dirt anonymously on comment threads and message boards, the possibility of anonymous saturation emailings of the company's major suppliers and customers and advocacy groups concerned with that industry.... well, let's just say that labor struggle becomes a form of

asymmetric warfare.

And such campaigns of open mouth sabotage are virtually risk-free, and impossible to suppress. From the McLibel case to the legal fight over the Diebold memos, from the DeCSS uprising to Trafigura, attempts to suppress negative publicity are governed by the Streisand Effect (named after Barbra's attempt to suppress online photos of her house generated publicity that caused a thousand times as many people to look at the photos than otherwise would have). It is simply impossible to suppress negative publicity on the Internet, thanks to things like encryption, proxies, and mirror sites. And the very attempt to do so will generate more publicity beyond the target's worst nightmares. Consider, for example, the increasing practice of firing bloggers for negative comments about their employers. What's the result? Rather than a few hundred or a few thousand readers of a marginal blog seeing a post on how bad it sucks to work at Employer X, tens of millions of mainstream newspaper readers see a wire service story: "Blogger fired for revealing how bad it sucks to work at Employer X."

Some of the most effective labor actions, in hard to organize industries, have involved public information campaigns like those of the Imolakee Indian Workers' boycott of Taco Bell and pickets by the Wal-Mart Workers' Association.

Rather than negotiating on the bosses' terms under the Wagner rules, in order to negotiate a contract, we should be using network resistance and asymmetric warfare techniques to make *the bosses* beg *us* for a contract.

Center for a Stateless Society (www.C4SS.org) Research Associate Kevin Carson is a contemporary mutualist author and individualist anarchist. His website is [Mutualist Blog](http://mutualist.blogspot.com) (<http://mutualist.blogspot.com>).

How Can Labor Unions Help Free the Market?

Darian Worden

When market anarchists talk about a "free market" or a "freed market" as something we desire, we aren't promoting some oppressive market in which capitalists are free to make commodities of everything while selling what doesn't belong to them. What we mean is that each of us is part of the market, and we should be free to exchange (using money or otherwise) what we want with other autonomous individuals without authoritarian power reaching into the equation. Unionism can contribute much of value to our efforts to free the market.

BRING
A GUN
TO
SCHOOL
DAY
A Novella

DARIAN WORDEN

Most of today's big companies are run by thieves. How many titans of industry condemn eminent domain, redevelopment organizations, cutting deals with congressmen, or any other crimes of the powerful? The only property they respect is what they control. They'd prefer to use the power of government to steal whatever they can from whomever they can. Of course they have a choice to do otherwise! Choosing domination and money over liberty and solidarity just shows what is valued more.

As Kevin Carson notes in *The Ethics of Labor Struggle*, we are not in a free market, and when we examine the relationship between labor and ownership, "we're dealing with power relations, not market relations." So it is rational for workers to build counter-power by organizing into anti-authoritarian groups that benefit them as individuals. In this way they are better able to set the conditions of their employment, making the power differential more equal so something closer to

market relations can function.

Radicalizing government employee unions may also help free the market. When large numbers of government workers who dislike working for the state and want to move toward a consensual society organize, they provide a means for taking government monopolies out of government hands. The services could then be run as a series of cooperatives. Radicalized unions can also become mutual aid organizations for former and current workers in an industry. Organized labor in companies that rely on government contracts can play a role in bringing the company into free market activity if the managers will not do so.

As the market is freed, unionism can form a basis for economic organization as an alternative to hierarchical companies. How many people would want to take on the massive amounts of work and risk to build a free society in the face of authoritarian reprisal, just to use up the rest of their life working where they have little influence and little interest when there are exciting and rewarding alternatives available?



*Graphic courtesy of
www.etsy.com.*

One possible alternative is the co-operative, which unions can provide a basis for creating. Another possibility is for a union of independent workers to provide services to its members like networking, finding gigs, insurance, and simplifying and securing terms of service. This could make it easier for more people to do the work they want to in a relationship with less authoritarian potential than that of employer-employee.

Those who choose to work in any remaining hierarchical businesses would benefit from the greater alternatives that entrepreneurialism and labor organization would make available. There would exist better options for a dissatisfied worker than there would be today, so satisfying workers would be of greater importance to any company that wished to stay in business.

Any structure that ignores the values of individual liberty can become a tool of tyranny. Unions too can serve as a method for people to gain power and sell out workers. Regardless of what specific forms of social organization prevail, the libertarian mindset of maximizing the liberty of the individual without infringing on the equal liberty of other individuals must be maintained for society to remain free. So long as unions work with libertarian goals they can be useful in creating, improving, and securing the freedom of all workers.

Darian Worden is an individualist anarchist writer with experience in libertarian activism. His fiction includes [Bring a Gun To School Day](#) and the forthcoming [Trade War](#). His essays and other works can be viewed at [his personal website](#). He also hosts an internet radio show, Thinking Liberty, on [PatriotRadio.com](#).

Wobbly in a Cubicle

Fellow Worker John Goodman

The last eight plus years have done a number on workers economically and psychologically. From the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, torture, domestic spying, corporate bailouts, a failed housing market and mass unemployment (as of Nov, 6, 2009 the unemployment is 10.2% and is expected to average 10% in 2010⁴ ,⁵) it's a wonder people aren't rioting in the street; Greek workers seem to be the most notable exception. Much, if not all, of this helped shape my current feelings about the State, politics and even Capitalism and it has been a major factor in shaping my decision to join the IWW.

While the IWW is not a political union and refuses to align itself with any political philosophy, I consider myself an anarchist and view my decision to join as statement against the current Capitalist system. Before this economic crisis, I had never heard of the IWW and was not remotely interested in joining a union. Growing up, unions and unionism always seemed to be looked down upon by my family as some sort of coercive entity in which dues were taken against a workers consent. As a kid I had a job as a bagger at Safeway and was never fond of the idea of having union dues taken from my paycheck; Nobody ever explained why the dues were important or what benefit I might be getting from them. From my perspective, the dues were just another tax.

