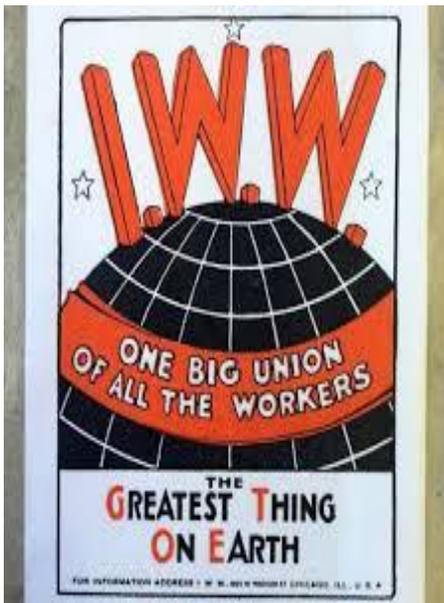


# "WE ARE BUILDING THE STRUCTURE OF THE NEW SOCIETY IN THE SHELL OF THE OLD"



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Finally, we want to point out that the IWW wants to build the structure of the new society within the shell of the old one, while the A.A.U. does not have such bold plans in its program. This is one of the basic principles of the IWW, as much as its creed; it is the short strong formulation according to which it rallies the workers for communism; it is the central point of the program which is printed in every newspaper, and which one finds in all articles and speeches. The IWW sees in the formation of industrial organizations in all fields the unavoidable precondition for the implementation of communism. Thus the IWW believes it can kill two birds with one stone. By uniting the workers in industrial organizations they are a match for industrial capital, and at the same time they are building the organs that will continue production after the conquest of economic power.

Actually, it was quite superfluous for the IWW to include this point in its program. The fact is that every organization presumes to be called to take charge of production after the overcoming of capitalism. Every organization in the class struggle thinks that it is building "the structure of the

new society in the bosom of the old". The fact that the different organizations have a different structure also expresses that they all have a different conception of the implementation of communism. The structure of an organization for practical class struggle and its conception of communism are directly related to each other. It is such a close relationship that from the structure of an organization one can deduce its views on communism. In Europe, this phenomenon is very evident in the trade union movement (guild socialism and factory democracy) and also in the political parties (the radical social democracy of the Moscow type and the reformists of the II International). The federal structure of the syndicalist unions also coincides again with a conception of communism that gives it a distinctly federal character. And therefore it was really superfluous to include this point especially in the program of the IWW. ALL so-called socialist or communist organizations hold that they build the structure of the new society within the framework of the old. The Moscow Communists, for example, intend to do this by creating a party with iron party discipline and the "conquest" of the trade unions. The party then becomes the core of the state apparatus under communism, while the unions must act as intermediaries between the workers and the state. (The unions are supposed to sign collective labor contracts with the leaders of the state enterprises.) This is their conception of building the structure of a new society within the shell of the old.

So if the IWW has included this formulation in its program, then this will not in itself make any difference with the council movement. It only depends on what the IWW understands by it. But it is this more detailed explanation which forms a direct contrast with the views of the council movement. An organization with the views of the IWW in Europe, would be fought here with all severity, because these views are in sharp contrast to the revolutionary development in Europe.

The IWW has social revolution on its program, but it makes it dependent on the organizational power of the IWW. It translates the well-known sentence of Marx that the new society is born in the womb of the old, in the sense that the working class builds up in the course of time in the organization of the IWW the apparatus with which it can continue the production! "Only when the proletariat has developed a form (is meant an organizational apparatus - Gr.I.C.) which can take to heart the interests of man, then the social revolution will become a fact of history." (The IWW what it is ... p. 29). Until the IWW has organized enough industries, there can be no question of social revolution. "When the organized power of the proletariat becomes greater than the organized power of the other class, then the social revolution will come." (25 Years... p. 12).

The organization that is supposed to bring about this organized power, which includes all workers, whatever work they do, is supposed to be the "one big union", the IWW. It builds its organization in such a way that, in its opinion, it can easily take over production from the entrepreneurs.

For this purpose, the organization is grouped into 6 departments (e.g. the Departments of Agriculture, Transportation, Public Works, etc.) in which the related industrial organizations are grouped. The more industry the IWW knows how to organize, the more complete is the organization grouped in the departments.

When finally the majority of the workers are united in this sense, then only the profit interest of the entrepreneurs and capitalists stands in the way of the organic functioning of production. Therefore, at this stage of organizational development, revolution is inevitable, for "both in theory and in

practice, the IWW begins and ends with the idea that if the workers of the world dominate the industry of the world, they must also own and control it." (The IWW in theory and practice, p.5).

The IWW is therefore an opponent of armed insurrection in the class struggle. It is convinced that it will never be a match for capital in military terms; it therefore leaves violence to the ruling class. But it never shrinks from the machine guns and gas bombs of the bourgeoisie, it accepts them as the inevitable "costs of war". An unshakable idealism gives the Wobblies the strength to calmly confront the murderous gangs of American capital. The victory of the working class is not armed insurrection carried out with success, but this victory, the social revolution, falls as a ripe fruit into the hands of the working class when workers everywhere are united in industrial organizations. That is why the IWW sees the growth of the social revolution in the growth of its organizational apparatus. The wage struggle is the lifting tree of communism. The wage struggle is to continue to attack surplus value so that it is brought "to zero," while at the same time the struggle for control of production brings communism step by step closer. "When we are organized, we, the working class, will have power. With this power we will take back what is stolen from us. We will always demand more wages from our entrepreneurs. We will take power away from them and gain that power for ourselves. We will continually become better disciplined, and always gain more self-confidence." (The revolutionary IWW, p. 11)

*"Industrial power is the irresistible force that will bring the IWW onto the battlefield. When the power of labor, which is necessary in every industry and in all industries, is controlled by an organization embracing all workers, whatever work they do, it will not only be possible but even certain that this control will be applied in the direction of attaining a higher standard of living, as milestones on the road to industrial freedom." (The IWW, What It Is, p. 37)*

In reality, "building the structure of the new society in the shell of the old" is a revolutionary process according to the IWW. We are thus slowly growing into communism. We are slowly hollowing out the fat cheese of surplus value from the inside, so that the shell, later as a superfluous thing, is thrown away by no one desires.

In the smooth evolution toward communism, then, the IWW shows a marvelous agreement with the views of the reformist trade union movement in Europe. The difference between the two is that the trade union movement believes it can achieve this state through cooperation between capital and labor (collective labor contracts, while the IWW is aware that the process of growth must be irrevocably against capital. (An IWW organization in Montane was expelled as an organization from the IWW for contracting with business owners. See: The IWW in theory and practice, p. 78.)

It is obvious that the council movement cannot share this view of "building the structure of the new society in the shell of the old". In our experience, the emergence of a revolution is not tied to "the organized power" of the proletariat. The revolution knocks at the door of history when the illusion of democracy and the improvement of living conditions within capitalism is broken, and the continuing pressure on the masses has become so immense that not the slightest hope of a way out remains. Then the physical tensions discharge into self-activity without first asking the IWW headquarters in Chicago or even in Berlin: Are you ready with your industrial organizations?

Experience has taught us that the masses organize themselves only in revolution, but not according to the principles of industrial organization. And that is why the council movement cannot recognize

the "Preamble" (Declaration of Principles) of the IWW. Not because of what it says, but because of the more detailed explanation as laid down in the writings of the IWW.

## **The Councils Movement and Communism**

What is the attitude of the council movement towards the implementation of communism? Can its view of communism also be deduced from the structure of the council movement? This is certainly the case. It is true that it does not build the new society in the bosom of the old one, it is true that it builds its apparatus in reality only in the revolution, but nevertheless its conceptions are determined by its structure, because we consider that factory life is continued under the administration of the factory organization.

It is actually not quite correct to speak of the views on communism in the council movement. Its views do not go beyond the slogan: "Take the forces of production into your own hands through the factory organizations." It speaks well of the abolition of wage labor; but it does not say how this is to be done, it does not say to what conditions this is bound. In other words, it has no conception of the laws of motion of communist factory life. The French comrades apparently go a step further by demanding the abolition of wage-labor through the abolition of the market and of money, while factory life is to take place "without compulsion to work." But this is only apparently a step further because only is indicated, how it should not be, - without market, without money and no labor coercion. But with this we can start very little, because we must know how it must be. On this question the councils are silent in all languages, which says no more than that in reality there is no idea of the concrete task of the social revolution.

This is, of course, an untenable position for a movement that has the implementation of communism written on its banner. The council movement calls on the workers to destroy the wage system, but it has no idea of the conditions attached to it. A part of the council movement is well aware of this lack, while another part thinks that this will find itself. Here the word of Wagner is in the right place: "The AAU is moving, but it does not know where to go". It does not know where to go, because in fact "things always find themselves", but this does not always mean that the path found leads to communism. Russia has given an excellent example of a state in which private ownership of the means of production in industry has been abolished, while the workers have remained wage laborers. Therefore, in the soviet movement, an attempt has been made from two sides to go before the masses with a clear, concrete program, so that we can say: Here you have our conceptions of communism. And this is how we must carry it out. One was made by the AAUE (Frankfurt), by publishing the paper "From Manifesto to Law". The other attempt was made by the "Group of International Communists (Holland)", which clarified its view in the "Fundamental Principles of Communist Production and Distribution".

So far, these attempts have not led to a unified view. But nevertheless the council movement stands in a more favorable position than the IWW with regard to the realization of the social revolution, because the council movement leaves room for the development of the self-activity of the masses, while the IWW wants to squeeze them into its organizational apparatus. This, of course, must end in a fiasco. What matters is to order these psychic forces, to direct them and to give them the same direction. This order, however, is not primarily an organizational matter, but of an economic nature. This order comes about through the introduction of general rules for production, according to which

the workers can manage and administer the factories independently. Thus, all workers participate in the life of the enterprise under the same economic conditions and become equal producers. At the same time, the council movement must give general rules for consumption, i.e. it must implement working time as a measure for individual consumption. In this way, everyone participates in consumption under the same conditions, i.e. the workers are also equal as consumers.

On this basis, the workers can independently manage the enterprises and are then free producers, while the links that the enterprises create among themselves leads to the "Association of Free and Equal Producers".

## **Postscript**

Comrades of the IWW and the AAUD.

It is clear from the above series of articles that the International Communist (Holland) groups believe that the views of the IWW and the AAUD on social revolution are so divergent that there can be no question of organizational fusion. But even if we diverge in our basic views, we are not enemies. Therefore, at the present stage, we are dependent on "marching separately" and to act together where possible. The practice of the international class struggle must bring the formation of unity.

Source: [Pressdienst der Internationalen Kommunisten Holland, April 1931](#)

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