

It was the radicalism of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) that led to its short-term success, but more importantly, led to its downfall. Perhaps nowhere is this made clearer than in the timber-laden forests of the Pacific Northwest. It was in the Evergreen State that the Wobblies (a slang term for IWW members) found a large force of disgruntled migrant timber workers who would bolster their numbers, and enable them to become a strong force in the region. It was the Wobblies and their radical ideas and acceptance of disenfranchised who were rejected by other unions such as the American Federation of Labor that attracted the migrants and unskilled workers that others would not represent. These radical Wobblies and their purposely inflammatory tactics would clash with federal and state authorities, capital, vigilantes, and even alienate the civilian public. This would manifest itself in many ways throughout the early 20th century in Washington. The Wobblies would instigate a confrontation and when they were prosecuted they would honor their fallen as martyrs as in the case with Joe Hill. They would find temporary success in the free speech fights but meet with resistance as towns and cities began to anticipate their tactics, and counter by driving Wobblies out of town as a preemptive strike. This led to the violent confrontation at Everett. The Wobblies' radical anti-war and anti-government beliefs and hindrance of timber production in 1917 would spur extreme persecution, and culminate in the violent riot in Centralia.

The IWW would fight the town of Spokane for the right to publically rally for their cause in the Spokane Free Speech Fight and win the battle, but set themselves up to ultimately lose the war. The Wobblies' radicalism was demonstrated to the world in their posters, political cartoons, poems, and music, as well as in their public speeches, and drew the ire of the society that they were lashing out against. The radicalism of the Wobblies had turned the public against them, and violence would erupt between IWW agitators, and the brutal "deputies" who tried to

run them out of Everett, culminating in the Everett Massacre. Even with the many earlier conflicts that the Wobblies had with the government and society, the way in which they sealed their fate was their opposition to the war effort during World War I, and their involvement in the Lumber Strike of 1917, which deprived the United States government of the timber that it needed to support the war effort. It was these events that set the stage for the ultimate downfall of the IWW in Washington State in the wake of the Centralia Massacre, in which they violently clashed with the American Legion during the fateful Centralia Armistice Day Parade of 1919. It was the vicious backlash following the events of the Centralia Massacre that was the final straw in ensuring the end of the Wobblies' influence in the Evergreen State.

There are several key factors that led to the development of the radicalism amongst the Industrial Workers of the World. It is important to examine the historiography of the IWW by reviewing the perspectives of authorities on the subject. For example, Professor of Pacific Northwest History, David Brumbach, and the authors Carols Arnaldo Schwantes, Paul Buhle and Nicole Schulman, Peter Cole, Melvyn Dubofsky, Erik Michkelson, John McClelland, Stephen M. Kohn Murray Morgan, Gibbs M. Smith, Robert L. Tyler, and Patrick Renshaw, and Wallace Stegner describe the origins of, and the Radicalism of the Industrial Workers of the World from different perspectives. While all of these historians and authors agree on certain points, such as the fact that the Industrial Workers of the World represented a group of workers not directly represented by other unions, the historians come from differing backgrounds and have different perspectives on the degree of culpability the Industrial Workers of the world had in drawing the ire of mainstream society, and whether or not they started the many violent confrontations in which they were involved.

There is a consensus amongst the sources that the Industrial Workers of the world organized marginalized categories of workers, and that their radicalism was seen as a threat to society. For example, Carlos Schwantes proposes that:

The Wobblies represented the most alienated Northwest laborers--- migratory harvest hands, timber workers, and similar categories of labor--- a fact clearly stated in the IWW constitution: 'The working class and the employing class have nothing in common.' The Wobblies believed that all workers in each major industry should belong to the same union and that together the industrial unions should run society.¹

One can see from this quote that the IWW was willing to represent groups of disenfranchised workers, who were no doubt angry at their marginalization, and proved fertile breeding ground for radical ideology. The general consensus amongst historians on the matter supports Schwantes' assertion that mainstream unions such as the American Federation of Labor, would only organize select, skilled laborers, and not unskilled laborers like lumber jacks; the idea being that striking skilled laborers could not easily be replaced, but unskilled laborers could.² Robert L. Tyler agrees and proposes that:

These workers were attracted to the I.W.W. because it supplied a home and a meaning for their aimless lives. Structurally, the I.W.W. appealed to them because it made no political demands upon them, because it charged low initial fees and dues, because it allowed seasonal workers to transfer from one constituent union to another without red tape or new fees. It appealed psychologically because it satisfied social needs and because it seemed to be an organization really their own, not something created for them by middle-class socialists, welfare workers, or the Salvation Army.³

¹ Carlos A. Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive history*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 339.

² David Brumbach, Personal interview. University of Washington Tacoma, October 21, 2013.

³ Robert L. Tyler, "I.W.W. in the Pacific N.W.: Rebels of the Woods." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (1954): 3. <http://www.jstor.org/offcampus.lib.washington.edu/stable/20612131?seq=7&uid=3739960&uid=2134&uid=2129&uid=2&uid=70&uid=4&uid=3739256&sid=21102809412337> (accessed October 23), 201

This quote not only reinforces the other historians claims that the IWW was the union for the workers who other unions rejected, but became their own. Rather than them belonging to the IWW, the IWW belonged to them.

In addition to accepting classes of white workers that other unions wouldn't organize, the IWW accepted shunned ethnic and racial minorities as well. Peter Cole claims that the IWW was a multi-ethnic and interracial union, and was unique for this fact, and supports this claim by pointing out that IWW longshoremen even welcomed immigrants and blacks into their union.⁴ During WWI, a time of such ethnic and racial division, with a fear of immigrants---particularly German immigrants, and fears of African Americans supplanting striking workers as scabs, the IWW's acceptance of ethnic and racial minorities was radical indeed. Buhle and Schulman also agree that the IWW was necessary to fill the vacuum left by the mainstream unions of the unrepresented, unskilled workers, and quote a Wobbly Song to prove their point---

“Now we have no fight with the old AF of L
 But we ask you use your reason for the facts we have to tell
 Your Craft is but protection for a form of property
 And your skill is the property you're losing, don't you see?
 Improvements on machinery take tools and trade away
 And you'll be among the common slaves some fateful day
 And the things of which we're telling we're mighty sure about
 O, what's the use to strike when you can't win out?”⁵

As Buhle and Schulman suggest, by quoting this song, the IWW was appealing to a class of disenfranchised workers, but more than that it showed the radicalism of the IWW. It warned the

⁴Peter Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront Interracial Unionism in Progressive-Era Philadelphia*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 49.

⁵Paul Buhle and Nicole Schulman, *Wobblies!: A Graphic History of the Industrial Workers of the World*. (London: Verso, 2005), 12.

skilled workers that unions like the American Federation of Labor could not protect them forever and that *all* workers must unite under one big union--- unite not as machinists or lumberjacks, but as proletariat against capital! As one might imagine, these were very radical--- and dangerous ideas indeed.

If there was one man who embodied the spirit of IWW radicalism, certainly that man was Joe Hill. Hill was infamous for taking Salvation Army hymns changing the lyrics to represent that working man's struggle against his capitalist bosses. For example, his most famous song is *The Preacher and the Slave*, a re-working of *In the Sweet By and By*, which facetiously scolds organized religion, which, as Joe Hill felt, encourage workers not to fight mistreatment at the hands of their bosses, or as the song said "Work and pray---live on hay, and you'll get pie in the sky when you die."⁶ Joe Hill apparently had other hobbies besides song-writing, poem-writing, and union-organizing, however, as in 1914 he was charged with murder by the state of Utah, to which he pleaded not guilty.⁷ There are varying views amongst historians whether Joe Hill was guilty or not, but most importantly, they generally concur that he did not receive a fair trial--- regardless of his guilt or innocence. For example, Gibbs M. Smith says "While there is no evidence of a conspiracy masterminding Hill's conviction, there *are* good reasons for believing that the trial was not as fair as it might have been."⁸ Joe Hill's biographer, Wallace Stegner believes that Joe Hill was guilty of murder despite initial sympathy for him, due to the shady nature of his trial.⁹ In addition, Patrick Ramsey agrees that while there was no evidence of a conspiracy to convict Joe Hill, he did not get a fair trial. He supports this claim by quoting Joe Hill's lawyers: "The main thing the state had against Hill' they said before the trial, was that he

⁶ Joe Hill, "The Preacher and the Slave". In Gibbs M. Smith, *Joe Hill*. (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1969), 233.

