

**Interviewee: Jason Adams**

**Affiliation: Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)**

**Interviewer: Jeremy Simer**

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**Interview Summary:**

An active member of the International Workers of the World (IWW), Jason Adams discusses his year-long role in helping mobilize international and local support for the WTO protests through a variety of groups, including the IWW Labor Mobilization Committee, Direct Action Network (DAN), and Seattle Anarchists Response. Adams describes the organization of University of Washington and community college students and his own work designing flyers and stickers urging a citywide student walkout. He describes conflicts between various anti-WTO organizations, and gives vivid descriptions of the November 30th Labor march. Adams also discusses the pros and cons of working with coalitions, and his use of the Internet in organizing Labor, students, and the general public.



**JS** Do you mind if I start recording? I'm looking at this picture here of Wobblies on top of the Labor Temple. So what happened?

**JA** So basically what happened – this was on, I think this was Thursday, and this was the day when there was the big labor march that was very tightly controlled. They had ropes going around everything to make sure that nobody ran off and did anything else.

**JS** Was it Thursday or Friday?

**JA** Or maybe it was Friday.

**JS** I think it was Friday.

**JA** I think it was Friday. As we were coming back, a group of Wobblies left. I wasn't actually there. I was at the office, sort of trying to be there for communication reasons and stuff like that. They went up on – they found like a back way up onto the Labor Temple and basically hung these banners over. They got a call. We all had walkie talkies, not all of us, but we had like five walkie talkies between us. They got a call on the walkie talkie from a Wobbly who was down at the labor march saying that some Steelworkers had heard that we were up there and they were going to come kick our ass. So everybody basically left. I think they were only up there for, like, 15 minutes.

**JS** The Steelworkers were going to come kick your asses because you were on top of the Labor Temple?

**JA** Yes, because they thought that we were like trying to make some statement about the Wobblies are better than the AFL, you know what I mean, stuff like that. I don't know what the intention of the people who were up there was. I think they were just trying to – I'm not exactly sure what their intention was.

**JS** Do you know who was up there?

**JA** Yes. There were some Wobblies from Seattle, Victoria, B.C., Portland, Olympia. Mostly Northwest.

**JS** All over the Northwest, huh?

**JA** Yes. I think there was one from Philadelphia.

**JS** What's today, the 16<sup>th</sup>?

**JA** Yes.

**JS** Well, let's start at the beginning. I'm talking with Jason Adams. You work at the Tenants Union?

**JA** Yes.

**JS** And you're a member of the IWW?

**JA** Yes.

**JS** Also the Student Worker Walkout Committee, was that the name of the group or was that a separate group?

**JA** There was a group called the Workers and Students for a Walkout, and sort of the idea behind it was – I don't know if you know about Paris in 1968 when the students and workers formed these things called Student Labor Action Committees, or something like that. Wait, no, that's organizations that are on college campuses in place now. I can't remember what it was; it was like Worker Student Solidarity Committees, or something. They basically had a general strike all across the country, and they almost overthrew the French government. It was because the students went on strike and workers went on strike, and it shut the entire country down. It was really serious.

Basically, some of us saw that and we were like, wow, there's all these students who were planning a walkout, and then there are workers going down to this labor march and they're probably going to take the day off, and some of them will probably walk out, too, so let's agitate for this, and that's what

that was. It was some students, including – what was that guy’s name from Mercer Island?

**JS** Teal?

**JA** Teal was pretty involved in that, and some students from Seattle Central Community College.

**JS** Who from Seattle Central?

**JA** I can’t remember her name. Curly hair, kind of...

**JS** Shawna?

**JA** I don’t know. Yes, I think that might be it. She’s a good friend of Teal’s. So, some people from there.

**JS** Oh, Zoe.

**JA** Zoe! That’s who it was. Zoe. Then we had some students from Seattle University who came, and a couple of other places.

**JS** I remember Rami was working with you guys, wasn’t he?

**JA** Rami was for a while, and then what happened was, he basically stopped coming, and all the UW students stopped coming. I think they were having their own meetings. I don’t know why they didn’t want to be involved in the broader thing, but I think it’s probably just a matter of time. I know that some of the community college students felt like they saw themselves on a different rung or something, like a higher kind of economic thing. I don’t really know what it was, but that was the impression that I got from some of the community college students. They felt like they were like separating themselves from the rest of the movement, from the rest of the students.

**JS** The community college people were or the university people?

**JA** Some of the community college students felt that the UW students were, and they were, but the reason why is, I have no idea why, exactly, but that’s what they felt.

**JS** Do you remember about when you felt that division starting?

**JA** It was just when they stopped coming that people starting speculating, “Oh, why aren’t they coming anymore?”

**JS** I was never clear on when the worker student group was meeting.

**JA** It was meeting on Fridays at seven at Roma Espresso on the Ave.

**JS** When did that start? Do you remember?

**JA** It probably started about a month and a half before November 30<sup>th</sup>. But those weren't – those were just sort of coordinating meetings, and like informing each other what is going on, like, kind of workers informing students of what they were doing, and then students informing workers and figuring out how we could work together and that kind of stuff. But the more important meetings that actually got more done were the actual – the more important meetings, in my opinion, were probably the ones of like the Labor Mobilization Committee, which was rank and file union workers and Wobblies and other people.

**JS** You were also involved with the Labor movement, right?

**JA** Yes. Those meetings, and then the separate student meetings. I think a lot of those were happening at the People for Fair Trade office.

**JS** Like the Monday night meetings?

**JA** Yes. I think those ones probably did more to actually organize the students and stuff like that. My main involvement was, I came up with a flyer that said “citywide walkout” or “citywide student walkout” and distributed those.

