

THE I.W.W. IN THE GRAIN BELT

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The withdrawal of the Western Federation of Miners in 1907 marked a turning point in the history of the Industrial Workers of the World. After the Federation's departure, the I.W.W. developed into an organization whose energies were largely devoted to agitation. Members of the I.W.W. played a prominent role in taking over the leadership of spontaneous strikes of unorganized workers who left their jobs in protest against conditions they could no longer bear. McKees Rock, Lawrence, Paterson, Little Falls and Akron are inextricably linked with this phase of I.W.W. activity. The free speech fight was another type of agitation prominently carried on in the period between 1909 and 1915. Attempts by local authorities to restrict or suppress street corner meetings led to passive resistance, which usually flared into free speech fights. Hundreds of footloose free speech fighters would flock to the scene of the disorder, mount soap boxes, and court arrest. Local communities found it expensive to fill the jails and sometimes, as in San Diego, California, reacted with brutal violence. Spokane, Fresno, and Sioux City were the scenes of other spectacular free speech demonstrations.

The free speech fights attracted widespread attention and even aroused sympathy among many who were otherwise hostile to the doctrine and activities of the I.W.W., but they did not have any significant organizational results. Except for a few former members of the Western Federation of Miners and a scattering of others like William E. Troutmann, a former leader of the Brewery Workers, who left the I.W.W. after the Lawrence strike, soapboxers dominated the organization during this period. Their conception of the function of the I.W.W. is reflected in the comment of James P. Thompson, for a time general organizer, on the Lawrence textile strike. An extremely effective street orator, Thompson was called in to help run the strike. For him, the strike was "one big propaganda meeting. Every hour that the strike lasted the One Big Union idea was spreading like wildfire.

Labor Review, 38
Board, First Annual
in, *Labor Relations*
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made. See, however,
Berkeley, 1950), and
Auto Industry, 1954
182-205.

The strikers of Lawrence were actually teaching the country how to fight."¹

Propaganda had become the main function of the I.W.W., which had virtually developed into a propaganda league. Some of its leading members felt that it should abandon any pretense of being an economic organization and devote its energies exclusively to agitation and, wherever possible, to boring-from-within the conservative unions of the American Federation of Labor.

Curiously, while at this time the I.W.W. was ineffective as an economic labor organization, on a minuscule scale it showed some of the symptoms usually associated with business unionism. In 1912 complaints were heard that "several of the Locals have suffered in the past year from defaulting secretaries."² The Lawrence textile strike, which began in January 1912, was not unattended by scandal. Over \$68,000 was expended on the relief of strikers and their families, but some of the funds collected for these purposes were misused.

In 1914, the I.W.W. seemed completely spent. True, this was only a year after the spectacular Paterson silk strike, a struggle which aroused national attention. But neither this nor the previous dramatic strikes had led to the creation or establishment of permanent unions in the industries involved. A notable exception occurred in Philadelphia, where a group of dock workers, the majority Negroes, had applied for a charter, and struck for recognition on May 13, 1913. After a strike of two weeks, the dock workers won recognition of their union and the right to bargain collectively. The I.W.W. was opposed to signing agreements, but the Philadelphia longshoremen were able to agree to contract terms, and they carried out their agreement faithfully.

From the start the Philadelphia dock workers encountered a number of difficult problems because of their affiliation with the I.W.W. These eventually led to a severance of their affiliation. The I.W.W. required that its constituent units accept the card of a member of another branch without additional charges for initiation. This free transfer system meant that a member could shift from one division to any other, as long as he had or sought employment in an area in which an I.W.W. unit operated. The desire of many footloose members to

1. *Solidarity*, October 19, 1912.

2. *Industrial Worker*, October 24, 1912.

transfer at different times to the Philadelphia longshoremen's local inevitably created a problem. When the I.W.W. insisted the local reduce the initiation fee, which had been raised to \$25.00 to limit new entrants, it withdrew.

