

MAR 12 2010

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

**WSU Libraries
Student Research Excellence Award****Application Cover Sheet**

Name Kearby M. Chess
Title of Paper/Project There is Unrest in the Forest: The Industrial Workers of the World
in the Northwest Timber Industry, 1909-1939

Class standing Senior

Major History & Anthropology

Contact information for faculty member supporting this application

Faculty member's name Matthew Sutton

Faculty member's department History

Name of course for which work was completed Writing About History

Department and course number Hist 300

When course was taken Spring 2009

If I win the Award, I agree to contribute materials to an exhibit on my research for display in the WSU Libraries. I also agree that this paper will become the property of The Libraries; winning papers will be added to the WSU Research Exchange (online research and publication repository).

Signature Kearby M. Chess Date 3/11/2010

When I first enrolled in Dr. Sutton's History 300 class, I had no inkling as to what subject I should devote my research to. In reading the assigned books for the course, I happened upon a small mention of the Industrial Workers of the World in the Pacific Northwest as part of a larger portrait of the Red Scare of the late 1910s. Fascinated by their role in the Centralia Massacre of 1919, which occurred not far from my hometown, I decided to embark upon a path of further study. My work, which developed into *There is Unrest in the Forest*, led me down many avenues of research. In writing this essay, I utilized a number of resources from the WSU libraries. The wealth of general information on the subject available from the libraries was of enormous help. I was able to use books such as Melvyn Dubofsky's *We Shall Be All* and Robert Tyler's *Rebels of the Woods* to get a better sense of the union as a whole before narrowing down my research specifically to the Pacific Northwest of the Progressive Era.

One absolutely priceless source that aided me in this endeavor was *The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW): A Research Collection*, a bibliography compiled here at Washington State University by Siegfried Vogt and Paul Green in 1985. Not only did it provide me with a comprehensive historiography of the I.W.W, it also guided me to specific collections and volumes on the subject held by our libraries. Thanks to the information contained therein, I was able to consult a number of unpublished theses and dissertations on the subject written over the years by graduate students in our history department. These in turn directed me to various other sources, which I might have missed entirely had I not found this veritable font useful information. Vogt and Green's bibliography also helped guide me to incredibly useful primary sources relating to the I.W.W, which proved invaluable in my research and helped shape my final conclusions into something that I believe many historians have not considered. Through the newspaper *The Industrial Worker*, which our library has in both microfilm as well as some of the

original print copies, I was able to see the events I studied through the lens of the I.W.W.'s propaganda arm. This was further enhanced by the library's collection of Wobbly pamphlets and literature, such as James Rowan's *The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry* and Walker C. Smith's account of the Everett Massacre. Microforms of the staunchly conservative *Seattle Times* and *Spokesman Review* gave me insight into the views of those opposed to the I.W.W., and I also made use of several period magazines which portrayed the lumber strike of WWI from a mostly neutral viewpoint. The autobiography of logger Emil Engstrom was also of enormous use to me, because it showed an aspect of the strike not given much thought by historians. Engstrom, though he did not share the radical views of the Wobblies, joined with them during the strike because they promised palpable material gains to the workers. Perspectives like his are often neglected in historical considerations of the I.W.W.

Regarding the strike, several volumes from the government documents section in Holland Library were of paramount importance to my research. Reports from the State Council of Defense, the State Bureau of Labor and the U.S. Department of Labor gave me a window into the government's attempts to mitigate the strike, and their efforts to round up Wobblies under the Sedition Act of 1918. Cloice Howd's report for the Bureau of Labor Statistics entitled *Industrial Relations in the West Coast Lumber Industry* was indispensable in its value to my work. Howd painted a portrait of the causes of the WWI strike in vivid detail uncharacteristic of a government report, and provided me with much needed independent verification of the claims of abuse and squalor that dominated Wobbly literature. In all, the sources available from the Washington State University Libraries guided my research and led me interesting paths, which allowed me to truly get into the mind of all those involved, and to come to a unique conclusion from the available evidence.

**There is Unrest in the Forest:
The Industrial Workers of the World in the Northwest Timber Industry, 1909-1939**

**By
Kearby Chess**

**History 300
Dr. Matthew Sutton
May 1, 2009**

In the morning hours of June 27, 1905, an assembly of over 200 labor unionists, socialists and anarchists gathered at Brand's Hall in Chicago to discuss the formation of a grand new industrial union to supplant the craft unions of the conservative American Federation of Labor. Sparing his audience any grandiose oration, William D. Haywood, secretary of the Western Federation of Miners, called the convention to order quite succinctly, saying: "Fellow Workers ... We are here to confederate the workers of this country into a working class movement that shall have for its purpose the emancipation of the working class from the slave bondage of capitalism."¹ With the lofty aim of unifying all wage-workers into "One Big Union" for all industry, and with its stated goal of abolishing the wage system and overthrowing capitalism, this confederation, which called itself the Industrial Workers of the World, instantly won enemies among the government and business sectors of the United States and quickly alienated would-be allies in the mainstream American labor movement. Almost as quickly however, the Wobblies, as they came to be known,² found eager support amongst the rough-and-tumble lumberjacks of the Pacific Northwest, whose isolation and squalid working conditions fomented considerable labor unrest. A decade later, the approaching war with Germany and the desperate need for lumber entailed therein set the stage for a domestic battle over higher wages, shorter hours, and better working and living conditions; demands that were just a small slice of what the I.W.W. called "all the good things in life."³

Even before the U.S. entry into the war, tensions were on the rise between the I.W.W. and the "employing class," as Wobbly literature termed it. Wobbly speakers led strikes and "free

¹ I.W.W., *Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World* (1905; repr., New York: Merit Publishers, 1969), 1.

² While the origin of this term is uncertain, the most frequently told story goes that a Chinese restaurateur along the Canadian Northern Railway defended his service of I.W.W. members by saying "Me likey I Wobbly Wobbly." See Stewart H. Holbrook, "Wobbly Talk," *American Mercury*, January 1926, 62.

³ I.W.W., *Preamble and Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World, Organized July 7, 1905* (Chicago: I.W.W. Publishing Bureau, 1916).

speech fights” across the Northwest, most notably in Spokane and Everett, Washington. Government and business leaders, aggravated by Wobbly speakers advocating their typical gospel of class warfare, passed ordinances banning street meetings, the preferred venue of the I.W.W. agitator. Wobblies did not take kindly to this, and traveled *en masse* to these cities, hoping to fill the jails and challenge the legality of such laws. These clashes came to a head in Everett in November 1916, when I.W.W. organizers from Seattle came to protest a speaking ban and were beaten and run out of town by law enforcement and businessmen. In response, more Wobblies from Seattle descended upon Everett on November 5, leading to an armed confrontation with the Sheriff and his volunteer deputies at the city dock, a battle that left seven dead and dozens wounded on both sides.

Not only did the coming of World War I bring the federal Espionage Act and numerous other pieces of state level antisindicalism legislation largely designed to target and destroy the Wobblies’ growing movement, but it also brought an increased need for lumber, particularly spruce, desired by airplane manufacturers for its strength and light weight. Seeing the wartime need for timber, the Industrial Workers of the World and their rivals in the American Federation of Labor seized upon a logging camp strike in Sandpoint, Idaho in June 1917 and independently of each other called for general strikes across the lumbering regions of the northwest to protest working conditions and the standard ten hour day. This strike, which lasted for almost nine months, was a highly unusual one in that after three months of picketing, workers returned to their camps and sawmills, but brought the strike with them. For example, after eight hours on the job, some loggers would blow their own whistle and would be promptly fired by the foreman, only to move on to the next camp and start the process all over again.⁴

⁴ James Rowan, *The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry* (1920?; repr., Seattle: Shorey Bookstore, 1969), 50.

Backed by the federal government, mill operators and lumber owners in turn seized upon the strike as an opportunity to crush the Wobblies. The Army placed Col. Brice Disque in charge of the Spruce Production Division and sent him to assess the situation and attempt to mediate the strike. He promptly established the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen, a rival union meant to draw workers away from the Wobblies and break the strike by instilling in them a sense of patriotism while still supporting the strikers' goal of an eight hour day. Soon, Disque publicly mandated that companies and mills receiving federal support must abide by that condition, which by that point was the standard for federal workers. On March 1, 1918, the eight hour day was instituted in camps and mills region-wide. Meanwhile, law enforcement and government had been working meticulously with business leaders to imprison the strike leaders and cripple the I.W.W., and by the end of the strike much of the Wobblies' power base had been decimated.