**JS** Did you make that graphic?

**JA** No. Seth Tobocman. He's like a squatters rights activist in the Lower East Side of New York. He's a comic artist and he's a contributor to *World War III Illustrated* and *Squatter Comics* and he's basically – he's heavily involved in housing stuff in New York, so being involved with the Tenants Union, I came across his graphics quite a bit. I was really impressed by them, and especially that one. It's my favorite one. I just used it.

**JS** We borrowed that for some of the Monday night student meetings, too. Specifically, I was just going through some papers for the archive, like stuff like this, and I found something that was from like a media... Remember the November 6<sup>th</sup> teach-in at Seattle Central?

**JA** Yes.

**JS** There was like a “How to Work with the Media” sort of workshop. It had a little packet on the back, you put the... It was like six pages or something, and the front was like how to work with the media, blah, blah, blah, and then on the back was this full page of November 30<sup>th</sup> walkout.

**JA** Yes. With that I just came up with the layout and with the language and the words and stuff like that. I didn't draw that or anything.

**JS** I remember seeing that all over the place. Did you guys do stickers of that?

**JA** We made little stickers. We made about probably 12,000 copies of the full page one and distributed them everywhere.

**JS** On just regular paper?

**JA** Yes. Then other people made their own copies, so that's why they were everywhere. We just made tons and tons of them.

**JS** So there were at least 12,000?

**JA** Definitely.

**JS** And how many stickers?

**JA** About a thousand. About a thousand stickers, and then I printed up templates for the stickers. I also came up with the stickers, and I printed up templates, like 12 on a page, and distributed them to activist organizers. A lot of them went and made their own stickers and cut them up and put them up all over the place. I don't know if I should speculate on how many of those were actually made, but maybe twice that many or something.

**JS** Was anyone else working with you on the graphics stuff, the leaflets and the stickers and stuff?

**JA** A woman from the Worker Center came in who works with students....

**JS** Kathy Lowenberg?

**JA** An Asian lady?

**JS** Yes.

**JA** Yes. She came in here, actually, one night, and I helped her come up with... I basically took the one that I had already made. I made that in Publisher, and I changed it so that it said Student Walkout. She added some suggestions, and I helped her make that. She said that she made, like, 5,000 copies of that one, so that's an additional 5,000.

**JS** It just said student? It didn't say student worker?

**JA** I think it just said student walkout. We tried to make them to fit every, like, when Mumia was supposed to be executed, we made one that said "Walkout for Mumia". It was basically a template and I think there were like six different versions that were made to fit, like, every constituency.

**JS** Maybe you've said this before, but I wasn't exactly clear. What exactly did the student worker group do? You said you were doing outreach to different student and Labor groups?

**JA** The student worker group was more... The main function of it was coordinating things and sort of like sharing information and figuring out what everybody is doing and figuring out what we could do together. It's kind of weird, because like people from that group did a lot, but I don't know if you could say as a group that we did these things, although I guess that's probably fair to say. It's weird, because I'm in the IWW, and then I was in the Labor mobilization committee. I was in DAN for a while kind of, and I was in Seattle Anarchists Response. I did all these things, and it's kind of up to me to determine which group I was acting on behalf of and for the individuals.

It seemed like most of the groups that I was involved in didn't really do things as a group too much, especially the Student Worker Committee. One thing that we did do that we coordinated within that group was hanging banners over I-5. We did that a couple of times.

**JS** When? Like, during the week, or before?

**JA** That was like the week right before. No, it wasn't, because I went to Texas the week right before and stayed there just to clear my mind before the big thing and to visit this girlfriend I'm seeing, or was seeing. So it was the week before that, so it was like two weeks before we hung these banners. We just stood there with them.

**JS** What did they say?

**JA** Honk if you're going to walk out or call in sick November 30<sup>th</sup> We had people honking like every 10 seconds or something. It was great. It made us feel pretty good. Like lots and lots of people were honking.

**JS** Where did you do this banner hanging?

**JA** Right over I-5, right by the Convention Center downtown. We also did one at University and I-5.

**JS** 45<sup>th</sup> and I-5?

**JA** 45<sup>th</sup> and I-5, yes.

**JS** In the U District?

**JA** Yes.

**JS** There are so many questions I have for you, because you worked for all those different groups, right? By the way, how much time do you have to talk? It's 1:20 already.

**JA** How long do you have?

JS

Usually these interviews go for about an hour.

JA

That's cool. I'd like to focus on Seattle Anarchists Response. I don't really want to focus on... I'd prefer to focus on the Wobblies and maybe the walkout stuff.

JS

I want to ask you most about the Wobblies, also because of the historical connection, because you've been involved with Wobblies for a while, right?

JA

Since '96.

JS

Tell me what you did with the Wobblies, and what the IWW did in general.

JA

Basically, what I saw was that we're an international union. We've also called for global worker solidarity ever since we were first formed. We've been all over the world. Now we're much smaller than we used to be, but we do have branches all over the world. We have places organized in a lot of different countries. I saw that as a network that could be used.

The June 18<sup>th</sup> International Day of Action had happened previously, so I came up with... Well, once a year we have this thing called the IWW General Assembly. Last year it was in Winnipeg, Manitoba. So I came up with a proposal for the General Assembly to endorse, or basically asking the General Assembly to endorse. I typed up about two pages of background information about the WTO and sort of comparing how the WTO is basically like, I mean, they are pretty much like, as far as the IWW goes, they are pretty much like our exact opposite. They are like the global union of the richest corporations and the richest people in the world, and we're like, at least theoretically, we're like the global union of workers and the people who work for these corporations.

So it makes sense for us to do – if they're organizing globally, it makes sense for us to be organized globally and to do something global in response to this meeting, which was going to be a big deal. So I came up with a proposal and sent that along with some people who went to the general assembly. I wasn't able to go. It was endorsed unanimously by the assembly.

JS

What did the proposal say?

JA

Basically it was calling for an International Day of Action on November 30<sup>th</sup> against the WTO. Peoples Global Action – I had already been working with.... I had set up an international listserv called [n30@listbot.com](mailto:n30@listbot.com) So on that listserv there were already people talking about this International Day of Action.