The Philadelphia longshoremen's branch and a local of Italian bakery workers in New York were the only stable unions the I.W.W. was able to establish prior to 1916. The low state of I.W.W. fortunes in 1914 may be inferred from the fact that less than 1,700 votes were cast in the election for secretary-treasurer, the highest office in the organization.³ (Publicly the I.W.W. claimed 25,000 or more members.) Vincent St. John, who had been the previous secretary-treasurer, refused to be a candidate for re-election. Since he was a veteran unionist, his refusal was perhaps an expression of disillusionment with the possibilities of building an economic organization independent of the traditional unions. In any event, the record of the I.W.W. made it abundantly clear that it could not build viable "on the job" organizations. It was much better adapted to engaging in colorful battles with police and local authorities than to recruiting and organizing stable and steady workers.

It was during this ebb in its fortunes that there occurred a development which, were it not for the intervention of World War I, might have transformed the I.W.W. into a powerful economic organization of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. During the convention of 1914, Frank Little, a member of the General Executive Board suggested that "some means should be taken for concerted and efficient action in the harvest fields next year. It was proposed that a conference be held composed of members from different locals bordering the harvest district, and that this conference [devise] ways and means for harmonious grouping of hitherto spasmodic efforts of harvest organizations."⁴

At harvest time, farmers in the Middle Western grain belt found it necessary to hire considerable additional labor. Not all of this labor could be provided by the cities and towns in the area; hence the farmers depended upon thousands of workers who migrated from cities such as Kansas City, Omaha, etc., although some workers came from even more distant points. The harvesting of winter wheat would begin in Southern

3. *Solidarity*, March 10, 1914.

4. *Ibid.*, October 10, 1914.

Oklahoma in late May or early June, depending upon the season; and gradually expand into Eastern, Central, and Western Kansas and into the grain-growing areas of Nebraska. A minority of harvest hands would remain for the threshing, but the larger group would move in a series of northward jumps so as to be on hand for employment in the spring wheat areas of Minnesota, the Dakotas, and Eastern Montana; some would move as far north as Saskatchewan and Alberta. Not all harvest hands started in the fields of Oklahoma or Kansas; there were those who worked only in one or in several adjacent states.

Farmers with one hundred acres in grain might require five to seven extra men for harvesting. On the average, a harvest hand might be able to get from seven to fourteen days work from a single job. As the grain ripened simultaneously in the same area, most harvesters would be compelled to move North and West once they finished a job in a given section of a state. The fortunate ones might finish the season as members of a threshing crew with twenty-five to sixty days of steady work. Threshing was carried on by crews from fourteen to twenty-two men, some of them usually from the surrounding farms or the immediate area. Some workers were hired by the farmer and the rest of the crew by the contractor.⁵

After finishing the grain harvest, some men usually moved into Iowa and Nebraska for corn husking. Others would try their luck at potato picking in Western and Central Minnesota, and still others would seek employment in the sugar beet factories of Western Nebraska. The oil field worker went back to Kansas and Oklahoma, Texas or Louisiana, and the lumberjack normally found his way back to the woods in the Middle Western lumbering areas or to the short logs in Montana and Idaho. Many harvesters sought only a "stake" large enough to enable them to move into a housekeeping room in one of the cities adjacent to the grain belt. By frugal management, they hoped to go through the winter with a minimum of work. Such hopes were often not realized; inadequate earnings, as well as danger and temptation, were the frequent lot of the harvest hand.