⁷Gibbs M. Smith, *Joe Hill*. (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1969), 79.

⁸ Ibid, 83.

⁹Wallace Stegner, *Joe Hill: A Biographical Novel*. 1950. Reprint, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969), Foreward.

was IWW, and therefore sure to be guilty. Hill had tried to keep the IWW out of it, but the papers fastened it upon him.”¹⁰ The Trial of Joe Hill, and the kangaroo court that sentenced him to death, whether he was guilty or not, shows the public’s, and the government’s hatred for the Wobblies. Joe Hill may have been guilty of murder, but it was his radicalism that was ultimately his downfall.

In addition to their anti-capitalist, and anti-organized religion paradigm, the Wobblies were (most unforgivably of all in WWII era America), anti-war. Certain Wobbly leaders even encouraged workers to overthrow American society while the United States was preoccupied fighting WWI.¹¹ These multiple clashes that the IWW had with state and federal governments and American Society in general, was a foreshadowing of their downfall, across the nation, and specifically in Washington State.

Many historians believe that the events of the Centralia Massacre led to the downfall of the influence of the IWW in Washington State.¹² The Centralia Massacre had occurred when shots were fired between American Legionnaires and Melvyn Dubosky explains how these anti-war beliefs were enraging to the public, and quotes a speech by Senator Harry Amhurst of Arizona on the senate floor “‘I have been frequently asked what IWW means,’ he informed fellow senators, then added: ‘It means simply, solely, and only ‘Imperial Wilhelm’s Warriors.’”¹³ With the benefit of hindsight, modern readers may scoff at the ridiculousness at such an accusation, but at the time, the paranoid American Public took such rhetoric very seriously.

¹⁰Patrick Renshaw, *The Wobblies: the story of the IWW and syndicalism in the United States*. New, updated ed. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999.),152.

¹¹Indictment: U.S. v. Marie Equi, Cr. Case Records of the U.S. District Court, District of Oregon, Portland: National Archives-Pacific NW Region

¹²David Brumbach, Personal interview. University of Washington Tacoma, October 21, 2013.

¹³Melvyn Dubofsky. *We shall be all: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 376.

Wobblies during the Armistice Day celebrations in 1919. It is unknown which group fired first, but it ended in several Wobblies being found guilty, in questionable circumstances (much like Joe Hill had), and in lynching of IWW leader Wesley Everest who was later considered to be a Martyr for the Wobblies.¹⁴ Tom Copeland explains that, Everest, who had been in a gunfight with Legionaries attacking the IWW Union hall, had been viciously beaten, dragged to jail, then kidnapped from the jail, and lynched from a bridge, and his murderers never charged.¹⁵ This goes along with what the other historians had been saying--- that the radicalism of the IWW so scared and infuriated the public, it led to unfair trials, and violent reprisals against the IWW. John G. Richardson seems to concur with the idea that the violence that occurred between the IWW and their persecutors, was not simply an economic one, but an ideological one. For example, he sees the Everett Massacre (another violent confrontation between the Wobblies and the law), as “A cultural struggle as much as, if not more than, an economic conflict between labor and capital.”¹⁶ We can see here, as all of the historians seem to agree that the radicalism of the Wobblies and the paranoia and prejudice of American Society of the time, caused many problems for the Wobblies. It was not merely the fact that Wobblies were standing up to their bosses, that turned the public against them, but the fact that they challenged the American System itself. By fighting against WWI Veteran American Legionaries during an Armistice Day parade, they were seen as seditious. In an age of hyper-nationalism and patriotic sentiment, this turned the public against the Wobblies, and ensured their fade into obscurity, and the end of their once powerful influence in the Evergreen State.

¹⁴Tom Copeland, “Wesley Everest, IWW Martyr”. *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 77 (4) (1986): 122-129, <http://www.jstor.org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/stable/40490296> (accessed October 15, 2013). 122-123

¹⁵ Ibid, 122-126.

¹⁶ Richardson, John G.. "Mill Owners and Wobblies: The Event Structure of the Everett Massacre of 1916." *Social Science History* 33, no. 2 (2009): 183-215. <http://ssh.dukejournals.org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/content/33/2/183.full.pdf+html> (accessed October 23, 2013). 124.

All of the Historians mentioned in this paper agree that the IWW were a very radical group. All agree that this radicalism drew the ire of mainstream society. Additionally all of the arguments put forth by the historians in this paper, pave the way for the final clash between the radicalism of the Wobblies, and the hyper-nationalism of the public, and the American Legionaries in the Centralia Massacre. Thus, despite the different focuses of the historians cited in this paper, the common thread between them was their acknowledgement of the radicalism of the IWW, and the road to destruction that it set them upon.

In order to understand the how the IWW was able to gain such influence amongst the migrant workers in Washington State it is important to understand the ideological difference between the mainstream unions such as the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the radical Industrial Workers of the World. The goals of these two unions where as different as day and night. The AFL was concerned with the poor conditions that many workers labored under and bargained with the bosses for improvements. The IWW, on the other hand, did not want to bargain with the bosses for better conditions, they wanted to be the bosses. One represented the typical American ideals of diplomacy and compromise, and the other represented a revolutionary entity that sought to take what it wanted by any means necessary.

The American Federation of Labor, which represented the mainstream labor movement, was concerned with gaining improvements for members such as higher wages and shorter working days, but did not seek to abolish the capitalist system or stage a revolution of the proletariat.¹⁷ To the contrary, the AFL sold itself as a conservative American labor union that wanted to work with the government and capital to gain better conditions for workers, for their

¹⁷ Melvyn Dubofsky. *We shall be all: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 12.

mutual benefit, and supported the American system.¹⁸ Thus, one can see that the AFL was a very pragmatic union that was looking to work within the system to achieve their goals, they were not looking to up-set society. In short, the AFL was a means to an end---the union being the means, and better working conditions, and mutual prosperity between capital and labor, being the end.

While this model was quite appealing to mainstream Americans, and non-threatening to the powers that be, it did not work out well for all workers. Part of the problem with the AFL was the fact that they did not represent all laborers, but choose to represent only the skilled workers, not unskilled migrant laborers.¹⁹ The reason for this, is that the AFL believed that if they organized non-skilled workers and went on strike, then the business would simply fire the workers and hire scabs---however, if the AFL only organized the skilled workers, and they went on strike, then the business would be unable to find scabs with the skills to adequately replace the striking workers, and thus would be forced to compromise with the workers and provide better pay and conditions, which in turn would “trickle down” to unskilled laborers.²⁰ Despite the best intentions on the part of the AFL, however, this did not always work out in practice. According to Dubofsky:

In return for the good treatment accorded to the skilled dominant elite in the AFL, the Federation became in time one of the strongest defenders of the American system. So long as the wages rose, and they did, security increased, and it appeared too, the AFL could grow fat while neglecting millions of laborers doomed to lives of misery and want. As trustee of labor's aristocracy the AFL achieved a ringing success by making sure that its reach never exceeded its grasp.²¹

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ David Brumbach, Personal interview. University of Washington Tacoma, October 21, 2013.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Dubofsky 12.

Because of the fact that the AFL would not represent such a great number of workers, this left a niche---one that would be filled by the much more radical IWW.

Unlike the moderate AFL, the militant IWW believed as Schwantes puts it, “the working class and the employing class have nothing in common,” and “The Wobblies believed that all workers in each major industry should belong to the same union and that together the industrial unions should rule society.”²² The IWW did not believe that capital and labor could work together towards mutually beneficial ends---they were polar opposites and the only way for labor to free itself from the oppression of capital, was to eliminate it. If the IWW were to describe the capital labor dynamic as a pie they would say “We bake the pie while the bosses and owners eat it all and barely leave us the tiniest of crumbs,” and rather than simply demanding a larger slice of the pie they would say, drive the owners and bosses from the bakery, take it over, split the pie evenly amongst the workers, and not give the owners or bosses any---unless they became workers. To the Wobblies, capital and business was something to eradicate, not to negotiate or bargain with.