I was pushing for it, and a lot of people were like, "Oh. There's not enough time." With June 18<sup>th</sup>, we had a lot of time to prepare for it, and we contacted lots of people and that's why it was such a success. I don't think we have

enough time to do this. I kept pushing for it. A couple of other people were pushing for it.

**JS** How much time went into J18?

**JA** I think they had a good six months, or maybe more. I'm not exactly sure. I know they had the website all up and running a long time before it ever happened.

**JS** When was the Winnipeg Assembly?

**JA** The Winnipeg Assembly was in September. We did have some time, but it just wasn't the same amount of time that they had before, and it didn't have the buildup. So basically, I was pushing for that. Then some people took it – a person from Eugene came up with a few other people; I helped write this thing, too, a proposal for the International Day of Action on November 30<sup>th</sup>.

**JS** For IWW or for PGA?

**JA** No. This one wasn't for anyone in particular. It was basically for everyone. We weren't claiming affiliation with any group necessarily. Basically what ended up happening was that proposal was taken to the Peoples Global Action Conference in India, which was in August. PGA endorsed it and, I guess, enthusiastically. I don't think it was unanimous, but it was enthusiastic from the report that I heard.

That ended up happening in a lot of different places around the world. So, anyway, that was right before the IWW general assembly, so I typed this thing up real quick, got it off to them, and they endorsed it. So the main stuff that the Wobblies did for the International Day of Action was we typed..., and PGA never did these things, although they probably had better connections than we did, because they are affiliated with so many different groups.

But one thing we did was we typed up – we had our own International Call to Action that was separate from the PGA-endorsed one that was more focused on, like, walkouts and strikes and on-the-job direct action and stuff like that. We typed that up and sent that to all of our branches around the world and to a list that was provided to us by Peoples Global Action. So it was sent to a lot of different places around the world. That was actually done through Seattle Anarchist Response, because they were sending out their own mailing.

**JS** So when you say you sent out to a list the PGA provided, you mean an email list, right?

**JA** No, an address list. We sent it out by mail. Then we did a separate mailing to all of the IWW branches...

**JS** How many are there?



**JA** I'd say about 50, 60 maybe.

**JS** And that's in an envelope?

**JA** Yeah. How many countries are represented? One, two, three, four, five, six...nine... We didn't just send it to these countries, so probably about 12 different countries.

**JS** Okay. So you sent that out, and then what?

**JA** That was part of it. In the IWW we have this thing called assessment stamps, and they are little stamps that you put in your membership book when you join, or you put them in your membership book and then you pay a delegate – a delegate is somebody who collects dues. So you pay a delegate like five bucks, and then you get this little stamp, and then that money is followed towards whoever is doing the organizing on that particular issue, whether it's an organizing drive or if it's for an International Day of Action like this. So we had those made, and those were sent along with the letter to all the IWW branches.

**JS** Do you have any of those left over, any assessment stamps?

**JA** Yes, I do.

**JS** That would be something cool for the archives.

**JA** Yes. Yes.

**JS** So, in other words, you pay five dollars and the stamp says, like, N30 Action or something like that.

**JA** Right. Right.

**JS** Then that five dollars specifically goes to that organizing drive?

**JA** Right. Right. So now there's all these people who have like little stamps in their books.

The other big thing we did was – well, I should say that an IWW member did, which was O'Shawn in Olympia. He set up this website which is – I've got a copy of it. I just printed that out, and that's basically the front page. I don't know if it says how many hits we got, but I think it got something like 50,000 hits.

**JS** Wow.

**JA** It got lots and lots of hits, and I think the website was [www.n30.org](http://www.n30.org). Now when you go to the website, it directs you to [www.mayday2.org](http://www.mayday2.org), but it used to be [www.n30.org](http://www.n30.org).

**JS** When you say 50,000 hits, that's like before or after N30?

**JA** Before. And then after, I don't know how many it's gotten. Then after the things went down, I mean, as it was going on, you could click on these different maps and find out what was happening in your area. We'd have contact information. You could call that person up and try to help them organize something where they were. After it was done, O'Shawn came up with these reports from actions and people sent in stuff from all over the world, saying what happened where they were.

**JS** What's this guy's name?

**JA** O'Shawn.

**JS** O'Shawn? And he's in Olympia?

**JA** Yes. He's in IWW and EarthFirst!, so he typed up something for the EarthFirst! Journal, and I typed up something else for

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**JS** Okay, so you were saying, about the web page?

**JA** I was just saying that me and O'Shawn worked together to type up the one that ended up in here.

**JS** In the *Ministerial Worker*?

**JA** Yes.

**JS** So what other activities was the IWW involved in, on the local, for example? What did you do to get it? The IWW tends to have a pretty active membership, right? People who are members tend to be activists?

**JA** Yes.

**JS** So, what did you do to reach out to people to get them out in the streets, and then what happened during the WTO, when you had the banner?

**JA** The main thing that we did, preliminary, was working on printing those flyers calling for the walkout, and we also distributed them. We made giant posters and gave those to people who went and pasted them up in different places. We also addressed meetings, like, I think you were there when I addressed the student meeting at SCCC.

JS

On November 6<sup>th</sup>?

JA

Yes. And I basically told them about my experience in the citywide student walkout against the Gulf War when I was a freshman in high school. And I also went and I found a teacher who called us up, called the Wobblies up, and she wanted one of us to come and talk to her students at Shoreline Community College. So I went and talked to their students, and met a few students there, and helped them distribute flyers and get people excited about it there.

The Labor Mobilization Committee was probably the biggest thing that we were involved in, and that was rank and file AFL-CIO union members. Originally it was both union officials and rank and file members and Wobblies, and we were meeting at the Labor Temple. That started back in - it must have been like maybe June or July or something. That group was meeting then, at that point, and originally it was a teamster who called for a citywide walkout, a rank and file teamster.

