

Frank. Cedervall - Keynote Speech, IWW Convention, 1972

September 7, 1972

A man came in to the IWW. And he began to interrogate the fellow worker. He said, "Nell, have you heard our speakers?" "No, me no hear the IWW speaker." "Have you read. the preamble?" "Me no hear the preamble." "What do you know about Karl Marx?" "Who is he, a tailor?" "Jell, why do you want to join the IW? " He said, "Because I have heard that the IWW fucks the boss all the time." This is the answer. A simple answer. That's why the employing class has hated the IWW. And that's why you young men and women in this organization coming up, some of you may have been tempted by this Socialist Workers Party and these are the people who give you suave, intelligent, well educated people with five or six Ph. D. degrees behind them to lead you out of the wilderness. It's going to take the dishwashers, the brick layers, the carpenters and the wage workers to make a revolution. And once you get that in your head and understand. that, we'll get somewhere.

I'm going to take a little more time than I usually take, because brevity is the success of a speaker. The longer you talk, they say, why the asshole sit down? There was a young man came to my house through the good offices of fellow worker Thompson. A young fellow named Roy Wortman. He wanted to write a doctoral dissertation, and many of you people are in the academic community, and you know how difficult it is to find something to write about that hasn't been covered before. So the only way that you can really get somewhere at all is to try to try to look up some esoteric problem that hasn't been dealt with deeply. And this fellow worker, this young man, stopped in to see Fred Thompson and he wanted to write about the Colorado strike. And Fred said, "Well why don't you go down to Cleveland and visit with Frank Cedervall for awhile, and talk about the

Cleveland- IW drive " He wrote a letter. the other day and he sent me a copy of a report that I never knew that I had ever written. Because I don't keep a file. And if I haven't lost it, I brought it up here with me, somewhere. Now that would be the asshole of the world if I did that. That's it. A lot of people say the world has changed. In thirty years things are different. It's not the world of 1905. As long as capitalism exists, as long as one man exploits another at the point of production, things are the same. We have a system that needs to be destroyed and it can only be destroyed by organizing on the job. And would you believe it or not from 1934 until. 1952, that's only 20 years ago, don't look in the back in the history of the IWW, in 1952, there were 1,200 organized members of the IW in the city of Cleveland. And there can be 1,200 more members of the IWW, 12,000 members of the IWW. How simple it is. And I'm going to read, with your permission, "There is no doubt but what Cleveland and its 440, activities has caused widespread comment among IWW members throughout the country. No complete picture of our two years activity has ever been drawn. And because such a picture is needed, I'm taking the liberty of attempting to present an outline of our achievements and failures that, will give you a conception of what has taken place in Cleveland and what can be hoped for in the future." This is 1935. I just got this. Now this is a strange thing I bring this to the convention. Now this man, I don't know, he must have researched his ass off to find it. How in the hell he dug it up I don't know. He says, "The Cleveland drive began in late January of '34." At that time the membership consisted of a well grounded group of Hungarians in the GRJ branch and a few Finnish fellow workers. We had no chartered branch, They were small in numbers, but they enthusiastically began to raise funds for a drive. That's one thing we had to do--find out who in the hell believes in the revolution

enough to dig down in your pocket and pull out a buck. And these Hungarian fellow workers dug down and they dug up this money. The organization spent most of its energy in January, February and March distributing mimeographed leaflets at the various plants, just as the fellow workers in Portland are doing. You see how important it is? But very small results were obtained. But one of the molders at the Buckeye Brass Company came over and mentioned that in one division of the Ohio Foundry there were workers who were dissatisfied and we leafleted that place, and we organized the workers and had them out on strike and 100% organized job control.

Now I want to talk to you about another problem and I'm not going to read this whole thing. You might not be interested. And I don't want to lose your attention. We have what we call infantile leftism in the labor movement. This is a thing that Lenin spoke about. Super-radicals. And so in 1952 in the height of the Mc Carthy hysteria, the United States government passed a law stating that if you would not sign a non-communist affidavit you were not eligible for the services of the National Labor Relations Board. And I want-you to mark this, and mark it well. We came here, we members of the IWW out of Cleveland, with job control, with action that we had fought and died for. One man spent years in the penitentiary; another fellow worker did three years in the pen. And men sat at the IWW convention in 1952 with AFL cards in their pocket. And they worked under APL's dictatorship, and said, "It's alright for the APL to sign the non-communist affidavit, but I'm not going to permit the IWW, my pure union, to do so." This is what is called leftism. Because the power of the working class is on the job. We have to get out into the industries. Have you ever seen a picture like the one in England that occurred just a few weeks ago where those stevedores on the docks had the country in a turmoil? For God's sake they were dumping tomatoes all over the place.

The government was distraught, frantic. And the government and the leaders of the union in England conspired together. And when they made a settlement the police had to protect the leadership from the wrath and anger of the workers. This is the power. This is where it's at. This is where we have to go. And there are people in the IWW, if I didn't know, if I hadn't learned on this tour that I made through the West Coast, that there were young men and women who understand this principle, I wouldn't have wasted my time to come to your, to our convention. There is jealousy or even worse. You can see it coming. How do you explain that you're here? Why aren't you over there with the Socialist Workers Party? Why aren't you out there working for Comrade McGovern? You're here because you understand this simple principle. That when the organized power of the working class becomes stronger than the organized power of the capitalist class, then and only then will the workers rule the world. As one fellow worker, James P. Thompson said, everytime that he spoke he said. it. He repeat it time and time again. And 'read the pamphlet that they turned out, it gives you the whole story. Now in conclusion, I'm going to repeat a phrase that I repeat again and again. And I borrow the words from Peter Kropotkin. He said that we soldiers who blindly obey the commands of the generals, who are good enough to command us, we have but to make an about face to see a deathly pallor over their faces. And we peasants who mumble the chaff while the master eats the wheat, we too are a goodly number. And we workers who are like grains of sand, we overflow the street's and squares like a- sea at full tide, when the factories clamour, gives a moment's & respose. If we but had the will to do it, that very instant, justice will be done. This is the power. Here is what it is And keep all your tomes, all your diplomas. Go back to Harvard and get six more degrees. I don't give a shit where you go or how you go. If you

want a working class revolution, you must build a union, a union that is not organized because our ideas are the same because we cannot organize ourselves with similar ideas. We have certain needs. We organize for our need. And our needs are to grab control of the max of production, to build power to change the world where generals and politicians and prostitutes of various sorts are not going to ride our backs anymore.

So do not be discouraged, fellow workers. Get out there in the industries and build the IWW; build the one big union of the working class. This is the thing I want to talk to you about this is the thing that I know that you're talking about. We are old, our day is done. But we old timers are with you. And out of your group right here in this very convention there are people with the possibilities and the capabilities to do the job. I thank you very much.