

Join The Wobblies

THE IWW IS A UNION UNLIKE ANY OTHER. It is a grassroots, democratic and militant union that seeks to organise ALL workers in ALL industries in ALL countries into 'One Big Union'.

Unlike many of the TUC unions, the IWW has no stifling bureaucracy with fat cat salaries that'll do a deal with the boss behind the membership's back and stitch them up.

The IWW wishes to unite workers along industrial lines in order that they will not be kept divided and competing with each other in their different trades.

THE IWW CANNOT SELL YOU OUT because its leadership is its rank and file - its members make the decisions and have the final say.

The IWW won't try to flog you life assurance or credit cards, but will offer expert advice on labour law and practical help when you experience any work related hassle whether 'large' or 'small'.

We believe in helping workers to help themselves through collective organisation, not in selling services or forming partnerships with employers.

In short the IWW will offer SOLIDARITY, DIRECT ACTION and the WILL TO WIN - things the TUC (to put it mildly) seem to lack!

THE IWW IS WHOLLY INDEPENDENT and is not controlled by or affiliated to any political party or movement.

WE CAN PROVIDE advice on legal matters, health and safety, bargaining and negotiating, novel tactics to beat the boss or whatever assistance you may need. If you need to take action against your boss we will try to give you whatever support you ask for. Obviously the more of us there are, the more we can do.

LOW DUES! Dues are paid according to a sliding scale, with low paid or unemployed members paying only £1 a month.

AGITATE, EDUCATE AND ORGANISE! If you would like to organise either where you work or in your neighbourhood then our organising manual will come in handy. We also produce a range of material including leaflets, stickers and posters, and these can be tailored to suit individual campaigns.

JOIN US! All workers (including the unemployed, pensioners, housewives and students) are welcome to join the IWW, irrespective of colour, age, sex, sexual orientation, religion or nationality. Only employers are not allowed to join.

Contacts

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- In celebration of our Fellow Workers - The Women Chainmakers of Cradley Heath

The main industry of Cradley Heath during the industrial revolution was iron working, specifically chain making. In "The White Slaves of England" Robert Sherard reminds us that 1,000 tons of chain was made in the Cradley Heath District each week.

He uses the word Slave advisedly for as he tells us, '*chronic hunger can bind tighter than any iron link*'. And chronic hunger was the lot of the women chain makers of Cradley Heath. Sherard tells us of the desperation of many of these wretched women working to within a few weeks of their confinement. Many of the women were over seventy and many younger than fifteen often working twelve plus hours a day. There is also reference made to a "*sweater*", a kind of overseer who has "*never forged a link in her life and gets a good living*".

In 1910 there were in all three thousand five hundred chain makers working in small shops. Two thirds of these workers were said to be women. These women workers were generally stopped from organising themselves and joining a union due to the very low wages they earned. They were faced with a choice between union dues or some bread for the table.

However in 1905 a Women's Chain Making organisation was formed as part of the National Federation of Women Workers. The main mover in this federation was Mary Macarthur from Glasgow who was well known around the Black Country. Chain making in the Black Country received some attention from the government at this time. The idea being to regulate wages and ostensibly improve the lot of workers.

During the negotiations to establish a better wage the employers complained that higher wages would

make them vulnerable to foreign competition and would encourage faster mechanisation thus the loss of jobs. Remember this being 1910 not 2007.

In the spring of 1910 a wage, mostly affecting the women workers, was agreed within the nationally organised board. The employers however almost immediately tried to wriggle out of their obligations and tried to find loopholes in the agreement. All sorts of dirty tricks were planned and implemented.

As a result of this treatment the women were galvanised into action and a mass meeting was organised. The women voted to '*come out and stay out*'. It was reported at the time that seven hundred women had ceased work.

Money had been collected at the time by well wishers which avoided the women being starved back to work. Even a big businessman like George Cadbury donated to the fund. Another donor to the fund was the Nobel Prize winning author of The Forsyte Saga, John Galsworthy. He wrote a report on the strike in a chapter of his book of essays "The Inn of Tranquillity". He calls the women. '*the chief guardians of the inherent dignity of man*'.

The strike went on for ten weeks and resulted in the women securing victory. The money left over from the Strike fund was used to found The Workers Institute in Cradley Heath. The institute, built for the benefit of working people in the area was, as we know, moved in 2004 to make way for a road enabling easier access to a shopping centre.

The Women Chainmakers of Cradley Heath resistance to the Capitalist Class should never be forgotten. They are an inspiration to all workers fighting for a better tomorrow.

Their fight against the Capitalist Class is an inspiration to us all