JS

Really? Do you remember who it was?

JA

It might have been Mike Miller from Teamsters for a Democratic Union. I'm not really sure. Actually, later on, right before November 30<sup>th</sup>, Mike Miller and another TDU guy put it on the floor of the Teamsters local at one of their meetings to call for a general strike.

JS

Local 174?

JA

Yes, and it wasn't endorsed, but he did bring it to the floor.

So, anyway, what happened was Ron Judd kind of took up that banner and sort of was talking about it at some of the bigger meetings, I guess.

JS

Where did you see him? Did you see him say that?

JA

I never saw him say that, but I've heard that report from a lot of people.

JS

Like at what meetings, do you know?

JA

I heard that he said it at one of the earliest Network Opposed to WTO meetings, and he was basically calling for that way back then. I got wind of it from a Wobbly named Eric Dee who was at that meeting, so I took it upon myself to look up the King County Labor Council phone number and call them up directly, because I was editor of the *Industry Bulletin*, which is the local IWW publication.

So I called him based on that, and it was like, "Hi. This is Jason with *Industry Bulletin*, and I heard a rumor that you are calling for a general strike against the WTO."

JS

So what did he say?

JA

At this point, I had no idea that he got the idea from a Teamster who had called for it first. I didn't find that out until almost the 30<sup>th</sup>. He said that he had said that, confirmed that he'd said that. He said that he was talking – he said that it was problematic, though, because he needed to talk to the presidents of the international unions and find out from them how that would impact the AFL-CIO's image, and whether they would endorse that or not, because back in 1919, what happened during the general strike is, the international presidents came in and basically whipped people into shape and squashed it. So he didn't want something like that to happen. A lot of people think he was just blowing hot air and trying to look militant when he's really not.

JS

By saying the stuff about a general strike in a public forum?

JA

Yes. Yes. And that he never really intended for that to go anywhere. He was just trying to get people excited. Maybe he didn't. I don't really know.

JS

Just to interrupt for a second, how do you know that the teamster resolution is what gave him the idea? I mean, is it possible that he'd come up with the idea independently, or is there a connection?

JA

Sure, it's possible, but I heard that from Mike Miller. He told me that that was... I was telling them, "I can't believe Ron Judd was originally the one calling for this general strike, and now they are talking about working within the WTO." That's a 180-degree turn, or at least it seemed so to me. And he was like, "Well, actually, he wasn't the first one to talk about it. It was a Teamster who brought it up."

JS

Okay. Did he say anything else in that conversation?

JA

Yes, he said to call him back within a couple of weeks and he would talk to the international presidents of the unions and get an idea of what their level of support would be for such a thing if the King County Labor Council were to call for something like that.

I got back to him in about a month, and he said that he had talked to them, and it looked to him like it was more... Meanwhile, I'm talking to all these Wobblies, and I had published it in the *Industry Bulletin* that he had said that, trying to hold him accountable for doing this, because I thought it was great. If he's going to say that, then let's run with it, and try to make it happen as well as we can, hoping that it would make it less likely that he would back out of it if everybody knows that he had said that already. You know what I mean?

JS

Yes.

JA

So anyway, he talks to the international presidents and comes back and tells me, after I call him up – it's not like he contacted me – and tells me that they

want to have a Day of Action on November 30<sup>th</sup>, which is what usually happens every time anyone anywhere talks about a general strike in the AFL-CIO. It always gets turned into a Day of Action.

**JS** Which means like a rally and a march sort of thing?

**JA** Right. Right.

**JS** When were those phone calls? When did you first ask him that, do you remember?

**JA** That was a long time ago. That was probably April.

**JS** April?

**JA** Well, maybe it was, like... Do you remember when the very first Network Opposed to WTO meetings were?

**JS** See, I was out of town until July, but I heard that there was a first meeting... It might not have been a publicly-announced meeting, but there was a first, sort of, activists' meeting in February, and then maybe the first general meeting was in March.

**JA** Okay. Then April sounds about right.

**JS** About April? And then you called him back about a month later?

**JA** Yes, so, about May.

**JS** So let's get back to that, and then maybe afterward we can talk about the Wobblies' relationship with the black walk. And, also, how old are you, Jason?

**JA** I am 25.

**JS** What's your occupation?

**JA** Section 8 Tenant Organizer.

**JS** What's the best way to keep in contact with you in the future?

**JA** Probably by email.

**JS** And that's jason@iww?

**JA** Yes.

**JS** So you're saying you wanted to talk about tracing how the pressure of the Wobblies on the King County Labor Council?

**JA**

Right. So basically what happened was, so he's called for this thing, and then he comes back and gives me this information that they are going to have a Day of Action instead. So we started talking, and my basic idea was like, let's just keep pushing for this. I mean, a lot of people have heard about it already, and around this time, the Labor Mobilization Committee meetings were starting, and that was kind of started by Martha Baskin, and Ron Judd was going to these, and some of the other labor officials were going to them.

As it became more and more clear that most of the rank and file union members and Wobblies, who were at the meetings, were leaning towards more of the position of abolishing the WTO and calling for a walkout and that kind of thing, as opposed to calling for a march and a rally and for negotiating within the WTO... As that became more and more clear, the union officials stopped coming.

It went from a process of us meeting in the Labor Temple with the officials, to them leaving, to the group becoming more radicalized and staying in the Labor Temple for about three months, and then when we really started, when some of the people in the Labor Mobilization Committees really started becoming effective, like a couple of people, including Dick Burton and Martha Baskin went to the Washington State Labor Council meeting and put this thing on the floor about – it was basically calling for the U.S. to withdraw from WTO; that was their long-term thing that they were calling for the Washington State Labor Council to endorse, and this is like right before – not very far until the WTO action actually happened. They didn't have anything on the agenda regarding the WTO, yet there's this huge march that's supposed to happen with 50,000 people. It's, like, what's going on?

