



Organizer Training 102: The Committee In Action

Trainer's Manual

Version 1.2 – April 2013

Organizing Training Committee Purpose Statement:

The Organizer Training Program (OTP) of the IWW is administrated by a three-member committee charged with overseeing the work of the body, which is called the Organizer Training Committee (OTC). Though the goals of the OTC remain fluid, since the needs of the union will grow and change, the present goals of the OTC are to offer Organizer Trainings for branches, groups and workplace organizing committees to increase capacity and skills to do workplace and industrial organizing. The OTC communicates the methods and ideas of solidarity unionism in all trainings and aspects of its work. The OTC prioritizes the recruitment and leadership development of trainers who are leaders in workplace organizing campaigns and who are women, people of color, and immigrants.

contact the OTC at: otc@iww.org

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About this Manual

This booklet is meant to be a guide for the trainer, a general resource. Trainers will often keep it close by during trainings, but not for the purpose of reading directly from it. We suggest studying it closely before you give your trainings and then only using it to fill in holes during the training. Please note that we only give these manuals out when someone attends a Training for Trainers. The reason is simple. Consider the idea of someone who wants to learn to organize being handed a manual and sent on their way without attending an organizer training with all its roleplays, discussions, and lessons. The OTC doesn't consider manuals to be the central tools of teaching. **So please don't pass this manual along.** If you come across someone who is interested in becoming a trainer, please get them in touch with the OTC, and we'll get them signed up for the next Training for Trainers.

We've used a number of symbols to help you get an idea of what's coming up at a glance. These symbols include:

“ ” Quotation marks. These are around information that we think it is important to clearly communicate. You don't have to be a slave to the text and read directly from it: feel free to say your own version of the information if you're comfortable doing so.



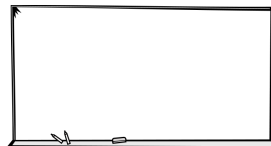
Facilitator presents material. This is information that you present to the group. You should be comfortable conveying this information without relying on the manual to read.



Brainstorm. You lead a brainstorm around a particular topic, soliciting responses from the participants. In most cases you may choose to write responses on the board, but sometimes there are specific directions. The guiding questions and example responses are meant as aids for you but aren't required.



Group work or activity. There are a number of different activities and ways to run the group work in this manual. In many cases this material was adopted from previously existing trainings and each have their own format and specific instructions.



Chalkboard or whiteboard writing. This is material that we suggest you write on the board in the form it appears in this manual



Facilitation suggestions. These are tips or alternative options for how you might want to present material or structure the activities.



Handout: This lets you know which material to have ready to hand out, and when the best time is to hand it out. It's a good idea to check the next few sections for this symbol during the breaks so you will be sure to have the right material on hand.

Some basic things to keep in mind:

Remember that for many participants, the Organizer Training is their first exposure to the IWW outside their branch.

Be conscious of your role as a representative of the broader union. As you give more trainings you will better develop your unique style and emphases.

Remember to manage your time due of the large amount of material to cover.

Take care of yourself: get a good sleep the night before the training, eat a good breakfast and lunch, and drink your tea/coffee.

Trainings are great opportunities to tell stories about organizing, especially your own.

Trainers can work as a team, with one trainer presenting and the other chiming in with points the other may have missed.

Remember that the messages discussed and taught in the trainings are not just going out to the participants in the trainings, but out to their co-workers and organizers as well. The "102 Training" is unique. It is likely the most comprehensive training of its kind aimed towards everyday union members and worker-organizers. The two-days of content is more than a mainstream union's advanced training program. It is a great opportunity to inspire members and give them the basic tools needed to organize so we can live and practice the idea of "Every member a leader."

Everyone learns more by *doing*, but the 102 gives people a sense of the basic steps and hopefully, by the end of it they will feel ready to try it themselves.

Remember to submit a report when you're done! Go to tinyurl.com/iwwtrainerreport to submit your report online.

1) Introduction

Purpose: The Welcome/Introduction section is meant to get participants comfortable with each other, provide the training's schedule, and give the lowdown on the training space. It is also designed to get a sense of who is in the room, where they work, and what brought them to the training today. It is also the time to spell out the purpose and goals of the training.

Nuts and bolts of the space

- Point out bathroom locations, childcare space, and other relevant information about the building
- Give rough schedule and lunch plans/breaks for the day
- Note where the coffee/snacks are.
- See if people need pens and paper or anything else.

Introductions:

Go around the room and ask people to say their name, their branch (if many are represented) and where they work. Do icebreaker question. Example: If you had a magic wand and could change any one thing about your job, what would it be? (Often this is a good opportunity for the trainer to set the tone of the training. Give an emotional example yourself first ie. "My name is Erin, I am from the Chicago GMB, I work in the textile industry, and I would get rid of the forced overtime because right now it keeps me from spending enough time with my partner").

Feel free to use other ideas since most participants will have done something like this for the 101. The purpose of this is to get people who will be together for two days talking and feeling comfortable with each other.

Spell out the purpose of the 102 training:

The purpose of this training is to build on where we left off in the 101 training. We will build off the concepts we developed in that training. The 102 in some respects is a reflection of where the union is. Ten years ago, the 101 was developed based on our initial steps into workplace organizing. It was geared towards moving a group of workers to organize their coworkers and then confront their bosses. With the 102 training, we are moving into a training based on the work and forms of organizing that happens after a group of workers formed a shop committee and are regularly taking action. It aims to help groups of workers build power on the job, win demands, connect to other workers in and out of the union, and use solidarity and direct action effectively. Ultimately, it is to give workers experiences with self-management and to build the power of the union.

One other fundamental difference between the 101 and 102 training is this. The 101 training is designed for organizing off the radar of the boss. In contrast, the 102 training is designed for organizing on the boss's radar. Both moments pose opportunities and limitations for organizing. The goal of the 102 training then is twofold: one, the training is designed to ensure the boss does not kill the IWW presence. Two, the training is designed to help us organize in a more public and open way not only in our workplace but also in our industry.

2) What is "Workplace Contractualism" and Why is the IWW Different?

Section purpose: Highlight the limitations of contractual unionism. Highlight the benefits of solidarity unionism.



(p.44) **Handout:** "The Committee In Action" by Phinneas Gage,
<http://recomposition.info/2012/01/31/the-committee-in-action/>

Email to participants to read before training

Have a few print copies available for participants who didn't read it electronically



Opening Remarks: A main component in IWW organizing is how we as an organization are different from business unions. So this next section will focus on that.

Ask: What is Workplace Contractualism? Draw this table on the board and have the participants help you fill in the blanks.

	Workplace Contractualism	Solidarity Unionism
WHO	Usually business unions and their "expert" staff manage the contract. Mediation produces decisions which mediator does not have to work under.	We are the union, workers decide on tactics and strategy
WHAT	Signing a contract, then having both parties live by that contract	Direct action and horizontal accountability
HOW/WHY	Evolved in last 80 years to suit the interests of the state, business, and business union leaders. NLRB is partly to blame for this.	Emergred from the initiatives of workers to win demands, seeks to build working class consciousness and solidarity.
WHERE	Centered not on the shop floor but in what are often closed door meetings.	Centered on the shop floor



What are the problems associated with workplace contractualism?

- Paternalism of union representatives, union bosses, government officials, and our bosses.
- The steward/business agent as superhero (mostly because he or she controls the

- knowledge of how the contract works and the relationships with management)
- The sanctity of the contract, which oftentimes does not anticipate future problems from bosses.
- Misguided notions that a contract will protect workers more than not having a contract.
- Establishes a structure that moves worker problems to paper and management offices, not the shop floor
- Puts most shop floor problems off until the next contract, which might mean 2, 3, or even 5 years down the road. It often makes worker actions illegal—also known as wildcat strikes.
- Disempowers workers during the life of the contract, usually through no-strike, management rights clauses, and recognizing the legitimacy of bosses in spirit, practice, and law.

Let's review solidarity unionism:

Solidarity Unionism is a form of unionism based on democratic unionism, direct actions, and workplace control. It is demand-oriented. It is immediate. It is militant. This form of unionism lends itself to industry-wide activities and actions that will facilitate the larger goals of the IWW.



(p.53) Handout: Excerpts from “Minority Unionism” by FW Alexis Buss

Distribute copies of the handout and have participants read through it aloud, each participant reading one paragraph at a time.

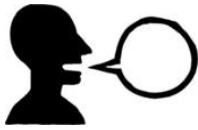
“As much as possible, we should seek to avoid situations where our power is replaced by laws and contracts.”

We need “a way for us to organize to address the respect (or lack of respect) workers feel on the job, our ability to control how we work, how our workplace is going to interact with our community and our world.”

“The point of unionism as the IWW sees it is to organize workers in ways that our power cannot be ignored or co-opted...As much as possible, we should seek to avoid situations where our power is replaced by laws and contracts.”

“The labor movement was built when groups of workers came together and began agitating over conditions: Sometimes they persuaded their fellow workers to approach the boss and demand that some problem be corrected. Sometimes they refused to work under unsafe conditions or in unsafe ways, and persuaded their coworkers to do likewise. Sometimes they acted on the individual job, sometimes they held citywide demonstrations over issues of common concern, such as working hours or unsafe-work.”

“[Solidarity] unionism is about forming meaningful, organized networks of solidarity capable of winning improvements in individual workplaces, throughout industries, and for the benefit of the international working class. It is a process, a process that offers hope for transforming our greatest weakness--the fact that our members are scattered in many, largely disorganized workplaces--into a strength.”



This training is the second step in the IWW OTC curriculum. The 101 is all about how to build a committee. This course is all about what to do with that committee and how to maintain it. A lot has to do with the nuts and bolts of fighting bosses and how to get people to stick together and stand up for themselves. As well, this training will highlight how to go about making decisions in a way that empowers workers and ensures accountability. This kind of empowerment is not what our economy is based on, but it is necessary for us to build the world we want to see.

The Shop/Organizing Committee: The form of this committee will depend on the industry. It might be a grouping of organizers from different shops in the same industry or company, a group within one workplace. It could also function as an alternative to an existing business union structure for dual carders. Let's talk about the role of this committee.

The shop/organizing committee does the following things:

- 1) Has one on ones with new workers, integrating them into the campaign.
- 2) Does social mapping, sets up one on ones, identifies workers we want to bring into the committee, and trains and develops committee members as organizers. (AEIOU)
- 3) Canvasses for grievances, and works with aggrieved workers to make an action plan
- 4) Coordinates direct action, pushes organizing forward, plans tactics and escalation strategies.
- 5) Calls committee meetings.
- 6) Develops ways to deal with problem workers.
- 7) Pushes workers to be more involved in the committee.
- 8) Works on linking the workplace to industry-wide organizing and the larger union

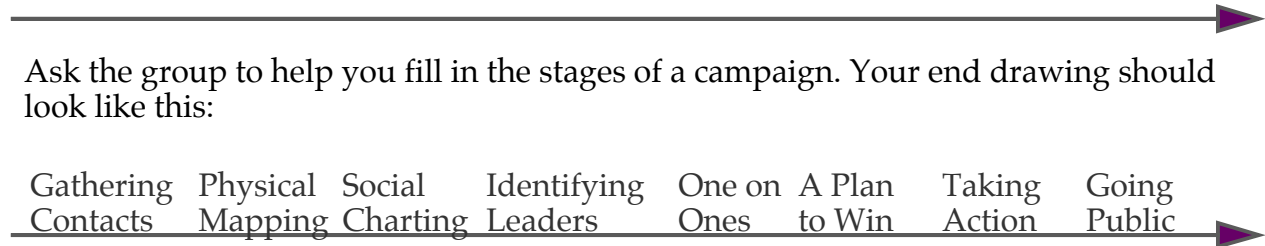
Building organizing committees is at the heart of what the IWW does. We are building the new world in the shell of the old by developing organs of working class self-management. In this training we're going to look at these functions in an in-depth way, and try to develop skills and best practices.



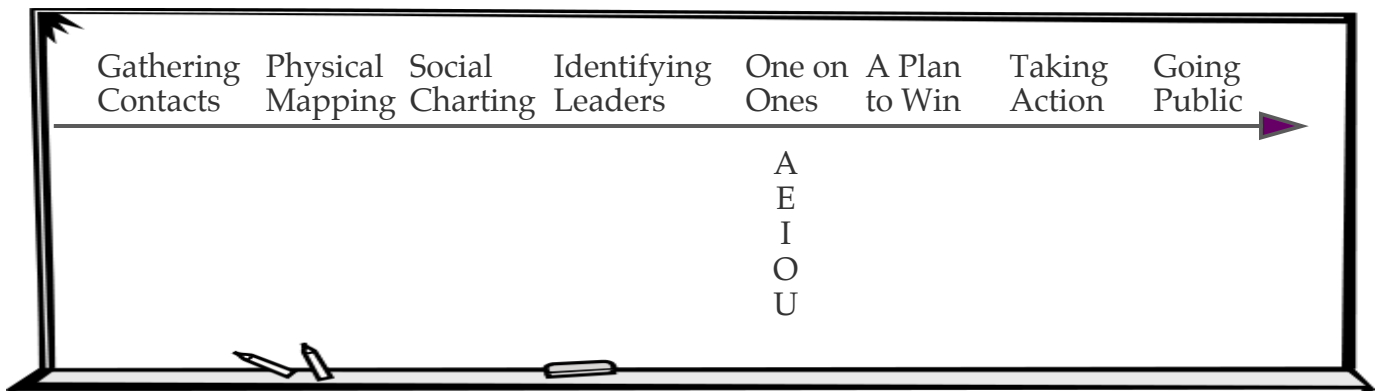
You might want to use this section to build the outline for the training, write these items on the board to leave up as the agenda for the training.

