

The Wobblies Take Action Against Unfair Labor Practices

IU650 Breaks Lockout

Labor Spring's Lessons

IWW Demands: End the Family Separations







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Official Publication of the Seattle IWW

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In support of revolutionary industrial unionism, this publication is written by union members. It is printed with union and volunteer labor.

Produced and edited by the Seattle IVW. Articles not so designated do not reflect the IVW's official position.

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Published bimonthly.

Press Date: July 7, 2018

No more detentions!

by Kay

y the time *Seattle Worker* goes to press, news about our new normal, the thousands of children kidnapped by US border guards from the arms of their parents, will be several weeks old. But right now it's fresh in our minds, a raw wound, a reminder that human cruelty can always go one step farther today than it did yesterday.

Unless we stop it.

Barbarity has been part of the US government since the beginning, since slavery, since the Japanese internment, since the seizure of Native American children from their parents. We keep thinking we've moved past it and learned never to do it again. And we're wrong. It's built into the fabric of capitalism and until we take down capitalism it will keep happening.

Yesterday's cruelty was imprisoning immigrant families together but for a limited time. Right now in the US, prolonged imprisonment of immigrant children is against the law. As part of something called the Flores Settlement, children cannot be "detained" for more than twenty days, which makes family-based concentration camps illegal.

Today's cruelty is warping the intent of the Flores Settlement in an effort to get rid of it entirely. This is a new and unique kind of nightmare. Border guards did not even bother to maintain a paper trail between parent and child, no matter how young the child--nobody does that to somebody they consider to be a human being. Also chilling: any number of things can happen to a child the government doesn't keep track of and cares nothing for: prostitution, death due to neglect. Some of the children go into so-called foster care facilities, run by private corporations that profit off them.

Is our future going to be more of the same, if not worse, or can we manage a 180 degree reversal? What would it

truly take to reunite and free all these families?

The IWW has answers. We have a unique perspective on the rights of migrants to travel freely, not only as a human rights issue but also as a worker issue. We don't respect national borders. Our goal is to organize as a class, across divisions of geography, race, gender identity, religion, ability, and the like, to recognize "divide and conquer" tactics and stand strong against them.

We know that the working class already holds the power to stop these inhumanities, if only we're kind and courageous enough to exercise it. Our tools are solidarity and the principle that "an injury to one is an injury to all." Our power is the ability to withhold our labor from the ruling class.

"But what about the immigration problem?"

That's the question I hear even from well-meaning people who are shocked by the atrocity of ripping a child from their parent. Sure, we want to help people, but how do we protect our borders? Why can't we have a kinder, gentler way to stop immigration, like ankle bracelets?

No.

Why are we even talking about an "immigration problem" in the first place? Why exactly do we care about the Mexico-US border but not, for example, the California/Oregon/Washington borders? Why haven't we posted guards there and built walls?

It comes down to white panic about brown people.

The IWW doesn't recognize divisions of race as legitimate. We are all one class. Our goal is to build solidarity, organize, unionize, seize the means of production for the working class, destroy capitalism, and, from there, build a better world.

End immigrant prisons.

End child separations.

End prisons.

End ICE.

Solidarity Forever.



he union drive at Grassroots Campaigns Incorporated (GCI) has been nothing short of profound. Throughout months of organizing we built an unparalleled culture of resistance and solidarity and a tangible sense that we don't need bosses to get work done.

At the beginning of May we realized that something was off. May and June are typically the biggest hiring periods with the office frequently swelling to 40 or 50 canvassers by midsummer. This year, though, the interim directors sent by corporate were simply not bringing in new people.

Thanks to shop floor agitation and legal threats, we were able to force the company to begin hiring by the end of May, but we soon found ourselves with a new problem. New hires were being made Field Managers (FMs) on their fourth or fifth days. FMs are similar to shift leads at other jobs but with extra paperwork, no real power, and often no increase in pay. When new workers should have been learning the skills needed to canvass, they were instead being asked to supervise other people.

