

17<sup>th</sup> July 2023

## Grunt

**"Who would these fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life."**

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Accessing the Shakespeare quote above, I had to investigate what a "fardel" was. It is, I discovered, "a bundle or collection, as in a "fardel of stories" or a "fardel of emotions". So now you know!

I had no such trouble with the word "grunt", however. And, indeed, watching the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in recent days, I'm reminded of the ubiquitous nature of the grunt. What *is* it with the loud grunt when a service is delivered or when a thunderous backhand is whipped across court? Is this something that comes naturally, or is it taught from an early age, or is it an affectation? And clearly, the women can compete with the men in the grunting stakes. But, each to their own. If it works for a tennis player, so be it. If it's permitted in the sport, all well and good. If it helps deliver a winner, go for it. Let the grunt do its job.

But I came across a different instance of "grunt" recently when I was reading a piece from the Professor of History in Texas State University, James E McWilliams. Writing about environmental issues and animal rights in *Radical Activism* in the activist website *Pacific Standard*, McWilliams references "the true believers" in radical protest who "do the grunt work of activism". These are the ones, he says, who put in the hard graft, day in and day out, with no public recognition, unlike many known radicals who do "little more than set an unrealistic benchmark of success." And, thinking of all those who do the "grunt work", McWilliams concludes by affirming, "I consider myself a member of this noble tribe."

I wouldn't wish to be aligned with the "fardel" of those tennis players who are known for their grunts. But, like McWilliams, I'm more than happy to be associated with the "noble tribe" of those who "do the grunt work of activism", the unheralded, backroom people. We need leaders and organisers too, of course, who do more than set unrealistic benchmarks. But, more and more, we need the grunt people, the folk who do the work.

"Grunt activists of the world unite," I say, and leave the *noisy* grunTERS to the tennis courts of Wimbledon.

### **A prayer for today**

*Back office or front of house, I'm ready to serve – grunts and all. Amen*

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