3) Organizer Training 101 Re-cap and AEIOU Revisited

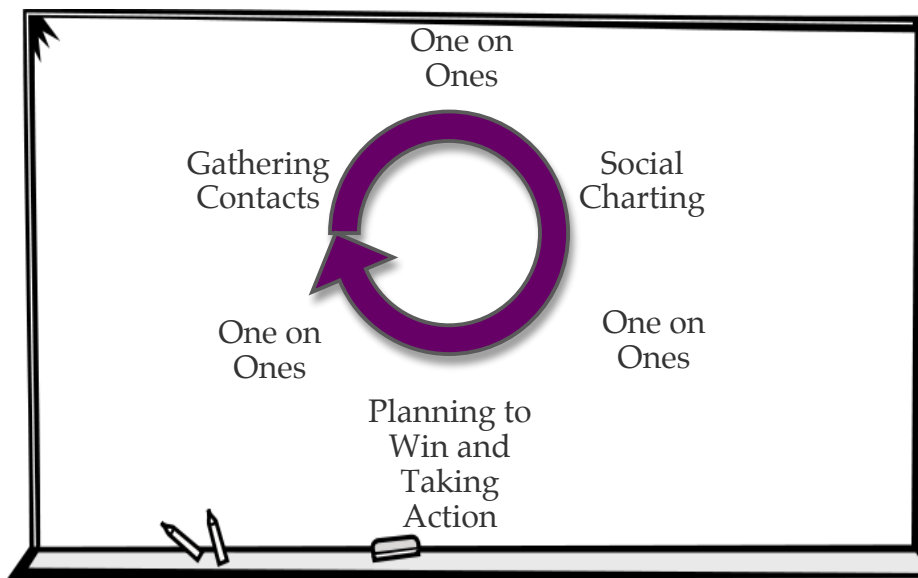
Re-cap the stages of a campaign with the group by drawing a line on the board like this:



Ask the group: Where does the AEIOU fit into this? Make a vertical line from the One on Ones to demonstrate how the Stages of a Campaign and the AEIOU fit together, like this:



When we teach basic organizing skills in the 101, we present the material in a pretty linear way. In reality, though, successful organizing campaigns are much more cyclical, and repeat the necessary steps many times. A more realistic picture of a long-term campaign might look more like this, with one on ones being a constant task.



So, if one on ones are a consistent part of organizing, then AEIOU is vital. **Direct actions will be major failures if education, agitation, and organization do not happen before and after the action is done.**

By now, we hope you are all seasoned veterans of the one-on-one. But it takes a day to learn and a lifetime to master. So let's review...

The importance of the AEIOU is in the ways its lessons can lead to informing coworkers, getting coworker input and participation, organizing smart, and building a stronger union. These activities DO NOT stop once a campaign has gone public or is otherwise on the boss's radar. In fact, it is even more important AFTER the campaign has gone public.

Often when we're close to going public or after we've gone public, you'll be able to move more quickly through the AEIOU conversation. This is because it is often easier to have a conversation about a committee that exists rather than something that might exist in the future. This is especially true if you've already taken action and the climate of the shop has changed.

Let's re-cap what each letter means, and think of some examples of good questions to ask at each stage of the conversation.



As this is review, try to go through this material very quickly, and don't write anything on the board.

Agitate:

- Agitation is asking questions and digging for work-related issues that make them angry. We are looking for those issues that carry a high emotional content.
- Sample questions:
 - o I noticed that you were really frustrated earlier when ___ happened, why is that?
 - o When you see the bosses making bad decisions, how does that make you feel?
 - o It must be really tough when you see all these terrible things going on but you can't do anything to change it, would you say so?

Educate:

- If agitation finds an issue and creates an emotional experience of that issue. Education presents a solution to the issue, and explains how collective action and solidarity is the answer to the problem.
- Sample questions:
 - o What would happen if you went to the boss to ask him/her to resolve [the issue]?
 - o What do you think would happen if five of us went and asked him to resolve [the issue]?
 - o What do you think would happen if no one showed up to work tomorrow because they were so angry about [the issue]?

Inoculate:

- Just like a flu shot, we are trying to give our co-workers a non-lethal dose of something harmful – in our case the rhetoric or actions of the corporation – so that they will be immune to it if they come into contact with the real thing.

Organize:

- To organize our co-workers in a way that builds solidarity and confidence. Specifically, since this formula describes the broad strokes of a conversation between us and a co-worker, the Organize portion is where we have our co-worker commit to carrying out a specific task.
- Sample tasks:
 - o gather information
 - o distribute information
 - o take minutes at a meeting
 - o talk to other co-workers
 - o help make a plan for an action
 - o draft a petition or demand letter
 - o pick up or gather materials (flags, picket signs, buttons, armbands, posters, etc)
 - o come to a meeting

The Union Makes us Strong

- Once our coworkers have taken an active role in the organizing committee, our job has really only just begun. It is our responsibility as organizers to continue to build the relationship and ‘push’ our coworkers (now fellow organizers) to keep stepping up and building their confidence and skills.

**Activity: One Big Organizer**

Get everyone to sit in a semi-circle. Choose one person or ask for a volunteer to be the worker, and have them sit in the front and middle. Explain that we are going to have a one on one meeting with this person. We are all working together and playing the role of one big organizer.

Explain everyone's roles:

Everyone but the worker in the centre: We work at a call centre. Our shop committee is pretty well established, we have had taken some small actions, and we have won a couple of victories around scheduling. We have some more actions in mind we'd like to plan, but need some more help on the committee.

The worker in the centre is a relatively new employee. We have gotten their contact information but haven't had a one on one with them yet.

Our goal is to get them agitated, educate them on collective action as the solution to their issues at work, inoculate about the boss's role, and to get them to attend a shop committee meeting.

We have to try and achieve our goal only by asking questions, not making any statements. That means we will try to ask questions that get them to talk to us in ways so that the person agitates her/himself, and comes to their own conclusions about how to be involved.

Each person may ask one question at a time, and the next person in the semi-circle will try and build off the previous question. The questions continue around the circle until the activity is done.

The one big organizer will begin by trying to get the worker agitated. The facilitator's role will be to assess when the worker has been sufficiently agitated, at which point they announce that it is time to move onto Educate. Once the worker is sufficiently educated, the facilitator announces it is time to move onto Organize, and so on until the worker has agreed to come to the shop committee meeting (or totally refuses!).

These interruptions from the facilitator are intended to keep the activity relatively fast paced and on track. Use your judgement as to when a good time to move from one stage to the next is – whether it would flow naturally from the previous question/response, or whether it is dragging and needs to be moved on for time's sake.

Debrief the worker first – how did it feel? What made them agitated? Any other thoughts?

Then debrief with the whole room – what were some good questions people asked that really got the person talking or otherwise were very effective?

4) Handling Grievances

Purpose: Learn to get the most out of grievances. Setting up a structure within Shop Floor committees to win grievances.



Opening Remarks: Who here has filed a grievance with a business union? How did that go?

In the IWW, we deal with grievances much differently. Much of the Shop Committee's work is addressing workplace grievances. We need to know how to listen to grievances and craft our response strategies to both resolve the grievances and build organization and power. In some cases we will be trying to win small victories to demonstrate the value of the union. In some cases we will be building strength to wage larger fights over larger issues. Often we will need to have an escalation plan, from a simple request for a grievance resolution, through negotiations, and direct actions.

Shop Committees and Grievances

Shop committee members should know their workplaces. Shop committees should have a procedure for determining who on the committee will take grievance cases and for ensuring that that member moves a case through to completion, which includes all parts below.

Many workers will only come to the union if they have a grievance. This can be an opportunity to show coworkers the power of the union and get them involved. What kind of issues will workers bring up?

- Sexual harassment
- Unsafe workplace
- Staff, hours, benefit, resource cuts
- Retaliation from bosses
- Violation of laws
- Mean supervisors
- Changing past practices



Activity: Sorting Exercise

Purpose: This activity is designed to familiarize participants with how to lead a conversation meant to agitate a coworker. Participants will contemplate various grievances their coworkers may have and learn to dig deeper to get at the grievances that have an emotional content.



(p.54) Materials: Sorting Exercise Material: Work Grievances. Feel free to add or use only what you feel pertinent to a particular group. You may decide to have multiple sets of the same issues or to distribute a wider variety among the groups. **Cut these up into small slips of paper.**

Process:

1. Category sort (10 min)

Split participants into groups of 3 or 4. Distribute grievance cards among the groups, ensuring that each group has a variety of different issues reflected and between 10-15 cards each. Have the groups read through the cards and decide as a group on some way of categorizing them. The categories they choose don't have to have equal numbers of cards. Announce that there are no right answers and whatever method they choose is entirely valid.

Mingle with the groups, asking questions and offering support. Don't suggest categories; one way to help might be to choose two cards and ask if they are similar and how, and move through a few pairs until the group has a sense of how to create their categories.

2. Discussion (5 min)

Once most of the groups have reached an agreement about how to sort their cards, ask the groups to explain their categories and why they chose them. Encourage the groups to ask each other questions. Some possible questions to lead the discussion:

Are all the issues we have with our jobs the same?

Do all of the issues we looked at have the same level of emotional investment?

Do you think there are certain kinds of grievances that are just mild annoyances, whereas others can be really important to an individual? Examples?

3. Priority sort (10 min)

Have participants return to their groups, and this time ask them if they think they would be able to order their grievances in terms of priority. If some say that's not possible, ask if they *had* to order these grievances in terms of priority, how would they do it. Have them rank their cards from most important to least important. Mingle and offer support, but don't be too explicit in what you mean by 'important' or 'priority' - they should discuss how they define these things in their groups.



Note: If you have extra time and the groups seem to be moving quickly through this activity, you might consider switching the cards, either by having extras available or by having the groups trade their cards.

4. Discussion (5 min)

Have the groups share how they ordered their cards, encourage questions and discussion. If you're short on time you might only ask them to share their top and bottom two, and if they ranked any equally. Some possible questions to lead the discussion:

Do you think it's valid to order grievances like this? Why or why not?

Do you think people who have the issues you identified as most important could be motivated to help the campaign along? What about the issues you identified as least important?

Do you think there are kinds of issues that we can 'live with' and others that need to be dealt with, even if it means taking a risk?

5. Digging Deeper (5 min)

Choose one of the grievances that a group identified as a very low priority and write it on the board. Explain that while on the surface this issue may seem insignificant, can we think of contexts where this might be more substantial, or have a higher emotional content?

Examples:

- When we have social events there are never vegetarian options: for some this may be a mild annoyance, for others this may be an insult to their religious beliefs.
- The office is too hot/cold/noisy: for someone with a medical condition, this may be a serious health hazard.
- I don't like my uniform: this might be beyond a matter of personal style - it could be too revealing, in conflict with religious or cultural clothing expectations, it might not come in sizes that are appropriate for everyone, it might be expensive and the worker has a hard time paying for it, etc.
- My managers always blame us when equipment fails: Imagine how scary this would be if someone already has been fired or seriously reprimanded for faulty equipment?

6. Wrap up (5 min)

The point of Agitation is not just to get our coworkers angry at the boss. It is to identify where their possible motivation to become an agent for change in their workplace might be. When we are motivated enough we are capable of amazing feats, including taking risks at work. Organizing is all about building relationships, and when we discover what will motivate people we will be able to return to this consistently when they waver or are afraid. We have to listen, ask lots of questions, and be incredibly attentive, because every individual will have a unique source of frustration and motivation.



Many workers will have the expectation that we will solve their problems for them. They may see us as experts who will act on their behalf. **What are our goals in dealing with grievances?**

- Empowering coworkers to participate to directly address issues
- Building the union by bringing in members through actions
- Changing the power relationship on the shopfloor
- Winning demands and improving life for ourselves and our coworkers



The first step in dealing with a grievance is to have a one-on-one with your coworker. In our one-on-one we are agitating them around their grievance, educating them about how we can fight back, and making a plan to win around the issue based on direct action. Here are some specific tips for conducting a grievance one-on-one:

Here are two possible frameworks for dealing with grievances. You may find they complement each other and that you might want to combine these to make your own unique version that's most helpful in your shop:

Grievance Collection and Documentation:

Thorough documentation can be a pain but can really pay off. For instance, if your committee is planning something large scale thing down the road like demanding a set of standards, a contract, or a memorandum of understanding, documenting issues that workers have can be used as good evidence as well as reminders for agitation and can tie into a broader struggle.

- 1) Ask your coworker to write a statement about what happened and bring it to the one-on-one. This helps assess the worker's seriousness, and shows that we are serious. Make grievance forms or set up a grievance hotline for your campaign. Make them accessible to workers in the shops.
- 2) At the first meeting, ask a lot of followup questions to get the worker agitated.

