
Direct Action

by A.M. Stirton

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Why not? And the more direct the better. What is to be said in favor of direct action?

Everyone knows that it is a principle in mechanics that the more direct the action the less will be the loss of power. To get the work done and to get it done right away and with as little loss of power as possible is the aim of the mechanic and inventor. Direct action is what is wanted.

In the ordinary affairs of life the same rule holds good. Men and movements alike are strong in proportion as they see clearly what they want and go and get it with as little loss as possible of time and energy. In the race of life the direct actionist leaves the dawdler and the dreamer far behind. Direct action wins the day.

That's what the working class needs, too, in their struggles with their employers. Why tinker and hesitate and compromise when all we need to put complete power in our hands is organization? Why go "round and round the barberry bush" when the simple, direct action of the working class in the place where they work, the place where the fight is actually on, is ten times cheaper and more effective?

Why make contracts with bosses when industrial organization will enable us to dictate terms?

Why spend money on lawyers to fight injunctions when the industrial organization of the working class will make all the injunctions of Christendom as out of date as the edicts of Julius Caesar?

There isn't any need of it — absolutely none whatever. The situation is very simple. Here's a handful of plutocrats owning the earth. Here's an army of toilers thirty times their number, working for them like dogs and yielding up in profit everything they produce except enough to keep soul and body together so that they will be in good shape to make more profits. The handful of plutocrats keep the army of workers down because they are better organized. They are banded together and interlocked in trusts, pools, and combines. Their interests are common and they realize it. They stand together not simply because they individually will to do so, but also because the trust form of organization has so bonded them together and dovetailed

their interests that none of them could do otherwise no matter how much he might desire.

The workers, on the other hand, are unorganized, or, worse still, split up into petty, jealous, warring craft unions built on industrial conditions that existed 40 years ago. For all practical purposes of opposition to the employing class they may be said to be unorganized.

The employers are splendidly organized. The workers are disorganized. The employers can therefore pit some of the workers against others and as a result of their mutual competition lord it over all of them.

The evil and its causes are plain enough, the remedy is equally so. The disorganization of the working class is the cause of their enslavement; it follows, naturally, that their emancipation must be accomplished through organization. To get out of the effect, remove the cause. In other words, direct action.

The Industrial Workers of the World supplies the means whereby this much needed direct action can be made prompt, certain, and effective. It organizes the wage workers not in their craft or trade, but in the industry in which they work.

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A revolutionary ballot will only spring from a revolutionary industrial organization...

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Of bullets the same thing is true. Military power depends on the ability to feed, clothe, and transport soldiers, also on the ability to mine lead, iron, and saltpeter and to manufacture arms and munitions of war. Industrial organization will put all of that power completely in the hands of the working class. It will take that power completely away from all other classes. Not only that power but all other — it will leave all power in the hands of the working class. It will therefore abolish all other classes. Nobody will have any power to fire bullets at the working class when they are industrially organized, and they will have no need to fire bullets at anybody because nobody will have any power to harm them.

Direct action, therefore, leads away from violence and not toward it. None the less it leads directly to victory. It is prompt, speedy, and effective. It is the road to power. And it is simple, plain, and to the point and can be understood and acted on by all.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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