Because of its inclusiveness for workers of all backgrounds---even unskilled migrant workers, the IWW enjoyed a large degree of success in recruiting the workers in Washington and the Pacific Northwest. In addition, the large number of migrant, manual laborers in the Northwest proved to be a fertile ground for the IWW; as Schwantes argues of the labor climate in the Northwest:

The distinguishing features of the wageworkers’ frontier---notably the predominance of manual labor and a largely nonfactory work force---were reflected in the character of the Pacific Northwest’s labor movement. The peculiar occupational composition of the local work force enabled industry-wide unions to overshadow specialized or craft unions in membership, influence and public

²² Schwantes 339.

awareness. These conditions gave unions like the radical Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) a prominence seldom attained in other parts of the United States.²³

As mentioned earlier, The AFL was not interested in recruiting unskilled manual laborers, such as the ones that Schwantes referenced. As a result, Washington State became a major stronghold for the Wobblies, due to its unique labor climate, and its vast pool of disenfranchised laborers.

Despite the fact that the AFL would not represent unskilled labor, the IWW was appealing to the migrant workers, because it met them on their level. The IWW appealed to these workers because it charged low initiation fees and union dues and it allowed seasonal workers to transfer between constituent unions.²⁴ This type of union is attractive to the migrant worker, because it allows them to have freedom of mobility, and to travel to various jobs, while still retaining union coverage. Unlike the AFL, which certified individual trades separately, the IWW sought to be one all-encompassing union, and thus eliminated inter-trade squabbling. In the IWW the workers had had an organization that they could call their own, one that accepted them and gave them a voice, and a sense of belonging. To the migrant timber worker, the IWW did represent them, not only in the function of labor representation, but culturally. Whereas the AFL styled themselves as a respectable middle class union, the IWW was made up of a bunch of rag tag, rough-necked misfits---and made no effort to hide it. It was this characteristic that gave the rough and ragged migrant timber workers a union that was truly theirs. As Tyler put it: “It appealed psychologically because it satisfied social needs and because it seemed to be

²³ Ibid, 334-335.

²⁴ Tyler, Rebels 1.

an organization really their own, not something created for them by middle-class socialists, welfare workers, or the Salvation Army.”²⁵

Another important reason for the IWWs success in recruiting workers in the Pacific Northwest is because the massive lumber industry in Washington was such a brutal and unforgiving trade. For example, as historian Erik Mickelson puts it: “Even though the employers (lumbermen) earned huge profits, they passed little on to the loggers. On average, the loggers made only 35 cents an hour working in wet and dangerous conditions. In addition, the working conditions in the woods were unsafe, unsanitary, and cooks subjected the loggers to food that was inedible at times.”²⁶ In fact, the food that the average timber worker had to endure, was at times so intolerable that they were sometimes driven to violence, as Mickelson recounts: “...the food was so wretched in one Northwest logging camp that one logger, A. Linqvist killed the chef claiming that ‘God told him Ed Gosseling (the cook) was the devil.’”²⁷ The lumber trade was a brutal existence for these migrant workers, and this was compounded by the fact that the lumbermen were far more concerned with their profit margins than they were with the safety of their workers. For example, in 1915, a logging camp in Port Angeles, Washington suffered two separate logging deaths on the same day.²⁸ Schwantes agrees: “Confronting some of the toughest and most arbitrary working conditions in the nation, unions like the IWW exhibited a strain of militancy that was seemingly a natural

²⁵ Rebels of the Woods 1.

²⁶ Erik Mickelson "The Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen: "The Origins of the World's Largest Company Union and How it Conducted Business." Strike: Seattle General Strike Project. <http://depts.washington.edu/labhist/strike/mickelson.shtml> (accessed February 18, 2014).

²⁷ Ibid.

byproduct of the struggle for existence.”²⁹ It is because of these extreme conditions that the IWW was so successful in recruiting lumber workers.

The Wobblies were well known for their scathing anti-capital public speeches and their propaganda. Their view of society as being a corrupt system controlled by greedy capitalists is evident in their flyers and political cartoons. A prime example of this is the IWW propaganda poster, titled *Pyramid of Capitalist System* (Figure 1). In the poster there is a massive pyramid, with working class individuals at the bottom level, and groups such as military, the rich, and political leaders occupying the higher levels. The working class are being crushed beneath the pyramid, languishing as a child lies dead at their feet, and the caption “We Feed All.” This group represents the common working class who has not organized with the IWW’s “grand industrial union.” The next level up depicts the wealthy dressed in tuxedos and gowns, drinking champagne with the caption “We Eat For You.” This group represents the capitalists who eat the fruits of the worker’s labor. One level up stands soldiers standing at the ready with guns, swords, and bayonets, and the caption “We Shoot At You.” This group shows the Wobblies’ hostility towards the military, which they see as a capitalist tool of oppression. The Next level up features religious leaders of various denominations with caption, “We Fool You.” This group symbolizes the Wobbly view that religion is a tool of complacency, to manipulate workers into putting up with intolerable working conditions in hope of a good afterlife. The next level up features political leaders, including a king and what appears to be a president and a prime minister, and the caption “We Rule You.” This level represents civil government which is seen as a pawn of capitalism. At the very top of the pyramid sits a massive money bag covered in cash signs with the caption “Capitalism.” This money bag represents the god and true ruler of a capitalist society.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Schwantes 335.

At the bottom sides of the pyramid there is a group of strong looking workers waving a red flag, which stands for the blood of the workers and holding their fists in air. These workers are not being crushed under the pyramid like the rest of the working class. The strong workers represent the IWW who are free of this corrupt system and they defy it. This poster is far from subtle, and concisely sums up the Wobbly philosophy.

