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Disruptive tactics were the basis of labor's revival in the 1930s. Most labor historians call the 1920s the nonunion era. Inequality in society during those years was roughly at today's level, and unions were even more beaten back and subdued than the ones around us.

Yet in the wake of the economic depression emanating from the 1929 stock market crash, working people - those with and without jobs - put themselves on the line.

In many cases they got arrested, and in some cases, their fates were worse. But on balance, their engagement in more heated forms of disruption shut down business as usual and became the core force behind the Wagner Act and the Social Security Act in 1935.

Three of the most famous strikes in American history occurred in 1934: the Auto-Lite strike in Toledo, the Teamster-led general strike in Minneapolis, and the San Francisco general strike started by the longshore and maritime workers. Part of what made these strikes so incredibly important to American history and the American labor movement was just how highly charged they were. They involved clashes with the police and national guardsman, the destruction of property, and the occupation of workplaces. Strikers and their supporters put a lot on the line, and because they did, they won.

Actually, we all won. Those kinds of disruptive strategies were central to reviving the labor movement and building real social protections that many Americans still enjoy.

It's true that unions were able to survive and thrive as organizations for some time after those turbulent early years. This success was driven in part because of their power in the collective bargaining process and in part because of their electoral alliance with Northern Democrats. But after decades of demobilizing their membership, when businesses went on the offensive in the 1970s, unions were ill-equipped to emerge victorious.

The Sotheby's lockout is a microcosm of where we are and where we could go. Its auctions are the playgrounds of the hyperwealthy - the kinds of people who have vacation homes in Martha's Vineyard and wear shoes that cost a year's salary for someone of "humbler" origins. To give you a sense of the commanding heights of the luxury occupied by these people, one painting at the November 9 auction sold for over \$60 million dollars (no, that is not a typo).

And while the hyperelite enjoy their towering fortunes in places like Sotheby's, the owners of Sotheby's are locking out 43 of their art handlers, organized by the Teamsters, because the union refuses to concede on major concessions in their contract. And this decision by Sotheby's isn't due to the competitiveness of the market. In 2010, Sotheby's made \$680 million in profits, and this year their CEO, Bill Ruprecht, received a 125 percent pay increase. Compare these figures to the situation of the art handlers outside of the building since June 29. Could the picture be any more clear? Working people - many, if not most, of whom are people of color - on the sidewalk, desperately trying to defend some of the gains they have made through their union, juxtaposed

with the mostly white hyperelite adding to their art collections. This is what Occupy Wall Street is all about. This struggle so perfectly encapsulates the moral outrage at the core of the slogan, "We are the 99 percent."

Students and workers, standing together and defiantly challenging Sotheby's, pushing the boundaries of acceptable protest and breaking the rules that should be broken, putting an end to both business and protest as usual - those are the ways that this struggle offers some insights into where we could go as a movement.