

why organise internationally?

Employers organise internationally.

Companies like Toyota and Unilever have plants in many different countries. New businesses are set up where the owners think they will get most advantage.

But workers still organise locally.

If we organise to get good wages here they move the factory overseas. They choose a place where workers are not so well organised, and where wages are lower.

We have to build up the strength of workers' organisations everywhere. But even more importantly our organisations must work together.

Like the old union banner says: *Unity is Strength* - but now we must unite internationally.

Capitalism is a global system

All industries, all companies, all workplaces are part of the same capitalist system. While we fight for our jobs and conditions locally capitalists move money, production and workers around the globe looking for ways to increase their profits.

Stop the race to the bottom!

We need to develop common demands so that capitalists can't play us against each other to make us work longer, harder, faster, for less money, with less safety, with fewer conditions and worse contracts.

Casualisation, contracting out and off-shoring are some of the ways capitalists try to find a cheaper workforce. Many workers are also forced to migrate in search of jobs, even to countries far away, with no community support and no right to stay and build a life.

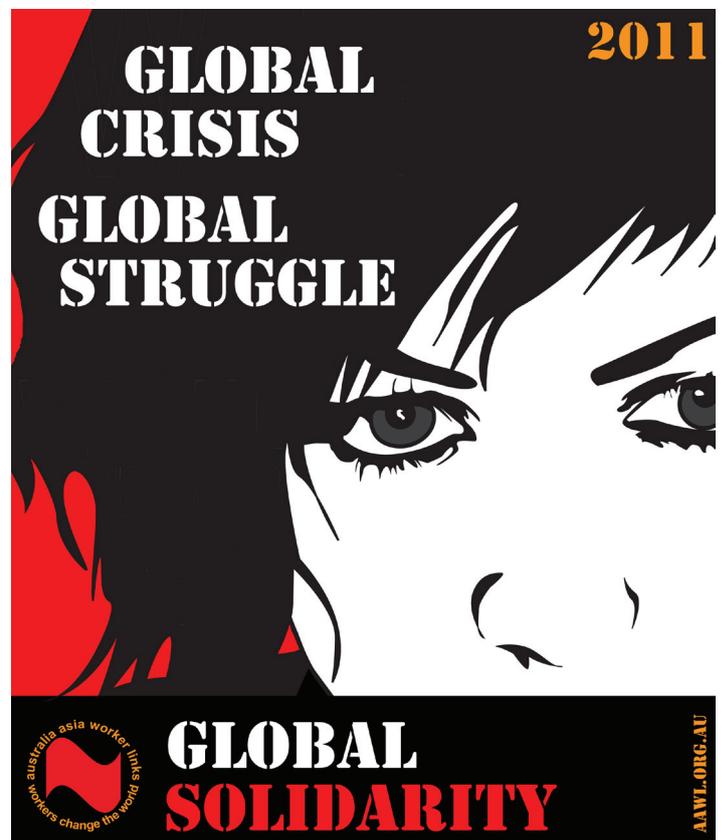
Capitalists hope we will see workers in other countries as competitors. They hope we will see migrant workers as a threat. But workers can refuse to be divided.

Our global demands

The global labour movement charter is a set of common demands written through discussion with many genuine unions internationally. It is a basic organising tool for all genuine unions and for all workers in all industries to campaign together for the things we all need.

International solidarity

In the global economic crisis capitalists will not give up their profits willingly. We need to coordinate our struggles with workers in different workplaces, different companies, different industries, different cities and different countries. Organising internationally is not easy. We need to overcome cultural, political and geographical differences. However experience has shown us that there are ways to organise effectively across national borders.



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1. Globalise the issue

Internationalism should mean more than national campaigns to send solidarity messages. It should mean building international campaigns to win disputes. Solidarity messages are good, but industrial action is what ultimately wins. A global day of action may get support. Global campaigns can get comrades out of jail. But they could also be global unionisation drives or global wage campaigns.

2. Use occupational health & safety

Health & safety is an area that shows very quickly that the interests of workers and employers are not the same.

And it is also an area where it is easy to begin an international discussion: The same things can kill us, no matter where we live and work. Chemicals and overwork are unsafe everywhere. The Stop Asbestos Campaign is relevant in every country. International action on health & safety can overcome differences between workers with different wages and conditions. International OHS campaigns can improve work conditions and show that international solidarity gets results.

3. Focus on the company

Many companies are ruthless exploiters and union busters: Nike, McDonald's, Wal-Mart, Philippine Airlines, BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto, Coca-Cola, Monsanto, Nestlé, BP, Posco, Toyota, Unilever, Motorola, Qantas, Samsung, Dow Chemicals, Suzuki, Ssangyong, Foxconn.

When workers are in dispute, solidarity from workers in the same company can help to win. Workers in the same company are not all unionised, but many are. They don't all have the same wages and conditions, but they will easily understand the issues, and may be involved in similar disputes. Solidarity from workers within the same company, locally or internationally, can build morale and contacts and genuine union links, and possibly even joint industrial action to win the dispute.

When major companies are in dispute consumer mobilisations can also be used to hurt the company by tarnishing the brand. But consumer mobilisations can't be a replacement for workers' mobilisation. Consumers and workers are the same people. But we are more powerful at the point of production than we are as shoppers.

4. Build an industry-wide struggle

Where there are no unions we need to build them. Strong unions can assist labour movement activists who are patiently building unions on the ground. This can be done with money, but more usefully with regular communication, solidarity visits, organiser exchanges, training programs, production and sharing of publicity and material.

Regular communication and campaigns built through the international union structures that already exist will help us. Regular solidarity visits will develop an understanding between workers of each other's situation and struggles, will reduce division and help us build a truly global movement. The strongest solidarity can come from workers in the same industry. This is because they face similar issues, often fighting the same employers. All pilots will understand safety issues raised by other pilots. All teachers will identify with issues of unpaid overtime raised by other teachers.

We are more likely to win when we build industry-wide struggles. If we build isolated disputes company by company as many industrial laws try to dictate to us, we will gain less.

5. Disrupt the supply chain

Winning disputes means hurting the capitalists' ability to generate profit. Strategic disputes that deny spare parts or services can make a dispute very costly for a company and help workers to win. Looking at any dispute we should ask - which group of workers is most strategic in being able to deny the employers what they most need? Those workers are the best placed to provide solidarity. Even just the threat of solidarity in a critical area like power supply or transport may help to decide a dispute in favour of the workers.

Workers of the world unite

Workers of the world unite is our slogan. It is time to make it real. Think about the international aspect of each dispute. Draw the line, make the links. It's time to win. Workers change the world.



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