

DIRECT**ACTION**

Industrial Workers of the World

An Injury To One - Is An Injury To All!

Creative Industry Workers Call To Unionise!

In the first years following the establishment of IWW in 1905, music was already rooted in the lives of the working class members. It was in this way that saloon culture impacted the early Wobblies. The saloon was more than just a place for drinking but a social hub, full of conversation and music-making. Where many of the organisation's songwriters started in these kinds of establishments, the process also worked the other way with Wobbly singers deliberately performing within earshot of the drinking patrons.

Through this, cultural attitudes and values were able to flow fluidly between the barroom and the IWW. This music, often tunes borrowed from drinking songs with revised lyrics, sought to unite in what IWW musician Utah Phillips called a **"crucial bridging of ideology and linguistic gaps between potential supporters of the union"**.

Today, music is still a part of the lives of IWW members and non-members alike as a unifying force. Where the saloon culture of the turn of the 20th century has waned, a new gig-culture has arisen. Creative industries are ones that are largely isolating and forcibly competitive. With writers, musicians and designers all having separate unions, these are generally lacking in urgency. Little or no collective challenge of the system's structure leaves creatives to face an enduring perception of being a *'small fish in a big pond'*. To make things more confusing and to run with this particular metaphor, 'the pond' is dominated by freelancing contractors working under seemingly faceless employers. Despite this feeling of separation, the short straws of working like this are felt by all workers. In real world situations many in the creative industries already exhibit natural union tendencies; from refusing to work for venues with a history of underpaying to physically showing up to support fellow workers.

Formalising this camaraderie under a new union specifically designed for the creative industries would allow currently fragmented union members to come together and work towards shared goals. Industrial Union 630 is the union for **Performing Arts, Recreation and Tourism Workers** and is beginning to be organised by IWW Ireland. In removing animosity between and within creative roles, not only can workers unite but the art created can truly flourish.

Creatives are often seen to be solitary types, but where would the writer be without the illustrator or the musician without the sound technician or the actor without the stage director? The arts sector is one which spreads across mediums perhaps more than most industries and if its workers stand firm together, the monopolising management agencies lose their power.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, a Union of Musicians and Allied Workers (UMAW) mobilised in the US. Their actions have included demanding fair pay and justice for musicians from streaming platforms such as Spotify, ensuring fair relationships with labels, establishing safer guidelines in venues and assuring artists get the royalties they deserve for their work. In being inclusive to performers and crew members alike, thousands have been able to back this action and begin to make progress.

In Ireland, the arts are a huge part of everyday life with 69% of all Irish adults describing themselves as 'arts goers'. In the North, 79% of Arts Council funding goes to the most deprived areas and 55% of investment takes place in public spaces such as hospitals, schools and community organisations.

Around 33,000 are employed in the creative industries in the North with a further estimated 46,000 workers across the rest of the country. During lockdown, online arts engagement in Ireland levelled out at 52% with a spike in those aged 20-34 where engagement rose to 71% by June 2020. Despite this, the arts remain the first sector to receive any cuts in either jurisdiction, leaving workers to flounder in times of crisis.

IWW member Conchúr showed early interest in a creative union. **"I had regular gigs before Covid but when lockdown hit, everything I had been working for disappeared."** Conchúr is one of the many Belfast based musicians who has been left in a state of uncertainty by the pandemic. As a sector based on live events, investment in a currently non-existent industry has ceased to exist.

Even pre-pandemic, Conchúr, like many other creatives, had to balance two or more jobs alongside studying in order to earn enough playing music. With little support available at the best of times, lockdown had a detrimental effect on precarious workers. **"Before lockdown I had to gain employment by myself and now all the avenues where I sought employment are closed. There's so little support available from government and charitable bodies."**

Industrial union 630 would allow members to organise a collective voice and pursue direct action to deal with issues like this in the creative industry.

In the coming days, weeks and months ahead, workers are in no doubt that we will continue to face attack after attack from both the bosses and the governments alike. It is vital that we now take the next step and organise as workers to ensure our fellow workers are also unionised to meet those challenges with confidence.

ONEBIGUNION.IE

WORKPLACE ORGANISING TRAINING DELIVERS THE GOODS!

“Your Job Your Union” (YJYU) training (the IWW’s introduction to organising within the workplace), was offered to members in Ireland online, on two occasions in August 2020.

