



IWW Newsletter

**An injury to One
is an injury to All!**

Issue 2
April 2020

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Alternative**

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Further Reading:

Pete Davies'
important reflections
on the lessons to be
drawn from campaign
to organise the
Couriers' Network :

newsyndicalist.org

Welcome to Issue 2 of the new Newsletter. We will do our best to keep you in touch with the most important IWW stories as they come into us. The newsletter depends on branches getting in touch with stories or members taking to their keyboards and writing for us. If you have a story idea or a piece of writing you think we could use, then contact us by email at: newsletter@iww.org.uk

Organising in a time of Covid-19

"I had to self-isolate due to fears about contracting Covid-19. I work in care. There was palpable pressure to go into work on Thursday last week, it was mild symptoms, I could cope. I chose to err on the side of caution and stay home." This is a choice that a lot of workers will be facing across the world right now.

"Do I go into work and ensure I get enough money to stay afloat, or do I do what I think is right and stay home" This pressure is difficult to reconcile for people in low-paid and precarious work. It's unfair to ask workers to do this.

The impact that covid-19 has had on the union is quite stark, the reality of not having face-to-face meetings has blown a hole in what people's interpretations of what union organising is. There's a high likelihood that the social-distancing measures



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Newsletter Title

Members' Poll

These are the choices, FWs. If you'd like to vote then please email newsletter@iww.org.uk Subject line Title Poll and the letter of your choice. Issue 3 will be sent out with the new title.

- a. Wildcat
- b. Bread and Roses
- c. Solidarity
- d. Strike
- e. IWW News
- f. Flying Picket

will extend into the middle of 2021 so we should prepare for that eventuality.

Solidarity purely through online communications is difficult. Mutual trust is hard to form in phone calls, through email or in Whatsapp groups. However, everyone is now coming face-to-face with that reality: the union will have to rise to this challenge and encourage people to use these forms of communication more. The uptake of that will depend on our union's ability to teach and support one another. We need to adapt to new ways of interacting.

As a union we pride ourselves on trying to organise precarious workers, they are the ones going to be most affected by covid-19. Zero-hours contract workers and the faux self-employed (where you're 'self-employed' but in effect are a worker with less rights) are all wondering where their next pay cheques are going to come from.

We need to be in there now, supporting workers and encouraging them to collectivise the struggle in each individual workplace.

organising@iww.org.uk

Editorial - There is an Alternative

'The most advantageous use of all commodities would be, for each of them, to go, first, for satisfying those needs which are the most pressing.' (The Conquest of Bread, Peter Kropotkin)

What would it look like then? In a society organised to meet human need rather than to generate profit, what would the response to a pandemic look like?

In healthcare, the detailed planning of health workers for an outbreak would form the basis of timely preparations. Spare capacity would not be reduced as "inefficient" but seen as necessary to meet need in

moments of crisis. Healthcare workers would be valued and not kept poor and overworked; there would be more doctors and nurses per capita rather than less, and every worker, from the cleaners to the surgeons, would be seen as equally important in the functioning of the health service. There would be neither an internal nor an external market in people's health.



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We would not live in fear of losing our homes due to a stoppage in work because good housing would be recognised as a fundamental human need; neither would we face hunger because of the needs of quarantine or social distancing. Neither debt nor rent would drive people from their homes and families to gamble with their lives and with the health of us all because of the demands of bosses.

Mutual aid and the strength of communities would be at the heart of meeting need and mitigating the worst effects of social distancing;

recognising our common interests rather than the individualism of the consumer society, we would see to fair shares to meet the needs of all.

As healthcare workers decided what their sector needed to face a possible or actual pandemic, manufacturing would meet those needs. The priority would not be profit first and health and society after. There would be no need to ask the manufacturers of racing cars to build ventilators because no healthy society would lack the reserve capacity in

emergency equipment which reasonable planning had asked for.

The response of a society organised to meet human needs would be based upon real democracy in workplaces and communities, because only through that process of discussion and involvement, building respect and solidarity, can we avoid the rule of privileged fools who prefer to think of us as the herd, and to run the country they own as if our lives do not matter at all.

Passa Parola!

The IWW has arrived in Italy

L'IWW è avviata Italia

IWW Italia was started in February 2020 by two Wobblies who had been active in WISERA for many years. The situation in Italy is very different to the UK. The union movement is bigger here, and many syndicalist 'base unions' already exist, as well as the Left (and the Right...) being stronger in general.

So, why start the IWW in Italy? We have the greatest respect for the Italian syndicalist tradition, and for the base

unions that fight (and win!) for their members, and for the working class as a whole. We're not arrogantly saying we have anything to 'teach' Italians about syndicalism or workplace organising.

But the style of the IWW is different; not affiliating to a particular political party or ideology; not allowing those with the power to hire-and-fire to be part of the union; and the IWW's open bureaucratic structure that allows new, young members to become

Your Union Needs You!

Have you ever wondered how you can get more involved in the IWW and help the work along? Do you maybe live a long way from your branch and struggle to get to meetings.

There are many ways for IWW members to participate and lots of work to be done!

Below are some ideas and some contacts for you.

www.iww.org



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more involved and refresh the union, in terms of ideas and influences.

We tried to plan the “launch” of IWW Italy as much as possible, to learn from our previous experiences (and mistakes!) when developing branches in WISERA – creating a presence on social media, accessing WISERA’s administrative tools, translating the Welcome Pack and standard emails. But, obviously, the CoVid19 crisis has overtaken everything, and so at the moment we are concentrating on supporting local mutual aid groups, and adding our voice to the pressure on the state to ensure workers are protected, in

particular gig economy workers such as delivery riders and language teachers.