- 3) Ask how they would like to see the problem resolve
- 4) Collectivize the grievance by asking the worker if others have had the same problem, or tell them about other workers who have had similar problems
- 5) Find other issues to agitate them around to get them to look at the big picture
- 6) Get them to come to a committee meeting
- 7) Photocopy grievances and have the committee keep a binder of them to build up a collective memory and document patterns of abuses.

Planning Direct Actions around Grievances

This is adapted from “The Committee in Action” article and is used a lot by postal workers in Canada, but the specifics (such as whether ‘coffee break meetings’ are feasible) should be flexible and adapted to different workplaces:

- 1) Worker presents a grievance to the committee (this would either be the organizing committee at the early stages or a shop committee or informal workgroup based on the job).
- 2) The committee identifies the level of management responsible for the grievance and picks a tactic that pressures the appropriate level of the corporate hierarchy. The organizing body that targets management should be built around the territory covered by the decisions that level of management governs. So a city-wide policy will ideally be challenged by the city wide organizing committee and target the city wide management officials.
- 3) Committee members on the floor organize the action and raise the demands from the floor. There is no delegated negotiation; all important decisions in regards to a campaign are made in the shop floor “coffee break” meetings. Demands are issued and we would agitate for concessions. There was little room for management to make counter offers or cut us deals.
- 4) After the action the committee debriefs on what happened. They identify points on the floor where the campaign was strong and where it was weak. The organizing committee assesses the effectiveness of the action and identifies leaders and people who should be encouraged to attend an Organizer Training.
- 5) We would then assess whether the action worked. Part of this was identifying if we got what we wanted. If we didn’t get what we wanted we would go back to step two and try and turn up the heat either by moving up the chain of command or increasing the intensity at the same level of management. We would also assess whether the floor was stronger because of what we were doing or if there were places we needed to build support.

In the next section, we will discuss how to integrate these grievances into the work of the committee.

5) Taking Action

Purpose: to ensure that direct actions get the short-term goods and encourage more workers to build the union. **Thing to stress: The more education and organization that happens, the more successful direct actions will be.** The more successful direct actions are, the more workers will support direct actions, thus moving our work along.



Before you start this section:

1. Ensure you have enough copies of the fill in the blanks sheet (in the Appendix, labeled *Parts of an Action fill in the blanks (p.56)*) for each group (pairs or groups of 3).
2. **Cut up the large print terms** (in the Appendix, *Parts of an Action station cards (p57)*) and tape each one in a different spot around the room (or place each on a different table). You may either tape them face up so they are visible to the room, or face down so the participants have to turn them over when they arrive at a station. Option: make your own station cards on bigger and more colourful paper!



Opening Remarks: It's safe to assume that many bosses won't listen to reason, and they will want to maintain their power and control over us.

When the IWW organized in the timber and wheat fields they didn't strike to win their demands. They were more clever. To win the 8 hour day, they simply blew the whistle when 8 hours was up and walked off the job. When their beds were filled with lice, they didn't beg for new beds, they simply torched all the bedding to force the boss to buy new materials. Recently at a Chicago Starbucks, the union requested a ladder so they did not have to stand on wobbly (sic) tables and chairs. When the boss balked, the workers brought in their own ladder, covered in IWW stickers and slogans. The manager bought a company ladder the next day.

(Trainers insert your own examples here as well)

In the IWW, the first question should always be "how can we deal with this grievance directly?" What are some creative examples of direct action that people are familiar with? (write list on board)

Strike, slow down, petition, intermittent work stoppages, mass breaks (unscheduled of course), marches on the boss, breaking into song, etc.

Let's take a closer look at how to be successful when we take action by talking about the component parts of an action. Since we all have knowledge and previous experience with taking action, we're not just going to lecture you. Instead, we're going to try and work together to pull out the important aspects of making direct actions awesome.



Activity: Taking Action

Break the participants into groups of 2 or 3. Point out the 'stations' with the large print terms. Give each group a fill in the blanks sheet, and go over the questions with the group. Have them rotate through the stations and answer the questions as they go. Mingle among the groups to help them stay on track and to be on hand to answer questions.

Bring the groups back together, and invite a few volunteers (or good responses you overheard while mingling) to share some of their responses to the question prompts. Ask if anyone thought there was a crucial component missing, and discuss why that might be.



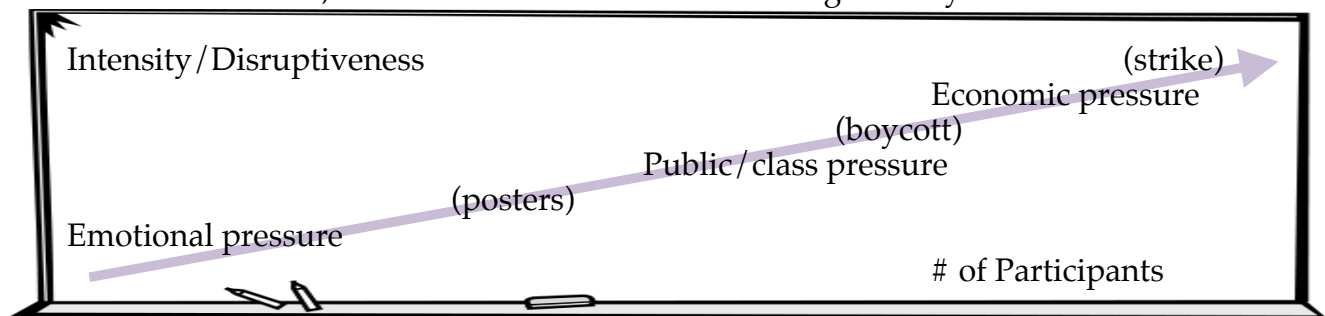
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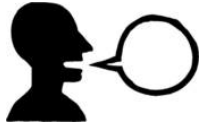
- There is room on each sheet for two stations, but if you have time you may want each group to visit more than two. If this is the case, have extra fill-in-the-blanks-sheets on hand or have them use extra blank paper.
- You may want to have the groups rotate through the stations at their own pace, which may mean having more than one group at a station at a time. Or you may want to enforce a time limit and have the groups all move to a different station at the same time, which may mean that some groups are waiting around while others are scrambling and unable to finish the questions.



Hand out the *Parts of an Action participant handout (p.59)* to everyone and use it as a guide while reviewing each station in detail. Encourage storytelling and sharing personal experiences, but be careful not to let a small number of participants dominate.

Introduce Spectrum of Direct Action/Escalation Diagram. Moving from doing nothing to an all out strike, what small actions can we do along the way.





Many of the creative direct action tactics we mentioned are very context-specific. Today we're going to look at one type of common tactic that can be applied to pretty much any grievance: the march on the boss.

Action plans often begin with a delegation to the boss to state the problem and see if it can be resolved before workers have to fight any harder. Once you have decided to march on the boss to present your issue and possibly demand a response, here are some things to think about:

- 1) Get workers to sign petitions to promise to attend the delegation. Check back in with workers that sign regularly leading up to the action.
- 2) Choose a rallying point and an appointed time.
- 3) Enter the office together. Move quickly and confidently.
- 4) Get people psyched up. Workers who feel strong, unified and enthusiastic are far more frightening than quiet scared workers. Do chants, talk about the reasons for the delegation.
- 5) One person can act as a check to management. That person tells the manager not to interrupt if he or she tries to stop others from speaking. If the boss persists, a round of applause or commotion can drown out his or her voice. Do not allow the boss to speak until you are finished.
- 6) Another person should state the issue. Have people tell personal stories about how the issue affects them. The more people, the better.
- 7) After everyone has given his or her personal testimony, someone should voice the demand.
- 8) Others should voice agreement with the demand.
- 9) Set a deadline for the demand.
- 10) Give something in writing with people's names on it. Anything less than that is weaker. People often think that keeping their names off things makes them safer. The opposite is true. The more public we are in our participation in an action, the more legal protections we have. Workplace actions that include more than one person often give us some legal protection under the NLRA. If we can demonstrate that the boss was retaliating against workers for "concerted activity," the law can help. But we sometimes need to show conclusively that the boss knew who was involved. Plus the more public we are the more we build our co-workers' confidence about stepping up. If we seem shy or nervous about stepping up then others will not trust us as much and will not be as likely to step up themselves.

Preparing for management's response:

What are some of the ways management might respond?



- 1) Personalize or minimize the issue (this is just one person's problem)
- 2) Changing the conversation from the issue at hand (you're being disrespectful to me, I can't believe you would do this to me, why didn't you come to me sooner, why didn't you come to me individually)

- 3) Make vague promises or the "I hear you" response. (we'll make things better, we'll get our act together, we have a plan, we'll start listening, as soon as sales are up....)
- 4) Get tough ("how dare you," "sit down and shut up," "I'll show you," "I'm going to call the big boss," profanity, yelling, threats, etc)
- 5) Split up the group (address one person, share some other information about just one person like "well, Joe just got a raise so I don't see why he's unhappy", address a group or make an offer to a group "the cooks can have a raise but no one else," bring up another issue that effects just one person "Karen I know you've been wanting a transfer")

The goal of each of these responses is for management to regain control. To prevent this, we need to answer what management says.

Has anyone ever had experience with these responses? What did you do?

Post-Action Stuff (follow-up is 90% of an action)

- 1) Have a second action in mind, and have a backup plan if management refuses to meet with you or isn't around. Also, have a plan for retaliation. What will you do if someone or all lose their jobs?
- 2) It is usually a good idea to have an immediate brief post-delegation meeting - a mini-rally to finalize the action and for the committee to cheer themselves on/pat themselves on the back/remind people what the next step is. This keeps things solid, and oriented toward progress.
- 3) Have a follow up plan. The organizers need to talk to the committee to see how they felt. The organizers and the committee need to do the same thing for all the other participants then with the witnesses, then with co-workers who didn't know about the action. The follow-up is where you transition from action planning and execution back into regular organizing to grow the campaign.
- 4) Memorialize your victories. The point of actions is to build organization. If people don't feel good about the campaign they will burn out or drift away. Celebration is key for recharging people and keeping spirits up.

6) Retaliation from the Boss

Purpose: Finding ways for shop committees to work through the fear of getting fired and the reality of getting fired. Stress the fact that workers get fired, with or without organizing, and that workers can have more protections/ rights with organizing through mutual defense, mutual aid, and labor laws in some cases (concerted activity, for example)



Before starting this section, surprise the participants by “firing” one of them:

1. One facilitator, acting like a boss, asks one participant to please leave the room (ideas for bosspeak: “ ___, please come with me. I’d like to speak with you privately.”)
2. The other facilitator stays in the room and, also acting like a boss, explains that ___ was just fired (ideas for bosspeak: “I’d like to let you all know that ___ will no longer be working with this company. The management team felt that their combative attitude was not appropriate to the kind of work environment we want to encourage.”)
3. The first facilitator, outside with the ‘fired worker,’ explains what’s going on inside the room with the rest of the group.
4. Because the intent of this min-activity is to surprise the participants and make them somewhat uneasy, and because it involved picking on one person in particular, think carefully about who you choose to ‘fire’.
5. After a few moments, allowing for some reaction from the participants, bring the fellow worker back in the room and explain it was all a ruse.



Opening Remarks: Sadly, firings are a result of capitalism and a reality for most organizing drives. The question is usually not if the boss will fire someone, but when. The Shop Committee needs to have a way to deal with the fear of workers around firings (or really the loss of income) firings as they happen.



Why does management fire people?

- to try and destroy campaigns
- because it’s worth it; breaking the law can be a calculated risk
- to remove leaders, intimidate workers and spread fear

Why doesn’t management fire people more often?

- they need the workers to do the work
- if they see that workers will fight back and make their lives much more unpleasant
- it might cause them PR problems
- they might lose money
- it is illegal

Usually for bosses the benefits of firing workers outweigh the possible repercussions.



What are some ways we can deal with firings? What have people's experiences been with firings in the context of organizing?

- **It is far easier to prevent someone from being fired, than to get them their job back.**
- If you are going to fight for reinstatement, make a long-term plan, and get the whole committee on board with it. If you win, it will rarely be an overnight success.
- Fight like hell for the first worker that gets fired. The first fight over a firing sets the precedent, and sends a message to both the boss and the workers.
- Take up collections to help the fired worker, and get your branch to fund raise while you are winning the job back.
- If you file a ULP, do not let your committee focus only on it. The ULP should be just one part of the action campaign. Be sure to explain to the fired worker (s) the long slow process of the ULP and the ways in which back pay works.
- When designing your fight for reinstatement, remember what you've learned about winning grievances through actions. Build an escalation plan.
- Many workers, once they are out the door, quickly give up on getting their jobs back. Bring them to the center of the campaign, don't let them twist in the wind while the action is going on elsewhere.
- If the committee and/or the worker decide to let it go and move on, you can often negotiate for severance, win a back pay settlement, or get a notice posting from the NLRB.
- Form a discipline watch-dog committee, that tracks managements moves and alerts management to the fact that the union will be watching every move they make.
- If you manage to get a back-to-work order after the worker has decided to work elsewhere, ask them to consider coming back to work for a week, or even just one day. This can be a powerful statement to the rest of the workers at the shop.
- Being public can sometimes provide more protection because the boss will be in the spotlight if he or she retaliates.
- Document all discipline, even the most seemingly benign (like informal talking's-to). You can bet your boss is keeping track, and they may be building a case.
- Contact the Organizing Department Board to ask for assistance. Consider applying for a short-term organizing stipend if the fired worker is able and willing to work on the campaign.
- Help the fired worker find other employment, preferably where there is another active or potential IWW organizing campaign.