As I began studying anarchist theory and principles I kept

⁴http://money.cnn.com/2009/11/06/news/economy/jobs_october/?postversion=2009110609

⁵ <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601103&sid=aDc9YYP0m09M>

running into references to the IWW and stories of the struggles of the early Wobblies. Eventually I became curious. What I found, was that the IWW espoused many of the same ideas that I've come to hold:

- The IWW is voluntary; all are welcome and are free to leave at anytime and no one is forced into membership.
- The IWW is opposed to war and militarism.
<http://www.iww.org/culture/antiwar>,
<http://www.iww.org/culture/official/qanda#18>,
<http://www.iww.org/en/node/4870>
- The IWW doesn't advocate the use of force.
<http://www.iww.org/culture/official/qanda#13>
- The IWW believes in Direct Action to win its demands.
<http://www.iww.org/culture/official/qanda#19>
- The IWW is against wage slavery
<http://www.iww.org/en/node/4574>
- Finally, the IWW is a non-political union and doesn't use the State to gain concessions. (See Direct Action).
<http://www.iww.org/culture/articles/Gaylord1.shtml>
- "The ballot box is simply a capitalist concession. Dropping pieces of paper into a hole in a box never did achieve emancipation for the working class, and to my thinking it never will." --Father Hagerty at the founding convention of the IWW.

The final realization that lead up to my decision to join the IWW was that I **am** a member of the working class. It's very easy to get caught up in a form of class analysis paralysis, which I did, and think "What is this mortgage holding, child having, corporate job working, suburban idiot doing joining a union?" I used to think that because I sit at a desk all day and test software I was somehow not a member of the working class and didn't need to be part of a union. Here's some news: If you don't own the means of

production, you're a member of the working class.

"Fellow workers! The Industrial Workers of the World is going to organize the entire working class. What is the working class, fellow workers? The working class is anyone who has a boss and works for wages. Always remember, class is not defined by income level but by your relationship to the means of production. If you don't own the tools of your production, if you don't own your workplace, if all you're doing is selling your labor energy to get a paycheck, it doesn't matter if you're a college professor or a ditch digger - you're in the working class and better be proud of it. Why, the middle class is just a joke made up by the bosses to keep us fighting against each other." —Yours for the O.B.U., Utah Phillips, X342908; **The industrial Workers of the World: Its First 100 Years**, pg vi.

My introduction to the idea of wage slavery happened when my boss asked me to work on a solution for a customer with which I had moral and ethical problems; I declined the request. Because of this request and fear of losing my job, I began looking for a another job in a down economy. While looking for other employment, I was quickly reminded of the current economic problems facing many people and of my obligations as a husband, father and mortgage holder. Plus, as my wife's job was beginning to look uncertain, the idea of wage slavery became cemented in my mind. While looking for jobs, I was reminded of a section in Kevin Carson's Book Mutualist Studies in Political Economy, where he sums up central banking's promotion of a "natural" level of unemployment and labor's willingness to put up with crap from management during difficult times:

"a major requirement of finance capitalists is to avoid inflation, in order to allow predictable returns on

investment. This is ostensibly the primary purpose of the Federal Reserve and other central banks. But at least as important is the role of the central banks in promoting what they consider a "natural" level of unemployment--until the 1990s around six per cent. The reason is that when unemployment goes much below this figure, labor becomes increasingly uppity and presses for better pay and working conditions and more autonomy. Workers are willing to take a lot less crap off the boss when they know they can find a job at least as good the next day. **On the other hand, nothing is so effective in "getting your mind right" as the knowledge that people are lined up to take your job."**

Additionally, working eight years at a job listening to management constantly tout the mantra of "do more with less" and their tendency to treat workers/contractors as disposable capital, coupled with the myriad of idiotic management decisions, makes one wonder why most corporate workers don't shoot or hang themselves in their cubical. Once again, Kevin Carson sums it nicely when he states:

"These large corporations have the internal characteristics of a planned economy. Information flow is systematically distorted up the chain of command, by each rung in the hierarchy telling the next one up what it wants to hear. And each rung of management, based on nonsensical data (not to mention absolutely no direct knowledge of the production process) sends irrational and ass-brained decisions back down the chain of command. The only thing that keeps large, hierarchical organizations going is the fact that the productive laborers on the bottom actually know something about their own

jobs, and have enough sense to ignore policy and lie about it so that production can stagger along despite the interference of the bosses.

When a senior manager decides to adopt a "reform" or to "improve" the process in some way, he typically bases his decision on the glowing recommendations of senior managers in other organizations who have adopted similar policies. Of course, those senior managers have no real knowledge themselves of the actual results of the policy, because their own information is based on filtered data from below. Not only does the senior management of an organization live in an imaginary world as a result of the distorted information from below; its imaginary world is further cut off from reality by the professional culture it shares with senior management everywhere else."

Because of all of the above and a personal need to show solidarity with other members of the working class, I made the leap. I am a worker! I am a Wobbly!



John Goodman is a technical worker, gardener and home wine maker, living in the Bay Area with his partner and child.



ALL Wobbly

James Tuttle, X370920

My goal with this sketch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) is to make a Wobbly out of you, dear reader. If I fail in this goal, I hope that I at least present the IWW as an organization to work alongside.

Why is the IWW important and why are they a revolutionary force for Left-Libertarians? According to Fred W. Thompson and Jon Bekken, “[The IWW] was started because there was obvious need for a union of, by, and for the working class, and hopes that it might so conduct its affairs that locals and internationals would join, and great masses of unorganized workers become organized through its efforts.” This sentiment can be extended to the “great masses of unorganized” political refugees who feel the jackboot of Empire pressing on their throats or the soft tyranny of liberal statism dulling their senses and eroding their connection to humanity.