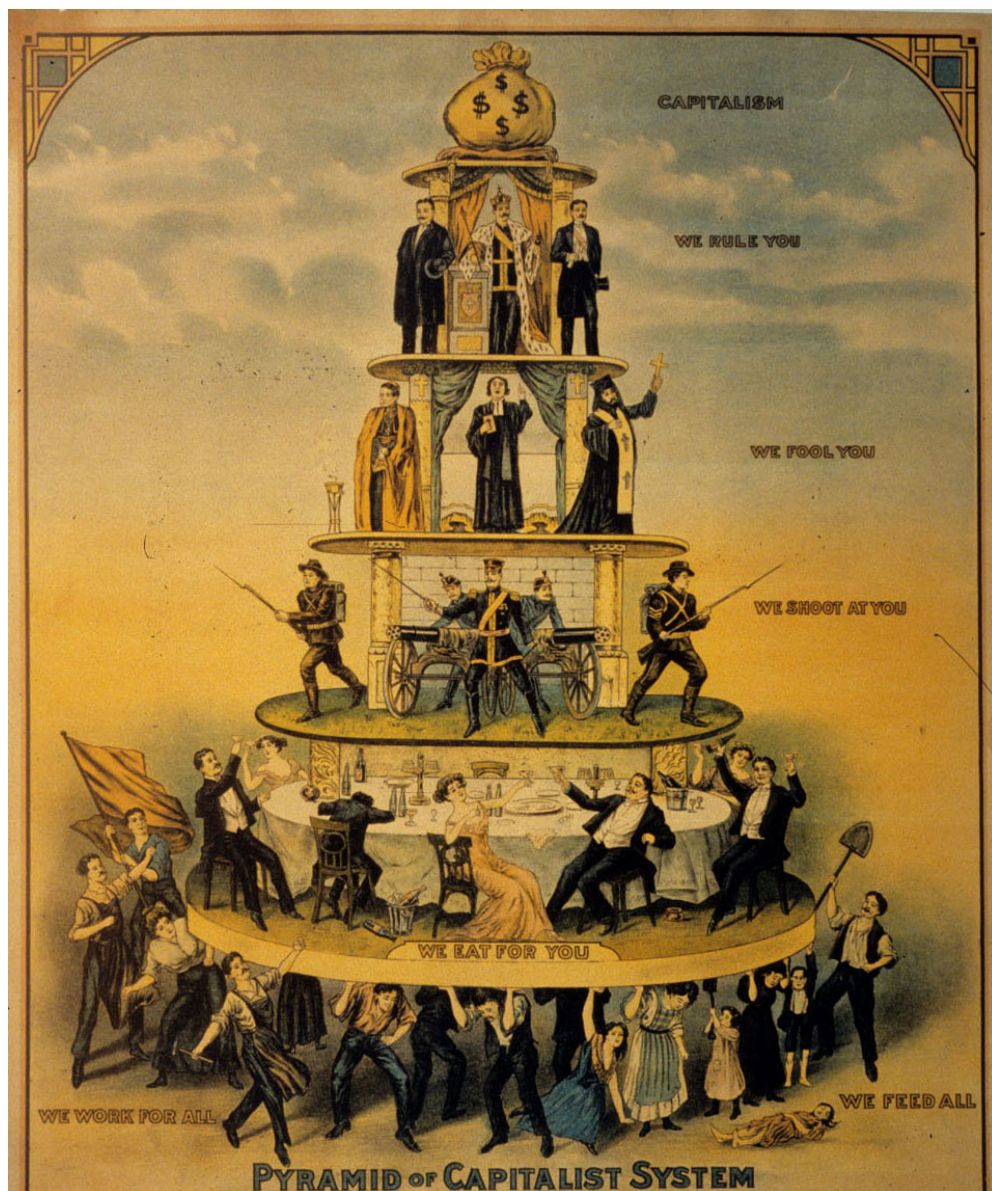


Figure 1

An important characteristic in Wobbly propaganda is their empathy for people that they see as martyrs who sacrificed themselves for their class. One of these “martyrs” was an influential Wobbly leader and songwriter Joe Hill. Joe Hill was convicted of murder in Utah and sentenced to death by firing squad. The Wobblies portrayed Hill as a martyr who was murdered by the kangaroo courts controlled by the capitalist system. A prime example of this is lyrics to Wobbly Propagandist Ralph Chaplin’s song, *I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night*, which alleges that the copper bosses framed him for murder and had him killed, but celebrates that his spirit lives on and inspires workers to organize in the IWW.³⁰ The legend of Joe Hill was kept alive through tributes, poems and song lyric printed in IWW propaganda such as the Little Red Songbook (figure 2).

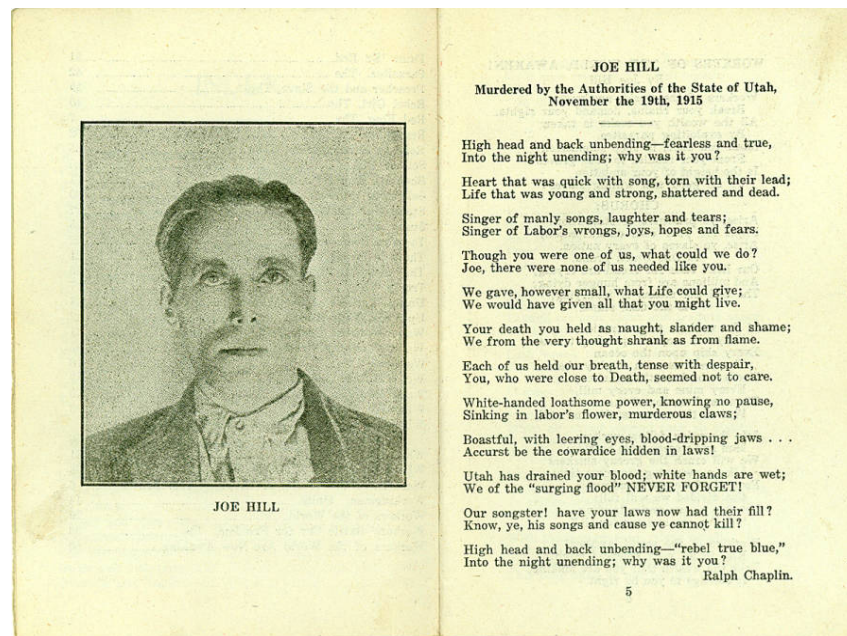


Figure 2

³⁰ Smith, 194.

It is true that the Joe Hill did not get a fair trial due to the shaky circumstantial evidence against him, less than scrupulous methods used by the prosecution, and questionable conduct on the part of judge.³¹ As mentioned earlier, despite the problematic nature of his conviction, many historians believe Hill was either guilty of, or at least capable of committing the murder. Regardless of his guilt or innocence however, he was immortalized as a martyr to the Wobblies and served as an example to follow. The Wobblies who would intentionally get themselves arrested in the free speech fights were following in his spirit.

The Spokane free speech fight was an important event in the history of the IWW in the State of Washington because it demonstrated the abrasive style that the Wobblies used to get their radical message across to the public, and also the outlast against them. The Wobblies succeeded in their battle against the town of Spokane for the right to public free speech, but they ultimately ended up losing the war. The negative impression that they created on the public would come back to haunt them later, and it set the stage for the Everett Massacre. The free speech fights in the town of Spokane and other cities would soon have consequences that the IWW could not foresee because of its radicalism.

In the summer of 1909 the Wobblies began to protest a Spokane ordinance that banned street meetings, and defiantly expressed their views from soapboxes and marched in the streets.³² It was later in the summer, shortly after the protests begun, that Spokane passed a special ordinance that exempted the Salvation Army from the anti-street meeting ordinance, and

³¹ Smith 101-102.

³² Tyler, Rebels 9.

provoked the IWW to vehemently and antagonistically protest these ordinances.³³ The IWW sent out a call for Wobblies to come to Spokane, who then flooded in on empty freight cars from places as far away as South Dakota.³⁴ The Wobblies then launched their offensive against the Spokane ordinances. In acts of civil disobedience they violated the ordinances and got themselves arrested and jailed. The hundreds of Wobblies soon flooded the jails and exasperated the police and town officials. Indeed, the police had arrested so many Wobblies for violation of the ordinance that they filled up the jail and the police had to use a school building to imprison the overflow.³⁵ This was a desperate effort to contain the Wobblies, and could not last, as the city was burdened with feeding and controlling the radical and angry prisoners.

The city of Spokane would not be successful in its attempt to quell the Wobblies. True to their radical nature, the imprisoned Wobblies continued protesting from behind bars---according to Tyler: “Wobblies proved uncooperative prisoners. They refused to work or cut their own firewood, and when punished with a bread and water diet, they went on a hunger strike and ‘built battleships’ making deafening uproars in the jail and school.”³⁶ The Wobblies were relentless in their fight against the city of Spokane, and eventually the city government caved. In spring of 1910, city officials dropped all charges against the Wobblies, and withdrew their ban on street speaking, after the IWW threatened to call more masses of Wobblies into Spokane.

The IWW’s success in Spokane was an exhilarating victory for the Wobblies and they made plans to use the same tactics in other cities with similar ordinances as Spokane. For example, a cartoon titled *An Overdose of IWW* (Figure 3) appeared in the IWW newspaper *Industrial Worker* in 1911, (figure 2) which celebrated the Wobblies’ successful victory over anti-public speaking laws in Spokane, Missoula and Fresno. The cartoon shows the tombstones

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

titled “SPOKANE WASH”, “MISSOULA MONT”, and “FRESNO CAL” respectively. Each tombstone contains the epitaph: “HERE LIES THE GAG LAW OF (respective city), DIED (date of free speech victory), FORM OVER-DOSE OF I.W.W.” Resting on top of each tombstone is a bag of money, a truncheon, a policeman’s helmet, and a money bag with a dollar sign on it.

Above the tombstones is the caption “NEXT!!!”, and below the tombstones is the poem:

Once more the foe is vanquished
 We have won another fight
 We have stormed the walls of Fresno
 And Proved that ‘Might is right.

The message of *An Overdose of IWW* is that the IWW is killing the unjust anti-free speech laws and striking a death blow to the capitalist oppressors, with its strategy of agitation and flooding towns with Wobblies. The money bags on the tombstones represent the capitalists. The policemen’s helmets and truncheons on top of the tombstones represent the brutality of the police in suppressing the working class. The scrolls represent the law. The message is that the police and law is controlled by the capitalist class, which is represented by the money bags, to control the working class. The fact that these items are resting on the tombstones of the “gag laws” is indicative of the IWW’s belief, that by beating the public speech prohibitions, they have struck a blow against the capitalists and their police henchmen and corrupt laws. The Wobblies are asserting that by using their radical and unyielding tactics against these town ordinances, they have triumphed. The poem reinforces this notion, with its claims that their “foe is vanquished”, and they have “proved that might is right.” The phrase “NEXT!!!” over the tombstones suggests that the IWW plans to repeat this strategy. The message of this cartoon is plain, and gives viewers a glimpse of the radical frame of mind of the Wobblies when it came to challenge laws

that prevented them from proselytizing their radical philosophy in the streets of the American West.



Figure 3

Unfortunately for the Wobblies, their success against various towns with their free-speech fights would be short-lived, and provoke unintended consequences. After the IWW began to use their free-speech fight tactics enmasse, towns and cities began to anticipate such tactics and prepare counter measures. As Tyler puts it:

Instead of locking up Wobblies---precisely what they wanted---they organized small armies of vigilantes or deputies to keep the Wobblies out. In Aberdeen Washington, in 1911, a free speech fight lasted only a few days because businessmen closed the saloons, patrolled the streets and outlying hobo 'jungles,' and deported all suspicious transients.³⁷

The IWW had made a fatal miscalculation, and let its radical idealism cloud its judgment. The extreme methods that Wobblies had used to achieve their goals would be met by an equally radical and brutal response in the future. It was these radical methods used by the Wobblies that had brought harsh countermeasures, and would lead directly into the events in Everett in 1916.