Other than firings, **what are some other ways that the bosses might retaliate against a solidarity unionism campaign?**

- suspensions

- letters on file
- change job duties or schedule
- smear campaigns aimed at individuals but meant to discredit entire campaign
- get really nice all of a sudden (yes, this is a form of retaliation!)
- revisit Inoculation section of the 101

Often bosses will file or threaten to file lawsuits. Usually they will do this as an intimidation tactic even if they don't have a strong case as an intimidation tactic. What kinds of lawsuits have organizers seen or heard of, and what are some possible strategies for dealing with them?

- Defamation: this is common, but very hard for the bosses to prove. In order for something to be considered defamatory it has to be proven that a statement was maliciously untrue. As long as we are acting to the best of our knowledge this shouldn't be too scary a lawsuit to be confronted with.

- Interference with 'economic rights': this is a more serious allegation that bosses have used against the IWW in Alberta, Canada, and we have yet to see how this may play out.



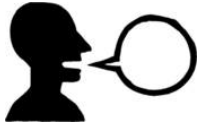
Regardless of what legal jargon the bosses and their lawyers throw at us, remember that its primary goal is to intimidate the workers. We should remember to include discussions around lawsuits when we are inoculating workers about the bosses' possible responses to a campaign going public.

One suggestion is for the organizing committee to develop a list of possibly sympathetic labour lawyers in the area that could be contacted for advice about specific questions and precedents. As well, be in contact with the Organizing Department and other campaigns to ask how other wobblies have dealt with legal issues in the past. The main thing to remember is to not let the campaign be distracted, bogged down, or intimidated by how the boss uses the law.

-- END OF DAY 1 --

7) Thinking Strategically

Purpose: Consider long-term realities of IWW campaigns, including dealing with questions around signing contracts, filing for elections, and expanding campaigns beyond a single shop.



We have found that as IWW campaigns develop and grow, they often reach a point where they're pushing at the limits of how far our model of solidarity unionism has been fully worked out in practice. We are a very different kind of union from traditional unions, but the appeal workplace contractualism is that it seems to have an easy answer for groups of workers when they come to unfamiliar terrain. We have seen a number of IWW campaigns wrestle with questions around whether or not to file for elections and to try and negotiate a contract.

We hope that this training will provide some tools for campaigns to use if and when they reach this point, but ultimately these questions will have to be worked out on the ground by groups of organizers like you. In this section we will spend some time discussing the IWW's views on contracts and how to articulate our model of organizing as a positive program.



Have a volunteer or series of volunteers read this section from the Constitution aloud.

Read, from the Bylaws of the IWW Constitution:

ARTICLE XI Agreements

- Sec. 1. Each Industrial Union shall have power to make rules relating to agreements between its job branches and the employers.
- Sec. 2. No agreement made by any component part of the IWW shall provide for a checkoff of union dues by the employer, or obligate the members of the union to do work that would aid in breaking any strike.
- Sec. 3. Effective January 1, 2013, no agreement by any component part of the IWW shall provide for a prohibition barring members from taking any action against the interests of the employer, nor shall any prior agreements add new prohibitive language. Agreements containing previously negotiated prohibitive language, and the renewal of such agreements, shall be exempt from this amendment.



Discussion questions:

- What does this mean, in plain terms?
- Does this prevent IWW shops from signing ANY written agreement? What specific kinds of agreements does this prevent?
- Why do you think this was passed? (at the 2012 Convention and Referendum)
- What implications does this have for organizing?
- How might you explain this to your coworkers?
- At what point in a campaign might you want to bring this up?
- Have you been part of a campaign that has considered filing for a labour board election or negotiating a contract? What were the arguments on either side? What was the result?



Often IWW organizers find themselves explaining what we're NOT: we don't follow workplace contractualism; we're not like traditional unions; we don't sign agreements with no strike clauses; we don't allow dues checkoff, etc. Let's take some time to practice articulating what we are and presenting it in a positive light.



For this next brainstorm, briefly list and write on the board, don't discuss each in detail. Use participants' suggestions or these examples, but try not to phrase it negatively as in "we don't use contracts."



What are the major features of Solidarity Unionism?

- Direct Action
- Workers decide tactics and strategy
- Accountable organizing committees
- Builds working class consciousness and solidarity
- Centered on the shop floor
- Willingness to use legal tactics only when they don't compromise workers' autonomy



Group work: Practicing 'Selling' Solidarity Unionism

Split participants into as many groups as you have features on the board (ex. if you use these features, create six groups). Assign each group one feature, and have them complete the following activities:

- 5 mins: Have the groups brainstorm ways of presenting this feature of solidarity unionism to their coworkers.
- 5 mins: Randomly choose one participant from each group to rotate to the group to their left and roleplay talking about their feature. The new person in the group is the organizer and the rest of the group are workers. The organizer has to try

and get the workers educated and excited about this particular feature of Solidarity Unionism.

- 5 mins: Come back to full group and debrief: Was it easy to talk about Solidarity Unionism in a purely positive light? Was it tempting to frame things as 'we don't do this' instead of 'we do do this, and this is why it's awesome'?

Strategic Targets



What are the different types of workplaces we can organize with our organizing model?

- single shops
- multi-shop chain of identical workplaces (ie. Starbucks, Jimmy John's)
- corporate owned and franchised companies
- contractors
- multi-shop network of different workplaces within an industry (auto industry, other manufacturing)
- unionized, non-unionized
- ownership structures: privately owned, public traded, cooperative, publicly owned



So, if we can organize at all these different kinds of workplaces, then the question becomes not so much WHERE should we organize but HOW do we organize against bosses. However, there are different organizational strategies that are more or less appropriate for certain industrial contexts. The IWW is a flexible organization that can adapt to the requirements of campaigns.



What are some examples of organizational forms the IWW has used?

- Company-specific union, for example the Starbucks Workers Union or the Jimmy John's Workers Union
- Industrial Unions, for example the IU 560 branch in Madison call centres or the IU 650 in social services in Portland, and the IU 670 branch in recyclers in the San Francisco Bay Area
- informal or semi-formal networks within other unions, for example IWW members in the Canadian Union of Postal Workers
- network of campaigns within similar types of workplaces, for example the Food and Retail Workers United
- Supply-Chain organizing, for example the Focus on the Food Chain in New York City
- Direct Action case work where branches help individuals win demands from bosses without the presence of a long-term organizing campaign, for example Dirt City Solidarity in Edmonton

(many of these projects are loosely modeled after the Seattle Solidarity Network or SeaSol)



As our campaigns grow beyond single shops, **how do we decide what organizational form is best for our context?**

- Research the company and industry (the Survey and Research Committee is developing an Industrial Research training that can help you learn how to do this!)
- Brainstorm and choose an organizational form that is best suited to a) your current and likely future capacities as organizers and b) will be well-placed to leverage the bosses at an appropriate and effective level of management
- Try not to get too carried away with new organizations: keep in mind that adding administrative tasks can take away from energy for organizing
- Don't get too married to one organizational idea: our organizing must be flexible and adapt to changing needs and contexts



Many campaigns get stalled in a single shop or small chain. **What are some ways we can push our campaigns to bigger targets and/or towards industrial organizing?**

- Map out not only your shop, section, or department, but the entire company, school, industry, supply chain, etc.
- Research the company and industry (the Survey and Research Committee is developing an Industrial Research training that can help you learn how to do this!)
- Find out who the key players are in the industry or sector and brainstorm ways to target them.
- Organize salting programs through branches where people looking for work (or who have been fired for organizing!) are supported to find jobs in a business or industry where we have active organizing campaigns
- Look for ways to spread the campaign geographically – for example setting up or getting involved in regional/national coalition or issue-based networks to find contacts or through IWW members moving to a different area of the country



The Next Step

Split participants into pairs. Have each pair decide on whose campaign to focus on. They will discuss what is one obvious firm or shop connected with their current organizing campaign that should be targeted as a “next step.” After 10 minutes of discussion in pairs, have them come back and have a few volunteers present what they think they should target next outside their own shop.

8) Accountability and Effective Meetings

Purpose: To consider the importance of consistently using good process in our campaigns and branches to encourage accountability.



Tell a story: Painting the Bike Shed

Imagine your committee is building a house. The architect puts forward the building plan and blueprints, but no one else is an architect so their plan is accepted without much discussion. The engineer then says what supplies they'll need and how to go about the construction, but again no one else is familiar with these details so there's little discussion. Finally it's decided that the house will have a bike shed, and the question comes up about what colour to paint the bike shed. This is the first thing that everyone has an opinion about and so the debate becomes heated and goes on forever.

Have you ever had an experience like this in a meeting? What are the dynamics that cause this kind of thing to happen? How can we avoid this from happening in our committee meetings?



Accountability Roleplay

Materials needed (in Appendix)

- **Grievance cards (p62):** Cut up into smaller slips of paper, and make sure you have enough copies for each participant
- **Agitational poster (p63):** Make a few copies to pass around
- **Intimidation letter (p64):** Make a few copies to pass around



Be very diligent about enforcing time constraints. Tell the group how much time they have for each step and give them 5-minute and 2-minute warnings that their time is running out. Your job is to follow the script closely and keep the group focused and on topic. Don't let them break character or break out of the role-play until the end.



The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate horizontal accountability in a shop committee. There are deliberate time constraints and an expectation that decisions be arrived at democratically. In a lot of organizing, people are pressed for time, but important decisions need to be made. For the next hour, we will be doing a role-play set in an imaginary organic grocery store called Green Planet. Please try and stay in character and imagine that you are really there and members of the shop committee. I will be keeping time and moving you from one step to the next but not participating in the discussion.

You are a shop committee at an organic grocery store. At a committee meeting 3 months after going public, boss's anti-union campaign is still around, but has slowed from its initial fever pitch. The committee is planning another action around break policies. You have all conducted one on ones and these are the grievances that have come up during agitation. As a committee, choose one issue and plan an action to address it, assigning roles and tasks for committee members.

Hand out the **grievance cards**.



Make sure the group:

- Selects someone to take minutes and to chairs
 - Decides on which grievance they choose to focus on.
 - Plans an action to resolve that grievance.
- Give the group 10 minutes to come to a decision and make their plan.*

Hand out the **agitational posters**. There will only be a few copies so have participants share.



"But wait!!! The day before your planned action is supposed to happen, someone who isn't in your committee has put up posters in the lunch room and on the street in the community attacking the company and calling for a meeting of the employees. No one knows who put them up.

You've called an emergency committee meeting to discuss these posters. Discuss how this development affects your committee, campaign, and planned action. How are you going to respond to these posters?"



Give the group 15 minutes to decide how to respond to the rogue posters.



Hand out the boss **intimidation letter**. There will only be a few copies so have participants share.



“Uh-oh! A week after the posters were put up, the boss sends a letter to all employees. As well, different department managers are interrogating union supporters outside of the committee to see if they as individuals had anything to do with the posters and if the union did.

You’ve called an emergency committee meeting to discuss the letter and the probing by the bosses. Discuss how this development affects your committee and campaign. How are you going to respond to the bosses?



Give the group 15 minutes to decide how to respond to the boss’ letter.

Debrief: 15 minutes

Allow participants to break out of the role-play. Guide a discussion to debrief the role-play, using questions such as these to help stimulate discussion:

- Was the person who put up the poster wrong to do it? Why?
- What does accountability mean in a shop committee?
- Did it feel rushed? Did the time limits make it more difficult to make a decision democratically? Have you experienced similar time pressures in your organizing?

Holding Effective Meetings:



- What are the goals of our meetings? What are we trying to accomplish?
 - to have productive meetings, not alienate members, and move the work forward.
 - With these goals in mind, how can we prepare and make sure our meetings achieve these goals?

Note: This section applies to all meetings, including one on ones.



Remember that we only have a large workplace meeting after we've had one-on-ones. We don't want anyone at the meeting unless we've had a one-on-one with them. Also, even though we have already had a one-on-one with everyone there, we usually still go through some elements of A-E-I-O-U with the whole group.



It is of course not necessary (and sometimes not even helpful) to use official Rules of Order at committee meetings. But, **what are the essential elements to any good meeting?**

- **Have an agenda.** The purpose of the meeting should be clear. It should not turn into a gripe session or a pep rally. The purpose is to answer questions, train, and conduct the work of the campaign, which includes inoculating workers against the employer campaign, assessing union support, determining strategy, etc.
- **Have concrete goals and outcomes.**
- **Keep the meeting short.** Start and end on time. Otherwise, people with family and other responsibilities will stop coming. If people want to talk longer, let them stay after the meeting and talk.
- **Meet at a convenient time and a neutral place.** Avoid bars and even restaurants that might make some workers uncomfortable or be too noisy. Solicit the help of your branch to offer child care if possible.
- **Encourage participation.** Nothing will kill committee interest faster than prolonged speeches. Instead, suggestions, discussion and participation by committee members will keep them interested and eager to make their contributions to the success of the campaign. Be sensitive to individuals from different social groups. If a worker or group of workers want the union to do something, try to make it happen. Make sure certain individuals (especially white men) do not dominate meetings.
- **Have a chair and take minutes.** Rotate these responsibilities among committee members, but don't sacrifice the strength of the meeting with someone who doesn't know how to chair. Work on training chairs. This might mean having co-chairs. It might mean letting individuals keep the stack for discussion. It might mean giving one on one trainings with future chairs. Remember, we want all members to be comfortable doing the various tasks of building the union.
- **Always start meetings with agitation.**
- **Be flexible.** Allow your committee to take on its own culture and develop unique things about it that make it distinct and flow from the experiences of the workers involved.