Italy after the crisis (and predicted economic collapse) will be a very different place to the Italy of before, and we will fight to build a new union for this new reality. Please ‘passa parola’ (spread the word!) to anyone you know who lives in Italy. Grazie, ciao!

The workers involved have all found new jobs, in some cases thanks to networking during the campaign, and in an industry which is barely unionised, confidence has been built and valuable organisational lessons learned.

Passa Parola! nel febbraio 2020 da due Wobblies già attiv* in WISERA (Wales Ireland Scotland England Regional Administration) per molti anni. La situazione in Italia è molto diversa da quella del Regno Unito. Il movimento sindacale è più grande ed esistono già molti sindacati di base; i movimenti di sinistra (e di destra, purtroppo) sono più diffusi.

Quindi, perché iniziare l'IWW in Italia? Abbiamo il massimo

rispetto per la tradizione sindacalista italiana e per i sindacati di base che combattono (e vincono!) per chi ne fa parte e per la classe lavoratrice in generale. Non siamo così arroganti da pensare di avere qualcosa da "insegnare" in Italia sul sindacalismo o sulla mobilitazione nel posto di lavoro.

I metodi IWW sono diversi: l'IWW non è affiliata a nessun partito politico o ideologia; non consente a coloro che hanno il

Get Involved, Get Active!

Do you want to recruit your workmates and have an IWW presence where you work?

Contact:

organising@iww.org.uk

Are you interested in international aspects such as developing the IWW around the world, relations with other unions? Contact: international@iww.org.uk

If you have language skills and can help out with, for example translating leaflets or articles, contact translations@iww.org.uk

Do you have any IT expertise that could help the IWW run our systems? Contact: secretary@iww.org.uk

Is prisoner solidarity something that you would like to get involved in? This could just be writing to IWW members who are in prison Contact: organising@iww.org.uk

Are you concerned about environmental issues and the class struggle? Contact: green@iww.org.uk

More below

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potere di assumere e licenziare di far parte del sindacato; ha una struttura burocratica aperta che permette a persone più giovani e/o nuove di contribuire e partecipare, portando nuova energia.

Abbiamo cercato di pianificare il "lancio" dell'IWW Italia il più possibile, con quello che abbiamo imparato dalle nostre precedenti esperienze (ed errori!) in WISERA: abbiamo creato una presenza sui social media, richiesto accesso agli strumenti amministrativi di WISERA, tradotto il pacchetto e i messaggi standard di benvenuto.

Ora, ovviamente, la crisi legata alla diffusione del CoronaVirus ha messo tutto in secondo

piano, quindi, al momento ci stiamo concentrando sui nostri gruppi di mutuo soccorso dove viviamo, ma continuiamo a far sentire la nostra voce per chiedere la protezione dei diritti della classe lavoratrice in questa situazione, in particolare, delle persone che lavorano nell'economia "dei lavoretti" come riders di Glovo e altre aziende, e insegnanti di lingue in scuole private.

Dopo questa crisi, e il conseguente collasso economico previsto, l'Italia sarà un posto molto diverso, e noi lotteremo per costruire un nuovo sindacato adatto a questa nuova realtà. Per favore, passate parola a qualsiasi persona italiana o che vive in Italia che conoscete. Grazie, ciao!

We are looking to put together a team of members interested in equality issues. Contact: secretary@iww.org.uk

Do you have research skills? Interested in designing surveys? Contact: secretary@iww.org.uk

Are you an experienced organiser or workplace rep and would you like to train other members? Contact: training@iww.org.uk

Are you interested in getting involved in IWW antifascism? Contact: organising@iww.org.uk

We really need people with writing and design skills to produce IWW literature such as pamphlets and leaflets! Contact: literature@iww.org.uk

Obviously we now have a new IWW newsletter! Would you like to help out? Contact: newsletter@iww.org.uk

Do you have any PR or press skills? Contact: secretary@iww.org.uk

Do you have ideas for merchandise design? Contact: merchandise@iww.org.uk

Are you a TUC accredited workplace rep? Why not get an IWW reps card? Contact: organising@iww.org.uk

Universities and the Universities and College Union - the UCU

The world has changed drastically in the past few weeks, but while the IWW has achieved many vital successes in recent times, some struggles are still ongoing, or worse - in deadlock.

In recent years, the UK's higher education sector has become increasingly corporate

and financialised, with teaching staff subject to gender pay gaps, disability pay gaps, stagnant wages, ballooning workloads and the precarious employment conditions endemic to wage labour. The crisis came in 2018, where proposed revisions to the USS (University Superannuation Scheme) threatened to cut an



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average £240,000 from staff pensions.

Industrial action and picket lines began in response, headed by the Universities and College Union (UCU) and later joined by the Scottish EIS. But, despite widespread media coverage and an increase in striking universities, the UCU has seen little material

consequences for its efforts. Universities have yet to seriously reconsider their pension schemes or to address material inequalities among staff; what has followed instead have been sanctions and such as those imposed on the 'Stirling 13', who were barred from classes, submitting coursework or even accessing mental health

services as punishment for their solidarity with striking staff. That the UCU plans to re-ballot for further action in summer is just one more sign of poor momentum in this struggle.

The IWW stands in solidarity with all strikers, but the stalemate paints a bleak image for the potential of bureaucratic unions like the UCU in fights like this one.

As a necessary catalyst for class consciousness, education is inherently radical, and protecting it requires equally radical tactics. In December last year, members from our Reading and Bristol branches joined protests on the University of Reading campus in solidarity with students who were suspended for supporting UCU strikes over pay and pensions.

The IWW can break new ground by engaging directly with sympathetic students and helping them organise along directly democratic lines.

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism, and with their tuition fees, university students hold immense leverage over the same neoliberal universities that now freely jeopardise their educations and their futures for the sake of profit.



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