



WHY GRIEVANCES ARE NOT ENOUGH

The grievance is an essential tool for enforcing your union. However, grievances can fix only a tiny fraction of the injustices that go on in any workplace. Here's why:

Many problems are not grievances.

Most potential grievances will never be filed, for instance because:

- The worker is still on probation.
- The worker is already facing discrimination.
- The worker is afraid of being marked as a troublemaker.
- The worker doesn't realize her problem is a contract violation.
- The worker doesn't know how to reach a steward or file a grievance.
- The steward doesn't have time to comb the workplace finding every possible grievance—or to file them all.

When we do file a grievance and win:

- The process takes months.
- Only a few workers are involved—it's not usually a collective activity.
- It doesn't build power.
- Even workers with similar problems never hear about the solution.
- Most people are left stewing over their unsolved problems.

Action works better. When we use shop floor action to back up a grievance (or bypass the grievance system altogether):

- More workers participate.
- More people see their problems addressed—especially problems that affect many people.
- More people develop the skills and confidence to confront problems at work.
- People start expecting to participate in defending the contract and defending each other.
- Union power grows.