The so-called Everett Massacre was a demonstration of the radicalism of the Wobblies, and the radicalism of their enemies. This event was a foreshadowing of more violent conflicts to come. It was in Everett that the Wobblies learned that the tactics that they had used in their previous free-speech fights would no longer be effective. The trouble began in 1916 when a group of AFL shingle weavers went on strike in Everett and were consequently taken to a trestle and beaten by Everett police officers.³⁸ As a result, there was a riot the next day in which the police succeed in temporarily suppressing the shingle weavers. The IWW decided to come and support the union, by initiating one of its infamous free speech fights, despite the fact that its help had not been asked for.³⁹ The Wobblies would not enjoy the same success as they had in

³⁷ Ibid, 10

³⁸ Murray Morgan, "Strike." In *Skid Road: An Informal Portrait of Seattle*. Revised ed. (New York: The Viking Press, 1962), 206.

³⁹ Ibid.

Spokane. This time, they would face an adversary that was prepared for them, and would use extreme brutality to prevent them from flooding the town.

The Wobblies who came to Everett were met with resistance from a powerful group of affluent mill owners and the police that they controlled. This powerful group was known as the Commercial Club, in which the powerful mill owners met to discuss timber prices and the wage levels of workers.⁴⁰ The Commercial Club was joined by Everett citizens who had attained social prominence, and allied themselves with the agenda of the controlling mill owners.⁴¹ As Richardson explains:

The Commercial Club became the symbol of Everett's great economic promise, primarily by staunchly promoting the open shop. In doing so, it represented itself as the sole agent entrusted with preserving Everett's economic and moral future.⁴²

This powerful group that controlled the economy and social order in Everett was not about to let what they saw as rabble-rousing Bolsheviks, who hated capitalism, challenge the social order that they had created.

Representing the social club, Sheriff Donald McCrae, led "citizen deputies" in a brutal campaign to crush the Wobblies and drive them out of Everett. McCrae and his deputies brutalized any Wobblies that they caught attempting to enter Everett or demonstrate there. For example, when a group of Wobblies attempted to enter Everett on the small tugboat, *The Wanderer*, McCrae fired across *The Wanderer's* bow and forced the skipper to come aboard the Sheriff's boat, where he savagely beat him.⁴³ As the skipper of *The Wanderer* recalled:

...they had made fast my stern line and as I bent over with the line McCrae struck me with his revolver on the back of the head, and when I straightened out he struck me in here, with a revolver about that long said something to him and then he ran up the revolver right in here in my groin and he ruptured me at the same

⁴⁰ Richardson, John G.. "Mill Owners and Wobblies: The Event Structure of the Everett Massacre of 1916." *Social Science History* 33, no. 2 (2009): 190.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Clark 187.

time. I told him, “it’s a fine way of treating a citizen.’ He says, ‘You’re a hell of a citizen, bringing a bunch like that,’ he says, ‘to cause a riot in this town.’ I says, “well, they are all union men anyway.’ He says, ‘you shut your damn head or I will knock it clean off.’ And I guess he would, because he had enough whiskey in him at the time to do it.”⁴⁴

Everett had learned a lesson from the Spokane Free speech fights, and was preventing the Wobblies from ever entering the town. In cases where the Sheriff and citizen deputies were not able to stop the Wobblies from entering the town, they resorted to extreme brutality to prevent the Wobblies from protesting. For example, the citizen deputies used special clubs to beat Wobbly protesters and street-speakers---clubs that were made out of leather and rubber tubes containing lead shot that were “so flexible that they usually did not break the skin on the back, the shoulders, the hips, or the groin.”⁴⁵ The Wobblies’ previously successful tactics were now failing against the pre-emptive attacks of the Commercial Club. The IWW was enraged at the brutality inflicted on them by the Commercial Club, and McCrae and the citizen deputies, and the Wobblies attempted to make a final effort at fighting for free speech in Everett.

The Wobblies planned to come en masse to Everett, in order to protest. They were armed and ready to defend themselves if attacked by deputies. The Wobblies were eager for revenge, and had no intention to be victimized again---as Clark explains about the crew of the *Verona*:

These were ‘enlightened workers’ whose enlightenment had been the wrath of Donald McCrae. These men carried memories in broken noses, missing teeth, and mashed genitals, and they were not prepared to sacrifice a second time in these painful ways. With pistols smuggled in coat pocket or belted under overalls against the belly, they were grimly determined not to suffer Everett’s kicks or clubs again.”⁴⁶ “ On November 5, 1916, 250 Wobblies boarded the steamer *VERONA*, and left Seattle at 11:15 a.m., headed toward Everett. Sheriff McCrae had been alerted to the Wobblies’ plans by Pinkerton spies within the IWW, and was waiting at the wharf with 200 citizen deputies.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Ibid, 187-188.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 189.

⁴⁷ Clark, 202.

As the Wobblies pulled up to the dock, they were zealously singing: “We meet today in freedom’s cause and raise our banners high!... We’ll join our hands in union strong, to battle, win or die!”⁴⁸ Sheriff McRae hollered at the ship “Boys, who’s your leader,” to which the Wobblies laughed and taunted “We’re all leaders!”⁴⁹ The pistol-brandishing Sheriff then told the Wobblies that they could not come ashore, to which they responded “The hell we can’t!”⁵⁰ It was shortly after that a shot was fired, and although it is unknown who fired first, there immediately erupted a fusillade of shots from the Wobblies and the citizen deputies, killing five Wobblies and wounding twenty.⁵¹ The ship backed away from the wharf during the shooting and returned to Seattle.⁵² The radical fervor of the Wobblies had proved futile. They had been unsuccessful in their attempt to win a free speech fight against Everett, and their efforts only won them brutal beatings and a violent showdown with vigilantes.

In the aftermath of the Everett massacre the Wobblies would face yet another ordeal. When the *Verona* returned to Seattle, all of the men aboard were arrested, and 72 were charged with the murder of two citizen deputies that had been killed in the shootout.⁵³ The Wobblies were not convicted of the murders, however, as there was no proof that the two vigilantes were killed by the Wobblies, and some evidence suggested they may have been killed by bullets from their fellow vigilantes.⁵⁴ Indeed, one of the vigilantes died of a bullet wound in his back, and his widow blamed Sheriff McRae for his death.⁵⁵ Despite the fact that the Wobblies escaped murder convictions, their involvement in the Everett Massacre would be a major defeat for them. During the trial the Wobblies were demonized portrayed as dirty, violent, hobo anarchists who wanted to

⁴⁸ Clark, 204.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ “Casualty Report of the Steamer ‘Verona’”: National Archives-Pacific Northwest Region

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Morgan, 207.

⁵⁴ Clark, 211-212.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

destroy society, by the prosecution.⁵⁶ The Wobblies had failed to win their free-speech fight, improve working conditions, or accomplish anything. They had triumphed in criminal court, but condemned in the court of public opinion.

The Lumber strike of 1917 was in many ways, the beginning of the end for the Wobblies in Washington State. At the height of WWI hyper nationalism and patriotism the Wobblies were hindering the production of valuable lumber needed by the government for war supplies. If they were merely an annoyance before, now they were truly a thorn in the side of American society. They were now viewed as seditious traitors to the United States, and would draw the extreme and aggressive scorn from all facets of mainstream American society and the government. As a result the government, in effect, declared war on the Industrial Workers of the World, and ordinary American citizens turned against them in a big way. Despite that the Wobblies were initially effective with their involvement in the strike, in the sense that they tied up lumber production, they ultimately failed. As a result of the strike, the government opted to create the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen, where they gave better working conditions and pay to lumber workers in exchange for a promise not to strike.

As mentioned already, the Lumber Strike of 1917 came about from the terrible working conditions that lumber workers faced on a daily basis. The Lumber workers were paid extremely low wages, sometimes as low as 35 cents an hour, were forced to live in unsanitary work camps, and were fed poorly.⁵⁷ In addition, working conditions were extremely dangerous, and many workers were killed and maimed on the job, because of unsafe machinery and conditions. The lumbermen would do nothing to improve conditions, because improved safety would cut into

⁵⁶ Tyler, Rebels 17.