The IWW is a Union, its focus is struggle and its battleground is the point of production on a terrain of economics, but this is only the tip of an iceberg. The idea of Solidarity Powered Industrial Unionism is far from limited to defending the working class from state maintained conditions of *subordination, exclusion and deprivation* for capitalist profit. The culture and proud history of the IWW and its core commitment to Direct Action extends to mutual aid, charity, the arts, decentralized production, job training, colonial subversion, ect, ect... Emile Pouget reveals “Direct action puts paid to the age of miracles – miracles from Heaven, miracles from the State – and, in contraposition to hopes vested in ‘providence’ (no matter what they may be) it announces that it will act upon the maxim: salvation lies

within ourselves!” In other words if it needs to be done and you see it, then roll up **YOUR** selves and get to work, the Fellow Workers of IWW will have your back.

For those libertarians who are rightfully suspicious “...of any enterprise which requires a change of clothes,” they must understand that *solidarity*, as anarchists understand it, and to clearly distinguish and distance it from *party loyalty*, is a cultural manifestation. The Swiss Historian Jacob Burckhardt describes culture as “...the sum total of those mental developments which take place spontaneously and lay no claim to universal or compulsive authority.” The IWW slogan *An Injury to One is an Injury to All* is a classic expression of what solidarity feels like. The same feeling felt by libertarians when a new tax is levied or law passed; or when another excessive police beating is caught on tape or victimless “criminal” is convicted for self medication; or when a government budget deficit exceeds a trillion or the U.S. dollar suddenly drops in value. Nothing has happened to you, but in that moment someone somewhere is on the government rack or slab and you feel next in line. We are all next in line, unless...

The IWW is a class based “fighting” union organized industrially for radical and cosmopolitan ends.
But what does this mean?

From the *Preamble*:

“The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people, and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.”

The IWW recognizes that within “modern” society there are

two classes whose interests are at odds, that everyone can theoretically be sorted into either one or the other and that this relationship does not need to exist. Nay! It should not exist. Utah Phillips gives us some perspective:

“Fellow workers! The Industrial Workers of the World is going to organize the entire working class. What is the working class, fellow workers? The working class is anyone who has a boss and works for wages. Always remember, class is not defined by income level but by your relationship to the means of production. If you don’t own the tools of your production, if you don’t own your workplace, if all you’re doing is selling your labor energy to get a paycheck, it doesn’t matter if you’re a college professor or a ditch digger - you’re in the working class and better be proud of it. Why, the middle class is just a joke made up by the bosses to keep us fighting against each other.”

This sentiment should be nothing new or shocking for Left-Libertarians; our intellectual lineage, the radical French liberals of the early 19th century, can claim the honor of introducing the concept “class conflict” to modern political discourse. Samuel Edward Konkin III places “class analysis” in a central position for agorist theory.

“Agorism (revolutionary market anarchism) and Marxism agree on the following premise: human society can be divided into at least two classes; one class is characterized by its control of the State and its extraction of the unearned wealth from the other class. Furthermore, agorists and Marxist will often point to the same people as members of the overclass and underclass, especially agreeing on what each considers the most blatant cases.”

Butler Shaffer describes a similar situation as a “division of purpose.”

“What begins as a simple *division of labor*, a system of specialization designed to allow the work of the group to get done more efficiently, becomes a *division of purpose*, with group members segregated into a chain of command.”

Kevin Carson points out the inherent antagonism found in hierarchical relationships.

“Conflict of interest is built into a hierarchy. The relationship between any higher and lower levels in a hierarchy is, by definition, zero-sum. Those in authority benefit by shifting work downward while appropriating rewards for themselves.”

This condition of class antagonism can be difficult to see from the Left and the Right. Voltairine de Cleyre, in a semi-famous debate, lifts the veil to the assumed free market conditions between worker and capitalist and paints a target on the source of this disparity: government granted privilege.

“Laborers are free to compete among themselves, and so are capitalists to a certain extent. But between laborers and capitalists there is no competition whatever, because through governmental privilege granted to capital, ..., the owners of it are enabled to keep the laborers dependent on them for employment, so making the condition of wage-subjection perpetual. So long as one man, or class of men, are able to prevent others from working for themselves because they cannot obtain the means of production or capitalize their own products, so long those others are not free to compete freely with those to whom privilege gives the means.”

The IWW is a “fighting” union simply because it picks fights; it looks for them, it listens for them, it runs to them and it starts them. I have scare quoted “fighting” because, historically, the IWW has been one of the more peaceful

unions. Its method of “fighting” is with “mental dynamite” with “their fists in their pockets” or “Sabotage: Bum work for Bum Pay.” As Dan Georgakas describes:

“The reality was that the IWW consciously used ‘direct action’ and ‘sabotage’ somewhat ambiguously, in much the way civil rights activists of the 1960s found it useful to employ the vague but menacing phrase ‘by any means necessary.’”

The “I,” or Industrial, in IWW has several connotations. Lucy Parsons, a founding member of the IWW, states that labor organizations, in order to be an effective counter power to capitalist machinations, must evolve or mirror trends in capital organizations.

“The American Federation of Labor is doomed: first, because of its own inherent rottenness; and second, because, in common with all other craft organizations, it has outgrown its usefulness, and must give way to the next step in evolution, which is the Industrial Union, which proposes to organize along industrial lines, the same as capital is organized.”

Industrial, as it is indicated in the *Preamble*, affirms the working classes commitment to carrying on production, not in spite of the “employing class,” but in the absence of them; that their existence is superfluous and burdensome and we can do it better without them.

“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.”

Industrial also gives us a glimpse at the revolutionary potential possible to the “One Big Union,” the power of the “General Strike.” Imagine whole sections of economic activity, up and down the line of production, stopping in solidarity with striking workers who have been “Warned that

the company refuses to allow sick leave, even if the worker has a legitimate doctor's note. Taking a day off sick, even with a note, results in a penalty point. A worker with six points faces dismissal" or "Made to work a compulsory 10½ hour overnight shift at the end of a five-day week. The overnight shift, which runs from Saturday evening to 5am on Sunday, means they have to work every day of the week."