However, the northwestern contingent of the I.W.W. was not completely done in yet. One year after the end of the war, members of the American Legion attempted to raid the meeting hall of the I.W.W. during an Armistice Day parade in Centralia, Washington and expel them from the town. The Wobblies were prepared, however; a similar raid had occurred during another parade over a year earlier and renewed plans to drive the I.W.W. out of town had been openly discussed in public meetings at the Elks Club and in the city's newspapers. As soon as the Legion reached the hall and smashed the door, the Wobblies opened fire from inside and from snipers' positions along the parade route. In the ensuing chaos four Legionnaires were shot dead, one Wobbly was lynched and a dozen more, most of them lumber workers, were arrested. Of those, eight were found guilty of second degree murder and given the maximum possible sentence in the state penitentiary at Walla Walla. By the time of their eventual acquittals twelve years later, the I.W.W. had all but died out.

The Industrial Workers of the World drew the attention of historians and academics almost as soon as the organization was founded. One of the earliest balanced and comprehensive histories was compiled by Columbia University professor of political science Paul F. Brissenden, in *The I.W.W.: A Study of American Syndicalism* (1919, 1920), which for nearly half a century was considered to be the authoritative history of the Wobblies. Brissenden traces the I.W.W.'s roots to European syndicalism and examines its effects on the labor movement and political climate of the early 1900s. He attempts to dispel the then-popular notion of the Wobblies as “a motley horde of hoboes” with a “philosophy simply of sabotage and the violent overthrow of ‘capitalism,’” but is by no means an apologist, stating that “I.W.W. agitators have themselves helped to misrepresent their own organization by their uncouth and violent language and their personal predilection for the lurid and the dramatic.”⁵ Unfortunately though, as the bulk of the text was written before WWI, discussion of the Wobblies’ role in the northwest in general and the lumber strike in particular is nigh-nonexistent, even in the second edition published in 1920.

Some ten years later John S. Gambs, also of Columbia University, wrote a companion piece to Brissenden’s book, entitled *The Decline of the I.W.W.* (1932) which intended to bring the history of the Wobblies up to the then-present. Originally written as his doctoral dissertation at Columbia, Gambs argues that, while the wartime crackdown sent the Wobblies into disarray and forced them to funnel much of their meager coffers into legal defense, their ultimate undoing was in their commitment to revolutionary ideology over pragmatism and practical gains, writing that “The I.W.W. is willing to change the world, but it is not willing to change itself. Members with constructive suggestions for change and adaptation to post-war conditions are not encouraged to express their opinions.” He further calls them “inflexible, dogmatic [and]

⁵ Paul F. Brissenden, preface to the first edition of *The I.W.W.: A Study of American Syndicalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1920), xv-xvi

fatalistic,” and with further foresight notes that if the I.W.W. were to continue on, it would be for “futile decades after its hour of lustihood.”⁶

Labor historian Melvyn Dubofsky makes a similar argument in his book *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (1969, 1973), which, though it is now four decades old, is still considered to be the definitive academic history of the Wobblies. Siding with Gambs and citing a lack of true strong central leadership, he believes that the I.W.W. was “doomed to failure” from the beginning, explaining: “... [T]he I.W.W. failed to transform its followers’ concrete grievances into a higher consciousness of class, ultimate purpose, and necessary revolution.” Furthermore, he suggests that when the Wobblies did fight directly for and achieve immediate improvements of their circumstances, it “inevitably diminished their discontent and hence their revolutionary potential.” While Dubofsky devotes some exposition to the I.W.W.’s impact in the northwest, he does not analyze the interactions between the Wobblies and the lumber industry as thoroughly as he might have.⁷

However, other historians have indeed seen the greater significance of the protracted battle between labor and capital in the northwest timber industry, though many have come to differing conclusions regarding the ultimate outcome and, while many of these sources examine some aspect of the decline of the International Workers of the World in the northwest, few take the crucial step back to gain the perspective necessary for a holistic evaluation of the union’s downfall. Robert L. Tyler’s *Rebels of the Woods: The I.W.W. in the Pacific Northwest* (1967) is a patchwork of his previous studies and stands out even forty years later as a definitive and frequently cited work on the subject. Tyler joins Gambs and Dubofsky in their assessment of the situation, noting that the I.W.W. “could never decide whether to be a labor union or some kind of

⁶ John S. Gambs, *The Decline of the I.W.W.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), 206.

⁷ Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, 2nd ed (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 480-481.

militant, class-conscious elite leading the working class to revolution,” specifically pointing to the split between the more industrially-minded and militant “overalls brigade” from the West and the politically-minded intellectual base from the East, whom the westerners eventually expelled. Tyler regards the strike as a success for the workers themselves but notes that it came at the expense of the Wobblies who he says never recovered from the “bludgeoning” handed down by the federal government.⁸ Subsequent historians, however, have cast doubt even on that conclusion.

Robert E. Ficken, citing correspondence between managers and owners at several mills, disputes Tyler’s view of the strike as a success for workers in his article “The Wobbly Horrors: Pacific Northwest Lumbermen and the Industrial Workers of the World, 1917-1918” (1983), claiming that the timber industry “emerged from the strike with a major triumph,” having traded the eight hour day which was only of moderate consequence to them for a government crackdown on Wobblies which benefited them greatly. Ficken expands on the strike and its deleterious effects on the Wobblies in *The Forested Land* (1987), his history of the western Washington timber industry, calling them “little more than disturbing irritants” after the war. Tim Hanson, in his article “Wobblies in the Woods: The 1917 Lumber Strike in the Inland Empire” (1991), which describes strike efforts in eastern Washington, supports Ficken’s conclusion and argues that by returning to work and bringing the strike with them, Wobblies “neglected the realities of lumber production and demand,” noting that after the loggers and millers returned to work, spruce production shot up 1300% in just one month.⁹

⁸ Robert L. Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods: the I.W.W. in the Pacific Northwest* (Eugene: University of Oregon Books, 1967), 215; see also Tyler, “The Everett Free Speech Fight,” *Pacific Historical Quarterly* 23 (February 1954): 19-30; Tyler, “The I.W.W. in the Pacific Northwest: Rebels of the Woods,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 55 (March 1954): 3-44; and Tyler, “The United States Government as Union Organizer: The Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47 (December 1960): 434-451.

⁹ Robert E. Ficken, “The Wobbly Horrors: Pacific Northwest Lumbermen and the Industrial Workers of the World, 1917-1918,” *Labor History* 24 (Summer 1983): 341, Robert E. Ficken, *The Forested Land* (Seattle: University of

Richard A. Rajala echoes somewhat the views of Dubofsky and Gambs and to a lesser extent Tyler in his article “A Dandy Bunch of Wobblies: Pacific Northwest Loggers and the Industrial Workers of the World, 1900-1930,” (1996) inasmuch as he partially recognizes the role conflicting ideologies played in the downfall of the I.W.W., specifically referring to a strike called in 1923 “for the release of class-war prisoners [which] was likely to galvanize only the most committed lumberworkers.” However, like Hanson and Ficken, Rajala places most of the blame for the Wobblies’ demise on the arrests and money-draining trials of its leaders as well as a “determined blacklist” of known Wobblies after the war and a “stagnant lumber economy” which drove members elsewhere.¹⁰

Finally, several works have emerged regarding the events in Centralia, but John M. McClelland’s *Wobbly War: The Centralia Story* (1987) is by far the most comprehensive. It presents the story of the massacre and the subsequent legal battles over the release of the prisoners, though as a journalist McClelland’s primary concern is crafting a narrative of events and as such he aims comparatively little focus at analyzing the causes and effects of the tragedy. He argues that while the strike had done much to sour public opinion of the I.W.W. during the war, the media portrayal of the tragedy was the final nail in the coffin for the Wobblies, and despite the eventual acquittals in the case, the damage had already been done. He postulates that Centralia was an “affirmation in blood of the worst that was believed about the Wobblies”, and it drove many potential recruits and former Wobblies into the ranks of the newly formed and much

Washington Press, 1987): 150; Tim Hanson, “Wobblies in the Woods: The 1917 Lumber Strike in the Inland Empire,” *Pacific Northwest Forum* 2nd series 4, no. 2 (Summer-Fall 1991): 78.