The harvest fields were a magnet for thousands of workers. Some came from places hundreds and even thousands of miles distant. Men

5. Don D. Lescotier, "Conditions Affecting the Demand for Labor in the Grain Belt," *United States Department of Agriculture Bulletin* 1230, April 1924, pp. 6-13.

who worked at strawberry picking in Arkansas might come into Southern Oklahoma to replenish their income. There were also those who "made" the harvest annually: the oil field pipe liner or roustabout, the lumber worker, the mule skinner without a road job, and the migrant who moved from place to place picking up an occasional job. The ranks of the perennials would be swelled by a scattering of college students in search of tuition and adventure and, in times of more than normal unemployment, by more venturesome factory workers. The large mass of strangers who invaded the grain areas inevitably attracted a number of undesirables. These included the tinhorn gambler, the highjack (the term came from the orders of the stickup man, who addressing his victim as "Jack," told him to raise his hands "high"), and in dry areas, the bootlegger. Railroad brakemen were also a problem. The men who came to the harvest would usually steal rides on top of freight trains, and the brakeman might ask: "What are you riding on?" The question was, in effect, a request for a dollar, although some brakemen would recognize a union card in lieu of payment.

Until they got work, most harvest hands arriving in the grain area would be forced to sleep in box cars and eat in "jungles," areas adjacent to the local stockyards or beside a brook or a spring. Through use of tin cans and makeshift frying pans, it would be possible to prepare an inexpensive cooperative meal which might be shared with those without money. Upon completion of a job, the men would return to the jungles to "boil up," that is wash and mend their clothes, before moving to the next point. The bootlegger and cardsharp infested the jungles hoping, and often succeeding, to separate the harvester from his hard-earned wages. Highjacks rode the trains, relieving the hapless victims of their monies and sometimes seriously injuring those whom they compelled to leave the train while it was moving rapidly through the countryside. The communities in which the harvest hands congregated were not always overjoyed at the presence of their out-of-town guests. Of course, the welfare of the town might depend upon the availability of harvest labor, for otherwise it might not be possible to bring in the crops. But many of the workers created police and sanitary problems, and the best the harvest hands would normally receive was a grudging welcome from the townspeople.

Distribution of harvest labor was imperfect. A short crop or a large supply of hands meant a surplus of labor, and forced many to remain in town without employment or funds to support themselves. Begging or stealing inevitably aroused the local populace which might order the unwelcome strangers out of town. On the other hand, a sudden ripening of grain over a wide area might deplete the available labor supply and lead to a serious shortage of help.

The I.W.W. at the time consisted mainly of independent local industrial unions and recruiting unions. The latter were analogous to the federal labor unions of the A.F.L. in that workers of every type and grade joined one unit. The difference was that the A.F.L. regarded these units as temporary organizational devices whose members would eventually be distributed among various affiliates. The local industrial unions and recruiting unions of the I.W.W. contained relatively few members and were of no significance as unions. There were also a few national industrial unions in the I.W.W., largely paper organizations of no importance.

The locals in such places as Kansas City and St. Joseph, Missouri; Omaha, Nebraska; and Minneapolis, Minnesota, which bordered on the Middle Western grain belt, usually sent their delegates into the harvest fields in a competitive endeavor to recruit members among the thousands of migratory workers who annually flocked to these areas in search of employment. The proposal of Frank Little to the 1914 convention was thus designed to establish cooperation among the different locals on a common organizational program in the grain fields.

Soon after the adjournment of the 1914 convention, William D. ("Big Bill") Haywood, the new secretary-treasurer, announced the I.W.W. would establish a Bureau of Migratory Workers. He declared that "an organized effort will be made to circumvent the schemes of the labor bureaus and employment sharks." He attacked the existing exploitation of the migrant worker and described the procedures followed by I.W.W. members in the harvest belt during the crop season. "The I.W.W.," Haywood said, "form in groups and establish what may be called community life in the jungles. When a crowd of members of this organization leave a train near the station, they go to the outskirts of the town or the bank of a stream if convenient. There a

meeting is called, a Camp Committee is elected, the formation of which is to see the camp is kept clean and sanitary. A job committee is selected to rustle the town for work. . . . Every man is expected to do some work around camp, though there are some of parasitic nature who accept service without giving service; these are called 'Jungle Buzzards.' But they are not tolerated for long by the I.W.W. Gamblers and 'Stick-ups' infest all harvest gangs, but in the I.W.W. camps the rule, No Gambling, is strictly observed."⁶

As directed by the convention, Secretary-Treasurer Haywood convened a conference in Kansas City of locals adjacent to the grain belt. The conference took place on April 21, 1915. Its purpose was to work out a unified organization program for the harvest fields. Earlier Haywood had suggested that the conference might establish a central office separate from the locals, and that a general organizer should be appointed to direct the organizing campaign. He also recommended the application of uniform dues and initiation schedules throughout the entire Middle Western grain belt. The individual locals would be prohibited from following their own inclinations in these matters.