Another "Industrial," as Roderick T. Long distinguishes, is "... the sense of championing what [libertarian and individualist anarchist thinkers and activists of the 19th century] called the industrial mode of social organization, based on voluntary cooperation and mutual benefit, over the militant mode, based on hierarchy, regimentation, and violence" I see many similarities between the sympathies and audacities of the Radical Fringe Liberals and Libertarians of the 19th century and the Radical Fringe Labor Organizers of the 20th. To support my case consider these statements:

- "In all the revolutions, there have always been but two parties opposing each other; that of the people who wish to live by their own labor, and that of those who would live by the labor of others..."
- "As soon as men who do not belong to the dominant caste discover the secret of creating wealth by their own industry, and as soon as nobles have lost the power to get wealth other than by giving something of equal value in return, the former who are accustomed to order, to work and to economy increase constantly in numbers, whilst the latter group, not knowing how to produce anything and basing their glory on magnificent consumption, will be reduced in a short time to complete decadence."¹

•“The State always represents the organized interests of a dominate class; therefore the subjection of other classes may be said to benefit the State and their emancipation may be opposed as a danger to the State. It is evident from the very nature of the State that its interests are opposed to those of Society...”

•“I propose in the following discussion to call one's own labor and the equivalent exchange of one's own labor for the labor of others, the 'economic means' for the satisfaction of needs, while the unrequited appropriation of the labor of others will be called the 'political means.'”

•“Somebody gets the surplus wealth that labor produces and does not consume. ... The usurer is the Somebody, and the State is his protector. Usury is the serpent gnawing at labor's vitals, and only liberty can detach and kill it. Give laborers their liberty, and they will keep their wealth. As for the Somebody, he, stripped of his power to steal, must either join their ranks or starve.”

If these statements were not issued by Wobblies or were before the time of the IWW, then they would be reason enough to set up something like them.

The IWW is radical down to its founding. From the *Preamble*:

“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 strategy and tactics adopted by Fellow Workers, besides mass civil disobedience, e.g. reading the U.S. Constitution out loud on street corners, were, as Kevin Carson points out,

more akin to “a form of asymmetric warfare.” Slowdowns, Work to Rule, Whistle Blowing, Good Work Strikes, Sick-Ins, etc, etc, to name a few pioneered examples. The IWW’s commitment to radicalism and opposition to reformism placed them at odds not only with the State but with competing Labor Unions and Organizations.

“The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping 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 have interests in common with their employers.”

And finally, the Wobbly worker is a cosmopolitan worker. The IWW sends missionaries, if you will, all over the world. This has been a focus of the One Big Union from the beginning as Lucy Parsons records in her notes the *Afternoon Sessions*:

“...remember that we are here as one brotherhood and one sisterhood, as one humanity, with a responsibility to the downtrodden and the oppressed of all humanity, it matters not under what flag or in what country they happened to be born. Let us have that idea of Thomas Paine, that ‘The world is my country, and mankind are my countrymen.’”

This commitment to global solidarity with all members of the working class bestows a “progressive” honor, admitting young, old, black, white, male, female, citizens, undocumented workers, skilled, unskilled, gay, straight, etc, etc, none of it matters at the point of production; if you worked for a wage and wanted a say in your toil, a Wobbly you could be. The more the merrier! Solidarity is not a sword, it’s a ground swell. This is not to mean that is was all

merriment. The cosmopolitan commitment has made the IWW unpopular with Politicians and Generals. One of the bylaws of the O.B.U. is that you cannot hold political office and union membership; it's the working class that should get your full attention. And as the famous slogan, "No War, but Class War," attests the IWW is an anti-war organization, Dan Georgakas illustrates referencing World War I:

"The preponderant majority of Wobblies felt the war to be a purely capitalistic struggle for economic leverage that no worker should support.

And why should they? What does a bomb or bullet do, besides diverting scarce resources from productive ends to destructive ones and killing a Fellow Worker on the other side of an imaginary line?

This is only a sketch of the IWW, it doesn't go into the many amazing and charismatic personalities that put the One Big Union on the map: Lucy Parsons, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Helen Keller, Big Bill Haywood, Vincent St. John, Frank Little, Joe Hill, Ben Fletcher, Carlo Tresca, and the list goes on and on.

This sketch also doesn't cover the infighting or the failures; the trial and tribulations, but it doesn't have to. "Knowing that humans must always err, the IWWs dared to err on the side of liberty." The IWW is an idea and it is kept alive in the hearts of workers like you and me. We might not get the 15 minutes in the spot light, but we will get are day in the sun. Together.

If it's Equality or Liberty that you want, Solidarity is how we get and keep it.

James is a Left-Libertarian Anarchist, Co-Editor of the ALLiance Journal, , Friend of Corvus Editions and a dues paying Fellow Worker.

Wobbly, And I Won't Fall Down

Thomas L. Knapp

Long before I self-identified as a libertarian (of the "left" or any other variety), I became fascinated with the Industrial Workers of the World, primarily through the science fiction stylings of Mack Reynolds (*Deathwish World*, etc.).

I'd always been pre-disposed toward political activism of the protest/monkey-wrench variety – the first overtly political act I recall committing to, in junior high school, was walking through the Post Office once a week or so and making all the draft registration cards disappear. I'm sure they had an endless supply on tap, but in 8th grade it really felt like I was sticking it to The Man.

As an adolescent and young adult, my political orientation was vaguely "left" and rigorously anti-"right." I counter-demonstrated at Ku Klux Klan rallies and at conservative rallies against Southwest Missouri State University's production of Larry Kramer's "The Normal Heart," a play about the early days of the AIDS epidemic. To the extent that I "joined" groups, they tended to be either temporary/ad hoc issues-based efforts or "send a check in the mail and consider the good deed done" things (Greenpeace, Amnesty International, etc.).

When I came across IWW, first in fiction and then as a real organization, what I found immediately attractive about it was its . . . solidity. The whole idea of a permanent (or at least long-lived) group with an over-arching vision of society and "organizers" running around promoting that vision on the ground was new to me. The only kind of groups I was used to seeing that from were the political parties, and even as a fairly conventional "leftist" I already distrusted them

and was beginning to distrust the whole idea of the state itself.