¹⁰ Richard A. Rajala, “A Dandy Bunch of Wobblies: Pacific Northwest Loggers and the Industrial Workers of the World, 1900-1930,” *Labor History* 37 (Spring 1996): 228-231.

less radical Congress of Industrial Organizations, causing the I.W.W. to fade into obscurity by the time prisoners were released.¹¹

The work of previous historians raises an interesting historical question: Just how did an organization that could marshal the support of some 40,000 lumberjacks and mill-workers¹² dwindle to such a hollow shell of its former self in barely a decade and a half? Did the antisindicalist crackdown during the war emasculate the Wobblies to an extent from which they could not recover, as well as many would have us believe? Did the initial public backlash to the Centralia massacre cripple the I.W.W.'s ability to effectively recruit, as McLelland suggests? Was the Wobblies' steadfast commitment to ideological struggles over practical gains their ultimate downfall, as Gams and Dubofsky have argued? Or perhaps was their decline simply a product of changing times? After all, the strike had won the concession of the eight hour day, and working conditions in the timber industry were continually improving. The explosion in automobile ownership sped along the extinction of the young, single itinerant workers who formed the core constituency of the Wobblies by making it possible for loggers to return to their homes after a day's work and thus rendering moot many of the issues against which the I.W.W. had fought so tenaciously.

I intend to show that the Industrial Workers of the World's decline in the northwest resulted from a convergence of factors and that, contrary to what some other historians have argued, it cannot be pinned on any single cause. In doing so, I will follow their rise and fall, starting with their founding in Chicago and the ideological split which hampered them from the beginning. I will continue on to the propaganda battles they waged in free speech fights in Spokane and Everett, followed by their activities during the war and the government crackdown

¹¹ John M. McClelland, *Wobbly War: The Centralia Story* (Tacoma: Washington State Historical Society, 1987): 241-2

¹² Rajala, "Dandy Bunch of Wobblies" 219

on radicals, as well as the tragic events at Centralia. Finally, I will examine some of the outside factors which contributed to their demise in the lumber industry, such as the changing times which lessened the attraction and relevance of radicalism.

First, it is necessary to look at the founding of the Industrial Workers of the World and their early years, for some of the factors that Gams, Dubofsky and Tyler cite for the Wobblies' ultimate downfall plagued them from their very inception: namely internal ideological struggles. On the one hand, there was the large faction of western migratory workers typified by Bill Haywood, and on the other was the eastern intellectual arm led by Daniel de Leon of the Socialist Labor Party. The tension between the two sides was best illustrated by a clause in the preamble to the Wobbly constitution which stated "... a struggle must go on until all the toilers come together on the political, as well as on the industrial field, and take and hold that which they produce by their labor through economic organization of the working class without affiliation with any political party."¹³ Haywood and others disputed the inclusion of language supporting political action, with one Thomas Hagerty, a former Catholic priest and an influential figure in the genesis of the I.W.W., calling the ballot box a "capitalist concession" and saying "Dropping pieces of paper into a hole in a box never achieved the emancipation of the working class."¹⁴ At the founding convention a motion to amend the preamble and excise the political action clause was denied, and the section was passed intact.¹⁵

Financial troubles also soon struck the Wobblies, when Haywood was arrested on charges connected to the assassination of the anti-union ex-governor of Idaho, Frank Steunenberg. In a portentous vision of future turmoil, the I.W.W. was forced to funnel much of

¹³ I.W.W., *Proceedings of the First Convention*, 247.

¹⁴ Thomas Hagerty, quoted in Joyce Kornbluh, *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964), 12.

¹⁵ I.W.W., *Proceedings of the First Convention*, 246.

its limited capital into the defense of Haywood, who was eventually acquitted thanks to the legal services of Clarence Darrow. However, during Haywood's lengthy imprisonment the ideological struggle raged on and finally climaxed at the fourth convention of the I.W.W. in 1908. A group of transitory workers calling themselves the "overalls brigade" came to the Chicago convention from Portland in opposition to the political faction led by de Leon, charging that his aim was to subjugate the I.W.W. to his Socialist Labor Party in an attempt to increase his own power. They argued that the Wobblies should shun political action entirely, and instead focus on direct action such as strikes and sabotage. This northwestern contingent commanded an overwhelming majority at the convention and voted to expel de Leon, though on a technical objection arising over his representation of a union to which he did not belong.¹⁶

The next point of order was to amend the preamble and excise the offending phrase supporting political action, replacing it with a passage that read: "... a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system," which has since remained in their constitution and appears on nearly every I.W.W. publication.¹⁷ This relatively minor change in language was the cause of a massive shift in the makeup of the Wobblies. Despite the "catholic pretensions of the name,"¹⁸ as Tyler puts it, the Industrial Workers of the World, in losing the socialist influence of the east and eschewing political action, reorganized themselves into an essentially western body which became a haven for itinerant workers, especially those of the lumber industry. In doing so, though, they sowed some of the seeds of their own demise by succumbing to the ultimately inflexible and single-minded leadership of certain western radicals.

¹⁶ See Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods*, 23-24; and Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 136-140.

¹⁷ Brissenden, *The I.W.W.*, 351.

¹⁸ Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods*, 24.

Though this lexical alteration meant the Wobblies had abandoned the ballot box, it did not mean they had forsworn the pretense of politics entirely, for in their subsequent “free-speech fights” they adopted the mantra of defense of the First Amendment and Bill of Rights as a way of fighting laws and practices they saw as unjust. One such fight which exploded in Spokane in November 1909 brought the I.W.W. into the unflattering national spotlight for the first time. The battle began as many others had, with Wobblies preaching their gospel on the streets. In this case, the I.W.W.’s primary grievance was against employment agents, or so-called “job sharks,” whom Wobbly organizer James Rowan described as “petty grafters who fleeced the workers by making them pay for the privilege of being skinned by the big grafters.”¹⁹ In other words, prospective workers were forced to pay up a sum to an employment agent working in conjunction with “the bosses” in order to even be considered for a job, which often did not even exist.²⁰ While this practice was common in the lumber industry, it was by no means particular to it.

Employment agents did not take kindly to the Wobblies’ denunciations and in late 1908 persuaded the Spokane city council to pass an ordinance banning street meetings in the downtown and business districts. Early protests against this new law resulted in a riot in February 1909 after which five Wobblies were arrested.²¹ Following this, the I.W.W.’s executive committee decided to lay low in Spokane and let cooler heads prevail. In August 1909, however, it became abundantly clear that the I.W.W. was the true target of the speaking ban when the city council passed a revised ordinance exempting religious and charitable organizations. When one of their organizers was arrested for protesting this change, the Wobblies set November 2 as the

¹⁹ Rowan, *I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry*, 12.

²⁰ Robert Eckberg, “The Free Speech Fight of the Industrial Workers of the World, Spokane, Washington: 1909-1910” (M.A. Thesis, Washington State University, 1967), 24.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

date for a massive free speech fight challenging the city, declaring in a banner headline in the *Industrial Worker*: “We Stand On Our Rights.”²² In response, the Spokane chief of police called every available officer to duty “in anticipation of trouble.”²³

The plans called for Wobblies to do everything within their power to get arrested for violations of the speaking ordinance and, as fight participant John Panzner put it, to “go to jail until all of the jails were full.”²⁴ And fill them they did; by the second day of the fight a hundred and fifty Wobblies had been thrown in jail, and by the end of the month that number had topped six hundred.²⁵ The *Spokesman Review* denounced the actions of the I.W.W., calling them “un-American, unfair and intolerant of the clear rights of others.”²⁶ The invective was not exclusive to that particular paper, however; all three dailies in Spokane as well as the Wobblies’ weekly paper the *Industrial Worker* dealt it with abandon. Though both sides wished a quick resolution, the fight dragged on for five long months, and with jails overflowing Wobbly prisoners were held in generally poor conditions, including an unused and unheated school house in the dead of winter.²⁷ However, that was precisely what the I.W.W. wanted from the fight, and finally in March 1910, Spokane acquiesced to the Wobblies’ demands, citing complaints from taxpayers regarding the increasing cost of keeping them incarcerated.²⁸ I.W.W. prisoners were released, and materials seized in hall raids were returned.²⁹ Furthermore, in what proved to be one of the Wobblies’ greater successes in the northwest, nineteen “job sharks” in Spokane had their licenses

²² “Tuesday Nov. 2, Is the Day of Free Speech in Spokane. We Stand On Our Rights,” *Industrial Worker*, October 27, 1909.

²³ “Pits Entire Force Against I.W.W.,” *Spokesman Review*, November 2, 1909.

²⁴ John Panzner, quoted in Kornbluh, *Rebel Voices*, 99.

²⁵ Eckberg, “The Free Speech Fight,” 47.

²⁶ Editorial, “Misguided and Contentious,” *Spokesman Review*, November 3, 1909.