⁵⁷ Mickelson.

profits.⁵⁸ These terrible conditions left workers angry and exasperated. In mid-June of 1917, several hundred lumbermen who were not affiliated with any union walked off their jobs in protest of the intolerable living conditions.⁵⁹ The IWW was quick to capitalize on the situation, and began to gain control of the strike---issuing a strike call for June 20th.⁶⁰ The IWW succeeded in gaining control of the strike, because as Tyler puts it: “Wobbly ‘delegates’ were frequently the natural leaders in the camps and because, for better or for worse, the I.W.W. was the only instrument available, the strikers accepted its proffered leadership.”⁶¹ Because the Wobblies were the only avenue that the lumber workers had to achieve better working conditions they joined the IWW---not because they wanted to overthrow society.

If the lumber workers were only joining the IWW in hopes of improving their conditions and wages, the IWW wanted to make the lumber strike part of their war on the wage system and capitalist society itself, which they saw as exploitive and corrupt. The Wobblies made their view of lumber industry as exploitive oppressors of the working class clear in their propaganda. For example one Wobbly political cartoon (figure 4) depicts a fat lumber mogul with the label “lumber Baron”, who is donning a top hat, as he washes his hands which are covered in blood. Outside of the lumber baron’s window is a worker who has been lynched, hanging from a trestle. Underneath the lumber baron is the saying: “The Lumber Barons are fat with profits and their hands are smeared with the blood of the workers.” One can see here that the lumber industry is being portrayed as a greedy behemoth that is cold-bloodedly killing workers in order to rake in ill-gotten profits. It is clear from the ogre-like depiction of lumber industry in this cartoon that the IWW did not see the lumber industry as an entity to bargained with---but an monstrous enemy to be battled and destroyed.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Tyler Rebels 19-20

⁶⁰ Ibid, 20.

⁶¹ Ibid.



Figure 4

The Wobblies would be tremendously successful in their lumber strike, and both the strikers and the lumber companies belligerently fought each other, while state government desperately attempted to facilitate a truce. The lumber strike so severely impeded lumber production, that it put the entire industry into limbo---as Tyler puts it "...the lumber industry

dragged to a standstill.”⁶² Because of the halting of the lumber industry, Washington State Governor Ernest Lister attempted to broker a compromise between employers and employees, and appealed to the lumber companies to grant workers their demand for an eight-hour workday in a desperate attempt to end the strike.⁶³ For the first time, the poor conditions of the lumber workers started to be taken into account. Employers, however, remained as belligerent as the IWW, and refused to entertain the notion of granting an eight-hour workday.⁶⁴ As the West Coast Lumbermen’s Association stated in an interview with the *Seattle Daily Times* on the issue: “This is primarily a strike of the I.W.W. and it is part of their propaganda that upon returning to work it shall not be with any intention of abiding loyally by the results of the conflict, but rather with the view of further disorganization.”⁶⁵ To the lumber employers this strike was not about the legitimate grievances of lumber workers, but the anarchistic plot of IWW rabble-rousers. Because neither side would concede, the federal government was forced to come up with a solution in order to continue lumber production for the war effort.

In order to understand why the lumber strike was so effective in instigating such radical changes, one must understand how much the government needed wood for the war effort. The United States needed wood to build things such as airplanes, ships, and barracks, and the lumber strike was a major impediment. Spruce was the most desirable of the wood that the government need, as it was incredibly strong and lightweight---making it ideal in building warplanes.⁶⁶ The demand for spruce was so great that even before the strike it was hard for the government to acquire enough---as Mickelson puts it: “Spruce was the lumber the Army sought after the most.

⁶² Ibid, 21.

⁶³ *The Seattle Daily Times*, "Govenor To Ask U.S. Aid To End Lumber Strikes," August 16, 1917, Evening edition. http://infoweb.newsbank.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive/?p_product=EANX&p_theme=ahnp&p_nbid=K69C4DMLMTM5MDk4NTIzMS45ODg1NjoxOjEzOjEyOC45NS4xMDQuNjY&p_action=doc&s_lastnonissuequeryname=7&d_viewref=search&p_queryname=7&p_docnum=232&p_docref=v2:127D718D1E33F961@EANX-1294F2EDB3A512CC@2421457-128362BED4511595@0-1295A4A5DEDB5CF6@ (accessed January 29, 2014). 8.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Mickelson.

Spruce was the strongest, most flexible wood in the forest... the US only produced 2 million board feet of spruce a month before the lumber strike. They needed five times that amount to make the required quantity of warplanes, ships and barracks, and this did not take into account lumber for private interests.”⁶⁷ When the lumber strike began, it made the already scarce spruce almost unattainable. The Army would not tolerate this, and the government was forced to take desperate actions to end the strike.

In answer to the problems cause by the lumber strike the Army appointed Colonel Brice P. Disque to solve the lumber strike.⁶⁸ Disque was not fond of labor unions, but he had a reputation for being adept at labor relations, and was sympathetic to some of the loggers’ complaints.⁶⁹ He said of the strikers and the employers: “Both sides are selfish and neither shows any patriotism.”⁷⁰ He was determined to settle the labor dispute, and created a new organization to foster cooperation between lumber employers and workers. Thus, he came up with a woodcutter division of the Army called the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen (4L), which was created to meet the Army’s demand for wood.⁷¹ Disque met with lumber capitalists and convinced them to agree to an eight-hour workday, and set about to recruit workers for the 4L.⁷² The 4L was wildly successful at recruiting members, and improved working conditions for the lumber workers, as well. As Tyler says of Disque and the 4L: “By the end of the war he had restored lumber production, eased some of the tension in the industry, had established the eight-hour workday and made an advance in improving some of the worst job conditions.”⁷³ Lumber workers with ties to the IWW were not allowed to be in the 4L, and many lumber workers

⁶⁷ Mickelson.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Tyler, *Rebels* 24.

abandoned the Wobblies to join the 4L.⁷⁴ The 4L worked not only to improve physical conditions, but functioned to give a sense of community as well. It had brought tangible improvements to the lumber workers, and had given them a less radical and more pragmatic alternative to the Wobblies---and many took this alternative.⁷⁵ During the lifespan of the 4L, it became the biggest union in the world, and it produced enough spruce to meet the demands of the war effort.⁷⁶ It was the wild success of the moderate and pro-American 4L that shattered the IWW's stranglehold on the lumber workers.

Because of their central role in leading the lumber strike, the Wobblies were severely persecuted as being anti-American traitors for impeding the production of lumber that was vital to the war effort. As Tyler asserts:

News of the 1917 lumber strike and the rumors of I.W.W. sabotage and subversion corroborated a general impression that the I.W.W. was a sinister internal enemy in American society. Because the war had made such 'internal enemies' especially dangerous and because the lumber strike had unveiled an unusually powerful enemy, the American people through their state and local governments, through their federal government, and often times without the benefit of the law, launched a concerted, nation-wide assault upon the organization.⁷⁷

Indeed, during the lumber strike, newspaper stories were run in Washington newspapers with headlines such as "U.S. Declares War On I.W.W. In Northwest," and subheadings such as "Iron Hand Of Law Will Grip Conspirators Who Impede Production," and "Plotters To Be Run Down."⁷⁸ Because of the Wobblies' impediment of the lumber industry during wartime, and

⁷⁴ Mickelson.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Tyler, *Rebels* 25.

⁷⁸ *The Seattle Daily Times*, "U.S. Declares War on I.W.W. in Northwest," August 16, 1917, Evening edition.

http://infoweb.newsbank.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive/?p_product=EANX&p_theme=ahnp&p_nbid=K69C4DMLMTM5MDk4NTIzMS45ODg1NjoxOjEzOjE5OC45NS4xMD

their unashamed anti-war and un-patriotic beliefs, they had essentially signed their own death warrant.

The Centralia Massacre marked the death rattle for the IWW in Washington State. Having already drawn the ire of the federal, state, and local governments, and civilian public, they would soon commit an unpardonable sin. The Wobblies would get into a shootout with members of the American Legion during the Armistice Day Parade of 1919. Although it is unknown who fired first, the irreparable damage that would be done to the Wobblies---not only with the pistol butts and clubs of the American Legionaries, but with the immense public backlash that followed. Now the Wobblies were seen as violent traitors who had fired on returning war heroes, and were driven out of Centralia. In addition, the government's persecution of the IWW was ramped up and conducted with extreme prejudice.