Nine locals were represented at the conference, and the delegates established the Agricultural Workers Organization 400. Haywood later declared that the number "400" had been suggested by him because he regarded the migratory worker in the harvest belt as making up the elite which would regenerate the labor movement and as fitted to carry out the more difficult tasks of organization. A secretary and an agitation committee, later to become the organization committee, were chosen. The conference voted, "if there is any surplus of finances at the end of the season in the treasury of the Agricultural Workers Organization, that it be used for organizing work among the migratory workers."⁷ The conference formulated the following demands: A minimum wage of \$3.00 a day; 50 cents overtime for every hour worked above ten in one day; adequate board and good places to sleep; and no discrimination against members of the I.W.W.

The first organizing campaign got under way in June in Oklahoma and Kansas.⁸ A statement issued by the agitation committee, "Harvest-

6. William D. Haywood, "To Migratory Workers," *Solidarity*, November 28, 1914.
7. *Solidarity*, April 24, 1915.
8. *Ibid.*, June 26, 1915.

ing the Harvesters," declared that "Kansas is full of tin-horn gamblers and crooks of all kinds. These human vultures follow up the harvest in order to harvest the harvesters. They go ahead with their business unmolested. . . . Gambling and holdups are in full swing. It seems as if the authorities are encouraging it, as there is nothing done in the way of stopping it. . . . The I.W.W. organization is referred to as 'I won't work' and the members are charged with that they never work. But gamblers don't work and they are OK. . . . And the only reason the employers are against the I.W.W.'s is that they Do Work."⁹ The agitation committee asked all I.W.W. members to transfer to the Agricultural Workers' Organization 400.

The tactics pursued by A.W.O. 400 were highly successful. From July 1, 1915 to December 31, 1915, the A.W.O. initiated 2,208 members and accumulated \$14,113.06 in its treasury.¹⁰ Such prosperity had seldom been enjoyed by any unit of the I.W.W. since the departure of the Western Federation of Miners. And this comparison is somewhat misleading, since the Western Federation of Miners was a going concern long before the I.W.W. had been established. The initiation of more than two thousand workers in a period of several months—most of the newly organized were recruited between June and October—may not appear to be a striking feat, but by the usual organizing standards of the I.W.W., it was of great significance. Few units of the I.W.W. had up to that time been able to do as well organizationally and financially, although relief and defense expenditures in several of the strikes were considerably greater.¹¹

The success of the drive in the harvest fields had repercussions in other parts of the organization. The *Monthly Bulletin* issued by the General Office "suggested that in view of the successful work of the A.W.O., similar methods should be adopted for the lumber, mining and other migratory workers' industries."¹²

In the summer of 1916 the A.W.O. organizing campaign in the harvest fields went in to high gear. Under the slogan "Come on 400," the A.W.O. began the forced initiation of thousands of harvest work-

9. *Ibid.*, July 10, 1915.

10. *Ibid.*, March 18, 1916.

11. *Ibid.*, January 8, 1916.

12. *Ibid.*, August 28, 1915.

ers. Organizers and their aids, some armed with clubs, pickhandles and guns, virtually took over the freight trains entering the harvest fields. No one was allowed to ride unless he could show a card issued by the A.W.O. 400 or another I.W.W. unit. In many instances, men who refused to join were unloaded, forced to get off the trains, or denied use of the jungles.