²⁷ Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods*, 38.

²⁸ Eckberg, “The Free Speech Fight,” 87.

²⁹ “Spokane Fight for Free Speech Settled,” *Industrial Worker*, March 12, 1910.

revoked, and the whole affair prompted legislation for better regulation of employment agencies.³⁰

However, events did not bode so well for the Industrial Workers of the World in a similar fight six years later. On May 1, 1916, shingle workers in the city of Everett walked out of their mills in protest of lowered wages, demanding they be restored to 1914 levels, and inadvertently starting another battle that raged for over half a year.³¹ Initially, the conflict was between the A.F.L. backed International Shingle Weavers' Union and the Everett Commercial Club, which had the support of city leaders and law enforcement. Though the Club despised the A.F.L., Samuel Gompers's organization could not match the bile raised in the throats of Everett's leaders at the thought of the Industrial Workers of the World invading their city in support of the shingle weavers as they had Spokane. Unfortunately for the Commercial Club and the local government, that is exactly what happened on July 31, 1916, though Wobbly involvement in Everett began almost entirely by accident.

On that day, I.W.W. organizer and veteran of the Spokane free speech fight James Rowan arrived in the city at the behest of General Headquarters in Chicago to assess the conditions of the lumber industry around Puget Sound. Unaware of the strikers and their battles with the law, which by that point had entered a lull, Rowan began speaking the Wobbly doctrine on the street and was quickly arrested and expelled from the city.³² Soon, the pattern which characterized previous free speech fights repeated itself in Everett. General Headquarters replaced Rowan, and Wobblies swarmed the town, challenging the speaking ban and looking to be thrown in jail. Clashes between the I.W.W. and Snohomish County law enforcement escalated, becoming more

³⁰ Kornbluh, *Rebel Voices*, 95.

³¹ Robert E. Hull, "I.W.W. Activity in Everett Washington from May 1916 to June 1917" (M.A. thesis, State College of Washington, 1938), 9.

³² Walker C. Smith, *The Everett Massacre: A History of the Class Struggle in the Lumber Industry* (Chicago: I.W.W. Publishing Bureau, 1917), 34.

vicious and brutal by the day. Public support for the Commercial Club and Sheriff Donald McRae's tactics in suppressing the Wobblies quickly evaporated; some businesses even went so far as to advertise themselves as not belonging to the Club.³³

On October 30, after three months of I.W.W. involvement in Everett, forty-one Wobblies came by steamer from Seattle to aid in the fight, and were met at the dock by Sheriff McRae and his group of volunteer deputies, whom the Wobblies later accused of being intoxicated and belligerent.³⁴ The I.W.W. men were rounded up and taken by a caravan of automobiles to an undeveloped park near the interurban railroad to Seattle. There, the deputies formed two lines facing each other and, as I.W.W. writer Walker C. Smith described it, forced the Wobblies to "run stumbling over the uneven ground down a gauntlet that ended only with the cruel sharp blades of a cattle guard, while on their unprotected heads and shoulders the drunken outlaws rained blow after blow with gun-butts, black-jacks, loaded saps and pick-handles."³⁵ While the Sheriff insisted that the Wobblies were simply given a "little talk" before being sent off back to Seattle, the melee was heard by a farmer and his brother a quarter-mile away. When the two men came to investigate, they found a number of the battered I.W.W. lying in the brush.³⁶

The beatings sparked massive public outrage, and while they were intended to send a message to the I.W.W. to keep out of Everett, they had quite the opposite effect. The whole affair galvanized Wobblies across the northwest, and the call went out to assemble in Everett on Sunday, November 5 to protest the events at the park of a week earlier. That morning, two-hundred and fifty singing Wobblies in Seattle boarded the steamer *Verona*, the same ship that brought the previous ill-fated expedition, and set off for Everett. Among their number were two

³³ Tyler, "Everett Free Speech Fight," 23.

³⁴ Hull, "I.W.W. Activity in Everett," 42.

³⁵ Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 73.

³⁶ Hull, "I.W.W. Activity in Everett," 43-45

detectives in the employ of the Commercial Club charged with spying on the I.W.W., who dispatched a warning to Sheriff McRae that the Wobblies on board the *Verona* were “armed to the teeth” and on their way to “invade, pillage and burn the city.”³⁷ Three hundred deputies assembled at the dock along with McRae, and a gun battle erupted when the *Verona* arrived and the Wobblies attempted to disembark. The *Verona*’s panicked passengers ran for cover, causing the ship to list and sending several overboard. Five Wobblies and two deputies were killed in the fusillade, as well six unknown men who fell into Puget Sound, and numerous others were injured.³⁸ Soon, men on the boat stormed the pilothouse and demanded that the engineer reverse the engines and return to Seattle; along the way they stopped to warn another boatload of Wobblies against continuing on to Everett.³⁹

When the *Verona* reached Seattle, the Wobblies were seized, and with the aid of an informant, seventy-three of them were charged with the murder of Jefferson Beard, one of the slain deputies. That number increased to seventy-four when the informant refused to take the stand and was similarly charged.⁴⁰ By this point, public sentiment in and around Everett had turned in favor of the Wobblies; Seattle Mayor Hiram Gill even went so far as to say that “In the final analysis it will be found these cowards in Everett who, without right or justification, shot into the crowd on the boat were the murderers and not the I.W.W.’s.”⁴¹ The *Seattle Times* editorial board disagreed, accusing the mayor and the Seattle police of “criminal negligence” in allowing the Wobblies board the *Verona* for Everett and calling them “accessories to murder

³⁷ Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 85.

³⁸ Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 89.

³⁹ Tyler, “Everett Free Speech Fight,” 25-26.

⁴⁰ Hull, “I.W.W. Activity in Everett,” 69.

⁴¹ “Mayor Gill Says I.W.W. Did Not Start Riot,” *Seattle Times*, November 8, 1916.

before the fact.” The conservative *Times* made its stance clear, writing: “... [T]he fact should be made plain that there is no room anywhere on Puget Sound for the I.W.W. and its followers.”⁴²

Five months later, on March 5, 1917, Thomas Tracy, the first of the Wobbly defendants, was finally brought before the court in a trial which lasted exactly two months. After a night of deliberation the jury returned a verdict of “not guilty,” and the charges against the other seventy-three Wobblies were quietly dropped in the shadow of the U.S. declaration of war against Germany a month earlier. However, the state had not given up its crusade against the Wobblies; the free speech fights at Everett and Spokane had strengthened the resolve of businessmen and government leaders and had bolstered their desire to rid themselves of the I.W.W. once and for all. With the coming of the war the opportunity to do so presented itself readily. Wobblies did little to abate the impending onslaught, fanning the flames of public indignation by calling a strike which crippled the northwest lumber industry.

On March 5, 1917, the same day the Everett trial began, a group of seventeen I.W.W. loggers representing different regions of the mid- and northwest met in Spokane to discuss the formation of a new industrial lumber union, and after two days of deliberation, the Lumber Workers Industrial Union No. 500 (L.W.I.U.) was born. Plans for a strike were drawn up, demanding an eight hour day at ten hours’ pay, a minimum wage of \$60 per month, and general improvements of camp conditions. On June 1, an L.W.I.U. committee set July 1 as the start date for a general strike of all loggers and millworkers in the region surrounding Spokane, known as the Inland Empire.⁴³ Smatterings of strikes began in April in Idaho and western Montana among log drivers, the men who floated logs downriver to mills.⁴⁴ However, the I.W.W.’s plans for the

⁴² Editorial, “Seattle is Responsible!” *Ibid.*, November 6, 1916.

⁴³ Rowan, *I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry*, 30-31.