These new hires felt like they were being pressured to quit by being given such responsibilities so quickly. They joined the union to do something about it. We sympathized with their issue and decided to March on the Boss on Friday, June 8 to demand that new hires get at least two weeks on the job before being asked to take on FM responsibilities. We reasonably expected the current director would accede to our demand on the spot, but, because of the company's consistent and blatant lawbreaking practices, we wanted to have the agreement in writing, which was something the company was incredibly averse to.

Ten of us, including all of the recent new hires, entered the director's office shortly before our morning circle. We delivered our demand and, as expected, she agreed verbally. She stated that she would get us something in writing by the end of the day but that she needed to talk to Laurie Owen (the company's General Counsel and chief union buster) to find out exactly what she was allowed to write. She agreed that one of our members could stay a bit late while she waited for approval.

Most of the office went out to canvass, and the hours ticked by. By noon it was starting to become clear that Laurie wouldn't give us anything. The director was told to write nothing down, although she was assured she had discretion over the policy to ensure all new hires have at least two weeks on the job before taking on FM responsibilities.

At lunchtime, one union member pointed out that because we had received a promise to have something in writing by the end of the day, the day couldn't be over until we had it. We all agreed and decided that if we didn't have something by the time we returned from canvassing we would remain on the clock discussing workplace conditions



Dispatch from

Wobblies and allies take to the unfair labor practices. Fa unionbusting, and the company contract, the union is taking a By x389645

with our manager until she gave us what she had promised.

After the afternoon debriefs, seven people found themselves in the director's office. For the next four and a half hours, there was continuous discussion about workplace conditions with the manager interspersed with songs and teach-ins. We were told repeatedly that no one would have to leave or be forced to clock out. At 9:45pm, we finally received a written notice from the manager that she could not commit policy to writing. Having forced a response that would greatly aid in future legal matters, we left feeling elated at the power of direct action.

In IU650, the 9th of the month has become something of a harbinger of major events. On March 9, we voted 15-2 in an NLRB election for federal recognition of our existing union. On April 9, our contract was signed. On May 9, we held a March on the Boss regarding holiday pay that coincided with the New Orleans office filing for an NLRB election. June 9, the day after our sit-in, proved equally momentous as it turned out to be the first day of our lockout.

We had been preparing for a lockout for the better part of a month. While its immediate arrival was somewhat of a



Picket

streets to fight against GCI's lockout, months cing to refusal the union honor ction.

> IU 650, the Seattle GMB, Seattle Solidarity Network, and the Whatcom-Skagit GMB picket outside GCI. June 15, 2018.

surprise, we were more than prepared to meet it head on. The very first day we received calls from corporate stating that the Seattle office was suspended, but we showed we were more than capable of working even without an open office. This act struck existential fear into management, who now knew we could do our jobs without them. We also had a solid legal case against them, thanks to their admission that the lockout was retaliation for the June 8 action.

Typical companies might obscure retaliatory actions behind a thin smoke screen. GCI, though, has been so blatant and consistent with its lawbreaking that even the NLRB can't help but find sympathy with our arguments.

We continued rolling out a campaign of direct action and workplace self-organization. On June 14th, we launched a phone zap against the corporate office with the aim of getting hundreds, if not thousands, to call GCI's headquarters and demand they end the lockout. Coinciding with this, we began running our own autonomous canvass in the streets of Seattle designed to build support for the union and get people to join in on the phone zap. This powerful collective action gave us a profound sense of what it means to work for

ourselves on our own terms and in control of our own labor.

Picketing started that same day. On Thursday and Friday we held spirited informational pickets outside our locked office in Fremont. We drew attention around the neighborhood and the community. Our numbers swelled from 30 attendees the first day to over 50 on the second. Simultaneously, we received solidarity from around the country with pickets at GCI offices in Denver, Raleigh-Durham, Philadelphia, and at the HQ in Boston. Taking to the streets was both a means of catharsis and community building and, when placed in a national context, had the potential to put serious pressure on GCI's business.

We continued to organize over the next few days. We fleshed out our plans for a direct action escalation campaign. those plans became unnecessary on Fortunately. Wednesday, June 20, when almost everyone in the office received a new set of phone calls from corporate: the office would reopen on Thursday. The lockout was over. We had won.