Around that time I also began to discover libertarian ideas through an odd concatenation of readings. William F. Buckley's *Up From Liberalism* led me to more of his stuff, where I noticed mentions of Ayn Rand that implied she disagreed with him on the same things I did, and agreed with him on the things I was deciding were true.

I ended up coming into the libertarian movement "from the right" via Buckley and Rand, rather than from the direction of the fuzzy leftism I'd grown up in, and when I arrived that movement seemed to be of an overwhelmingly "right" orientation itself. This was the height of the Clinton era, remember, and the political side of the movement usually attacks the party holding the White House from what looks, to the unschooled observer, like the opposite end of the left-right political spectrum.

At the same time all this was happening, I became a union worker. I had two job offers in front of me. One was to uproot myself, move across the state, and become a government "corrections officer." The other was a factory job ten minutes from home. The government job paid better to start, but the factory job looked like it had better long-term potential. I didn't have to move, and I wouldn't be working for – hurting people, and possibly killing some of them for – the government.

I was ambivalent toward the idea of unions.

On the one hand, the money looked good.

On the other hand, although I'd been brought up in a union

household (my father is a retired Teamster who's kicking himself in the ass to this day for voting for Reagan in 1980 because of the PATCO air traffic controller mass firing), my Randian reading and the "right libertarian" rhetoric of the day had left me pretty thoroughly indoctrinated to the notion that "big business" represented the "free market" and unions represented some kind of heathen coercive socialism.

Long story short: I became a United Food and Commercial Workers member, served on several workplace committees and as a steward, and decided that the only thing I didn't like about unions was their tendency to get involved in the political process in a way that struck me as suicidal (e.g. supporting crappy government programs like Social Security which give workers *just enough of a security blanket* to keep them from driving a hard bargain with their employers for something better).

Over time I developed an understanding of unions as, contra the "right-libertarian" arguments against them, market entities (for example, see <http://www.libertyforall.net/?p=753>) . . . even when, as in the case of the IWW, they may not really see themselves that way.

Also over time, as I began to understand libertarianism to embody certain core "left" principles (for example, the class theory of Comte/Dunoyer), I felt strongly enough about the matter that I wanted to continue to belong to a union, even though I was by then self-employed.

The death of Texas Libertarian Party activist Bruce Baechler put the IWW right back front and center in my mind when I read, in a movement obituary, that he'd been a Wobbly activist himself.

So, I got my red card and started paying dues. I'm not an active member at the moment, because the IWW's bylaws forbid members to hold political or party office, but when and if I'm in compliance with that rule again, I'll rejoin.

For me, being a Wobbly is part and parcel of being a libertarian.

While I don't necessarily agree that the IWW's preferred mode of economic organization (anarcho-syndicalism) is appropriate to all groups or situations (I foresee a society in which small, consensual groups come to their own voluntary arrangements), I've personally found it appropriate to my own (my "day job," Rational Review News Digest, is a unanimous consent anarcho-syndicalist cooperative, and two of its five editors are or have been IWW members). I don't want to force it on anyone, but it works for me and in practicing it I pick no one's pocket and break no one's leg (as Jefferson would say).

As an extension of that viewpoint, while I don't necessarily agree with IWW that the wage system of labor must be eliminated, I do agree that that system *as it exists today* is shot through with anti-market distortions due to state intervention on behalf of corporate (and other government-privileged) interests. Even if a wage system prevails in the future, that system needs to have been torn down along with the state and rebuilt on the basis of voluntary market interactions untainted by institutionalized coercion. A sound house can't be built on a cracked foundation.

Two things I heartily agree with IWW on:

First, the state must go!

Secondly, the most likely way to successfully rid ourselves of it is through non-political, even anti-political, means – the IWW's tools of preference are "building the new society in the shell of the old," a phrase which adherents of Samuel E. Konkin's agorism/counter-economics/Movement of the Libertarian Left will surely recognize, and the general strike.

When I say that I, as a "left-libertarian," am also a proud, red card-carrying Wobbly, I hope you won't take that to mean that all "left-libertarians" are like me, or would even approve of the affiliation, or that I'm insisting they should or must.

"Left-libertarian" is a label that gets slapped onto a variety of tendencies and positions. It bridges the chasms – or possibly just blurs the lines – that separate politics from anti-politics, anarchism from minarchism, capitalism from socialism, collectivism from individualism. Georgist "geo-libertarians" and Konkinite "agorists" and partyarch "Freedom Democrats" all lay claim to the mantle of "left-libertarianism," and damned if I can convincingly argue that any of them are more or less entitled to wear it than the others.

But for me, my red card is my membership card in the libertarian left.

C4SS News Analyst Thomas L. Knapp is a News Analyst with the Center for a Stateless Society, a long-time libertarian activist and the author of [Writing the Libertarian Op-Ed](#), an e-booklet which shares the methods underlying his more than 100 published op-ed pieces in mainstream print media. Knapp publishes [Rational Review News Digest](#), a daily news and commentary roundup for the freedom movement.

Anarchism and the Labor Movement

Anna Morgenstern

In honor of May Day, I decided to write something about how labor interests relate to anarchism. Traditionally, of course, the labor movement has been associated with, variously, anarchism and communism and various other flavors of socialism. But I think only anarchism can give the working class what they really want. Conversely, I think that the labor movement has been tainted, unfairly, in the eyes of many individualists by its forays into more statist varieties. If you're truly an individualist radical, you should be down with the liberation of the laborer, because that's where the rubber really meets the road. It is not labor who has given us the the sort of statism that we suffer under today, but capital, in collusion with the state and the trade union "labor monopolists".