⁴⁴ U S Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Industrial Relations in the West Coast Lumber Industry*, by Cloice R. Howd, Bulletin no. 349 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1924), 70

general strike in the lumber industry were usurped on June 15, when several hundred loggers unaffiliated with the Wobblies walked out of their camps in Sandpoint, Idaho as a “sort of instinctive protest.”⁴⁵ In response, the I.W.W. sent out the call for a mass walkout on June 20, starting a chain reaction that by mid-July had spread out across the state of Washington and shut down at least 75% of logging camps west of the Cascades.⁴⁶

To many observers, the strikers’ demands were not without merit in the notoriously moist forests of the Pacific Northwest. Loggers objected to the state of their living arrangements, especially with regard to cleanliness. Men were usually expected to provide their own bedding and often as many as forty would sleep in a bunkhouse meant to hold a dozen, with two or more men sleeping in each bunk. In general, there were very few toilets or sanitation systems, and rarely were there laundry facilities of any sort, so the men hanged their wet clothes up to dry over fires in their poorly ventilated dormitories.⁴⁷ Logger Emil Engstrom, who described himself as “never more than a card member” of the I.W.W, paints a dreary picture of logging camps before the strike, writing: “Working from dawn to dark ten to twelve hours a day, living in dirty, ill-kept, stinking shacks, gathering grass and cedar or hemlock boughs for a bed on which to spread our blankets—in reality we were oppressed, we were in chains.”⁴⁸ Quality of food was also of great concern, for it was often prepared and served in open kitchens adjacent to latrines and garbage piles, with total disregard to sanitation.⁴⁹ According to a U.S. Department of Labor report, it was “common for cooks or waiters to be suffering from tuberculosis or other communicable diseases” while serving food.⁵⁰ Lumbermen, however, rejected workers’

⁴⁵ Washington, Bureau of Labor, *Eleventh Biennial Report, 1917-1918* (Olympia: Frank M. Lamborn Public Printer, 1918), 66.

⁴⁶ Howd, *Industrial Relations*, 72.

⁴⁷ Charles Merz, “Tying Up Western Lumber,” *New Republic*, September 29, 1917, 242.

⁴⁸ Emil Engstrom, *The Vanishing Logger* (New York: Vantage Press, 1956), 46, 39.

⁴⁹ Rowan, *I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry*, 10.

⁵⁰ Howd, *Industrial Relations*, 41.

complaints as entirely unjustified; many of them had come up through the ranks themselves and expected their employees to put up with the squalor just as they had.⁵¹

At the core of the dispute, however, was the matter of the eight hour day at ten hours' pay, a concession demanded by both the I.W.W. and the A.F.L, whose Shingle Weavers' Union and International Timber Workers' Union had joined the strike on July 16, 1917.⁵² West Coast lumber companies maintained that if they were to reduce hours but maintain wages, they would be unable to compete with logging regions in the south, which were still on the ten hour standard.⁵³ Lumberman Edwin Ames likened the eight hour day to "practicing philanthropy with... stockholders' money," charging that it would increase costs while reducing profits.⁵⁴ A commission set up by President Wilson found differently, stating that northwest lumbermen were "unacquainted with... the relation between shorter hours and efficiency." The commission recommended that switching to an eight hour day was "indispensible as a measure of national need."⁵⁵ Washington Senator Miles Poindexter too expressed support for the eight hour day, saying in Congress: "I believe in an eight hour day, and I think Congress believes in an eight hour day, for Congress has passed numerous laws fixing eight hours as the standard of a day's work in nearly all of the government establishments," going on to say "the same principles... applicable to Government work apply by any industry."⁵⁶ Washington Governor Ernest Lister echoed the Senator's words in an address to the state.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Brice Disque, "How We Found a Cure for Strikes," *System*, September 1919, 379.

⁵² Dorothy N. Schmidt, "Sedition and Criminal Syndicalism in the State of Washington—1917-1919" (M.A. thesis, State College of Washington, 1940), 33.

⁵³ *Eleventh Biennial Report*, 74.

⁵⁴ Edwin Ames to W. Talbot, Edwin Gardener Ames Papers (University of Washington Libraries, Seattle), quoted in Ficken, "Wobbly Horrors," 330.

⁵⁵ *Eleventh Biennial Report*, 74-75.

⁵⁶ *Cong. Rec.*, 65th Cong., 1st sess., 1917, 55, pt. 5: 5950.

⁵⁷ *Eleventh Biennial Report*, 67.

Indeed, after negotiations between the State Council of Defense and the Western Pine Manufacturers' Association in December 1917, Inland Empire lumber operators seemed poised to grant the eight hour day, though at the expense of their southern competitors, writing a letter to Congress stating "in the interests of industrial peace, we ask that the application of the eight-hour basic standard day be made universal through the lumber industry of the United States." The *Industrial Worker* hailed this as a great victory, running a banner headline which read "Northwest Lumberjacks Win Eight-Hour Day."⁵⁸ The I.W.W.'s jubilation proved premature, however, as the Pine Manufacturers withdrew their plans four days before the proposed deadline, facing pressure from their colleagues west of the Cascades.⁵⁹

The urging of the federal government and the benefits of shorter hours did not stop lumbermen from attempting to rid themselves of the I.W.W, and employers seized upon the strike as means to do just that. The war had brought a high demand for spruce, necessary for airplane construction due to its light weight and relative strength. However, according to Weyerhaeuser general manager George Long, the inaccessibility of spruce along the coast meant that only about a quarter of lumber companies bothered to cut it at all, due to the expense of reaching it. Long wrote late in 1917 that "quick response to the increased demands of the Government [was] almost an impossibility."⁶⁰ That did not prevent the lumbermen from blaming the shortage of spruce on the Wobblies, though. According to Ficken that was their goal from the outset of the strike, and they manipulated the situation so that the government would intervene and help crush the I.W.W.⁶¹

⁵⁸ "Northwest Lumberjacks Win Eight-Hour Day," *Industrial Worker*, December 15, 1917.

⁵⁹ Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods*, 100.

⁶⁰ George Long to Howard F. Weiss, November 4, 1917, Weyerhaeuser Timber Company Papers (Weyerhaeuser Company Archives, Tacoma, WA), quoted in Ficken, "Wobbly Horrors," 328.

⁶¹ Ficken, "Wobbly Horrors," 333.

After Everett, work had begun in the Washington legislature on a bill which would ban “criminal syndicalism,” which it defined as “the doctrine which advocates crime, sabotage, violence, or other unlawful methods of terrorism as a means of accomplishing industrial or political reform,” while also outlining punishment for engaging in such acts.⁶² The bill passed both houses but was vetoed by Governor Lister on March 20, 1917, after the legislative session had adjourned, and thus nothing could be done with respect to the measure for two years.⁶³ However, when war was declared and rumors of a strike in the lumber industry rumbled, discussions began in the U.S. Congress on how to curb the I.W.W. menace. The Federal Espionage Act was quickly passed into law on June 15, 1917, giving authorities the power they needed to begin a massive crackdown on syndicalists and to round up Wobblies across the country. Stockades were set up in the northwest at places such as Yakima, Wenatchee, Ellensburg and Moscow, where Wobblies were imprisoned and held without charge.⁶⁴

With the arrests of Wobblies mounting, the I.W.W. announced plans in August, 1917 for a general strike meant to shut down all workers in the Inland Empire if the “class war prisoners” were not released. In response, martial law was declared in Spokane and police nabbed organizer James Rowan on August 19, crippling the Wobbly leadership east of the Cascades.⁶⁵ Federal agents stepped up their offensive against the I.W.W. on September 5, raiding halls and imprisoning leaders across the country.⁶⁶ At the same time, Wobblies held a referendum and voted to return to the job.⁶⁷ While it was hailed by employers and the press as a victorious end to the strike, it soon became apparent that the I.W.W. had brought the strike with them back to

⁶²Schmidt, “Sedition and Criminal Syndicalism,” 8-9.

⁶³ Ibid., 16-18.

⁶⁴ “States Prepare to Resist I.W.W.,” *Spokesman Review*, August 16, 1917.

⁶⁵ Washington, 16th Legislature, *Report of the State Council of Defense to the Governor of Washington Covering Its Activities During the War, June 16, 1917 to January 9, 1919* (Olympia: Frank M. Lamborn Public Printer, 1919), 76.

⁶⁶ Rajala, “Dandy Bunch of Wobblies,” 221.

⁶⁷ Howd, *Industrial Relations*, 74

work, “hoosier[ing] up” and working like “green farmer boys who had never seen the woods before.”⁶⁸

Meanwhile, accusations of treason and “pro-Germanism” against the I.W.W. spread rapidly in the press and the court of public opinion. The *Spokesman Review* editorial board quoted the Portland district attorney in writing “there can be no doubt that Germany’s is the giant unseen hand that is paying the I.W.W.”⁶⁹ Rumors of the nefarious and traitorous activities of the Wobblies were not limited to the Northwest press and politicians, either. Arizona Senator Henry F. Ashurst made I.W.W. stand for “Imperial Wilhelm’s Warriors,”⁷⁰ and in reporting on alleged arson committed by the I.W.W., the *New York Times* wrote there was “no doubt” that “German spies have figured in the working out of details of the conspiracy against the Government and people of the United States.”⁷¹ Ironically, however, the adjacent column reported that “continued investigation, it is understood, has failed to connect [the I.W.W.’s] activities with German money.”⁷² Accusations of Bolshevism were far better supported, given headlines in the *Industrial Worker* after the overthrow of the Czar such as: “Russia—The Herald of a New World.”⁷³

Rumors of sabotage also quickly spread, and Wobblies were said to have driven railroad spikes into logs to destroy the machinery of mills. Logger Engstrom later disputed that idea, writing: “No sane man would do that. Destruction of property and killing or injuring innocent persons in sawmills were not on the strikers’ program.”⁷⁴ Wobblies too were said to be the cause of forest fires that swept the Northwest during the summer of 1917, but the State Forester found

⁶⁸ Rowan, *I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry*, 50.