The Wobblies had always held anti-military beliefs, as the military was part of the society that they saw as a corrupt capitalist system. Unfortunately for the radical Wobblies, WWI-era America had bred a radicalism of its own, and any individual or group that hindered or slighted the war effort or military would be mercilessly persecuted by the government. The government was so serious about stemming opposition to the war effort that they past a series of laws to stop dissention. For example, in 1917 Congress passed the Espionage act of 1917, which stated in section 3:

Whoever, when the United States is at war, shall wilfully make or convey false reports or false statements with intent to interfere with the operation or success of the military or naval forces of the United States or to promote the success of its enemies and whoever when the United States is at war, shall wilfully cause or attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, refusal of duty, in the military or naval forces of the United States, or shall wilfully obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service of the United States, to the injury of the service or

of the United States, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than twenty years, or both.⁷⁹

The Espionage Act for the first time was providing severe penalties, including long prison sentences for dissent from groups like the Wobblies, whose members in some cases encouraged Army conscripts to desert their duty to join with their with their “class equals,” and “throw of their master” (American government) while it was “weak and unable to stop them” due to being distracted fighting the war.⁸⁰ The Sedition act of 1918 went even further and made it a crime to:

Willfully utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of the Government of the United States...willfully urge, incite, or advocate any curtailment of the production...necessary or essential to the prosecution of the war⁸¹

The Sedition Act was particularly damning to the Wobblies because they made it standard practice to shout from soapboxes, and to print and publish “disloyal, scurrilous, and abusive” language about the government of the United States. Not only that, but their involvement in the lumber strike of 1917, and their mantra of the usage of general strikes and sabotage on industry had willfully urged, incited, and advocated the curtailment of things necessary and essential to the prosecution of the war.

The Wobblies were so virulent in their opposition to the war that they printed cartoons showing US soldiers as pawns of capitalist masters, and illustrated the war effort as nothing more

⁷⁹ “The Espionage Act of 1917.” Digitalhistory.uh.edu <http://ows.edb.utexas.edu/index.php?q=site/espionage-act-and-limitations-first-amendment/espionae-act-1917> (accessed February 19, 2014).

⁸⁰ Indictment: U.S. v. Marie Equi, Cr. Case Records of the U.S. District Court, District of Oregon, Portland: National Archives-Pacific NW Region

⁸¹ “The Sedition Act of 1918: From The United States Statutes at Large, V. 40. (April 1917-March 1919).” PBS.org http://www.pbs.org/wnet/supremecourt/capitalism/sources_document1.html (accessed February 19, 2014).

than a money-making scheme of greedy capitalists. One cartoon (Figure 5) shows a giant plant with a tag hanging from it that reads: "WAR (Homo Sapiens Damphoolis)." The plant is massive, and its fruit are skulls inscribed with words including "death," "ruin," "sorrow" and "pain." Underneath the plant is a giant system of bulbous roots bearing cash signs and shaped like money bags. In the center of the roots is a giant bulb that is shaped like a money bag and has a cash sign and the word "profits" inscribed on it. To the right of the plant is a man in a soldier's uniform using a rifle and bayonet as a shovel, and digging at the base of the plant. To the left of the plant is a fat capitalist dressed in a tuxedo and top hat, with a sash bearing a cash sign. The capitalist is puffing a cigar with his hands in his pockets while he watches the soldier dig. Underneath the cartoon is the caption "BIG BUISENESS (to Labor generously): 'My good fellow, you'll be well paid for your patriotic action in 'tending this glorious plant: you shall have all the fruit above the ground---I'll take ONLY the roots.'" It is clear from this cartoon that the plant represents war, and the message is that roots represent the real reason for the far---which is greed. The greedy capitalist is manipulating the soldier to "dig" for the profits by fighting the war, and in exchange for his patriotism and service, he reaps only the fruits of death and pain, which are represented by the skulls on the plant. The cartoon suggests that the soldier is a dupe of capitalist masters and is being manipulated into fighting a corrupt war for profits. The word "Damphoolis" on the plant's tag implies that the soldier is a "damn fool." Such inflammatory cartoons served only to draw the antipathy of most American citizens, and the wrath of the government.

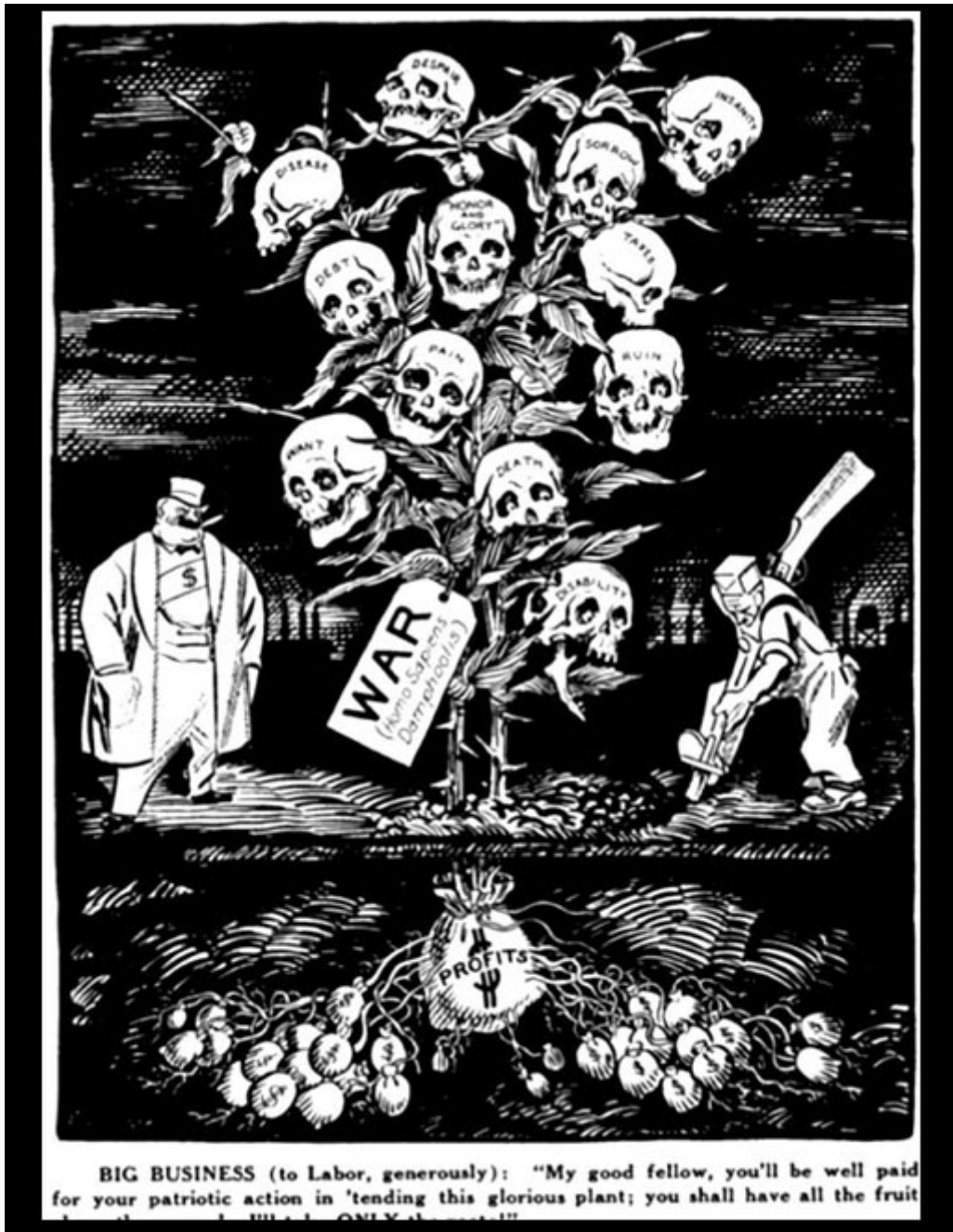


Figure 5

The government was very serious in enforcing the Sedition and Espionage Acts, and relentlessly prosecuted Wobblies and anyone else who spoke out against the war. Wobbly agitator Marie Equi was indicted under the Espionage Act for crimes as calling the Army and Navy “dirty corruptible scum,” and claiming that the IWW would not fight for the “Red, White and Blue, nor any British flag,” but rather for the red banner that stood for the blood of the workers.⁸² Famous IWW leader and propagandist Ralph Chaplin was put on sentenced to twenty years in Leavenworth Prison for his anti-war activities, and the Department of Justice recommended against a reduction of his sentence, calling him a “notorious agitator,” and accusing him of “using all of his power and influence to belittle the government.”⁸³ One man was indicted for simply saying that the “The United States had no business going to war,” “The people who went down on the *Lusitania* took their own chances and had no-one to blame but themselves,” and “The speakers back from the front who are going around talking about the German atrocities are liars.”⁸⁴ The Wobblies were no longer seen as mere hobo agitators by American society---they were now public enemy number one, and faced the full fury of the federal government. It was this tumultuous climate that led to the events at Centralia.