Two principle components of your committee meeting are **training** and **assignments**. Often they overlap. For example, if the committee is about to solicit membership in the IWW, part of the meeting is spent explaining what membership means, and preparing for conversations with coworkers about joining.

The best way to prepare for this or other activities is to role play the coworkers or the committee person, and let the "worker" raise the questions likely to come up. Just like we're doing in this training today! This way, committee members can help each other produce the best answers and approaches.

For the same example, the assignment phase of the meeting would involve

dividing up the contact list and deciding who is going to recruit which coworkers, as well as when and where delegates will be available to handle the paperwork and give out supplies. If applicable, use a signup sheet for assignments. Putting one's name down for a task is in itself an affirmation of commitment and the sheet facilitates your follow-up.

Let's take a quick look at a sample meeting agenda:

Sample Committee Meeting Agenda (*handout* or in agenda booklet)

- 1) 6:00 Amend agenda if needed. Report on anything new on the workplace and in the campaign
- 2) 6:10 Report results of previous assignments. Give recognition to those who completed their assignments (Remember the "O" from AEIOU!)
- 3) 6:25 Discussion of the next phase of the campaign.
ie. discussing the purpose of one-on-ones, how to do them)
- 4) 6:35 Role play by committee of next assignment
ie. members trade off being the worker and the organizer, practicing for upcoming one-on-ones
- 5) 6:50 Assignments i.e. distribution of contacts and addresses to committee members.
- 6) 7:00 Adjourn.

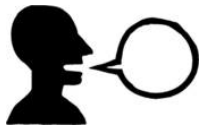


Wrap-up discussion of meetings:

- Can anyone share an experience of a good or bad committee meeting?
- What can go wrong in a meeting?
 - Bike shed analogy,
 - conflicts between organizers,
 - drinking or drug use before or during the meeting
 - uninvited guests
- How do we avoid these problems?
 - anticipate potential conversations and contentious items at a meeting and build consensus before the meeting even begins.

9) Integrating New Hires at the Shop

Purpose: Making sure that new hires are informed about the union and workplace. And they are given the chance to join and participate on their first day on the job.



Many of our workplaces and coworkers change regularly. During a campaign, we need to have a program for getting new workers into the union right away. Shop committee members should be trained and ready to have immediate one-on-ones with new employees at the job or in the industry. If the Shop Committee has built enough power, these meetings can be held on company time. That is, one demand from the boss should be to have a Shop Committee member meet with a new hire. This meeting should come before the meeting with HR but serve a similar function as the HR meeting—only ours is from a worker perspective.

Example: At a unionized workplace under the International Machinists Association an I.W.W. member and another worker were completing their job tying down air hoses on the side of a large semi chassis. The I.W.W. member had spent months talking with his coworker about the value of unionism. The two workers were a few days from being passed their 3-month probationary period. According to the contract following the probationary period the workers had to join the union or would be unable to continue work. The boss approached these two workers with a letter from the union. The letter stated that the workers would have to join the union or would lose their jobs. The boss stated this to the workers emphasizing the fact that the union would fire them if they did not join. Three months of work discussing unionism was undone by this one act. What does this tell us about our approach to new members?



What are the key talking points for new coworkers?

- History of campaign to the present day and any victories (better scheduling, a ladder to improve safety, raises, etc)
- The benefits of unions in an anti-union age. This is basically AEIOU.
- Horizontalism vs. looking up. Let new workers know that if they have a workplace issue, they come to the union not management. Explain direct action. Solidarity vs. individualism.
- Contact info for the Shop Committee.
- Possible discussion of the social map of the workplace: who is a snitch, who has been there a long time and can answer questions. Explain how to get the most out of the HR department.
- Importance of keeping a workplace diary. Importance of “Weingartner Rights” (only applicable to US, but it’s worth asserting elsewhere to see if the boss knows their labour law!) That is, that no worker should meet with the boss without a witness if the worker believes the meeting could lead to discipline.

- Explain that they can join the union any time. Here's some info about the IWW!
- Also, inform members or potential members that they can take their union benefits to every job they have.



Role play: Talking to a new worker about the union.

Split participants into pairs or groups of three. Have one play the role of the worker and the other play the organizer. After 5 minutes, have them switch roles.

10) Working with Problem Workers

Purpose: Figuring out ways to flip problem workers or at least neutralize them.



Nearly every workplace has one or more workers with bosshead. Bosshead is the opposite of solidarity unionism; it is the opposite of what the IWW stands for. Unfortunately, in many countries, especially the U.S., the majority of workers have bosshead. They believe in individual advancement and interests instead of the common good, capitalism instead of worker control, profit instead of human needs. These values produce a range of anti-worker and anti-union behavior.



What are some examples of “bosshead”?

- Sexism,
- racism,
- homophobia,
- brown nosing,
- nationalism,
- snitching,
- scabbing,
- individual self-advancement, etc. Give examples from your experience.

How can bosshead workers hurt our organizing?

- spying,
- snitching,
- scabbing,
- moving anti-union messages,
- wearing anti-union buttons at work,
- undermining direct actions, etc.

How do we deal with workers with bosshead?

- Brainstorm responses to problems they create.

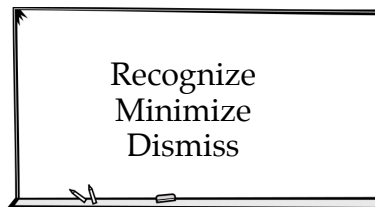
How do we deal with feeling like we’re manipulating people?



Invite participants to share their stories of how they’ve dealt with workers with bosshead. Invite success stories as well as frustrating or unsuccessful experiences.



Here's a model that can be helpful when taking part in difficult conversations:



Using this model, we start off with recognizing or acknowledging that the worker has a legitimate issue. We then minimize the issue, by putting it in context or bringing up relevant information. We end the conversation with dismissing the issue that was present at the beginning of the conversation.

For example: "I know that this manager has been really good to you and lets you pick your own shifts. But, that's not going to last forever, and eventually they're going to have a new favorite. So let's talk about a way of doing scheduling that's the most fair for everyone."

You may want to practice using this model in many organizing conversations , not just with workers with boss head. For example: "I know you're worried about getting fired for joining the union. But, that doesn't happen to a lot of people, and when it does happen it generally only happens to people who are really out front and public. So let's talk about ways you can be involved that aren't so out there and public."

Ideally, we want to move bosshead workers to supporting and participating in the union. At minimum, we want to neutralize them. Here are steps / options in dealing with problem workers:

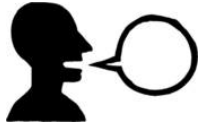
1. One on one, **try to get them on board** by focusing on an issue they care about. Debunk misinformation. Reveal anti-union leaders motives. Recognize, Minimize, Dismiss concerns of anti-union workers.
2. **Use social pressure to get them on board.**
 - If they are a leader, organize their base
 - If they aren't a leader, organizer a leader that has influence on them
3. **Socially isolate them.**



Role play: Split participants into groups of two or three. Have one participant play the role of the organizer and the other play the role of a problem worker who will have one or more of the bosshead we identified earlier. Allow a few minutes, then switch roles.

11) Staying Solid: Pushing and Dealing with Burnout

Purpose: Identify causes of organizer burnout and way to deal with them.



Organizing is a long and hard process. It can be emotionally trying, especially if you have to deal with many problem workers. At some point, all of us will feel burnout. We will lose motivation and possibly become embittered.



Share a story of a time when you felt burned out and how you dealt with it. While you don't have to share information you'd rather not, don't be afraid of being vulnerable and sharing your emotions. You will set the tone for how the participants relate to each other during this section, and the more vulnerable organizers can be with each other, the better we can support one another.



Small group discussion:

Split participants into groups of four or five. Have each person talk about a time when they felt burnt out, what they did about it, and how they are feeling now.

Group comes back together and facilitators elicit examples from each group. Brainstorm ways to avoid and minimize burnout by supporting each other.



One of the most powerful cures for burnout is returning to what motivates us. This section aims to identify what moves us forward and what holds us back. We will identify the obstacles that seasoned organizers face and discuss how we can push each other beyond them.

This will help us understand how to gain stronger commitments from our coworkers and be more genuine as organizers.

At some point, your coworkers will ask you why you do the things you do. This might be when you join, or when the boss outs you as a salt. We can inoculate our coworkers to claims that we are 'outside agitators', and build deeper, more meaningful relationships by wearing our hearts on our sleeves and sharing what motivates us. If you make yourself vulnerable by revealing what motivates you, your coworkers will be more likely to reveal what agitates them, and what holds them back. This will build a strong bond of trust and respect on your committee. This goes to the heart of how capitalism alienates all of us, and how we can overcome this alienation with working class solidarity.



This section, especially the next activity, can get emotional. Ensure that you have created a safe and respectful environment. If people cry, you have done your job.



Two-minute bio

5 minutes: Quiet reflection. Think back on an event or circumstance in your life that changed you. What made you become an organizer? What made you decide to join the IWW? What keeps you going? How have you been pushed? Show your heart. Make it emotional. Try to limit what you have to say to two minutes. You may write down your thoughts if you wish.

20 minutes: Sharing time. After five minutes have passed, everyone shares their responses. Though the instructions were to keep it to two minutes, don't cut anyone off unless you absolutely have to. Applaud after each person shares.



This can be a powerful, emotional exercise. You should participate, and you may want to go first to set the tone and try to keep responses under 2 minutes. If you have a very large group you may want to split into two groups.



Do you remember from the 101 what we mean by "pushing"? Often pushing happens one-on-one, between organizers who have a good working relationship. It can also be very helpful to bring this energy into our committee meetings with the "Hot Seat."



The Hot Seat: An Organizer's "Support Group"

Note: if you are running short on time, this activity may be convenient to skip



The Hot Seat is designed to both push people to become better organizers, and to help them through obstacles they have run up against. Really these two objectives are one and the same.

If the union is a collection of organizers all doing their own thing, then we won't have a real union. The hot seat concept encourages accountability among organizers. It encourages an atmosphere where organizers challenge each other and where the organizers are comfortable pushing each other to do more and learn from each other.

Choose one committee member from the group to be the focus of the discussion. Any meeting can turn into the hot seat. Usually this means spending a whole meeting focusing on a single worker's organizing project, goals, or skills, so make a policy of rotating.

5 minutes: The committee member gives an overview of a single organizing problem he or she is struggling with at the moment. This person reflects on where the problem has

come from, and frames a question for the rest of the committee. The discussion is not just for reporting a current event, but for laying out some problem that they are having with their campaign or even with a single worker. For this section, the rest of the committee just listens.

7 minutes: The group asks questions, to better understand the problem. They also ask questions to help the individual worker clarify and expand their thinking on the issue and the questions they've raised. The committee member who is presenting responds to the group's questions, but there is no discussion by the larger group of these responses.

15 minutes: The group has an open discussion among themselves while the committee member who presented is silent. What did we hear? What didn't we hear that they need to know more about? What do we think about the question and issues presented? Has anyone dealt with the same or similar issues? How can we help our fellow worker get past the problems they are having in the campaign?

30 minutes or more: The original presenter responds to the discussion, leading to a larger discussion among the whole group.

This discussion should really question the person on the hot seat, and then push them to deal with the problem in a new and different way.

Remember that beyond the day to day problems of "how do I move this worker?" or "how do I turn people out to a rally?" or "how do I get all this work done?" is always a bigger problem such as "how do I move this worker because I'm afraid of confrontation?" or "how do I turn people out for a rally when I'm not really connecting with the workers?" or "I don't know how to get all this work done when my partner is starting to get mad that I'm not home enough?"

It is these bigger problems, the real problems, that the hot seat should address.

Some best practices for making a hot seat work:

- 1) The conversation should focus on a practical and specific problem
- 2) It is not a brainstorm session. It is about finding out what is keeping the organizer from moving forward
- 3) The participants should have some understanding of the situation before the meeting.
- 4) The person on the "hot seat" should be prepared, and should be able to explain the problem that they are seeking to get through.
- 5) Don't focus on the external problems, think about what is holding the organizer back and why.
- 6) Don't attack the person on the hot seat. Yelling is not pushing. Sometimes the pushiest thing you can say is "Why?"
- 7) Expect defensiveness, but don't allow it to get in the way. Point it out and continue.

- 8) Don't take an easy "yes." If someone agrees without struggle then the person did not move.
- 9) The ultimate goal is not just to fix a problem, but to help change the way the person deals with problems in the future.