⁶⁹ Editorial, “I.W.W. Inner Circle Gets the Money,” *Spokesman Review*, July 10, 1917.

⁷⁰ “Tells What I.W.W. Means,” *New York Times*, August 18, 1917.

⁷¹ “Sabotage and Arson Plotted by the I.W.W.,” *New York Times*, September 6, 1917.

⁷² “Big Raid on I.W.W. and Socialists, Haywood Taken,” *New York Times*, September 6, 1917.

⁷³ “Russia—Herald of a New World,” *Industrial Worker*, February 16, 1918.

⁷⁴ Engstrom, *The Vanishing Logger*, 43

no evidence to attribute them to the I.W.W.,⁷⁵ and noted that Wobbly lumberjacks out of work due to the strike had volunteered to fight fires and were instrumental in doing so because of their superior knowledge of the woods.⁷⁶ Indeed, despite calling the I.W.W. “a bad lot in every way,” George Long too doubted the claims of Wobbly arson, writing “... [W]hile there have been a whole lot of suggestions... about their burning sawmills and burning up timber land, I do not know of one authentic case where this has occurred.”⁷⁷

Regardless of the dubious nature of the press’s claims, the federal government soon stepped up even further efforts to break the strike and return production to normal. In October 1917, the War Department sent former prison warden Col. Brice Disque as an investigator to determine how to expedite the production of spruce. After several weeks of study, Disque formed the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen on November 30, 1917, a new union meant to draw men away from the I.W.W. by appealing to their patriotism.⁷⁸ On a more practical level, however, employers used it to strike at the Wobblies by requiring membership in the 4L, as the Legion came to be known, and forbidding employment to any man found carrying the red card of the I.W.W. and creating a blacklist of any unrepentant Wobblies.⁷⁹ This did not slow the I.W.W.’s recruiting efforts in the slightest, though; in December they boasted gains of 1300 new members and in January claimed nearly as many.⁸⁰ The Army also sent the Spruce Production Division (S.P.D), a garrison of ten thousand men, to be placed under Disque’s command to supplement the work force in camps and mills.⁸¹ However, employing federal soldiers meant

⁷⁵ Schmidt, “Sedition and Criminal Syndicalism,” 43.

⁷⁶ Merz, “Tying Up Western Lumber,” 242.

⁷⁷ Long to J.F. Kimball, July 17, 1917, Weyerhaeuser Timber Company Papers, quoted in Ficken, “Wobbly Horrors,” 329.

⁷⁸ Howd, *Industrial Relations*, 77-78.

⁷⁹ Rajala, “Dandy Bunch of Wobblies,” 222-224.

⁸⁰ “Lumberworkers Gain 1300 New Members in December,” *Industrial Worker*, January 12, 1918; “Big Gains for 500,” *Industrial Worker*, February 9, 1918.

⁸¹ Tyler, “Government as Union Organizer,” 440-442.

complying with federal health standards, which in turn meant that working conditions had to be improved.⁸² In a boon to the strikers, Disque announce that he would only dispatch S.P.D soldiers to companies abiding by the eight hour standard.⁸³ On February 27, 1918, Disque met with a group of lumbermen in Portland to once again discuss the matter of eight hours, and after a long night of debate Disque publicly declared March 1 as the date for the region-wide adoption of the eight hour day, officially ending the strike.⁸⁴

In the end, every group involved claimed responsibility for the victory. The *Industrial Worker* was quick to write: "Through pressure brought to bear by the Industrial Workers of the World the lumber barons are at last forced to concede the eight-hour day to us."⁸⁵ The Wobblies celebrated their victory by burning their blanket bundles, the symbols of their oppression at the hands of the master class.⁸⁶ In an article written about a year after the war, Disque declared that the Loyal Legion deserved the credit.⁸⁷ Behind the scenes, however, employers came out of the strike as the truly victorious. As Ficken points out, the matter of eight hours had never really been an issue for the lumbermen; hardliners feared that granting one concession would open the floodgate for more and more demands.⁸⁸ While some operators, like those in the Western Pine Manufacturers' Association, recognized their productivity would not be harmed by shorter hours, especially in the winter months, they opted against it purely to present a solid front against labor. When the Federal government became involved, they used that opportunity to emasculate the I.W.W, sending their leaders to jail and blacklisting known Wobblies.⁸⁹ With the Wobblies' power base shattered, lumbermen were content to concede the eight-hour day, so long as it

⁸² Rajala, "Dandy Bunch of Wobblies," 223.

⁸³ Ficken, "Wobbly Horrors," 338.

⁸⁴ Howd, *Industrial Relations*, 79-80.

⁸⁵ "I. W. W. Activity Forces Eight-Hour Day in Northwest," *Industrial Worker*, March 9, 1918.

⁸⁶ Engstrom, *The Vanishing Logger*, 46.

⁸⁷ Disque, "Cure for Strikes," 380.

⁸⁸ Ficken, "Wobbly Horrors," 330.

⁸⁹ Rajala, "Dandy Bunch of Wobblies," 228.

appeared, as George Long wrote, to “come as a suggestion from the Federal Government through the activities of Col. Disque,” and not as concession directly from them to the laborers.⁹⁰

Much to the dismay of employers and authorities, though, the Wobblies in the northwest were not quite done in yet. No, their final defeat was to come a year after war’s end in the small town of Centralia. There, Wobblies had opened a new meeting hall on Labor Day 1919, drawing the ire of local businesses and the newly-formed American Legion.⁹¹ This was not the first occasion the I.W.W. had attempted to make a presence in Centralia; in February 1915 some four dozen unemployed Wobblies tried to spend the night there and were driven out of town by police and vigilantes, and in March 1917 they opened a hall near downtown but were again driven from town when a mob of businessmen raided their meeting hall during a parade in May 1918.⁹² The next time the I.W.W. established a meeting hall in Centralia, city leaders gathered together to discuss their “Wobbly Problem.” The Chief of Police reportedly said at a meeting at the Elks’ Club that “the I.W.W. is doing nothing wrong in Centralia—it is not violating any law—and you have no right to drive them out of town.”⁹³ This did not deter the leaders of Centralia, and the newspapers in the city printed accounts of the meeting for the entire town to read.

Remembering the previous raid, the Wobblies became very suspicious when the route for the upcoming Armistice Day parade was announced, for it passed directly in front of their new hall. The Centralia I.W.W, fearing another raid, did something no other Wobblies had done when faced with vigilantism: they made preparations to defend their hall with arms, after consulting with local lawyer and Wobbly sympathizer Elmer Smith. In a move that would later haunt them, several of the Wobblies decided to take up snipers’ positions in a hotel across from their hall and

⁹⁰ Long to F. Weyerhaeuser, Weyerhaeuser Timber Company Papers, quoted in Ficken, “Wobbly Horrors,” 339.

⁹¹ McLelland, *Wobbly War*, 57.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 1, 51-52.