Historically, in America, it makes sense to look at two strains of labor agitation, industrial unionism and trade unionism, originally called craft unionism. A lot of the features of craft unionism are inherently statist and monopolist. They have often been called "capitalist unions" by the more radical industrial unionists, notably Big Bill Haywood, leader of the IWW. The craft unions were organized around skilled trades, carried what would be prohibitive fees for an unskilled worker, and often would not admit someone without some sort of waiting period and/or various proofs and trials, creating a sort of "labor monopoly". The craft unions are the ones that led the focus on getting the state to pass laws protecting labor, and in fact, this was their primary criticism of the industrial unions, that by not involving themselves with the state, they were essentially ineffective.

The craft unions were, while not loved by big business, the

part of the labor movement that big business was willing to compromise with in the crafting of the regulatory state-capitalism of the 1900s. This was acknowledged as such by the General Managers Association: “We can handle the railway brotherhoods, but we cannot handle the A.R.U.... We cannot handle Debs. We have got to wipe him out.” The ARU was an industrial union of railroad workers organized by Eugene Debs. The ARU strike was broken by the Federal Government.

The industrial unions on the other hand were organized around entire industries at first, such as the Western Federation of Miners. Their dues were minimal, and often set on a sliding scale, and they admitted basically anyone who worked in a particular industry. The industrial unions found themselves in a conflict with the trade unions, who would essentially “scab around” their strikes and other direct actions. To a large extent, the early industrial unions had a history of failure because of sabotage by the craft unions working with Big Business, and when they were initially successful, by direct government intervention in strikes.

Eventually the IWW was formed as “One Big Union” which would take on anyone who worked for wages. The IWW’s rhetoric often sounded to modern ears much like communist rhetoric, but in practice, it was essentially an anarchist organization. Some IWW members were openly “anarchists”, but even the ones that weren’t, were opposed to “parliamentary socialism” – i.e. social democratism. They did not press for government intervention on their behalf, and they believed that if the government did pass laws favorable to labor, it would be only in response to direct action. This is basically the Spoonerian idea that the government is at best irrelevant to human action. (Such laws of course would be rarely, if ever enforced.) When they were striking, they would

actually set up small shops to sell goods and services to their members, because the shops in town blackballed them. And when Eugene Debs gave up industrial unionism to become a political Socialist, he was roundly criticized by the Industrial Unions.

“...[Debs] had left them without a fighting industrial union and forced them to enter the scab craft movements after he changed the ARU to a political movement...” – The IWW: Its First Seventy Years

One objection that many market anarchists have toward unions is that they essentially survive on violently preventing “scabbery”. But if that were really the case for industrial unions, the trade unions could not have sabotaged the early industrial union movement such as they did. But consider also, that the businessmen used Pinkertons (the early equivalent of say, Blackwater) and direct government intervention to break strikes. Then consider that from the laborer’s point of view, the property they worked on was truly homesteaded by them, not some abstract joint-stock company that “claimed” the land out of nowhere. But the IWW’s main weapon, after a while, was actually sabotage. This is where the familiar image of the Sab Cat or Sabotabby came from. Worker sabotage actually does not break any libertarian theory of implicit contract. The boss and the worker, unless put in writing, owe each other nothing. If the boss wants to fire someone they can, if the worker wants to spend his time doing anything but work, he can. The bosses were deathly afraid of sabotage because it was very hard to discover, and very hard to fight, unlike a strike which was visible, obvious and could bring in direct government intervention. As Ayn Rand said, interestingly enough, “You can’t force a mind”.

A lot of the features of “Unions” that libertarians and market anarchists object to are actually features of one form of unionism which was used by state capitalism to co-opt and undermine the other, more anarchistic and liberty-minded form of unionism, which was eventually destroyed (or at least attenuated into ineffectualism) by our least-favorite president, Woodrow Wilson (he of the signing of the Federal Reserve Act) during the “Red Scare” of the 1910s. He used his vast wartime powers to imprisonment most of the leadership of the industrial unions on grounds of sedition and/or undermining the war effort.

In some ways, if you see Trade Unions as labor’s form of monopolistic capitalism, then the Industrial Unions were labor’s form of agorist organization. Completely unofficial, unrecognized and spontaneously organized in order to gain back the portion of their labor that under a free market (where all property would have to be homesteaded) would rightfully be theirs.

Wages, essentially, are a factor of the supply of labor in relation to the supply of capital. The more capital there is looking for labor to work with it, the more valuable labor is relative to capital. In a free market, capital could not be monopolized and would accumulate broadly and rapidly, thus increasing the workers share of the product continually, asymptotically toward about say 95% or so, depending on external factors, and the “entrepreneur’s wage”.

Under statism, most actions performed by the state seek to reduce the overall capital outside of the hands of the “insiders”, thus making the remaining capital in the hands of the insiders more valuable, and suppressing wage rates. This is true in a social democracy as well, only there is a “floor” placed on this wage suppression, and trade unions have more

power. But it doesn't change the scarcity of capital in relation to labor, it may be better to some extent than a liberal democracy for laborers, but it is no worker's paradise, as long as private capital exists alongside statism.

If the state nationalizes an industry, then things become worse in the long run for the laborer, because you can't get blood from a stone. A government worker will do well in a largely capitalist system, because their wages will be high relative to other workers, and there is enough wealth produced outside of the government to absorb and give to the government workers. But as wealth creation declines overall, there is less and less for the government worker to absorb. Of course the higher ups will keep on taking a nice piece for themselves as long as they can, so you end up with a labor hierarchy and direct, violent exploitation of the lower classes worse than anything under a liberal democracy.

The only path for labor as a whole to get what they really want is anarchism, that is, an end to violently imposed oligopoly. And the industrial unionist movement understood this, if not in so many words, back in the late 1800s. We anarchists, especially market anarchists, are their philosophical descendants.

Anna O. Morgenstern has been an anarchist of one stripe or another for almost 30 years. Her intellectual interests include economic history, social psychology and voluntary organization theory. She likes pina coladas, but not getting caught in the rain.