More concepts to keep in mind

- 1) If you give people "the answer" then they aren't learning and you aren't being an organizer. Draw the answer out.
- 2) If you are an organizer, you are a leader. You lead by pushing, even your fellow organizers.
- 3) Your duty is to make more successful organizer and that means not giving up and not letting organizers off the hook.
- 4) Anything you should say today, you need to say today.
- 5) You can't push someone on the hot seat unless you really care about them. Do you know why they got involved, and why they are still involved? Do they know why you got involved? Show your heart.
- 5) If you are on the hot seat it's because the committee believes in you. If you are pushing someone on the hot seat, it's because you believe in them.
- 6) Be on the lookout for alibis and excuses from the person on the hot seat. They don't count.
- 7) Being a leader means helping others become leaders. Don't do things for them that they can do for themselves.
- 8) If the organizer isn't hungry to win, then they won't.
- 9) The path of least resistance is the path to more of the same. The hardest choice is often the right one.
- 10) If the person isn't uncomfortable then you aren't doing your job. If you are on the hot seat and you aren't squirming then you aren't getting pushed.

12) Finding a Role in the IWW

Purpose: Moving coworkers at the shop or in our industries to take a greater and greater role in the broader IWW.



Consider what it means if a delegate collects dues from a group of workers newly signed up during a campaign, and it takes 5 months for these workers to receive any information from GHQ or their local branch?



Why is it important to integrate workers and campaigns into the broader IWW?

- builds the confidence and leadership of organizers
- encourages a sense of ownership and empowerment from a campaign
- sharing experiences spreads knowledge and skills around the union
- builds workers' skills (public speaking, for example)
- broadens workers' view outside of their shop, industry, nation
- allows people to see workers' struggles around the globe as our struggles



There are many roles for different people in an organization. We need lots of people to do different things, such as administration, organizing, and attending protests. When you find you are unable to continue performing well in one role, try to find another to transition to. As an organization, we need to be able to accommodate people at different life stages when they have different levels of energy, free time, family commitments, etc.



What are some ways we can encourage our co-workers to step up into roles outside of their campaign?

- ask them to attend an Organizer Training
- ask them to attend a GMB meeting
- invite them to make a presentation about their campaign at a rally, panel, branch meeting, or an international event like the General Convention or an Organizing Summit
- put them into contact with other workers organizing in the same industry
- ask them to take on an Organizing Department Liaison position
- nominate them for a branch officer position
- find a way to incorporate a specific skill set they have into the work of the union (eg. making music or art; IT, writing, editing, graphic design, language / translation skills, etc)



As organizers, we can never be satisfied with a worker's level of involvement. There is no such thing as a worker that is TOO class conscious. We need to build leadership and better wobblies out of workplace campaigns.

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The Committee in Action

by Phinneas Gage

“So let’s talk about what happened in the last month or so”. I said looking over the room full of the usual suspects. Harjit told the story like this: “the supervisors came out on to the floor to talk to everyone about taking forceback (forced overtime), they didn’t think anything was up when they asked the first person and they refused. They just nodded made a note and moved down the row”. He was grinning like a maniac. “The supervisor then asked if it was a group decision, and everyone said no”. Pete continued the story beaming with pride “then the next one refused, and the next one, and the next one until the entire depot had refused forced overtime”. A sister in the back of the room asked what the supervisors did next “they ran back into their office and called upper management in the plant”. All of the workers simply said that mail was heavy, it had been a long day and they didn’t feel that doing overtime that day was a safe decision. This was when Harjit had sent the text out across the city and everyone heard about what had happened at Depot 9.

The workers at Depot 9 built their job action around a core group of workers who had staged a march on the boss action before Christmas. The action was a textbook example of what we taught in our “Taking Back the Workfloor Course”. The course was a single day of workplace mapping, basic strategy and a series of role plays designed to teach workers how to plan and execute job actions. The centre piece was a role play march on the boss where the workers take on a facilitator pretending to be a boss. The carriers were upset because the supervisors were being sloppy in assigning jobs to the workers who cover absences known as relief carriers. Usually this is done based on seniority (how long someone has been at the corporation) but often management will cut corners, either out of laziness or favouritism and assign the jobs based on their own whims. The relief carriers demanded that management respect the seniority list. After this action the supervisors were careful to assign relief

positions properly. This gave the carriers the confidence to be more ambitious when the time came for them to stand together again. They were also smart about it, they claimed the victory for what it was and told the other workers on the floor about what they got by standing together and taking action.

Initially some of us thought the campaign around forceback might not go anywhere but supported it anyways as a learning experience; we discussed the initial action at Depot 9 and as one action among many other small actions isolated to a single station. We were very, very wrong on that prediction.

Later the next week scattered reports of workers refusing forceback across the city began to come in. Every time a small group of workers would stand together it would be sent out over the text message tree so everyone could hear about it, this also created a buzz and a lot of talk in the break rooms. Finally at one more depot everyone refused all at once, this was turning into a chain reaction.

The Committee in Action

The Organising Committee would meet monthly and would open every time with each member reporting on their station. This part of the meeting almost always took up half of the meeting. The committee members mostly shared war stories and talked about grievances on the floor and what the workers did to resolve the issues. Early in the committee a lot of work was put into helping each other out with problems and planning small campaigns around small concerns usually based in an individual workplace or shift.

One action had workers at a section in the plant ambush the boss in a “staff talk” (presentation by management) with a list of demands. They planned the meeting out like a march on the boss with a list of demands, a group of workers who were instructed to interrupt the boss so that the workers could speak and a third group that would relate stories about how management’s policies were affecting them. The main militants, a pair of sisters, sat at the back of the room and

watched their organising play out in front of them. This was important for all of us in a lot of actions because we didn't want to be the exclusive leaders; we wanted our co-workers to learn how to plan job actions by doing it themselves. The two sisters then sent a text message out so the whole city could hear about the action and build off of it.

There was also a lot of talk about what we could win based on the support we had on the floor behind a given issue. Up to that point we deliberately kept things pretty modest and planned actions that were scaled to our demands. When we got more ambitious with our demands we began to move up the corporate hierarchy. This wasn't conscious at first but became extremely conscious further down the line. Demands were issued either verbally with the floor shouting the demands out or chanting, during a staff talk, or even sometimes in writing with a demand letter presented to a coffee break meeting for ratification and then handed in to the boss by a delegation of workers.

Issues like respecting seniority and information from management about the work plan for the day usually came down to pressure on a supervisor but staffing levels and work distribution meant we had to target managers or even directors for the entire city. We would target the level of management responsible for the grievance. This also meant our tactics had to change based on where our support was at, strong workplaces where they had a few actions under their belt were more daring and confrontational, others had to start the escalation chain at the beginning.

The workers would then attend an organising committee meeting, or send a report with someone based on a phone conversation. After every action we tried to encourage debriefing through the committee and ask what worked and what did not go as planned. Eventually this became an effortless part of the direct action process.

Ideally a strong committee should have as clear of a process for dealing with grievances as the

“grievance process” in a mainstream union. For us the process went something like this:

1. Worker presents a grievance to the committee (this would either be the organising committee at the early stages or a shop committee or informal workgroup based on the job).

2. The Committee identifies the level of management responsible for the grievance and picks a tactic that pressures the appropriate level of the corporate hierarchy. The organising body that targets management should be built around the territory covered by the decisions that level of management governs. So a city-wide policy will ideally be challenged by the city wide organising committee and target the city wide management officials.

3. Committee members on the floor organise the action and raise the demands from the floor. There is no delegated negotiation; all important decisions in regards to a campaign are made in the shop floor “coffee break” meetings. Demands are issued and we would agitate for concessions. There was little room for management to make counter offers or cut us deals.

4. After the action the committee debriefs on what happened. They identify points on the floor where the campaign was strong and where it was weak. The organising committee identifies leaders and people who would be good for the workflow mobilisation course and assesses the effectiveness of the action.

5. We would then assess whether the action worked. Part of this was identifying if we got what we wanted. If we didn't get what we wanted we would go back to step two and try and turn up the heat either by moving up the chain of command or increasing the intensity at the same level of management. We would also assess whether the floor was stronger because of what we were doing or if there were places we needed to build support.

After several actions we learned that a lot of these fights need to be framed in terms of respect, dignity and doing what is right and not

just in terms of getting what we want. Of course our motivation for doing a lot of things as radicals is the principle of the matter at hand but we doubted ourselves when we thought that large groups of workers would get on board with this line of thinking. We were wrong. Once we started appealing to people's sense of self worth even if an action went badly many workers saw it as a victory in itself. Our coworkers won't fight for a dollar. They will fight for dignity. Sometimes we fight over a dollar because dignity is what's at stake; we can lose the fight for that dollar but still win back some dignity because we fought.

This process is not something that occupies the space that legal tactics fill in most unions. We would often have grievance forms on hand and encourage members to grieve violations of the collective agreement in addition to our job actions. There were also human rights complaints, health and safety violations and one demand letter made an appeal to the Criminal Code of Canada. However, there are places where direct action can run into conflict with the more conventional union strategy. In these instances we opted to favour a strategy that used direct action on the floor rather than building our militants into full time grievance specialists. This put worker self activity in the centre of our unionism and meant conventional legal unionism was used as a backup. We treated the law as a shield, but not a sword.

The Campaign Develops

Everyone sat on couches in the union office holding pieces of paper, taking notes and relating what happened over the previous month since the last meeting. "Well is the fact that the absent carrier is going to have twice as much mail going to create bad blood on the floor?" I asked. "It might" Pete said. Christine piped up, "I called in sick for a day last week to take care of my toddler and everyone refused forceback on my route, when I came back there was more mail but it was worth it. There were two others in my depot that had undelivered walks that felt the same as me. I don't think it will create any

conflict, at least at our station".

"Look, this is a crisis, we've been trying to address this for years and have gotten nowhere" Christine said. She continued, "the forced overtime clause is supposed to be a last resort but we have depots that are using it three times a week when it used to be twice a year". She was right, also injuries were up and this was creating a vicious cycle where workers would work too much overtime to cover absences, get injured and then create more absences while they took time off work to heal. This did create bad blood, once some workers started getting doctors notes saying they could not work overtime. After this happened there was even more pressure on the workers that were left to pick up the slack. The solution to the problem was simple of course: hire more staff.

"This month we have four depots that have held the overtime ban for a few weeks, but we still have six depots with no ban in place". At a mass meeting called by the workers of Depot 9 the workers demanded to meet with one of the managers for the entire city. By all accounts the manager got roasted as angry carriers demanded answers as to why staffing the letter carriers was not a priority. He was furious with the union who he had felt put the workers up to it, when in actuality the union's relationship to the struggle was much more complicated.

The Mass Meeting

Christine got the meeting back on track: "We seem to be stuck in the same four depots, the Mail Service Couriers, and certain parts of the plant. We need a way to get everyone on board and push the actions into places where we aren't strong yet." "Easier said than done" said Keith, we've got the depots where folks either have had some fight in them for a while, like Depot 3, or where most of the carriers are lower seniority and younger". Christine nodded.

"What we need is a way for everyone, not just the four depots where we are strong, to talk with each other directly", said Pete. "That way the folks that are worried can hear how it worked for us and maybe our attitude will rub off on them".

Everyone nodded. “A meeting!”, Keith shouted in a eureka moment. “We call a mass meeting, where everyone comes and tells each other about what they have done and how we want to spread it to their station”.

“What about the executive though? Will they be in favour of it?” asked Pete. Pete was thinking about how hard it was to get the direct action course going last time. The last time we tried something like this was the course and there was stalling for months before it got through. (For more on this, see “[Waves of Struggle](#)”). “Do we need permission to call a meeting?” replied Keith.

Two days later an email went out with a nice clean graphic, a date and a time. We also decided that two sisters from the floor would chair the meeting, and that everyone would get equal time to speak, including any union officials. This definitely upset some people who were used to having the President act as chair at the General Membership Meetings, however it was agreed this was a meeting called by the workers and that it would have no standing under the CUPW constitution. We were clear but firm, union officials were encouraged to attend but they would be in the stack alongside everyone else. When word hit the floor there was overwhelming enthusiasm for the mass meeting. This enthusiasm started to rub off on the entire executive and even those who were worried about it started to think this was a good thing.

Before the meeting Keith stood in front of a crowd of 160 workers, the meeting hall was packed and everyone sat in a huge circle. Christine gave him a slow nod and he read the opening address he prepared. In the speech Keith roasted the union for inactivity and blamed poor leadership for what had happened with forceback. The President of the local was staring daggers at all of us from the organising committee. Some of our coworkers looked pissed too. Many workers were frustrated with the union but the local President was tremendously popular on the floor, she got

elected for a reason, and many of us in the committee disagreed with Keith’s argument that this was merely a question of leadership. The problem was with a lack of initiative at the base of the union too, the leadership played a role in this, but we had the same criticisms with the previous two Presidents also. (see [On Leadership](#), [On Contracts](#), and [My Introduction](#)). Plus, the meeting hadn’t been billed as one about problems with the union, it was supposed to be about fighting our bosses.