There have been several past attempts to build unions at GCI, two of them with the IWW. In both of the most recent efforts, the company closed the office in order to stifle the effort. The threat of closure and loss of jobs has proven to be a powerful deterrent to organizing for years. That threat is now over.

The fact that direct action forced the company to reopen our office will serve as tremendous inspiration as we continue to build our union here in Seattle and nationally. In the months ahead, our campaign will surely escalate. New hires will join the union and hear tales of the picket line. Workers at more offices will hopefully join the fight and open up new fronts. The battle to get our contract recognized still looms large. Through it all, we will remember what we learned in this struggle. To quote a song which kept us going in our sitin and on the picket line, "They have the plant, but we have the power!"





merican labor experienced a powerful resurgence this spring. The teachers' strikes in West Virginia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Arizona were the most visible. Additionally, 49,000 workers at the University of California launched a three-day strike. 50,000 casino workers in Las Vegas, Nevada authorized a strike, forcing hotels and casinos to negotiate new contracts for their workers. And in

opportunists see workers as a means to an end and see the strikes as an opportunity to reaffirm their own ideologies.

Seattle, the Academic Student Employees at the University of Washington and the school bus drivers of Seattle Public Schools also went on strike.

These strikes come at a time when most workers have found they can no longer trust their elected representatives to protect them, and in some cases, like the West Virginia

teachers, they can't trust their union bureaucrats, either. As state legislatures undercut and undermine public funding and public trust, rank-and-file workers are sending the message that the politicians and bureaucrats who determine their standard of living don't have any power in the face of an organized and agitated workforce.

A conservative and reformist take on this labor upsurge is that unions are reminding state legislatures that the politicians work for the people, not the other way around, and that unions are only on strike to win wages that are commensurate with the cost of living and inflation.

This perspective is almost certainly true for most of America's unionized workers. They want fair wages, fair healthcare, and respect for the invaluable services they provide to their states and communities. This perspective interprets this spring's strikes as backlash for years of neoliberal austerity.

But this conservative approach fails to account for the actual labor unrest in this country. And when I say "labor unrest," I don't mean just unionized workers who have been mistreated; I mean the entirety of the American workforce. Every working-class person, regardless of political affiliation or ideology, knows that there is something deeply wrong with America's economy.

I see it on the bus every day when I go to work: exhausted people with downcast eyes traveling into a city that's too expensive to live in, going to a job that doesn't pay nearly enough, working for bosses and corporations who only care about their profitability. They go to work before sunrise and return home after sunset. They pass by dozens of people who are homeless encamped along the freeway or under bridges. Their lives seem to be beyond their control.

This is not merely unrest and discontentment with wages, benefits, cost of living, or even our government's austerity measures. There is a growing awareness that the intertwined systems of government and capitalism are fundamentally immoral. The strikes of this spring and the election of Donald Trump both indicate the same phenomenon: workers are increasingly aware of their own alienation. Sometimes this manifests positively, like in union fights for better wages. Sometimes it manifests in capitalism's ugliest spawn: fascism, when workers become reactionary and attempt to reclaim an idealized past that never existed.

Some writers on the left have used the teacher strikes as evidence that now is the time for socialist and communist groups to insert themselves into the melee and steer the fight in a particular revolutionary direction. This perspective is as equally uninformed as the conservative, reformist view. These opportunists see workers as a means to an end and see the strikes as an opportunity to reaffirm their own ideologies. The workers' movement itself—as diverse, multifaceted, complicated, and problematic as it is—becomes nothing more than a tool for leftist opportunists to attempt to hijack workers' successes for themselves, and for their particular ideologies.

This is not a moment for opportunism. We aren't nearing "class consciousness." These moderate gains for teachers and public workers are not evidence that the great American proletariat is realizing itself as a revolutionary force. Instead, this is a time for militant and radical organizers to remember our place in the workers' movement. We aren't the vanguard of the revolution. We can't force people to become radical and to realize their revolutionary potential. We aren't an outside force, enlightened interlopers, or foreign agitators who are separate from the workers.

We are the workers.

All that we can do is continue to bring workers together into a union that will fight for them and with them. Of course,

it's no surprise that there were Wobblies and radicals among every strike I've mentioned. I don't have a pessimistic or cynical view of our organization; rather, these strikes give me a lot of hope about what we can accomplish if we continue the work that the *workers themselves* started.

