Cultural labour and its collective interest representation

Workers involved in the “cultural industries” have challenges, problems and opportunities that are different from those of the industrial worker model on which Wagnerism has been based. Many differ from the full-time, full-year, permanent, male-dominated, working-for-large-organizations norm on which our industrial relations system has been based. But even more telling and significant, most of them are not even in a legal employment relationship. Rather they are self-employed and thus, in most cases, not eligible for the statutory right to and protections for collective bargaining. Yet, far from independent, they are “dependent self-employed” (Muehlberger 2007) working in conditions of subordination, albeit in networks which appear at first glance to emancipating. Indeed, many are worse off than their employed counterparts.

Yet these cultural labourers are resisting subordination and dependency. In ways barely contemplated by the Wagner model, they are uniting to improve their position in labour and product markets, influence public policy, capture the proceeds of their intellectual property, and yes, even bargain collectively. Through unions, guilds, copyright collectives, co-operatives and professional societies, they are showing traditional industrial relations a thing or two about organizing the knowledge economy.

The following is a list of presentations appropriate to a single session. However, if there are more responses to a call for papers that fit within this topic, we would be glad to organize more sessions.

Presentations:

**Johanna Weststar, Saint Mary’s University:** “Occupational Identities as Barriers to Traditional Forms of Representation: A Study of Video Game Workers”

**Amanda Coles, McMaster University:** “United Artists? Organized labour, Canadian drama and the CRTC.”

**Marie-Josée Legault, TELUC-UQAM:** “Affinity toward unionism among videogame developers.”

**Larry Haiven, Saint Mary’s University:** “Struggling for Justice Outside the Wagner Model: Cultural Workers Organize and Strike.”