“This is bad, Phinneas”, Ike leaned in and whispered in my ear. I nodded slowly scanning the room, some members were obviously agreeing with what was being said, but at least as many were angry and felt this was an anti union tirade. As soon as Keith finished his speech there was some very enthusiastic clapping, but some members also put their hands up and were waiting impatiently, shuffling in their chairs in a way that only someone who intensely irritated can do. A split was developing. And in all splits there are two small fractions who get heated up and shout at each other and a majority who don’t want to be in a room with either group of shouters, let alone being in the room with both groups shouting at each other. That is, if a polemical argument broke out over Keith’s remarks, it didn’t matter who won because the argument itself taking place that way in this meeting would be a loss.

This wasn’t the time for executive politics so Ike decided to act quickly. He put his hand up and we all saw Christine sigh with relief, Christine knew Ike well and knew he was going to smooth things over. She wrote down his name on her pad of paper, even though Ike was a full time officer in the union he spoke when it was his turn along with everyone else, we were all equals in this meeting.

Before Ike spoke, Hank, a rank and file worker from Depot 3, and member of a charismatic church got up to speak. “I remember the good old days when Canada Post treated its workers well”, he started. “I used to call the supervisor by their first name, if I called in sick they would

ask me if I was okay when I was back at work". He paused for effect and to take stock of the crowd.

"We've been very reasonable on this issue, we've waited years", his pace picked up from the calm and thoughtful tone of earlier in his speech. "But Canada Post isn't listening! The union can't do anything for us it's up to us to do this! We can't wait any longer, our friends are getting hurt, the new people are working in the dark and the overtime just keeps coming and coming and coming!" The crowd was getting really worked up at this point, but still a few people were shuffling uncomfortably, there was still a clear split between a lot of folks who were worried this was turning a little too 'anti union' and the passions of the crowd weren't helping.

Then Ike's turn came. He was a lot younger than Hank; he had expensive glasses designer jeans and a faux hawk. He stumbled a bit at first stuttering the first words of his speech but he quickly found his feet. "Jean Claude Parrot was one of the greatest leaders this union ever had", the older members who remembered the years where 'J.C.' went to jail for defying back to work legislation nodded sagely. "But we make a big deal out of our great leaders, a big deal that even Jean Claude Parrot wouldn't agree with. He always said that they couldn't have any of what they had accomplished without the members taking action themselves, without the wildcat strikes and direct actions those glorious years would be nothing!" I'm a cynical guy but I could feel my own heart singing at this point. "Don't look to the union for permission they cannot legally give! You are the union, the union isn't the full time officers or the people in Ottawa, they are just a small part of CUPW; the union is every single one of us! This is what makes us a movement!" The crowd exploded, many started chanting "so-so-so-solidarity!"

The next speaker was Pete. He smiled broadly while re-telling the story about what happened at Whitemud South. "We were really worried when we were only the third depot to refuse forceback, first it was Depot Nine, then Depot Three", the

crowd cheered, "then it was us, and we thought the discipline was definitely going to come". He shuffled his notes, and beamed at the room. "But we stayed strong and we did it, and that's why I came to the meeting today, to say you all can do it too, together we can end forceback!"

Keith then stood up and read a motion to form a 'Workfloor Mobilisation Committee' to coordinate job actions all over the city. The motion outlined a committee that had broad representation from all the different depots, and sections and shifts in the plant. The committee would be independent of the local executive and would coordinate job actions outside the bylaws. Some of the tension in the room came back, but several executive members who were working on the direct action campaigns earlier spoke in favour of the committee. I was an executive member too, I voted in favour.

The Campaign Continues

The next morning the texts began to roll in: "Depot 6 is refusing all overtime, management extremely upset". "Sherwood Park depot is refusing overtime and standing strong". "Depot 3 affirms that they will not do any overtime". "Depot 1 refused overtime for today".

Each one was forwarded out to about seventy of our fellow workers, feeding more enthusiasm across the city.

A series of coffee break meetings began to roll out across the city where depot after depot affirmed that they had all but stopped mandatory overtime. In most depots a vote by a show of hands in a coffee break meeting generally decided it, this helped build the sense of strength and unity on the floor as workers saw how much support there was for the proposal. This pattern followed in about ten different stations and even spread to the plant as the inside workers used the momentum to raise their own concerns over days off and respect from management. Soon the spirit of militancy spread to the plant.

Then there were more text messages.

"Fork lift drivers just turned in their company

vehicle operators permits. They are refusing to move mail until issues of health and safety are resolved”.

“In the offsite”, a part of the mail plant operations that were moved to another building, “workers marched on the boss over staffing concerns.” Actions in one place would spur on actions in other places. They would often leap frog and places that had a lower level of agitation would often start at a much higher level than the first depots to start. Escalation would work on a different scale on a city wide level than it did on the level of an individual station.

At one point a coffee break meeting was as an extremely daring and radical act. Later on many of the stations would be organising a march on the boss as their first job action. The movement coalesced around the issue of staffing and health and safety, inside the mail plant and outside with the delivery personnel. Over a thousand workers at over a dozen different workplaces were involved in one kind of job action or another, either marching on the boss, refusing forced overtime, or participating in mass meetings on the floor. There were also petitions, chants from the floor, noisemakers and even some letter carriers would rock their cases and make noise to celebrate the arrival of Friday morning.

The Workfloor Mobilisation Committee

“Alright folks let’s call this meeting to order.” Keith sat at the front of the room in the coffee shop and looked across the room. The usual suspects were all present, except for the executive members that served on the local organising committee. There were also some new faces from some of the depots that were brought in to the struggle. The group took turns telling everyone about the job actions at their stations, petitions, noise actions, march on the boss actions, and forced overtime refusals. Keith opened the discussion on the direction of the committee like this:

“The members look to the leadership of the union for direction, these actions can’t continue without real leadership in the local.” Pete looked

uncomfortable and Christine shot her hand up. Keith smiled knowing he touched a nerve with some folks in the group but he wanted to press his point and a heated debate was just the way to do it.

Christine spoke her piece, obviously trying not to sound too annoyed. “Come on Keith it isn’t that simple, a lot of members just don’t have the confidence to take on a risky action yet. Having an executive member leading the charge isn’t going to change that. Folks need to learn and that only happens by taking risks yourself”.

Keith nodded, “people look up to their union leadership though and that is just a fact we have to deal with. It’s only natural that the union officers are seen as the people who need to make the decision to take action”.

“Isn’t that part of the problem though? I mean we have seen people question the union in a way they haven’t before and that’s healthy. We don’t want people to simply follow the union we want people to fight for something because they believe in the cause”.

Keith shot back. “You have to admit it is confusing to people when half of the stewards are saying one thing and the union leadership in the office is saying something else with regards to these actions. We need to be able to take these actions on through the proper channels. In order to do this we need to have a clear majority on the executive.” “What if that executive buckles under the pressure too? What if they get scared when someone gets fired or the Labour Board steps in and threatens fines? Having strong leaders is great but why do we isolate them in an office and put them in meetings with management all day?”

Christine took a long sip of water and looked out the window. Pete, after reminding everyone that there was a rules of order, told folks that they should probably get back on track and take care of some business too. “You have the floor Christine.

“It looks like the ban is holding across the city, what we need to be ready for now is discipline

in retaliation for our actions.”

Pete nodded, “definitely, the first hint of any discipline we need to see coffee break meetings across the city to discuss what to do”. Pete looked around the room, “seeing no more discussion on this item let’s move on to our discussion on putting on the next round of direct action courses”.

Trade Union Discipline

Typically the question that dominates workplace strategy is how the radicals on the floor should orient themselves towards the union leadership. When things really start to move in a shop another question arises: how is the union leadership is going to orient itself towards the actions on the floor? Our approach was a challenge to the traditional idea of what “discipline” means in a trade union. All unions rely on a strong degree of unity among their members. One way to get this unity is making a big deal out of leadership at the top. In almost all unions they say that the highest authority of the union is the membership. That is to say that most unions are democratic.

The basis of trade union democracy is the local meeting. Naturally the General Membership Meeting (in CUPW this is a monthly GMM) cannot meet all the time so there is a special committee, called the Executive Committee that reports to the General Membership meeting and acts on behalf of the membership at large between meetings. In CUPW there is also a corresponding regional executive committee and a national executive. These two groups have general meetings (conventions) every few years to decide policy and direction but otherwise the executive has the power to act in the name of the membership.

Now because the National Executive Board represents the will of the national membership represented by the National Convention their decisions are binding on all bodies below them, this means regions and locals. All decisions made by the regional office are binding on the locals in that region. This means that discipline flows from the top to the bottom of the

organisation. The check on this discipline is the fact that the leaders are elected and criticised in meetings. (This practice is very similar to Democratic Centralism as practiced by various left wing political parties, particularly those that come out of the traditions of European Social Democracy such as the Bolsheviks or German SPD.) So there is open debate and contested leadership and a vibrant democratic culture but ultimately many decisions in regards to strategy and tactics are made at the top levels of the organisation and are binding on every one further down the chain of command. That is to say that traditionally many unions are what is called centralist. These practices rarely exist inside the bylaws of most unions due to a century and a half of social democratic union practice they are simply assumed.

Our organising on the floor through rank and file committees was a challenge to this system because in our organising the workers at the shop level decide on strategy and call out for solidarity from other workplaces. We encouraged members to act without permission and to take the initiative independent of the leadership. One informal motto some of us took up was “it’s better to ask for forgiveness afterward than to ask for permission first.” This lead to the committees being accused of being undemocratic because the workers themselves were usurping the power of the democratically elected local, regional and national executive bodies.

Ultimately this was a question of the kind of democracy our union or even society at large should practice. On one hand you have a democracy based on freedom of initiative, the democracy of our committees that is constituted by the participation of those involved towards a common goal. The Organising Committee meetings act as a check on everyone’s activity but everyone also assumes that folks have the freedom to act on their own behalf and not wait for some saviour to come down from the clouds with the answer for them. On the other hand you have a representative system that is democratically managed by the members but in

essence acts as a workplace government in miniature. Many of these practices are implied but not outright stated, and in the long history of wildcats and independent action at the post office there has also always been a strong tendency towards independent action.

Some critics have said that direct action is a set of tactics and not a strategy. This is true when we're talking about individual actions in isolation. When we organize ourselves around direct action, though, and the capacity to take direct action then it's different. In that case, there is something special about direct action in that it cannot be managed from above and it chafes at every encounter with an idea of discipline that is based on strong leadership at the top of an organisation. For this reason it is not a strategy in itself, but it does effect the kind of strategy you are going to use.

In order for workers to have real control over their own activity leadership needs to be built through action on the job, this leadership needs to be accountable to workers on the job, and for the leadership to remain accountable the source of that leadership has to stay on the job. We aim to build leadership on the shop floor and have the shopfloor be the place where our union makes decisions about how to fight bosses. This is also why many of the larger job actions began with a "coffee break meeting" where the workers would hold an assembly on the job and vote by show of hands on the course of action to be taken. From this starting point you build towards a sense of unity and discipline that does not feel external to the workers but comes from their shared struggles and interests. Discipline then becomes a horizontal force, not something from above. It becomes something that everyone exercises on each other instead of something imposed by leadership with a mandate from convention. The question is not simply one of organisational form or a crisis of leadership, and it's certainly not about getting the right people elected to officer roles. It's a matter of developing the spirit of solidarity and horizontal discipline in the struggle itself. Effective direct action requires this, and produces this.

The Local Executive

Sam stood in the hallway shaking with rage, "There's a process Ike!", he shouted. Ike was grinning ear to ear as the labour relations rep continued his tirade. "What is the board going to say about this? You're going to get fined! This is Delton all over again!" The Delton wildcat (see "[My Introduction](#)") was part of a previous wave of job actions a few years earlier.

Ike smiled calmly and said "the office had nothing to do with this Sam, though we were obviously happy to see everyone take so much initiative and show so much solidarity but this happened outside the union meetings. The workers did this themselves. Over a thousand of them took action themselves without our direction." Sam shook his head and walked away briskly shouting, "fines, Ike! You better be ready to pay those fines!"

Later that day Ike was sitting between myself and Harjit listening to Craig, another executive member express his concerns about the job actions.

"I have no idea what is going on, I hear about a job action in one station after it happens, sometimes I hear about the job actions a week after they have happened. No one is asking us if it is alright- its total anarchy!"

Ike looked at Harjit and stifled a giggle, but the local President was not impressed either. I raised my hand and she gave me the floor.

"None of us know when an action is going to happen, to a certain degree we just have to trust the member's judgement". I paused. "None of this is political there are folks from all over the place in the local planning these job actions".

"What if the members are wrong?" asked Craig out of turn.

"Is that any worse than if we are wrong?" heckled Ike.

Craig continued, ignoring Ike. "Look, we need discipline we can't just have everyone running around doing as they please. We need to enforce the contract, if the language isn't strong enough

we have a democratic way to negotiate new language”.

I continued. “I think we would do well to follow the lead of the floor on this stuff, give them the power to act and we do our best to back them up and give them support. We do not need to be the stars of the show, if Delton taught us anything sometimes things need to be done that the executive cannot take the lead on and that is alright.”

“Look, the members elected us to make decisions for them, there is a process and we have bylaws”, Craig was clearly not convinced.

