

IWW Member

YOU LIVE IN CENTRAL CITY, USA, and are a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, the IWW, a radical labor union. You're concerned about school because you care about children, but also because you see schools as a place where people learn about what is expected of them by society. You see changing the schools as part of a larger movement for changing the whole society. Much is now different in America. The society is more and more divided between rich factory owners and workers who own nothing but their own ability to labor. As far as you in the IWW are concerned, the problems of working people will only begin to be solved when workers take over all the workplaces and run them together for the benefit of the whole society—not just for the private profit of the owners. As long as owners run industry for their own profit, there will be continual conflict between them and the workers they control. You believe that all wealth is produced by the workers, so all wealth should be controlled by the workers—what do owners produce?

Thus, the goal of the IWW is not only for higher wages or shorter hours, but to change the whole society. Workplaces and all of society should be run by the people who produce, the

people who do the work. And schools should help people learn the skills to run the whole society. In the IWW you don't believe in the idea of "follow the leader." Your goal is for every worker in the country to be a "leader." Recently, you read a speech by Eugene Debs, an IWW founder. Debs summed up the IWW belief:

The average working [person] imagines that he must have a leader to look to; a guide to follow, right or wrong. ... You have depended too much on that leader and not enough on yourself. I don't want you to follow me. I want you to cultivate self-reliance. If I have the slightest capacity for leadership I can only give evidence of it by "leading" you to rely on yourselves.

That's what democracy is all about as far as you're concerned: everyone a leader, a thinker, a participant—regardless of race, sex, or class background. And that's what schools should promote for all the students, not just the ones from rich families. Schools should model a truly democratic, classless society.