So they pushed this thing through. It was endorsed unanimously, but they ruffled a lot of feathers when they did that.

**JS**

That's the point at which the Labor Mobilization Committee stopped meeting in the Labor Temple?

**JA**

We were basically kicked out, and Martha Baskin, I think... I don't remember exactly what happened to her. You should probably talk to her, but I think she was basically ... I mean, Ron Judd will say that she was asked to leave, but she feels like she was – she feels like we were kicked out, so we had to go meet in the Teamsters Local 174 Hall.

While we were in the Labor Temple, during that period of time from when we became a primarily more militant group, more rank-and-file controlled, and we were meeting in the Labor Temple, we were having anywhere between 20 to sometimes 50 people coming to these meetings, rank and file union members, from all kinds of unions around the city. At the point where we started becoming effective and actually making things happen, and we were kicked out of the Labor Temple as a result, at least that's how we see it, then

we'd go to the Teamsters Local 174 Hall, all the people who knew when the meetings were and where they were before all of a sudden don't know where we went. Even though we are meeting in the Teamsters Local 174 Hall, it's like they need to use the room at different times, so we didn't have a regular time that we could meet like we used to at the Labor Temple, because the Labor Temple has so many more rooms available that we could always meet at the same time every other week.

So now we're scattered all over the place. Nobody knows when we're meeting, and the people coming to the meetings is dropped by like 90 percent almost. I mean, it's like serious. So at that point, we weren't getting a whole lot done anymore.

So basically the people who were going to those meetings, I think they basically just continued what they were doing in the first place and reaching out to other members and trying to get people interested and giving them flyers about what we were doing.

**JS** Later, then, the Labor Council established the Labor Education Committee, right?

**JA** Right, and the Labor Education Committee was controlled. That actually happened while the Labor Mobilization Committee was still in the Labor Temple, and they met at a different time, and they were mostly controlled by the King County Labor Council officials and also by the various union officials and stuff from the AFL-CIO unions.

They were pretty much separate from us, and anything that they came up with that they wanted to put out to the community, they sent it to D.C. to get it approved, and then the people in D.C. would decide whether or not it was okay and send it back, and then they would put it out, whereas we were, like, fuck that, let's just come up with what we want to do and distribute it. So that's the primary difference.

**JS** I actually have a list here of some more formal questions. I wanted to ask you a bunch of more general questions to get a sense of these different organizations, but I have a few others. Did you say you didn't want to talk about SAR so much, because I haven't interviewed anyone at SAR yet?

**JA** I prefer not to do too much with that, because my experience with it wasn't very good, and I ended up, like, I got into all these arguments with Roger Weaver and it was just annoying to me.

**JS** I really don't want to pry, but would you mind telling me sort of what those arguments were about, just the general subject?

*Tape stopped*

**JS** So, one of the main questions that I'm going to be addressing in this research, and I'm also going to be showing this stuff with a bunch of other professors and other people who are doing stuff on the UW campus. One of the big questions is coalitions, because obviously coalition building is really important for everything that happened here, for most of what happened here. So what were your experiences working with the Wobblies and with the Student Worker Committee in terms of what were the pros and cons of working in a coalition, and what kind of coalition work did you do? Who did you reach out to?

**JA** I worked with Direct Action Network for awhile, and this created a huge controversy within the IWW, which was about whether or not we were affiliated as a group with Direct Action Network. We never actually affiliated with them as a group, but it was very muddy about whether or not the international IWW was affiliated. Even the Seattle IWW, we never voted to actually endorse to become a part of DAN, as a member organization. We just endorsed the early morning action.

**JS** Did you guys have the opportunity to? Was there ever a time in which you addressed that or you were invited or something to formally join DAN?

**JA** To formally join DAN?

**JS** You said you never did it. Was that ever a question, or was is it just something that never came up?

**JA** I don't think it actually did come up. There are some confusing points, because the way that they did it was they had a list of people who endorsed, and the flyer says Direct Action Network on it, so it looks like you are endorsing this action and DAN, but really we were just endorsing the action and we didn't consider ourselves a member of DAN, a member organization of DAN.

To me it was very unclear, so some people in the IWW were like, "Wait a minute. We never endorsed DAN as a group. We just endorsed this action and we support this action. We're going to be there and we're going to take part."

**JS** Was there any other kind of coalition building that you guys worked on?

**JA** Yes. The Labor Mobilization Committee was coalition-building, working with rank and file labor union members of other unions. I thought that went really well. I really liked that, because there is sort of, like, there's a couple different things in the IWW about what our long-term goal is. Are we trying to become one worldwide union and make all unions be a part of IWW, for them to all be militant and democratic and that kind of stuff, or are we just trying to create sort of radical caucuses? So in a lot of ways I felt like we proved that it can be



effective; not necessarily to just try and create this one global union, but to be our own thing and then to work with other people who were doing stuff. So I thought that went well.

**JS** Do you consider that to be an important – was that a learning experience for the Wobblies at the local level, do you think? Was that a new...?

**JA** It wasn't really new. For me it was a learning experience because I haven't been involved with the Wobblies in much coalition stuff, but the Wobblies here have done a lot. Sort of the general feeling that I've, at least from my perception, the general feeling of the Wobblies in Seattle is not that we want to get all unions to disaffiliate from the AFL-CIO and to re-affiliate with us instead; it's more that we want to build a militant, radical labor movement with what is already here, and for unorganized workers to get them to organize in the IWW. If we're not a good fit, then at least organize with somebody.

So we have situations here where Wobblies will be salting for the ILWU or be salting for other unions that are Wobblies. Sometimes members will come from other places and they'll be like, "What are you doing? If you're going to salt for someone, salt for us." And that's just kind of how this global character with the branch here.