This spring has been an outburst of spontaneity. The teachers in Kentucky, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Colorado clearly took inspiration from the West Virginia teachers, who defied both the law and union bureaucracy when they went out on a wildcat strike for better working conditions. All it took

was one union in one small state standing up for themselves, and suddenly there were thousands of other workers across the country doing the same.

We can bring workers together. We can fight for modest gains without compromising on our radical goals. Every time labor wins, we win. Every successful strike shows other workers

these strikes give me a lot of hope about what we can accomplish if we continue the work that the workers themselves started.

that they have the power to take back control over not just their livelihoods, but their lives. Our job as organizers is to help workers recognize that power.

The IWW is a revolutionary labor union. We will build a new society in the shell of the old. But we will never reach this goal if we don't build worker power, and we will never succeed if we delude ourselves into believing we are separate from working people. We should take this opportunity to educate and agitate, all the while resisting opportunist impulses to lead workers. Instead, we must organize with workers so that they can lead themselves.



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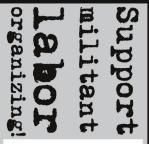
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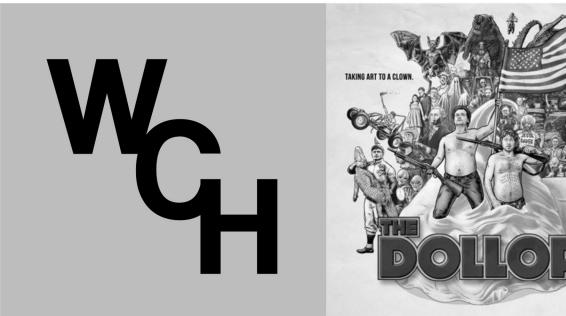
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Five Podensts you S by Hannah Hopkins





his is a list of my favorite podcasts I have been listening to lately. In this list you'll find interviews, music, reportbacks, and narratives relating to social movements, resistance, anarchism, and the history of working peoples. Podcasts are great because you can enjoy a vast selection of news, opinion, music, and comedy on your own schedule. You can generally find these podcasts on your phone's podcast app or you can stream directly from the podcasts' websites linked below.

Working Class History Podcast

workingclasshistory.com/category/podcast

Some of you might be familiar with libcom.org's Working Class History project which can be found on Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube. WCH contributors write, record, and share working class peoples' histories in order to make visible those peoples marginalized by capitalism, colonialism, and mainstream historical narratives. In February, WCH started an interview-based bimonthly podcast that features episodes about "those who have fought for a better world." I'm really excited about this project--so far they have done

episodes about the West Virginia mine wars, the Angry Brigade, and the Grunwick strike in London. Be sure to check out the recent interview with Peter Cole, co-editor of *Wobblies of the World: A Global History of the IWW* (WCH E6: Industrial Workers of the World in the US, 1905-1918).

MDAVE ANTHONY

The Dollop

thedollop.libsyn.com

I'm a longtime fan of The Dollop podcast. It's a bi-weekly US history podcast hosted by comedians Dave Anthony and Gareth Reynolds. The concept of this podcast is to share a story from US history--Dave tells the story and Gareth listens. A simple concept, but the story is filled with improvisational humor, hilarious tangents, and unbelievable stories about historical events and people. With 332 episodes in their back catalog, this podcast may be tough to break into. I suggest starting out with one of these episodes: 320 - The Wobblies Go to Everett; 241 - The Two Indigenous Actors; and 39 - LAPD - The Beginning.

hould Be Listening To



CHANNEL ZERO

NETWORK

IGDCAST

itsgoingdown.org/category/podcast

A weekly podcast produced by It's Going Down featuring interviews with participants in social movements and labor organizing. It's Going Down is an online platform that shares information about anarchist, anti-fascist, anti-capitalist, and anti-colonial movements primarily in the US. The IGDCAST is released super frequently and the episodes are generally less than 30 minutes. I really enjoyed a recent episode (posted May 8, 2018) about the March feminist general strike in Spain where the host talked with a member of the CNT (National Confederation of Labor). Also be sure to check out "This Is America #9: IWW Pickets, Berkeley Cops Help Alt-Right," which featured a fellow worker discussing the IWW 650 at GCI pickets in response to the lockout.