On Donning the Mask, And Watching the Fall of the Apocalypse

Travis

I recently attended a rally against police violence and joined some friends in donning the black mask of the anarchist. It was the first time I'd "masked up." I felt silly. Like a really tired cartoon character that you can't believe is still on television. It's like finding that "Saved by the Bell" is STILL on after all these years, and they all still go to the same high school. I did not feel heroic. I did not feel romantic. I did not have some surge of anarcho-heroism wherein I felt deeply connected to a larger community of resistance some 10,000 years old since the advent of civilization. I felt tired, silly, and useless.

And part of me still does.

But, thankfully this is one of those ironic essays where I start by being all cynical about the topic and then put a positive spin it. BAM! Betcha didn't see that shit coming!

I'm walking with my six comrades in the streets filled with other angry people, and we're shouting and raising our fists. People give us special glances because of the masks; they're wary, or curious. We continue shouting and shaking our fists. Although there are only six or seven of us, we are particularly loud in what is a sizeable march.

The march continues to the city college. Naturally, our group is a bit bitter about going to a COLLEGE to protest police violence against the people, but we grit our teeth and shout and swear. There are speakers. Prominent members of the civil rights movement and history of our city; a couple are running for office. They argue that it's just a couple of bad

apples. We shout that it's a rotten barrel. We are sure to swear a lot. The "leadership" physically pulls people off the podium if they so much as swear. One from our group is physically stopped when he shouts to the crowd from the podium, interrupting the attorney general, "How many of you are victims of the prison system?" A dozen hands shoot up, an angry murmur emanating from them.

"Excuse me," a man says who has just approached me.

"Hi," I say.

"Why are you all wearing masks," he asks, smiling.

Aw, fuck. Now I have to explain the mask. I feel like a dumbass even as I say it.

"Well, basically we're here in solidarity with those whose lives have been affected by cop violence, and the mask is a sign of anonymity, community, and resistance."

"Cool," he says, "thank-you," patting me on the shoulder and shaking my hand.

I have several encounters like this from different people. They seem...appreciative. And then I see a little light. A reason for the silly cliché. In the interest of full disclosure, I am a market anarchist. Agorism is the highest form of resistance, the most cohesive, and the most practical. And on this day, I realize I have donned this ridiculous costume to provide a service. It is an investment, of sorts. We are helping voice the rage of so many people in our community. My little group of friends, who have come together voluntarily, are giving a voice to those of us who want to shout at the politicians, cursing the system loudly and abrasively, like bulls

thrashing around in a glass shop. There is a demand to channel some raw, gnarly rage, and on this day we are providing a service that helps do that. And given the warm smiles and thank-you's we receive, there are some pleased clients. They are the individuals I am here for. I feel like a fool, and they seem to feel good. Not a bad trade, economically speaking.

Now, about the whole “Apocalypse” part of this essay. Why did it feel so silly? Why did I feel like such a walking cartoon character, old and worn out? The same question can be applied to the notion of apocalyptic culture, like ours. Disaster movies help satisfy an obsession with our own doom. The culture of civilization is inherently self-destructive, and we know it. I've been asking myself recently why we don't seem to learn from our mistakes, if we even remember them at all. 10,000 years of civilization rising and falling, and we still haven't learned to abandon it. What the fuck, yo?

Now to be optimistic. I think, MAYBE, we might be learning. That that's why the rally felt like a statist joke, that that's why the anarchist mask is so damn dumb. The old ways, again this is a big fucking MAYBE, are being made obsolete. The transition out of civilization is already underway and we all know it, on some level. It's there in all our myths, ancient and contemporary; we are obsessed with our own dooms because we know and remember the end game of civilization.

But we have an opportunity to make this our final apocalypse, and it is easier than it seems.

Showing a friend or neighbor how to fix something, grow something, heal something, is an invisible force whose sky is the limit, and I believe we are moving in that direction. The

agora is bubbling for absolute freedom, and personally, naïve as it may sound, as silly and foolish as it may sound (and may be), I think we might just pull this shit off.

And it could be fun and hilarious as hell.

Travis, aka "G20 Sided Die", co-hosts the internet radio show Bottom Up Radio Network (B.U.R.N.) every Sunday at <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/rabble>. He enjoys swearing, gaming, and agorism. He blogs at Trinkets, Steam and Gadgets (<http://sensiblereason.blogspot.com/>).

Anarchism – What's in a Name?

Melanie Pinkert

With all the stigma attached to the word anarchism, why call yourself an anarchist?

Anarchists are bound to ask themselves that question at some point. Perhaps you run across another news report where anarchists are blamed for some random violence. Maybe some pundit compares anarchists to terrorists. Maybe it's the constant use of the word anarchy as a synonym for violent chaos. Or maybe you're just tired of explaining it to people. I understand.

But you do lose something when you lose the word anarchism.

For decades, brilliant minds have been writing about anarchism and what it means. When someone wants to understand anarchism, I can point to stacks of writing. If I refuse to call myself an anarchist, where do I point to? Are we going to rewrite all that theory under a new name? What a waste.

And what about the history of anarchism. The most difficult thing to convince people is that anarchism can actually work. Specific, successful anarchist examples exist. And being able to point people to those is one of the best tools we have. Yes, there have also been many failures. But those may be even more important. If we don't study and learn from the mistakes of the past, we will repeat them.

Why let other people define the word for us? The root of the word anarchy simply means “without leaders.” Some people cannot imagine a world without leaders being anything

but violent and chaotic. Some people benefit too much from hierarchy to embrace a theory that takes that power from them. Why should we allow those people to define the terms?

Would it really matter what we called our beliefs? Does anyone think that if we believed the same things but called them a different name that people will be less suspicious of our ideas? Liberals in the U.S. recently re-branded themselves. Now they are called “progressives.” And now conservatives vilify “progressive” just the same way they used to vilify liberal.

Most importantly, we need you. If you are an anarchist who hesitates to embrace the term, then it is probably because you don’t want to be associated with chaos, violence, instability, or terrorism. That makes you the ideal ambassador for anarchism. If only those people who want to be associated with violence call themselves anarchists, then the cycle perpetuates and people who could learn from anarchist thought won’t go there.