**JS** So there is a different perspective on that in the IWW in other regions?

**JA** Yes, definitely. So I wanted something about how that can work, because where I had lived before in Gainesville, Florida, I was the Secretary-Treasurer of the Wobblies there, and our perspective there was pretty much that the AFL should be abolished and the union should either affiliate with the IWW instead or form another, more militant federation of unions that are organizations for unions.

**JS** You mean AFL-CIO sort of thing?

**JA** Yes.

**JS** Do you want to tell me about what the IWW did the actual week of it? Where were you guys on November 30<sup>th</sup> and the rest of the week?

**JA** The main place that we were at on the 30<sup>th</sup> was, early in the morning, we went to SCCC, and we marched downtown with the group. We split off about halfway down and went down and occupied... I haven't lived here very long; I don't remember what the street corners were.

**JS** I read your thing on your website, so I have a little bit of background on it. On your website, don't you have a page talking about...

**JA** What we did?

**JS** Yes. I think you described it, didn't you?

**JA** On my web page?

**JS** Yes.

**JA** One that I did?

**JS** Yes. Describing...

**JA** Oh, wait a minute.

**JS** You had that report about N30.

**JA** That's right. That's right. Okay, so you saw that in my signature thing and you just followed the links? Okay. I forgot that that was on the web. That was actually the same article that's in here.

**JS** Okay.

**JA** That was just my recollection of what happened.

**JS** So you guys marched down...

**JA** So we marched down, and we took over the first intersection we came across.

**JS** Had you chosen, like, in the DAN structure how they split up in wedges?

**JA** Yes.

**JS** Had you chosen a wedge?

**JA** Yes. We took the section that we were going to occupy. Actually, originally, we were going to take Westlake and work with – there's a couple of other groups that were supposedly going to be there.

**JS** So did you form a cluster with those other groups? Is that how it worked?

**JA** Not from what I could tell. From what I could tell, I think that was sort of the plan, but it was kind of confusing. Actually, right before it happened, right before we went on the march, there was this big debate, because there were some mothers with children who were going to Westlake and supposedly Westlake was going to be a safe zone. It was going to be like a child-safe zone or something. And that wasn't our understanding by any means. Our understanding was that was a place that we were going to take over, and it seemed like a very key place to take.

**JS** When you say a "safe zone", you mean a safe zone for children protestors or for just children shoppers?

**JA** For protestors, so that some protestors who had kids could go down and have a safe place to be, where they wouldn't have to worry about police coming in and shooting rubber bullets and stuff.

So I don't remember how that played out, but somehow we ended up going down... We occupied – oh, that's right. We went down to Westlake and we were going to take that intersection, but we ended up taking the one just past it. I think that might have been what we came up with in the debate with the people with children who were trying to, who had this deal worked out already.

**JS** One block just past the intersection?

**JA** One block towards the Westin; that would be west.

**JS** So that'd be like Fifth?

**JA** I guess so. Yeah.

**JS** So like Fifth and Pine?

**JA** I think, yes.

**JS** Do you remember what landmarks were around? Was that by, where?

**JA** There was a little Starbucks that was around the corner. I remember going in there, and it was kind of hidden.

**JS** So it was an intersection near several Starbucks?

**JA** Yes.

**JS** I think I know where you're talking about.

**JA** So we were down there, and we took that intersection, and there was a large group of black block people who decided to break off with us and they followed us – not follow us, but come with us.

There was some confusion because we thought that, like, our original plan was that us breaking off – we were breaking off as the Wobblies, and we had set up this sort of structure where we had something called a Picket Council. These people were going to sort of like make a decision together about what the best tactical thing would be to do.

So there was just a lot of debate back and forth. When the police came, we didn't know whether to stay or whether to move on to the next intersection or whether to try and go in with another larger group or what to do. So half of us

did a sit down; sat down right there and basically.... The police were getting their tear gas out and getting ready to tear gas people right away.

So some people were like, "No. We need to leave. Let's go up to the other place." We ended up, for some reason, they ended up leaving. I don't know where they went.

**JS** Did the Picket Council make that decision, or did people just sort of leave?

**JA** No. The police ended up leaving.

**JS** Oh, the police left?

**JA** Yes. For some reason, they left. So we ended up just staying there for a while, and then they came back.

**JS** Do you remember what time that was?

**JA** That was all before 8:00; probably 7:30 or 7:45. Then – God. I'm really foggy on the details of where we went. We just went from intersection to intersection, and then the police would come, and then they would have this menacing force with guns out and drawn. Then we'd move on to the next intersection. I don't know the names of the intersections and that kind of thing. But we probably had a good 60 to 70 people with us.

**JS** And were they from all over?

**JA** Yes, from all over the country. We had a couple of people from the anti-Bonistas, which is a like similar – they're a group in Italy that is similar to the Wobblies, and they were with us. Actually stayed at my house.

**JS** What happened the rest of the day? How long did you guys stay there?

**JA** This part of it you'd probably be better to interview somebody else, maybe like John Persak or Eric Dee or somebody. I was actually, at that point, we just kept going from intersection to intersection. At 10:30 or so, I left with a delegation of people to go to the labor march. By the time we got to the labor march, we had heard from people who were...

Actually, as we were leaving, the tear gas and rubber bullets and everything was starting. That was actually the first tear gassing of the day.

**JS** Are you sure?

**JA** I'm pretty sure, yes.

**JS** Do you remember what time it was?

**JA** It says it in here? Let's see. It says, "In spite of the media reports the gassing..." That was at Sixth and Union, three blocks away.

**JS** Oh, yes.

**JA** And that was at 9:15 a.m.

**JS** Was that at 9:15?

**JA** Yes.

**JS** Because I got hit by gas for the first time at Sixth and Union. But later.

**JA** Really? Was there like a giant, blown-up whale or something?

**JS** I think that was Sixth and University, or it was sort of in-between. It was pretty much at Sixth and University. Why? Why do you ask about that whale?