The Centralia Massacre came out of the pro-war and anti-Wobbly sentiment that was raging during this time, and served as catalysts for the violence at Centralia, including the events leading up to it and its aftermath. The Wobblies had opened their union hall in Centralia in the

⁸² Indictment: U.S. v. Marie Equi, Cr. Case Records of the U.S. District Court, District of Oregon, Portland: National Archives-Pacific NW Region

⁸³ Kohn, Stephen M, *American Political Prisoners prosecutions under the Espionage and Sedition Acts*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994. 91

⁸⁴ Indictment: U.S. v. Leo F. Denzel, Cr. Case: Records of the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Washington, Spokane: National Archives-Pacific NW Region

spring 1918, when it was, as Tyler puts it: “the height of war fever.”⁸⁵ During a Red Cross parade in May, 1918, marchers from the parade forced their way into the union hall, smashed windows, threw furniture out into the street, beat the Wobblies they found inside, loaded the Wobblies in trucks, drove them out of town, and beat them again, warning them not to return.⁸⁶ In September, 1919 the Wobblies gathered enough courage to return to Centralia, and open a new union hall, as a group vigilante businessmen known as the Citizens Proactive League met to discuss how to get rid of the Wobblies again.⁸⁷ The Protective League asked the police chief for advice on how to drive out the Wobblies, but he informed them that they had a legal right to be in town, and there was nothing the League could legally do.⁸⁸ The vigilantes would not be deterred by this legal fact however, and it wasn’t long before the commander of the American Legion, William Scales proposed that no jury would convict them for raiding the IWW hall again, but added that he personally did not support raiding the hall.⁸⁹ Whether or not Scales had intended for the raid to happen or not, his suggestion would be taken seriously and carried out.

On November 7, 1919 the American Legion publically released the route for their upcoming Armistice Day parade, which happed to run directly in front of the IWW’s union hall.⁹⁰ The Wobblies were alarmed by this, and were worried that the American Legion was planning another attack on their union hall, such as the one that occurred in 1918.⁹¹ The Wobblies sought the advice of a lawyer named Elmer Smith, who advised them that they had a legal right to defend their life and property.⁹² This was advice that the Wobblies would take in

⁸⁵ Robert L. Tyler, "Violence at Centralia, 1919." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (1954): 116-124. <http://www.jstor.org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/stable/40487099?seq=1&uid=3739960&uid=2&uid=4&uid=3739256&purchase-type=article&accessType=none&sid=21102809412337&showMyJstorPss=false&seq=1&showAccess=false> (accessed October 23, 2013), 117.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid, 118.

the events that soon transpired. During the parade as the legionaries marched past the IWW hall, some members broke off and started smashing their way into the hall. It was then that events completely spiraled out of control. As Tyler describes subsequent events:

The whole Centralia contingent followed. Legionaries kicked and pushed at the door and shattered the windows. As the battered door flew open, the Wobblies waiting inside the hall, across the street in another building, and lying in the crest of Seminary Hill several hundred yards away, opened fire with revolvers and rifles.⁹³

Like the Wobblies onboard the *Verona*, the Wobblies in the Centralia union hall had armed themselves, and were prepared to use deadly force to defend themselves from attack. Four members of the American Legion were killed during their assault on the IWW hall.⁹⁴

Regrettably for the Wobblies, they would suffer defeat at Centralia much the same as they had at Everett, but worse this time. Upon recovering from the jolt of being fired on by the Wobblies the furious legionaries raged into the hall and captured Brit Smith, the secretary of the Centralia IWW branch, and chased after Wobbly Wesley Everest.⁹⁵ Everest escaped to the Skookumchuch River, but was soon surrounded by a mob of vigilantes.⁹⁶ He yelled that he would only surrender to the police, and engaged in a firefight with the vigilantes, killing one.⁹⁷ Eventually Everest was overpowered by the mob, viciously punched, kicked, and beaten, then thrown into jail.⁹⁸ Later that night, Everest was kidnapped from the jail with no resistance from the police, and lynched from the Chehalis River Bridge.⁹⁹ When his corpse was recovered by police the next day they threw it in with the rest of the Wobbly prisoners.¹⁰⁰ No sooner than these events had transpired, there was a massive surge of vigilante violence against Wobblies all over

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Copeland, 122.

⁹⁵ Tyler, Violence at Centralia 118.

⁹⁶ Copeland, 125.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

western Washington, with most possess successfully capturing Wobbly prisoners.¹⁰¹ The legionaries were so ruthlessly hunting for Wobblies, that one posse opened fire on a “surly stranger” they encountered in the woods, suspecting him of being a Wobbly; but he was actually a fellow legionnaire from another posse.¹⁰² The press initially blamed the Wobblies for the murder, but the next day when they learned the whole story---their tone, as Tyler puts it: “shifted from grim indignation to tolerant dismissal”.¹⁰³ Even the victim’s son excused his father’s death, because the murder had thought he was killing a Wobbly, and said “I don’t blame you fellows. Don’t think that I do for a minute. It’s tough to lose dad---but you fellows did your duty.”¹⁰⁴ The anti-IWW sentiment was so strong that it was open season on the Wobblies, and vigilantes could roam with impunity.

It was not only extra-legal means by which the Wobblies were persecuted however. The courts tried the Wobblies involved in the riot with murder, and the Attorney General L. L. Thompson advised the county prosecutors to rush the Wobblies trial through en masse, and to monitor jury panels carefully to make sure only “courageous and patriotic” jurors would hear the cases.¹⁰⁵ In addition, Judge M. Wilson, who presided over the trial, instructed the jury that while it was legal to defend ones property , if the IWW had stationed armed men in areas outside the union hall, and if these men fired on attackers to protect the union hall, then they were guilty of murder.¹⁰⁶ Because the Wobblies had already admitted to this, the judge was effectively ordering the jury to convict the Wobblies.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, most newspapers ran stories condemning the

¹⁰¹ Tyler, *Violence at Centralia* 119.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁰⁶ John M McClelland, *Wobbly war: the Centralia story*. (Tacoma, Wash.: Washington State Historical Society, 1987), 160.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Wobblies as vicious murders who had committed an atrocity. Much like in the trial of Joe Hill, the media feasted on the Wobblies, and the court essentially rigged the trial of the Centralia Wobblies.¹⁰⁸ The Wobblies were convicted of murder, and although they would be granted clemency a decade later, the damage had been done. The events at Centralia thus were the death knell of the Wobblies in Washington. Their influence which had been waning for a long time was crushed at Centralia. As Tyler asserts:

The Aftermath of the Centralia riot and trial dragged on for years, and all the Wobblies sentenced to Walla Walla penitentiary suffered their “martyrdoms” through a decade that saw the I.W.W. dwindle and almost disappear from the American scene.¹⁰⁹

For all intents and purposes, the fight for dominance in Washington was now over, and the Wobblies had lost.

The Wobblies had failed to achieve their goal of becoming the one grand industrial union. Their intense radicalism had caused them to become blind to reality. The tactics of agitation and jail-crowding that they had used in Spokane would not work in Everett because their hand had been played and Everett would simply not allow them into the town to do what they had done in Spokane. They could not see this because they were blinded by the exhilaration of the short-term success they enjoyed in Spokane. The IWW’s antagonistic anti-military and anti-government stance, coupled with its impeding lumber production during the 1917 strike had invited the wrath of the federal government, and set it up for destruction. It was because of this that the tragic events of the Centralia Riot occurred. While it is true that the IWW was persecuted and provoked in many instances, the fact remains that it was its own radicalism that instigated such harsh suppressions. It is for this reason that the AFL exists today, but the IWW is of almost

¹⁰⁸ Tyler, Violence at Centralia 120.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 123.

no relevance in the labor movement. Its fanaticism and inability to compromise, led to its demise.

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