

Workers Rights, America's Only Hope: One Big Union

By [Philip A Farruggio](#)

Global Research, November 19, 2018

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#),
[Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

When the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW AKA The Wobblies) was established in 1905, their goal was to see 'One Big Union' formed in the USA. The Wobblies came from the socialist Western Federation of Miners organization led by William D Haywood. Up to that point the major union organization at the time was the AFL (American Federation of Labor) which was a gaggle of many autonomous unions. Sadly, the AFL and its member unions only represented high skilled and high paid workers. They refused to encompass the majority of American working stiffs, who happened to be low paid and low or unskilled laborers. One could only imagine if the AFL would have 'opened its doors' to the majority. It didn't, for many reasons, one being that it was allowed by the super rich who ran industry to 'sit at their table'. There was also much discrimination by the AFL towards lower classes of immigrants. They wanted to curtail immigration, even advocating a literacy test for all immigrants... and this was a labor union! Remember, this was over 100 years ago. Sounds familiar?

Claude Berri's 1993 blockbuster French film *Germinal* was based on an Emile Zola novel concerning French coal miner strikes in the 1860s. In the film one can see what a feudal world looked like. As with John Sayles's 1987 film *Matawan*, about a 1920 coal miners' strike in West Virginia, the miners lived in company owned rental properties and shopped in company owned stores... in both instances paying high prices for what they received. As it has always been with non union workplaces (duh, like Florida's 'Right to work' laws making it more difficult for union organizing) the working stiffs always got the short end of the stick. Both of these films, depicting real life events mostly, ended with the strikers ultimately failing to get what they wanted. One scene in *Germinal* captured the feudal nature of things, and the mindset it established. The French miners finally organize a bit and send a small committee to meet with the mine owner (an actual replica of a 'Lord of the Manor') at his *majestic* home. They are ushered into his drawing room, with him seated behind his lavish desk. The small group of them then take off their caps and hats and actually bow their heads a bit, as they stood in front of him... but never too close.

What helped to instigate failure by the striking miners in both films was the appearance of those good old *scabs*. In *Matawan* they were poor Italian immigrants and poor unemployed Blacks sent in by train; in *Germinal* they came mostly from within their own ranks. Now imagine if you would if there was a situation of having 'One Big Union' in both of these cases. Imagine if *all* the coal miners and *all* paid labor in the entire region around the mines belonged to 'One Big Union'. There is no way that the owners could ever conceive of ending those strikes without first engaging in open and fair negotiations. Period! Of course, we know from historical labor study that the owners had resorted to using police and hired thug

violence to quell strikes. Even then, this writer soundly believes that the presence of 'One Big Union' would quell such tactics. When an overwhelming number of people stand together under the banner of one common cause...cooler heads by the bosses may just have to prevail. Perhaps I am too naive... perhaps not.

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Philip A Farruggio is a son and grandson of Brooklyn, NYC longshoremen. He has been a freelance columnist since 2001, with over 400 of his work posted on sites like Global Research, Greenville Post, Off Guardian, Consortium News, Information Clearing House, Nation of Change, World News Trust, Op Ed News, Dissident Voice, Activist Post, Sleuth Journal, Truthout and many others. His blog can be read in full on World News Trust, whereupon he writes a great deal on the need to cut military spending drastically and send the savings back to save our cities. Philip has a internet interview show, 'It's the Empire... Stupid' with producer Chuck Gregory, and can be reached at paf1222@bellsouth.net

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Philip A Farruggio](#), Global Research, 2018

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Philip A Farruggio](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca