

# Industrial workers in canada

[Business](#)



Introduction The history of North American trade union movements is rich given the impacts that the Industrial Workers of the World, (IWW) made in the region. The IWW was remarkable for its radical ideology and tactical approach in achieving its main objectives. In essence, the IWW was formed to fight for income disparities between the employers and their employees with the aim of making the two factions to live harmoniously. Some ideals of the IWW were baseless; for instance, the fight for workers to own premises, production machinery, and the intention of abolishing the wage system. The IWW advocated for improved opportunities for its members in the industrial crisis.

Despite its accomplishments, there are those who questioned how pragmatic the IWW was given that the organization did not allow for recognition of contracts, did not address the unemployment benefits issues, among other issues that affected its members. Proponents of the significance of the IWW argue that the organization made strides in addressing worker's needs at a time when the government was repressive, the employers resisted the formation of the union, and the other trade unions were recruiting members. This essay establishes whether the IWW was an effective organization in the advocacy of immigrants and marginalized workers' rights. Addressing the unemployment rate of its union members was one of the IWW main concerns but as Schulze, (1009) records, " For the second year in a row, spring brought no end to unemployment. As a result, city council ordered civic labor bureau to provide relief work, on two-week rotation basis, to 75 per cent of the men on its rolls," (p. 73).

The goal of the IWW was to organize the unemployed as Canadian cities witnessed emerging protest by the union members. However, the demonstrations were not successful as in Vancouver and Winnipeg, workers settled for relief whereas those in Montreal were asking to be given a chance to cultivate their own parcels of land. The IWW-led faction in Alberta was successful as the organization advocated for best wage rates for general labor or free food and accommodation for its workers. This was based on the belief that, “unemployment was not an inevitable experience to be endured passively, but a nefarious consequence of capitalism to be resisted actively, (Schulze, 1990, p. 50). IWW fight for the unemployed was effective because the organization tried its best to secure job placements for its union members.

This is because the members had little bargaining power due to lack of adequate skills. In addition, the economy at those times was faced with massive unemployment rates and dependency on the urban political elite despite the fact that they had no connection to the urban administrators and politicians. As such, their endeavors suffered political repression despite drawing big following. These difficulties prevented IWW from achieving unemployment objectives in the short run, which could have discouraged the members and destabilized the organization. It is impractical to denote that the IWW failed because at the time, there was financial crisis that shook the capital market of most economies.

The Canadian Northern Railway, (CNR) was a labor-intensive project that required massive capital for its completion. Its construction made a boom to the Canadian economy as it employed a number of unskilled workers, who

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were mostly immigrants. Therefore, the consequences of the financial recession would affect rate of unemployment beyond the abilities of the IWW. The railway project was sub-contracted its works and this too led to bad state of unemployment. The IWW organized for strike but it did not take long before construction resumed. The recent economic crisis that struck the world and the inability of most economies to resolve the crisis is a clear demonstration of the complex nature of the recession.

In the United States, for instance, the aftermath of the global recession led to increasing rates of unemployment that the Obama administration still struggles to address. According to Brown et al., (2010), “ financial crises tighten the budget constraints of government who rely heavily on international credit to balance their budgets,” (p. 93). Even though their research was based on a temporary financial crisis, the study found out that there are a number of issues that result from financial crisis; for example, exhaustion of natural resources due to high debts levels, high commodity prices, and a drop in the prices of mineral resources, Brown et al.

, (2010). Another reason why addressing financial crisis is bigger than addressing unemployment rates according Brown et al., (2010) is that, “ While an individual country may benefit (at least temporarily) from expanding resource production to service its debt burden during a financial crisis, this action can have negative spillovers for other countries,” (p. 121). When project funding comes from outside the coffers on national expenditure, then effects of financial crisis will have ripple effects on domestic economy and worsen the state of unemployment, (Sachs, 2002).

In essence, creditors would require states not to accelerate resource production as a response mechanism to evade financial contagion. This supports the idea that the IWW could not afford to address unemployment cases in the Canadian economy despite frantic efforts made by the organization. However, the IWW did what was within their means to address the plight of workers. Another major challenge that the IWW faced was how to handle the diverse nature of immigrants. The IWW mission in Alberta turned pathetic because there was no end to unemployment for the second successive year after the epilogue.

The city council approved work on a rotational basis from the labor bureau, but the move was resisted by immigrants. According to Schulze, (1990), “Immigrants apparently mobbed the labor bureau when a new register of men seeking work was drawn up in connection with this plan, and at the top of the list were 1,191 English, and 594 foreign names,” (p. 73). This made British workers to meet the following day but the meeting was split into two groups, those who were trade union members and the unorganized laborers. The unorganized laborers accused the labor bureau of favoring the workers in trade union.

Despite this difference, they all agitated for equal employment opportunities amongst themselves and criticized the employment of perceived enemy nationality. The workers also demanded for fast internment of enemy nationality. In response, the city council gave an order to the labor bureau to ask for immigrants’ papers of naturalization. Later, the council was able to disqualify naturalized immigrants and advised the federal arm of government for the internment of aliens in Alberta. The 2000 workers who

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met on the Sunday of that week were unsatisfied by the immigrants' disqualification and insisted that the three arms of government must find a way of dismissing the Australians and Germans regardless of their positions of their naturalized status. Instead, they demanded that British workers and workers from Britain allies should replace them.

Disqualification of immigrants is another complex issue that still affects the modern societies. An example to this effect is the state of immigration policies in the United States; for instance, the Immigration and the Nationality Act of 1965. This Act has been hailed as the greatest change in the United States immigration policy (Cohn, 1995). The law not only abandoned the quotas adopted in 1920 by the Quota Act and National Origins Act, it proposed sweeping changes in the immigration policy. One significant change was the preferences given to the relatives of the natives and naturalized immigrants.

Furthermore, workers equipped with skills that were short in supply within the United States received special preferences. According to Cohn (1995), "the 1965 law kept an overall quota on total immigration for Eastern Hemisphere countries, originally set at 170, 000, and no more than 20, 000 individuals were allowed to immigrate to the United States from any single country," (p. 69). Immigrants from Asia received equal treatment as other immigrants from Europe. The immigration policy in the United States has evolved and this indicates that the United States has had to grapple with a number of challenges in its domestic and foreign policy issues. Human trafficking, drug trafficking, terrorism, and global health issues have called for an examination of the existing laws on immigration.

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This has precipitated the need for the adoption of a realist theory in handling immigration issues. Critics argue that the mishandling of the immigration policy places the United States at crossroads with its very foundation. The concepts of defensive realism adopted by the United States in its immigration policy are perceived to be more specific of the classical theory. Conclusion The IWW was committed to the satisfaction of its workers despite falling short of the over ambitious plan to do away with wage disparities. It is quite impractical to have an economy where everybody owns property.

The nature of capitalist economy popular in the modern world does not support that ideal. Nonetheless, the IWW was quite pragmatic in achieving its other objectives. For instance, the trade union gave its best in eradicating resolving unemployment but due to other economic factors like the recession in the aforementioned discussion, there were issues that are more complex. In addition, the IWW was full of unskilled workers with low economic bargaining power. Resolving the immigration crisis is another challenge that faced the IWW and this failure is justified given the complex policymaking procedures in addressing the immigration standoff.

Therefore, this essay agrees that the IWW was a strong organization that could have met its objectives were it not for the massive challenges that crippled its work.