⁹³ Ralph Chaplin, “The Centralia Conspiracy,” 3rd ed., in *The Centralia Case*, Civil Liberties in American History, edited by Leonard W. Levy (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 56.

on a small hill some distance from the parade route.⁹⁴ On November 11, the Legionnaires from the Centralia post brought up the rear of the parade, lagging behind a contingent of Legionnaires from nearby Chehalis. As the column passed the I.W.W. hall, post Commander Warren Grimm ordered his men to halt and close ranks.⁹⁵ Accounts are unclear as to what exactly occurred next. The Wobblies contended that when Legionnaires halted, one of them called out “Let’s go! At ‘em, boys!” before rushing to the hall and bashing in the door; only then do they say that the men inside and at the snipers’ positions opened fire.⁹⁶ The Legion claimed that they had not broken ranks until after the shots were fired, and that it was an act of premeditated murder.⁹⁷ A coroner’s inquest later lent support to the I.W.W.’s version of events. A Legionnaire, Dr. Frank Bickford, testified to the coroner that when the column stopped, he spontaneously volunteered to lead the charge and that when he and some other men reached the door of the hall they kicked it in, and only then did the shooting start.⁹⁸ However, this information was left out of the subsequent trial at the behest of the prosecutors. Though it is impossible to fully reconstruct the events that occurred that day, a later report concluded that it was “likely that some actual move toward the hall on the part of the paraders occurred before any shots were fired.”⁹⁹ Regardless of whoever bore the blame for the attack, after the shooting began one Legionnaire lay dead and four more were injured, including Warren Grimm, who later died of his injuries.¹⁰⁰

The horror of the day was not over, however. While many of the Wobblies inside took shelter in an unused icebox in the back of the hall when the Legion entered, one of them, a former serviceman and member of the Spruce Production Division named Wesley Everest, fled

⁹⁴ McLelland, *Wobbly War*, 66-69.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁹⁶ Chaplin, “The Centralia Conspiracy,” 67.

⁹⁷ Ben Hur Lampman, *Centralia—Tragedy and Trial* (1920: Repr., Seattle: Shorey Bookstore, 1965), 8.

⁹⁸ McLelland, *Wobbly War*, 73.

⁹⁹ Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, and the General Conference of American Rabbis, *The Centralia Case: A Joint Report* (New York: Brooklyn Eagle Press, 1930), 41.

¹⁰⁰ Lampman, *Centralia—Tragedy and Trial*, 8-9.

out the back door. In the alley behind the hall he encountered two Legionnaires who had circled around at the start of the commotion. Everest shot both of them and killed one before racing to the banks of the Skookumchuck River with three more Legionnaires in hot pursuit. Cornered, Everest shot and mortally wounded one his pursuers, emptying his gun in the process. The growing throng of men surrounded Everest, and one of them fastened his belt around Everest's neck before dragging him to the city jail, where about half of the fourteen Wobblies who defended the hall were being held. The terror had still not ended, though. That night, a mob of men and women outside the jail cut the power and demanded the keys from the guard on duty. Thinking he was the local Wobbly leader Britt Smith, the mob seized Wesley Everest and dragged him to the nearby Chehalis River, where he was lynched from what came to be known as Hangman's Bridge. Unsubstantiated reports later emerged that before he died, Everest had been castrated. A short time later, lawyer Elmer Smith surrendered himself to a mob that had grown outside his office, and the others were found and brought in over the next several days. The only one not apprehended was a man known only by the name Davis, who was likely the one that fired the shot from his perch in the hotel across the street that killed Warren Grimm.¹⁰¹

The massacre at Centralia ignited a firestorm across the state and throughout the country. More raid parties of vigilantes and police went out, rounding up Wobblies and destroying their literature.¹⁰² Senator Poindexter called for another round of tough Federal crackdowns on Wobblies, saying in Congress: "Force... is the only means of dealing with the Bolsheviki."¹⁰³ General John J. Pershing denounced the I.W.W., saying of Centralia "Too drastic measures cannot be taken to rid our country of the class of criminals who inspire or commit such

¹⁰¹ McLelland, *Wobbly War*, 73-81.

¹⁰² "I.W.W. Hanged at Centralia," *Spokesman Review*, November 12, 1919; "25 Are Jailed in Tacoma Raid on I.W.W. Members," *Seattle Times*, November 12, 1919.

¹⁰³ "Congressmen Urge Action," *New York Times*, November 13, 1919.

crimes.”¹⁰⁴ The *Seattle Times*, billing itself as an “American Paper for Real Americans,” ran a front page editorial calling for America to “clean house,” and imprison or deport any known Wobblies,¹⁰⁵ and another *Times* editorial declared that the offices of the *Seattle Union Record*, the main labor paper in the city, should be raided.¹⁰⁶ Little mention was made in any accounts of the public plans in Centralia to drive the I.W.W. out of town.

The Wobblies in custody were brought to trial for the murder of Grimm, for investigation had determined that Everest was responsible for the other three murders. The trial took place in nearby Grays Harbor County at the behest of the defense, led by prominent Wobbly attorney George Vanderveer, who had defended Thomas Tracy and the I.W.W. at the Everett trial. Vanderveer felt that an impartial jury could not be found in Lewis County. Even so, the objectivity of the trial was debatable; the American Legion had packed the court room with men in uniform and a National Guard unit was dispatched ostensibly to keep order outside the courthouse, but their positioning directly on the lawn infuriated Vanderveer.¹⁰⁷ If the Legion was trying to influence the trial, it certainly worked; two of the accused men testified against their fellows and eight were convicted of second-degree murder; albeit with a request for leniency. The judge, however, did not take the jury’s advice and sentenced the Wobblies to twenty-five years in prison. The only two acquitted were the lawyer Elmer Smith and Mike Sheehan, who had happened to be in the hall but refused to participate in its defense.¹⁰⁸

The ordeal was far from over, though. Vanderveer immediately appealed the ruling, but was denied. After that, he and Smith began the long uphill battle for the imprisoned men’s release, which quickly evolved into a *cause célèbre* in the labor community. Smith was soon

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Editorial, “America Must Clean House!” *Seattle Times*, November 12, 1919.

¹⁰⁶ Editorial, “What Does Seattle Labor Intend Doing?” *Seattle Times*, November 12, 1919.

¹⁰⁷ Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods*, 166-168.

¹⁰⁸ McLelland, *Wobbly War*, 159-165.

disbarred in Washington, but continued his crusade for his comrades' release. In 1928, eight years after the trial, an out of state Legionnaire came to Washington to sell insurance, and on noticing the apparent hatred of the working class for the American Legion launched his own investigation into Centralia, collecting affidavits from parade marchers confirming the Wobblies contention that the Legion had charged before the shots were fired. A number of the jurors approached Smith and told him they only voted to convict for fear of reprisal should they have found the defendants not guilty.¹⁰⁹ With these newfound facts and recollections, public opinion began to turn in favor of the prisoners. But, in spite of the mounting evidence, requests to the Governor for clemency went unheeded until ten years after the massacre and trial, when the Federal Council of Churches of Christ, the National Catholic Welfare Conference and the General Conference of American Rabbis issued a joint report on the events at Centralia, which reported "The mood of revolt which had come over these I.W.W.s was fortified by a deep sense of social injustice and economic disadvantage and the plan to deal with them by violence only deepened their resentment and goaded them to violent resistance."¹¹⁰ In the meantime, one of the prisoners had died in jail, one was released on parole, and another had been granted a reprieve. In the 1932 gubernatorial election, Democratic candidate Clarence D. Martin included in his platform a pledge to release the remaining Centralia prisoners in an effort to appeal to labor interests in the state. He won, and in April 1933 followed through with his promise to release them on parole, but one refused and instead obstinately demanded a pardon and so languished in Walla Walla until 1939, when Martin simply commuted his sentence.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods*, 177-182.

¹¹⁰ Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, and the General Conference of American Rabbis, *The Centralia Case: A Joint Report*, 45

¹¹¹ McLelland, *Wobbly War*, 224.

The events at Centralia seem to have had a sobering effect on the nation, or at least in the northwest, with regards to radicalism. After the initial backlash, little violence was recorded against the I.W.W, and the turning tide of public opinion shows that Wobblies were no longer viewed as the evil alien other they were portrayed as during the war. In some respects, though, this change in perception came much too late. By the time of the Centralia prisoners' release, the Industrial Workers of the World were rapidly fading into the mists of memory. This was due in part to the lessened relevance of radicalism after the war, particularly in the lumber industry. The Wobblies had fought doggedly so that they would not have to live in filth while in the forests, but barely a decade after they had gotten their shorter hours and their cleaner camps, the issues which motivated them were no longer germane to the situation. Sociologist and former lumberjack Norman Hayner points out that by 1932, the single, itinerant workers who so loathed the logging camps and small company towns had been replaced by settled, married men able to commute to logging sites in their newly prevalent automobiles.¹¹²

While the I.W.W. sought the overthrow of capitalism as part of their demand for the "good things in life," many of their supporters, as Dubofsky previously noted, were only preoccupied with the latter and only rallied behind revolutionaries inasmuch as it brought them palpable gains. In essence, the legion of workers the Wobblies seemed to command during the lumber strike of 1917 was a phantom, and as the standard of living rose and the gap between the workers and the bosses closed, the illusion of power was dispelled. So too after the crackdowns and blacklists of Wobblies during the war and after Centralia, many workers no longer wanted to be associated with the I.W.W. This, coupled with the inability of the western "bummers," as Daniel de Leon called them,¹¹³ to adapt to changes drove many mindful of the interests of the

¹¹² Norman S. Hayner, "Taming the Lumberjack," *American Sociological Review* 10 (April 1945): 218-220.