The Rebel Beat

rebelbeatradio.com

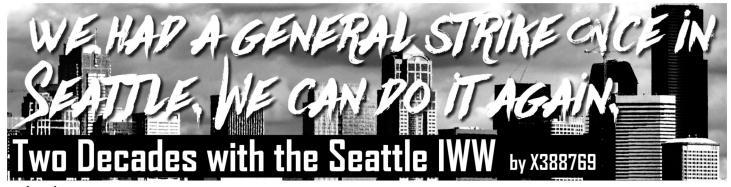
The Rebel Beat is a podcast I've recently started listening to. It's produced by Firebrand Records--a project that releases and distributes radical music globally. This monthly

podcast features radical political music from all over the world and from many different musical genres and in many different languages. Interspersed with the music are interviews and news reports. Episode 84: May Day Special is a good one to start with, it features music from Mbongeni Ngema, M.I.A., Ana Tijoux, Lillian Allen, and others.

Channel Zero Network

channelzeronetwork.com

OK this one isn't technically a podcast but maybe you're looking for a different type of podcast than the ones I recommended. Channel Zero Network is a coalition of anarchist podcasters that record episodes of news, interviews, and discussions about organizing, radical action, anarchism, anti-fascism, and other topics. It's a good idea to sample some of the Channel Zero podcasts to see if there are any that you like and want to subscribe to. I found a few of the podcasts on this list through the network.



There's no better time to be a Wobbly," says fellow worker Gee as he reflects on his 20+ years with the Seattle IWW. "Probably the best time since the '30s or the '40s."

In the last two years, Gee has seen the Seattle branch grow from a membership of about 20 people in early 2016, to over 70 members in good standing as of June 2018. Coming off 40 years of declining wages, rising inequality, and the election of Donald Trump, workers around the country have flocked to the IWW, and the Seattle branch is no exception. It is an almost unprecedented rise of membership and bodes extremely well for a legitimate workers' movement in 21st century America. To learn more about the recent upsurge of the Seattle IWW, I sat down with long time Wobblies, Red and Gee, to learn more about the growth they've seen over the last two years and listen to their reflections on their more than two decades of experience with the IWW.

I started the discussion by asking what it means to them to be a Wobbly. "Instead of having a dang country, we could

just have the IWW," said Fellow Worker Red. "I believe in democracy, but I don't believe in American democracy. With the IWW there is true democracy-direct democracy. You can vote, recall, and hold people accountable. The IWW provides a vision for the future. It's something to look forward to--to hope for."

Gee believes our strength comes from our longevity. "The IWW has a history that goes way back, and we're a part of it. We have the privilege of being able to learn

lessons from people who died before we were even born." But despite that history, we're not bogged down in it. "We are able to pull from the past while looking towards the future."

The Seattle IWW has a solid history. Originally chartering as the Puget Sound GMB in 1995 with only 15 members from Olympia to Bellingham, the Seattle branch broke off in 1999 creating the Seattle IWW GMB. The late 90s was the era of the anti-globalization movement, and in Seattle Wobblies played a crucial role in the street actions against the World Trade Organization (WTO). In addition to helping make onthe-ground actions a success, after a number of people in

Capitol Hill were arrested, they mobilized a snap march of over 500 people from Capitol Hill to the King County Jail, successfully winning the release of the jailed protesters. Throughout the 2000s, the Seattle Wobblies settled in with some workplace organizing, successfully gaining recognition at the Central Coop and the Washington Tenants' Union, as well as fighting for recognition at the "progressive" community organizing nonprofit, ACORN, where, despite successfully chasing off scabs, they ultimately lost their fight as management decided to shut down business in favor of allowing the workers to unionize.

Despite solid accomplishments throughout the 90s and 2000s, both Red and Gee agreed that the future bodes particularly well for the IWW both nationally, and in Seattle.