**JA** That's just something I remember from where we were. I think I remember there being a giant, blown-up whale.

**JS** Maybe that was Sixth and Union. I don't know.

**JA** Well. I think it might have been a little bit later, actually. No. No, that would have been about right, because I know we left in time to get to the rally by ten, because we wanted to get there in time and be part of it and have the Wobbly contingent there.

**JS** Did you see or hear the rubber bullets and the tear gas going off at that point?

**JA** I saw the tear gas, yes. And we have it on film and everything. We had somebody there video recording the whole thing. You might want to talk to him. That's Ben Ferguson.

**JS** Can I use your pen? Mine just ran out. So Ben Ferguson was recording? Okay. I don't think I know him. I know Eric Dee. You mentioned Eric and you mentioned John Pursack, too, right? They stayed behind?

**JA** Yes. All three of them were there.

**JS** How many people went in the delegation over to the march, the rally and march?

**JA** There was about five of us, and then when we got there, there was another five that were already there, so we had about 10 people. We had this big banner with IWW general secretary/treasurer Alex Bus in Philadelphia made, and it said, "Capitalism Cannot be Reformed". We made that on purpose for the labor march, because the AFL-CIO's position was to reform the WTO. So we wanted to make a kind of radical statement. We were right behind ILWU

and right in front of, at least at first, right in front of the Steelworkers. A lot of people were giving us thumbs up for our banner and stuff like that.

**JS** Really? From those two unions?

**JA** Yes. Well, mostly from ILWU.

**JS** You said ILWU was in front, and Steelworkers were behind?

**JA** Yes. And then, somehow, I don't remember what ended up happening exactly, but all this other stuff was happening while we were down there. We got word that we had made it impossible for the WTO to meet, so I was running around, talking to all these marshals from Boeing, from the Machinists, because they were the ones with megaphones. I was, like, "Hey. You guys should really make an announcement to the people who are here, lining up for this march, that they've shut it down, and that if we get everybody to go downtown, it's going to be more effective and we're going to have a longer-term impact."

**JS** What did they say to that?

**JA** They were like, "Yeah. I can't deal with that right now. I'm busy with this other stuff." Everyone I talked to with the megaphone was not willing to present this over the megaphone. We didn't have a megaphone or anything to tell people, so I ran around telling people what was going on, especially the people who were right around us.

When we got down there, which took forever...

**JS** Back downtown?

**JA** When the march started and we finally got to the area where it was supposed to turn around – that's what this cartoon depicts... When we finally got down to the part where, like, here's the march and the parade... The march is like this, and it shows the agitators down here, actually shutting it down. When we got down to this point, there were marshals and everything. The marshals were telling everyone – see, this is depicting a marshal – telling everyone to turn around and go back to where they started and not to go downtown where everything was happening.

So when we got down there, we started chanting, "Go downtown. Don't turnaround. Go downtown. Don't turnaround." Everyone around us started chanting it. So we come to the line of marshals who are completely blocking off the way to get downtown and directing people to go back, and we're like, "We're going downtown." They're like, "You're part of the labor march. You're not going downtown. You're going back. This is what we've negotiated with the Secret Service. It's not going to happen."

We were like, “We’re an autonomous union. We’re not part of the AFL-CIO, and we can do whatever we want. We’re going downtown.” So we started chanting, “Go downtown. Don’t turnaround.” We finally just broke through.

**JS** Did you physically breakthrough?

**JA** I didn’t see that. I didn’t see how that happened, but I know that we did break through somehow. Maybe they parted and let us through, but we were all chanting, “Go downtown. Don’t turnaround.” This one Machinist marshal was like, “Oh, great solidarity, there brother.” He said that to me.

**JS** To you guys or the marshal?

**JA** He said that to me. The marshal said that to me. And I was like, whatever. That’s exactly what this is. We’re going downtown and trying to support the people who are actually shutting this thing down. That is solidarity. Just because you’re in a union and I’m not doing what you’re telling me to do doesn’t mean that I’m not for solidarity.

What ended up happening was the sheet metal workers, and then a lot of ILWU people, kind of all filed in through the hole that we had created. Some people remember it as being ILWU who actually did that, so there’s two different stories. My recollection is that they were already going and turning around, and then when they saw this opening, they all came back and went through, and all the Sheet Metal workers came through.

But, literally, like a good one to two thousand people peeled off of the labor march and went downtown because of the hole that we helped to create.

**JS** Now, you said that you’re not always clear on the intersections. Do you remember what intersection that was at?

**JA** If you can get the route from – if you can figure out what the route was, wherever it was supposed to turn, that’s where it was. It was the very first turn when we were turning back toward the rally site, Memorial Stadium.

**JS** But it’s the first turn, like you’re coming off Fourth Avenue?

**JA** I guess so. I think so, yes. Yes. I think it might have been by Westlake.

**JS** Yes. That makes sense, because I think that was one of the turnaround spots. The reason I ask is because there were at least two turnaround spots. I think that Sweeney and the people in the front turned left on Stewart, and they left the march a little bit earlier so as to maintain even more distance from the direct action. But the actual route went one more block before it turned. That’s why I’m asking.

**JA** We consciously planned ahead of time to subvert the labor march. That was our goal. The reason we sent a delegation was to show solidarity with all the other union members who were there, but it was also because we were hoping to make it more than just a march that went in a circle. We wanted to actually make it do something.

I was told by some people from the AFL-CIO that they had negotiated something – I think it was Ron Judd – that they had possibly negotiated something where the labor march would stop, and then sort of the officials would go in and actually give a speech to the WTO and then come back out. So we were like, “Oh. That would be a perfect opportunity for 50,000 union workers to file in and occupy the place where the WTO were meeting.” There was a lot of talk about different things like that that could have happened.