¹¹³ Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods*, 23.

working into the more flexible and far less radical ranks of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, and left the I.W.W. merely a shadow of its former glory. In the conclusion of *Rebels of the Woods*, Tyler recounts a visit to the Seattle I.W.W. hall before it locked its doors for good in 1965. There, he found a number of Wobblies “considerably beyond middle age,” much older than the typical Wobbly of the 1910s, who was usually younger than twenty-five years. On the wall hung aged and yellowed photographs of Wobbly martyrs such as Wesley Everest, as well as decades-old I.W.W. publications. When Tyler asked them about the future of the Wobblies, they obfuscated and instead offered to look back in their files for something that would “throw light on the Centralia riot or the 1917 lumber strike,”¹¹⁴ proving Gambs’ prediction that by their unwillingness to change their organization, the Industrial Workers of the World doomed themselves to failure.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 229-231

References

Primary Sources

I.W.W. Publications and Accounts

Chaplin, Ralph. "The Centralia Conspiracy," 3rd ed., in *The Centralia Case*. Civil Liberties in American History, edited by Leonard W. Levy. New York: Da Capo Press, 1971.

I.W.W. *Preamble and Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World, Organized July 7, 1905*. Chicago: I.W.W. Publishing Bureau, 1916.

I.W.W. *Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World*. 1905. Reprint, New York: Merit Publishers, 1969.

Kornbluh, Joyce L. *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964.

Rowan, James. *The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry*. 1920?. Reprint, Seattle: Shorey Bookstore, 1969.

Smith, Walker C. *The Everett Massacre: A History of the Class Struggle in the Lumber Industry*. Chicago: I.W.W. Publishing Bureau, 1917.

Newspapers

Industrial Worker, October 27, 1909-March 9, 1918

New York Times, August 18, 1917-November 13, 1919

Seattle Times, November 6, 1916-November 12, 1919

Spokesman-Review, November 7, 1909-November 12, 1919.

Government Documents

U.S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Industrial Relations in the West Coast Lumber Industry*, by Cloice R. Howd. Bulletin No. 349. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1924.

U.S. Congress. *Congressional Record*. 65th Cong., 1st sess., 1917. Vol. 55, pt. 5.

Washington, 16th Legislature. *Report of the State Council of Defense to the Governor of Washington Covering Its Activities During the War, June 16, 1917 to January 9, 1919*. Olympia: Frank M. Lamborn Public Printer, 1919.

———, Bureau of Labor. *Eleventh Biennial Report, 1917-1918*. Olympia: Frank M. Lamborn Public Printer, 1918.

Other Accounts

Disque, Brice. "How We Found a Cure for Strikes." *System*, September 1919, 379-384.

Engstrom, Emil. *The Vanishing Logger*. New York: Vantage Press, 1956.

Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, and the General Conference of American Rabbis. *The Centralia Case: A Joint Report*. New York: Brooklyn Eagle Press, 1930.

Holbrook, Stewart H. "Wobbly Talk." *American Mercury*, January 1926, 62-65.

Lampman, Ben Hur. *Centralia—Tragedy and Trial*. 1920. Reprint, Seattle: Shorey Bookstore, 1965.

Merz, Charles. "Tying Up Western Lumber." *New Republic*, September 29, 1917, 242-244.

Secondary Sources

Brissenden, Paul F. *The I.W.W.: A Study of American Syndicalism*, 2nd ed. New York: Russell & Russell, 1920.

Dubofsky, Melvyn. *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973)

Eckberg, Robert C. "The Free Speech Fight of the Industrial Workers of the World, Spokane, Washington: 1909-1910." M.A. thesis, Washington State University, 1967.

Ficken, Robert E. *The Forested Land*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987.

———. "The Wobbly Horrors: Pacific Northwest Lumbermen and the Industrial Workers of the World, 1917-1918." *Labor History* 24 (Summer 1983): 325-341.

Gamb, John S. *The Decline of the I.W.W.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1932.

Hanson, Tim. "Wobblies in the Woods: The 1917 Lumber Strike in the Inland Empire." *Pacific Northwest Forum* 2nd series 4, no. 2 (Summer-Fall 1991): 69-80.

Hayner, Norman S. "Taming the Lumberjack." *American Sociological Review* 10 (April 1945): 217-225.

Hull, Robert E. "I.W.W. Activity in Everett Washington from May 1916 to June 1917." M.A. thesis, State College of Washington, 1938.

McClelland, John M. *Wobbly War: The Centralia Story*. Tacoma: Washington State Historical Society, 1987.

Rajala, Richard A. "A Dandy Bunch of Wobblies: Pacific Northwest Loggers and the Industrial Workers of the World, 1900-1930." *Labor History* 37 (Spring 1996): 205-234.

Schmidt, Dorothy N. "Sedition and Criminal Syndicalism in the State of Washington—1917-1919." M.A. thesis, State College of Washington, 1940.

Tyler, Robert L. "The Everett Free Speech Fight." *Pacific Historical Review* 23 (February 1954): 19-30.

———. "The I.W.W. in the Pacific Northwest: Rebels of the Woods." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 55 (March 1954): 3-44.

———. *Rebels of the Woods: the I.W.W. in the Pacific Northwest*. Eugene: University of Oregon Books, 1967.

———. "The United States Government as Union Organizer: The Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47 (December, 1960): 434-451.

WSU Libraries Student Research Excellence Award

Faculty/Instructor Letter of Support Cover Sheet

Faculty/Instructor Name Matthew A. Sutton

Date March 9, 2010

Department History

Student name Kearby Chess

Please indicate on a signed attached sheet your comments regarding how this student's work meets the prize criteria. The panel is especially interested in your assessment of the originality and depth of this work, and the level of self-sufficiency demonstrated by this student in pursuing research.

Deadline for this letter of support is **March, 12 2010**. You may give your letter to the student for inclusion in his/her packet, or you may send it in campus mail to Beth Blakesley, 5610. You may email the letter to elindsay@wsu.edu to meet the deadline, but we will need a signed hard copy in addition to the electronic copy.

March 09, 2010

Dear Student Research Award Committee,

I am writing in strong support of **Kearby Chess**'s application for a Library Student Research Excellence Award. Chess took my HIST 300 course, *Writing about History*. He was easily one of the most ambitious and hardest working students in the class and he produced what was arguably the best-researched final paper of the group.

The purpose of the HIST 300 course is to help students develop good research skills and then to use those skills to write a strong paper of at least twenty-to-twenty-five page (Chess's paper was thirty-five pages). He focused his paper on the history and significance of the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies) in the Pacific Northwest and sought to explain and understand how and why the Wobblies were unable to sustain their movement.

To make his arguments, Chess began with an excellent survey of the best secondary literature on the topic. He tracked down all of the important secondary sources (including books and articles) and wrote a compelling historiography. He also did an excellent job of tracking down primary sources, which provided the bulk of the evidence for his arguments. He started with the core documents that defined the Wobblies in order to understand how the union understood and defined itself. Then he turned to "outside" sources to analyze external perceptions of the organization. He examined the *Seattle Times*, *New York Times*, and the *Spokesman Review*'s coverage of key incidents in Wobbly history such as the Centralia strike, and looked up magazine articles from the 1910s. He also tracked down microfilm of the *Industrial Worker*, the short-lived Wobbly paper and made excellent use of government publications (federal and state) on union activity in the Pacific Northwest. These sorts of government documents often intimidate undergraduates (and even a few professors) but not Chess who drew on them for key support for his paper. He even made use of a 1940 master's thesis written at WSU. A quick look at his bibliography demonstrates what a thorough job Chess did researching this topic.

Finally, Chess worked very independently on this project, needing little guidance. He did a masterful job of making connections among the various readings and was able to use them to craft a sharp, analytical argument. His writing is consistently clear and crisp. As a result, he tied for the highest grade in the course, an A.

In sum, I strongly recommend Chess for this scholarship. He received consistent high marks on all assignments, made significant contributions to class discussions, and always had a good attitude. Of the handful of really top-notch papers that came out of my HIST 300 course, Chess's may well have been the best. Please do not hesitate to ask if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Sutton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matthew A. Sutton
Assistant Professor of History
Washington State University
P.O. Box 644030
Pullman, WA 99164-4030
sutton@wsu.edu
(509) 335-8374