"Watching campaigns like Burgerville, Stardust, and others, show a path for success," said Gee. "10 years ago, campaigns like that seemed impossible, but by collectively improving and growing across regions, we are getting better, smarter, stronger, and more successful. The months [and

years] of work behind the scenes help to build something that was big, strong, and public."

Gee likened the ability for the IWW to grow, build power, and create a revolutionary movement to the old folktale "Stone Soup."

"We have the resources and ideas, but we don't yet know how to put them together to be successful. Nobody really knows how to do it, else it would have been done. So let's 'pretend' we know

how. [If we] assume we can, what would we have to do? What would we need to add to the mix to make it work?" Like the hungry travelers cleverly combining little bits of resources from all members of the community, the Wobblies can combine the resources of our communities. "[Once we've brought together the resources,] next thing you know, we have the power and people are like 'I didn't know you could

Gee says the point of this analogy isn't to be dishonest or act as snake oil sellers, but to emphasize the importance of having a strong vision. "The vision is something you

"We are able to pull from the past while looking towards the future."

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do that."

believe... The people being a part of it makes the vision better and more complete."

With an active and militant organizing campaign at another "progressive" organization, Grassroots Campaigns, Inc., Wobblies are getting themselves back on the labor scene in Seattle. Starting in early 2017 with acts of shop floor solidarity and irregular meetings, by December the GCI workers felt it was time to launch a formal NLRB bid for recognition. After getting nearly every worker to sign authorization cards in February 2018, they handily won state certification in March and began a campaign consisting of daily shop floor action, regular marches on the boss, and an open-hearted willingness to appeal to legal authorities in defense of their rights. These approaches were effective enough that soon workers in New Orleans had joined the call. Putting the stone soup method in effect, in early June, IU 650 Seattle sent representatives to provide a crash course in their model, and a few days later, there were two legallyrecognized union shops at Grassroots Campaigns.

In early June, GCI workers in Seattle were locked out of their office in an illegal retaliation for a legal concerted action against management for flagrantly violating their own field manual. As a sign of our growing power, IU 650 was able to mobilize over 50 people for a two-day picket at Seattle's GCI office and successfully force GCI to end the lockout and reopen its doors for all the workers.

As the Seattle IWW continues to grow in size and notch up victories, Gee considered what will happen when we have 200 members, and then 2000. "Every time you double in size, the organization has to be structured differently. You have to organize differently with 5 people as you have to with 20 as you have to with 50 as you have to with 200, etc. At some point we might have to figure out how different IU branches can organize and coordinate together and how we can work together as one big union." He went on to ponder, "What would it look like to be a major player in this city? One day we could have 10,000 Wobblies in Seattle. That could give us real power and control in this city. We had a general strike once in Seattle. We can do it again."

I asked FW Red what he thinks we should do when we get to 2,000 -- or 10,000: "You just keep going. Just keep getting stronger. You don't stop 'til we win. And even then, you just keep on going."

If the growth we've seen since 2016 is any indication, we are well on our way. While there is clearly much work to do and we have long way to go, there is no doubt that the IWW is back and better than ever. With experience and wisdom from veterans like Red and Gee, we will continue to grow and continue to build power. *And we won't stop until we win. And then we'll just keep on going.*



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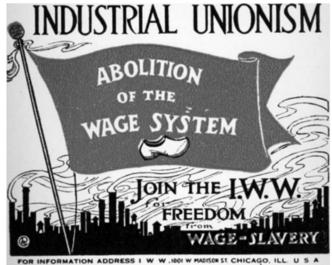
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What is the I.W.W.?

The Industrial Workers of the World is a radical, democratic, member-run labor union. We are committed to the liberation of the working class from the tyranny of capitalism. We believe that in our current economic system, wages are determined by a small number of elites who belong to the ownership class and we can no longer allow these people to determine our standard of living.

The IWW began in 1905 in Chicago, making it one of the oldest unions in the US. Seattle has a long history with the IWW, going all the way back to 1905. Wobblies--as members of the IWW are known--helped organize the Seattle General Strike of 1919.

We must unite together as workers into a single movement. Only through unity can we hope to revolutionize the economic system which strips away our freedom, our wealth, and our lives. Together, we can fight for what we deserve. But only if we act as one.



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