The training enables members to think about how to begin organising in their work place, mapping out who to approach and when, and gradually building worker power through supportive relationships with others.

It is based on the IWW’s influential Organiser Training which was developed over years of direct action organising. [Link to Garneau article here]

Participants were able to explore the philosophy behind the phrase “Agitate, Educate, Organise,” and to practice some of the skills needed to make this phrase a reality. In both trainings, Irish members mixed with Fellow Workers in Wales England Scotland and North Carolina. This approach also helps to build up contacts, share knowledge and learn from others throughout the union.

The original YJYU training was delivered over 4-5 hours in one face to face session. This training, which was held over Zoom, is split into two sections over two consecutive days, at 3 hours each time.

The training is built on group discussion and small group work, aiming to help develop organising skills in a safe environment.

Some comments from those who did the training;

“This was my first online training, I thought it went really well.”

“I thought the training was brilliant, I learned a lot and feel motivated by it.”

“Helped me to know how to respond to ...the whole ‘I thought we were a family’ spiel.”

“Mapping out your workplace was really useful.”

“I actually enjoyed the ‘march on the boss’ role play it felt real, and showed up the potential pitfalls of not being more organised.”

After the course, participants are linked to an experienced organiser in the Ireland Branch to consider how to use the training further. We will also be putting on the longer version of Organiser Training online in the coming months, this expands on some elements of YJYU and contains additional material. We are hoping to have another YJYU training event in late November/early December and will be asking members about this, but if anyone is interested at this point, please contact: m.brannigan@iww.org.uk, and we can ascertain whether during the week or weekends suit best. A number of these events, with different time/day slots can be run throughout next year.

DIRECT ACTION GETS THE GOODS!

The IWW has added its voice in welcoming in what has been described as a ‘partial victory’ for GWTUC Garment workers in Bangladesh in their fight against Dragon Sweater Group.

In August - September IWW Ireland Branch took part in a month long series of actions across the country in solidarity with GWTUC members in Bangladesh. The action itself was part of an international call for solidarity by radical grassroots unions which included FAU Bielefeld - FAU Münster - roots of compassion - Central Organization of Workers in Sweden (SAC Syndikalisterna) - FAU Freiburg - FAU Hamburg - Bristol IWW - FOB (Brazil) - Oficios Varios Capital Fora - feministische Gruppe Realitätswerkstatt Freiburg - CNT Aranjuez and ourselves in the IWW Ireland Branch.

International pressure was brought upon companies who received supplies directly from the Dragon Sweater Group which included Lidl, Asda/Walmart to the New Yorker group.

IWW CONTACTS IN YOUR AREA

Members in each area meet each month to discuss, support and organise activity locally.

You can contact your closest area organiser at the following email nearest you or online via Facebook or Twitter:

Dublin: dublin@iww.org.uk

Cork: cork@iww.org.uk

Derry: derry@iww.org.uk

Galway: galway@iww.org.uk

Belfast: belfast@iww.org.uk

Email: ireland@iww.org.uk

Online: onebigunion.ie

[facebook.com/iwwireland](https://www.facebook.com/iwwireland)



STOP WAGE THEFT!

There are many different forms of Wage Theft workers face every day from:

- * **non-payment of overtime**
- * **not giving workers their last paycheck after a worker leaves a job**
- * **not paying for all the hours worked**
- * **not paying minimum wage**
- * **not paying a worker at all**

In most cases, when workers are faced with wage theft many feel they are isolated or alone in trying to challenge their boss.

Bosses feel they can get away with treating workers badly because they think their staff are isolated. By joining the IWW union you will not be left isolated or intimidated, together we'll demand what is rightfully yours!

You can help put a stop to Wage Theft by encouraging your fellow workers to unionise. By joining the IWW and help unionising the place where you work we can stop wage theft!

JOIN THE IWW!

Don't forget the easiest way to become a member of the IWW in your area is by going online to the link below.

We already have active members in towns and cities across Ireland, both north and south, such as Dublin, Athlone, Cork, Derry, Belfast, Galway, Newry, Dungiven, Clare, Waterford, Donegal, Newcastle, Limerick, Portadown, Kildare and Tralee.

Our membership is wide and varied which so far includes workers in the public sector, construction, students, musicians, administration, artists, community, unemployed and hospitality workers:

www.iww.org.uk/join