

## Solidarity Forever for Awhile

Douglas Hesse

When *WPA: Writing Program Administration* came to me as editor, so did all facets of its production and distribution: editing, layout, printing, and mailing, that last including getting a permit and rubber stamp from the Normal, Illinois, post office, then affixing the 900 or so printed mailing labels that Jeff Sommers had shipped me from Miami University. I had a graduate assistant, first Kelly Lowe and then Eric Martin, who helped with advertising and the annual review of textbooks, and another graduate assistant, Anne Greenseth, to help with proofing; the group of us made a real mom and pop operation.

The nice bit of expertise I got from Illinois State University was with initial journal design. English Chair Ron Fortune arranged for me to meet the university's director of communications and a graphic designer. They asked about the journal, about any wishes I had, and whether there were design constraints. "None," I answered. A few days later, they provided three or four new cover designs, and I picked one with a goldenrod background, with a blue font and blue additional graphic elements. We kept the WPA logo, of course. The interior font was Palatino. Somewhere in a box in my garage, I bet there's a 3.5-inch floppy disk with the original templates we got from the designer, complete with the precise Pantone color numbers.

Also, somewhere in a box in my garage, I bet there's a two-page handwritten letter from Ken Bruffee. It's the kind of thing I wouldn't throw away, but though I searched while jotting this note, I couldn't turn it up. Bruffee, of course, was the founding editor of *WPA*, and he'd taken the time to write to me after he'd received my first issue (vol. 18, nos. 1–2, 1994). Ken commented on several articles, mused about his years as editor, and apologized he wasn't much active in *WPA* now, for reasons he attributed not to lacking interest nor, certainly, to political stance, but rather to time. After the generous, chatty opening paragraphs, he included a brief comment on the new look of the journal.

He understood, he said, that things need refreshing, and journals were no exception. Still, he was disappointed and not a little sad to see the old red cover discarded. He'd chosen it intentionally for its redness, specifically for its red echoes of the labor movement in the first part of the 20th century, and most specifically of all, because it echoed *The Little Red Songbook*, produced by the IWW (the Industrial Workers of the World, or Wobblies), containing songs like "Solidarity Forever." He was well aware (as were his co-founders) of the confusion of WPA, the organization, with WPA, the federal works program; in fact, they relished and embraced it, and Ken decided to up the labor echo in his color choice. Anyway, he thought it would have been nice to continue that choice, though times change and he wished me well.

Of course, I felt like a clod that I was oblivious to this history and tradition. "There are no constraints," I'd told the Illinois State designer.

These days I feel a little bit like Bruffee when it comes the change that's happened over the years with formal and casual references to the organization. Now, the reference is always to CWPA, four letters in the acronym. Twenty years ago, it was just WPA. "Council" has always been in the organization's name, of course, just not in the shorthand. But perhaps tired of saying, "No, not the FDR program," the organization embraced the C. There we are, even as fusty guys like me quietly stick to the Writing Program/Works Progress ambiguity, dreaming we saw Ken Bruffee along with Joe Hill last night.

#### WORK CITED

*IWW Songs—Fan the Flames of Discontent: A Reprint of the Nineteenth Edition (1923) of the Famous Little Red Song Book.* Charles H. Kerr Publishing, 2003.

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