You might be surprised how incredibly easy negative stereotypes can be to overcome. When who you are doesn’t match up with the propaganda, people who meet you will start to question the propaganda. The more anarchists a person comes in contact with, the less that person will be able to hold on to the negative stereotypes.



Six Questions with Gary Chartier

What personal experiences have been the most influential on your thinking?

I assume you mean my political and philosophical thinking, yes? I think I'd say:

-my relationship with my dad—both because his own personal attitudes and, in general, personal politics were anti-authoritarian, so that he was, in this sense, a model, and because he was himself a strong personality whose authority I resented.

-growing up in a small Protestant group whose members anticipated widespread, government-sponsored persecution (and had experienced some legal disabilities in the past)—which meant that I acquired at an early age a suspicious attitude toward the state and toward the use of state power to enforce moral and religious views

-my awareness of hierarchical and restrictive tendencies within that same religious community, tendencies against which I reacted and my reaction against which solidified my general anti-authoritarianism

-my relationship with my mom who was in general a very warm, accepting person

What essay, article or book has been the most influential on your thinking?

Again, if politics is in view, I'd say

-Stephen R. L. Clark's Civil Peace and Sacred Order helped to remove the patina of legitimacy from the state and to make clear that no actual state was grounded in consent

-Kevin Carson's Organization Theory gave me a window into an exciting synthesis of ideas while prompting me to read

Carson's other work and so to discover a way to be simultaneously a real leftist and a real libertarian.

What projects or events do you feel have the most potential to bring a social change, for the better, in the world today?

-Practical projects that enable people to live off the state's radar and without attracting its attention, while exchanging valuable goods and services (LETSs, local certification systems, other counter-institutions)

-Efforts to opt out of the control of existing states entirely and to put more attractive alternatives on the table (the Free State Project, seasteading, etc.)

What would you like to see happen in the left-libertarian movement?

Effective outreach to non-libertarian radicals (leftists, Greens, even some conservatives) who can be made to see the power and value of libertarian ideas precisely as leftist ideas. By all means, LLs should be talking to other libertarians. But the real influence of the LL movement will be felt when LLs shape the agenda for non-libertarian leftists (and others) who are open to LL ideas.

What area of left-libertarian theory do you think still needs work?

-Philosophical types (like me) will continue enjoying the opportunity to spell out and defend (or attack) alternate theoretical grounds for LL normative claims. I think there is probably more agreement on specific issues than there is on philosophical underpinnings. That's a good thing, in one sense, but it does mean there's fertile ground for continued reflection and analysis.

-I'm pleased to see that an issue of Roderick's The Industrial

Radical will focus on the issue of non-human animals. It seems to me that this really is an issue worth exploring further, both at the moral level and in terms of the kinds of legal norms the members of a community in a stateless society might or might not want to support where animals were concerned.

-Most, though obviously not all, LLs tend to be NAP libertarians. But the NAP presupposes an understanding of the acquisition, maintenance, extent, and loss of property rights. Even if one endores a Lockean view of how people acquire such rights, it's worth asking about just what the bundle of rights one acquires really amounts to (what about easements? what about emergencies and other cases of great need?)? Obviously, this intersects with the question of just what the theoretical grounding of an LL position might be. In any event, without answering these questions you can't determine whether conduct counts as aggressive or not.

-There's an interesting conversation to be had, I think, about the issue of legal pluralism in a stateless society. Contra Rothbard, such a society isn't going to feature uniform agreement on some sort of Libertarian Code. Norms, rules, and institutions are going to be develop from the ground up. When is a given approach just an instance of interesting variety, and when is it oppressive?

-Large-scale environmental issues raise interesting questions about tort law, both morally and operationally. What's the right response when it's clear that a major injury has occurred as a result of choices by responsible agents but there's no meaningful way of determining which of multiple parties might be responsible for a given loss. Rothbard thinks that, absent clear evidence of causal responsibility, we just have to treat the injury as a given, part of the background conditions of our action, comparable to an aspect of nature, and

proceed, but this seems to leave a lot of people in serious trouble.

Other than anarchism, what else occupies your time?

- hanging out with my sweet and lovely wife
- being an academic bureaucrat and a teacher
- relishing spicy vegetarian food (Mexican, Indian, Thai, and Italian cuisine, not to mention Doritos)
- consuming TV series on DVD courtesy of Netflix
- reading (philosophy, journalism, theology, spirituality, genre fiction)
- film

Gary Chartier is on the advisory panel for the Center for a Stateless Society. His blog is <http://liberalaw.blogspot.com>

Resources

Corvus Distribution – www.corvusdistribution.org

Liberty Activism – www.libertyactivism.info

Center for a Stateless Society – www.c4ss.org

Rational Review – www.rationalreview.com

IWW – www.iww.org

Charles H. Kerr Publishing – www.charleshkerr.com

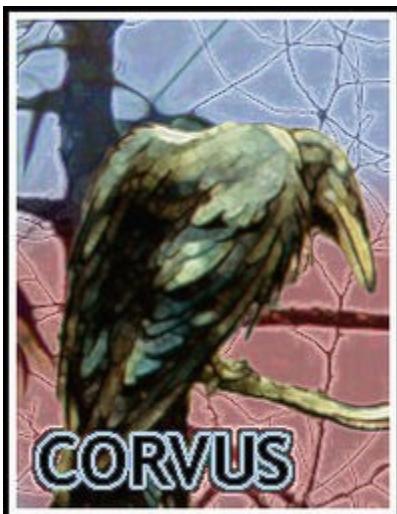
The Kate Sharpley Library - www.katesharpleylibrary.net

Left Libertarian Aggregator – www.leftlibertarian.org

Alliance of the Libertarian Left – www.all-left.net

Thinking Liberty Radio Show – www.thinkingliberty.net

BURN Radio - <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/burnradio>



ALLiance can be purchased from Corvus Distribution.



www.alliancejournal.net