Ike’s turn. “No one has broken any bylaws, it may be how things were done in the past, but no one is breaking the rules with independent committees. Show me the language in the constitution that says this if they are breaking rules”.

Sharon, continuing her slow pace and turns to lecture Ike, “so do these people, who are acting outside the constitution and outside the contract expect to be protected from discipline if the corporation tries to fire them?”

“Yes”, I said, “and they are justified in feeling this way, we don’t just give Solidarity to those we agree with when we fight the boss”.

Good Clean Wins

When radicals move from unfocused activism to real organising they usually go through a phase where they talk about winning a lot. It’s a way to show that they’re Serious Radicals Who Understand These Things. “What would it take to win?” “We need a victory.” Good clean wins don’t really exist, at least in our experience with direct action campaigns on the job. Everyone wants to think of labour struggles as like a backyard wrestling match where the opponents square off against each other. Eventually we pin the boss and they cry `uncle` and we get our concession.

What actually happens is you agitate like hell and the boss mocks you the whole way and does everything he can to make you feel powerless. Then the boss will come down really hard and try and punish the bad ones among you and buy off the folks who he can identify as wavering in their commitment. Then he will quietly address some of the concerns, usually without publically stating what is going on and if he has to acknowledge the change he will get professional help in crafting a plausible story as to why these changes were coming anyway.

With the forceback campaign we only found out the boss was hiring in response to everyone refusing overtime because one particularly dedicated militant was checking the job boards every day on the CPC website and noticed that Edmonton was hiring in a time of year when Canada Post does not usually hire. Eventually we found out our campaign was so successful Canada Post was hiring hundreds of workers. They have never publically acknowledged this victory to this day. They don’t want us to get bolder; they hope workers won’t learn or won’t remember the power we have collectively. Some members of senior management quietly conceded it was unrest on the floor that led to this course of action in private discussions with union officials. It was obvious anyway, but it feels good that management had to admit it, at least to themselves.

Claiming Our Victories

Harjit looked at the new kid next to him as he clumsily pushed the mail into the old wooden sorting case; he was slowly memorising the streets in case he had the same run tomorrow. He was moving much quicker, but slowed down for a second and turned to him, “you know why you got hired here don’t you?” The kid looked at him confused. “Let me tell you about what happened last winter”.

Excerpts from the series of articles on “Minority Unionism” by FW Alexis Buss

“As much as possible, we should seek to avoid situations where our power is replaced by laws and contracts.”

We need “a way for us to organize to address the respect (or lack of respect) workers feel on the job, our ability to control how we work, how our workplace is going to interact with our community and our world.”

“The point of unionism as the IWW sees it is to organize workers in ways that our power cannot be ignored or co-opted...As much as possible, we should seek to avoid situations where our power is replaced by laws and contracts.”

“The labor movement was built when groups of workers came together and began agitating over conditions: Sometimes they persuaded their fellow workers to approach the boss and demand that some problem be corrected. Sometimes they refused to work under unsafe conditions or in unsafe ways, and persuaded their coworkers to do likewise. Sometimes they acted on the individual job, sometimes they held citywide demonstrations over issues of common concern, such as working hours or

unsafe-work.”

“[Solidarity] unionism is about forming meaningful, organized networks of solidarity capable of winning improvements in individual workplaces, throughout industries, and for the benefit of the international working class. It is a process, a process that offers hope for transforming our greatest weakness--the fact that our members are scattered in many, largely disorganized workplaces--into a strength.”

Find all the minority unionism essays here:

<http://www.iww.org/en/about/solidarityunionism/explained/minority1>
<http://www.iww.org/en/about/solidarityunionism/explained/minority2>
<http://www.iww.org/en/about/solidarityunionism/explained/minority3>
<http://www.iww.org/en/about/solidarityunionism/explained/minority4>
<http://www.iww.org/en/about/solidarityunionism/explained/minority5>

Work grievances for Agitate sorting exercise

Cut into individual cards.

If your group is over 20 participants, make an extra copy of all cards.

I'm not getting paid overtime.

Some people at my work think I shouldn't get a raise because I'm Asian.

I'm not scheduled enough.

My boss makes comments about 'you people' when he's talking about people who are gay.

I'm scheduled so often I never get to see my kids.

I work so much overtime that I'm always late picking up my kids.

My manager speaks very slowly to me because English is not my first language. It's insulting.

The men at my workplace make sexist jokes.

I don't like my uniform.

Someone at my workplace touches me inappropriately.

My uniform exposes me to inappropriate comments from patrons.

My boss threatened me physically.

I'm often in trouble because I have to ride the bus and it's sometimes late.

When I am late for work I get into trouble but my coworkers don't.

I feel unsafe walking to work alone.

My boss plays favorites.

I think it's unfair that full time workers get 3% more in their retirement plan than half-time workers.

There are no opportunities for promotion.

My boss has punished me for refusing unsafe work.

Stress about my wages is affecting my marriage.

Management is always telling us to speed up but we're already working so fast we can't do everything safely.

I don't make enough money.

I don't make enough money to pay my child support.

My managers always blame us when equipment fails.

The cost of lost or broken equipment is taken off my paycheque.

I don't like my coworkers.

My coworkers are lazy.

My coworkers pick on me.

The office is too cold/hot/noisy.

My workplace isn't wheelchair accessible and my husband can't come to work parties.

I'm autistic and my supervisor doesn't understand that being touched really upsets me.

The music that plays in my workplace is annoying.

When we have social events there are never vegetarian options.

My boss has bad breath.

My supervisor has an annoying voice and speaks too loudly.

I wish my boss would take my ideas for how to improve the business seriously.

I don't know why the manager has an open door policy when none of the issues get resolved.

I wish they'd replace our uncomfortable chairs.

There seems to be different expectations for the men at my workplace.

I'm not getting my breaks.

Customers don't tip and I'm making minimum wage.

No one has updated the computers in our office.

I'm swamped with paperwork every time I deal with Human Resources.

My employer doesn't give me enough notice for shift changes.

When people call in sick the rest of us have to pick up the slack.

I go to work sick because my boss makes such a fuss about calling in sick.

No one cares about this work as much as I do.

I feel like my contributions aren't valued.

Customers yell at us because we're often short of stock.

When my boss yells, I get very frightened.

I wish we could wear whatever we want to work.

STATION 1: _____

What does this term mean in the context of direct action? Write your own definition or explanation of this term.

Give an example of this from your own workplace.

What could happen if this component wasn't considered in the planning of an action?

STATION 2: _____

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Give an example of this from your own workplace.

What could happen if this component wasn't considered in the planning of an action?

AEIOU

Grievance

Participants

Witnesses

Target

Demand

Means

Results

Escalation

Follow-up

Parts of an Action

An action isn't really just one thing. Actions have components: AEIOU conversations, planning, the grievance, participants, witnesses, a target, a demand, means, results, escalation, and follow up. Ultimately, organizing and direct actions to resolve grievances, if done well, can move the union closer to its short and long term goals of worker self management.

AEIOU: Education and organization for maximum worker participation. Planning of action.

Grievance: The grievance is the thing or things that workers want changed.

Participants: The participants are the workers who do the action. They should be a mix of workers. If the action just consists of only seasoned wobblies, then something is probably wrong. You should try to recruit new workers to take part in every action. The action demonstrates the power of the union to workers, which is more powerful than telling them about it.

Witnesses: The witnesses are the other people in the shop who don't take part in the action. This includes workers who support the union or the action but can't participate in the action for some reason (say they have to work and the action doesn't involve walking off the floor), workers who say they support but don't do so in a real way, and workers who are unsupportive. It also includes the bosses.

Target: The target is the person or persons who can give us what we want. The target depends on the issue and the demand. The night shift supervisor on a loading dock will not be able to make changes in the health insurance plan, for example, but will be able to make changes in how the attendance policy is enforced. Whatever the issue is, as a general rule, pick the lowest level target capable of making the change you want.

Demand: The demand is what the participants want in order to resolve the issue. The demand should be very clear. The demand should be put in writing as a statement. The demand should be said out loud as a statement followed by a question ("we want adequate supplies, so we want you to make sure we always have cleaning spray on hand. Will you do this?"). The demand should always have a deadline. If the bosses don't respect the deadline it may be time for escalation.

Means: The means is the action itself, what the participants are going to do in order to put pressure on the target. Your tactic depends on your goal and your target. Sometimes you want to fight and polarize the workplace around an issue, sometimes you want to make the boss do something stupid, but most often you'll need to use an escalation strategy. This means doing the lowest level action you can think of which is likely to make the target do what you want. That way, you have the option of escalating. Think about the appropriate place and time as well. You want as many

people as possible to be there facing the target. Prepare whatever materials you need - letter, petition, buttons, picket signs, etc. **Planning and organizing is key. Poor planning and poor organizing will kill a direct action.**

Results: The results are what happen after the action. There are three aspects to results.

- 1) The effect on the bosses. Do they give in to the demand? Do they refuse to give in? Did the action make their life unpleasant? Will they think twice about doing something again which will make them the target of an action?
- 2) The effect on the witnesses. This is tremendously important. Actions should always make more people support the union and the participants. If the action makes fewer people supportive of the union, then the action fails, even if it wins material gains.
- 3) The effect on the participants. This too is really important. The action should leave people feeling like they accomplished something. An action that makes less union supporters or lowers commitment is a failed action. Have a plan in advance for defense of workers who may be the victims of retaliation for the action. We will talk about job defense a little more later.

Escalation: Escalation steps and next actions aren't always carried out but you should always have them planned out. Escalation steps are what the participants will do if the target's response is bad - they refuse to do anything, they begin to retaliate against the participants or otherwise make life unpleasant, they miss the deadline, etc. Escalation has two basic forms.

- 1) Intensifying the means, such as moving from a written letter to a group confrontation with the target to a work stoppage. **Keep in mind that hitting the boss financially, short or long term, will be the most effective means of getting the goods.**
- 2) Picking a higher target, such as sending a letter to the night shift loading dock supervisor's boss, the night shift supervisor for the plant. Moving up the chain of command allows you to pinch lower management between the shop floor and upper management, making lower management's life unpleasant. This sends the message to lower management that if they don't deal with you then you will make them have to deal with their boss. Sometimes you may not have to escalate, like in the case of a missed deadline.

Follow up: Follow up is the work of talking to the participants and the witnesses. This is a crucial part of the action. Often the follow up is what determines whether the action is a success, a failure, or a major failure. In the follow up, the Shop Committee should have one-on-ones with the participants and the witnesses. Listen to their responses to the action, acknowledge any concerns they have, and move them to see direct action as a successful positive thing. This will allow us to always be building for the next direct action. This is key. The boss will always try to paint our activity as aggressive, negative, personal, motivated by bad intentions, and futile. We need to be prepared to counter these messages. Ideally, we counter these message by inoculating and instilling in advance the idea that our actions are successful and positive - our action made our lives better at work, that's a victory and is something no one can object to. Three guidelines

for follow up:

- 1) Make clear that if more people get involved we can make bigger improvements. Actions should always have one of their goals be recruiting new people.
- 2) Praise any positive contributions anyone made so they will repeat that activity or increase it. Actions should always make our supporters more capable and more willing to be involved.
- 3) Take credit. Remember that bosses will often try to take credit for our victory, trying to make it look like a concession is actually coming from their own kindness as a boss. As an organizer we are responsible for claiming our victories and preventing the boss from snatching victory from the jaws of his defeat.

To boil it down further, make sure you cover these questions in your shop committee when planning every action:

- What is the issue?
- Who is affected?
- What is the goal?
- Who is the target?
- What are the tactics?
- What are your fears?
- How will you respond to retaliation?

Work grievances for Agitate sorting exercise

Cut into individual cards.

If your group is over 20 participants, make an extra copy of all cards.

Grievances at Green Planet grocery store:

- wages too low
- always short staffed
- mandolin slicer defective and dangerous
- healthcare benefits only for full time employees, 80% of workers are part time
- no sick days
- leaky roof in the back room
- abusive manager who yells a lot
- scheduling is always done late and with errors

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GREEN PLANET WORKERS DEMAND RESPECT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

WE WANT:

-PAID SICK DAYS!!!!

-BETTER PAY!!!

-LESS CRAPPY EQUIPMENT!!!

**MEETING:
L STREET BAR, NEXT TUESDAY,
7PM.**

BRING A FRIEND!!!



Green Planet Foods

123 Environment Avenue

(123) 456-7890



Dear Team Members,

Recently we have been made aware of posters put up in the surrounding community by people claiming to be employees of our business. We have no doubt that this is only a small group of employees, as you well know you can't please everyone.

Regardless we are currently consulting our legal counsel with regards to whether we should begin legal proceedings against any individuals or organizations that may have played a roll in this poster.

What is most hurtful to our management team is that it undermines our shared project of bringing nutritious, organic, locally grown produce to our community. As a progressive business we can't help but think about the effect these letters might have on our business. Especially troubling is the business it may send to the retailers that do not hold our ethical values.

Of course we pride ourselves on being open and approachable about any concerns our employees might have. So I would like to encourage anyone to step forward if they have any concerns about this poster and whoever distributed it as well as any policies this company may have. As I like to say, "my door is always open".

With the Sincerest thanks,

"Big" Mike Stanfield,

General Manager

Green Planet Foods