**JS** You mean in order to prevent Sweeney from going in and talking, or in order to have a stronger presence?

**JA** Just to make a statement. Just to have a strong presence and to be in there.

So when that opportunity came up... I mean, obviously, and it was pretty clear that that wasn't going to happen by the time we got downtown...

**JS** What wasn't going to happen?

**JA** That the AFL-CIO wasn't sending a delegation in to talk. For some reason, that wasn't going to work, so when the opportunity came up to break through... I think it kind of just natural, too, because we, as a group, certainly weren't going to go back. We were definitely planning on going downtown. It just came up as things progressed. “Obviously, wait a minute. None of us should go back. Let's encourage everyone to go downtown.”

**JS** So how many people did you say you had? You said you had Sheet Metal workers and Longshore workers and Wobblies?

**JA** And there was another union, too. I don't remember which one it was.

**JS** How many people do you think went through, all told?

**JA** I don't know. It's really hard to say. Maybe 1,000 to 2,000. Maybe 2,000. Yeah. But then the marshals came and started picking people and grabbing AFL members and saying, “Come on, you guys. What are you doing down here? Get out of here.” And almost all of them went back.

**JS** So they went back into the march?

**JA** Yes. But the longshoremen – I think most of the longshoremen stayed. The Longshoremen were definitely the most militant throughout the week. Oh, it was the Steelworkers that was the third union. Definitely the Steelworkers.



**JS** That makes sense. So, I don't want to belabor this point, but what... Did you hear the marshals addressing you and the rest of the people who were trying to go through?

**JA** I didn't hear that interaction. I was behind. That happened in front of me, and I was behind the banner and behind the people who were in the front of what happened. I wasn't even expecting it to be an issue. I figured they would just open up and just let us go in if we wanted to, and so that's the interaction that I heard took place.

**JS** Do you know who, from the Wobblies, was up in front there?

**JA** I don't know exactly, but I'm sure there's other people who would probably know.

**JS** Okay, because I interviewed one of the marshals a couple of days ago, and he was saying that, at least where he was, which I think was at that same intersection – I think it was at Fourth and Pine, he was saying that they were telling everyone that they should go this way because it was...that they should stay on the route, because that was the route and that was the safest place.

**JA** They should stay on the route.

**JS** Yes, that they should stay on the route, but that they were letting people through who insisted they wanted to go downtown with the exception of two marshals who had been in a group. The marshals were organized into groups and each one had a captain, and apparently he said that his team of about 15 people, that they were all letting people to go through if they insisted they wanted to, except for just maybe two marshals who were being assholes about it and saying, "No. You have to stay this way."

**JA** That's not the impression I had. I had the impression that there was a serious argument. And I told you about the interaction I had with that one marshal who was like, "Oh. Great solidarity, brother."

**JS** I'm not refuting what you're saying at all. I just want to ask as many people about this. It may be impossible to get a sense of who was saying what, where and why, right? It's all so complicated. It's hard to figure out all the little details.

So then what happened when you got through the line, and where did you go?

**JA** That was when I first experienced the tear gas and the rubber bullets and the concussion bombs and everything.

**JS** What was that like?

**JA** I'd heard all the rumors about...

*Tape stopped*

- JA** Where were we?
- JS** You were just getting downtown as the tear gas and bullets and you said a rumor about something?
- JA** So I heard the rumor, well, it was in the press. They had this big thing about how the hospitals were going to be prepared for any terrorist attacks or whatever. So the first sign of the terrorist attack is from the police. The first thing I hear is this concussion bomb, and it's very, very loud. It felt to me like it shook the ground and scared the hell out of me. I thought it was actually some wing nut who did throw a bomb. And, in fact, the wing nuts were the police throwing bombs.
- After I figured that out, I didn't feel much better, but I felt a little bit better, because I knew it wasn't like something that was probably going to give us all anthrax or something. I wasn't really that worried about it. I figured it was just the media trying to...
- JS** For a second you thought it might actually have been some chemical agent?
- JA** Chemical terrorist, yeah.
- JS** The wing nut was the police, that's well said. So what happened the rest of the afternoon?
- JA** After that happened, I basically cleared out of the area, myself, and a couple of other Wobblies did, although most of them stayed in the area where everyone was and where all the stuff was happening.
- JS** When you got out of the area, you just mean the immediate area there where the bombs are going off?
- JA** Like a block away. Yes. There was people street fighting with the police, I guess, but I didn't really want to get involved with that because I figured we were outgunned. So I went a block away and sat with a group of three people. Actually, while all this stuff was happening and while the tear gas was going off, I was selling the t-shirts that the Northland Poster Collective came up with?
- JS** Which ones?
- JA** The ones that said, "Stop Global Piracy with Global Solidarity", and it has the two hands.
- JS** Yes. Those are from Northland?

**JA** Yes. So we got, I think, they sent us 500 of those. Maybe not that many. I don't remember. They sent us a good number of those, and they worked out a deal with us where we would get half of it, the income from that. So I was selling those while these bombs were going off and everything. It was kind of surreal and strange. I sold a lot of them. A lot of people were surprised that I was selling them at that time, but they were like, "Okay. Yeah. I'll buy one." Just handing out Wobbly materials and stuff.

**JS** I have kind of a random question. It's for one specific research question. Did you use the Internet for organizing, and how?

**JA** Yes. The main thing, I set up the international Listserv, n30.com. They had lots and lots of people on it. They had like 200 people or something, from all over the world.

They set up a walkout listserv. I set up like four different listservs and publicized them and people pulled them up right away. I set up a web page that had the call for international action, the IWW call.

**JS** In the other direction, did you ever get information from other organizations on the Internet?

**JA** Oh, yes. I got lots of information from other organizations that way. That's how I found out about Peoples Global Action and stuff like that.

*JA calls interview to an end*

**End of Interview**

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