The campaign was directed by the A.W.O. Organization Committee whose members were each given a territory to supervise. Stationary delegates were located at the principal points in the grain belt during the harvest season; among others, Enid, Oklahoma; Wichita and Ellis, Kansas; Fargo and Minot, North Dakota; Aberdeen, South Dakota. The actual organizing work was carried on by delegates or volunteers who were given credentials by the stationary delegates or by members of the organization committee. Groups of these delegates and their supporters combed the freight trains in search for non-members, who were requested or forced to join. Since commissions were paid for new members, an incentive beyond mere loyalty to the I.W.W. prompted the use of force.

These organizational methods led to a sharp increase in income and membership, and the monies were used to expand organization work in industries utilizing migratory labor. Nevertheless, not all members were happy with the new approach. Forrest Edwards, who was elected secretary of the A.W.O. in 1916, obliquely defended it. "Objections are frequently made to the methods of the '400'. Some say the methods are too severe. In fact, this seems to be the general opinion of oldtime I.W.W. men. This new blood is putting over stuff and getting away with it so that the old wobbly seem amazed at it." The organizers of the A.W.O. established what they called an 800-mile picket line "that reached from Kansas to Aberdeen, South Dakota. The longest picket line . . . simply represented an effort to keep non-union men off the job."¹³ Nevertheless the strong arm tactics created serious dangers for the organization. The older members recognized forceful recruiting techniques were not effective ways of promoting loyalty and stability. Joining, they felt, should be a voluntary act based upon sympathy for, and understanding of, the principles of the I.W.W. Yet the

13. Forrest Edwards, "The Class War in Harvest Country," *Solidarity*, August 19, 1916.

large increase in revenue and members obscured for many the dangers which the ruthless shock tactics held. The undesirables, who were a menace to the safety of the honest harvest hand, frequently took out a card for the protection which membership gave them. In a letter to *Solidarity*, a correspondent described the shooting and robbing of a member of the A.W.O. by a bandit who had "joined the organization merely as a shield and with the view of using the Union as a means of self-protection. Whatever good such characters have ever done for the Union has been upset by later actions."¹⁴ Nor was this an isolated incident, for as the writer indicates, many tin horns, highjacks and other undesirables joined the I.W.W. as a cover for their criminal activities. The "working stiff" were bitterly opposed to the influx of this alien element. Bitter debates on the attitude to be taken towards these men took place, but the issue was never resolved.

These "holdup" tactics, which could hardly be morally justified, had nevertheless a stimulating effect upon the general organization. Even more important was the comparatively large increase in monies flowing into the treasury of the A.W.O. The new resources enabled the I.W.W., aided by the Agricultural Workers Organization, to undertake campaigns in the lumber industry and in others as well.

At a mass conference, held by the A.W.O. in October 1916, it was reported that 18,000 members had been initiated since April 1915. The meeting decided to establish an industrial union, and elected an organization [executive] committee.¹⁵ Elsewhere the effect of the campaign in the harvest fields was noted from increases in income received at the general headquarters of the I.W.W. For the year ending August 31, 1915, the income of the I.W.W. was \$8,934.47; for the next fiscal year it reached \$49,114.84.¹⁶ The additional revenue enabled the I.W.W. to multiply its activity severalfold. During the fiscal year, largely in 1916, it issued 116 charters, the largest number ever issued within a comparable period.¹⁷

An examination of the journals and the literature of the I.W.W. during this time shows a clear shift in the orientation of the organi-

14. *Ibid.*, December 22, 1916.

15. *Ibid.*, November 18, 1916.

16. *Proceedings of the Tenth Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World*, November 10, 1916 to December 1, 1916 (Chicago, 1917), p. 32.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

zation. The shift was noted by the editor of *Solidarity* who remarked that the "10th Convention [1916] is remarkable as denoting the decline of the 'soap boxer' as a dominant element."¹⁸

The 1916 convention of the I.W.W. was largely controlled by the Agricultural Workers Organization whose 7 delegates held 252 of the 335 votes. The treasury had a cash surplus of \$18,000. As a result, for the first time in years the convention witnessed a debate on the size of the salary to be paid the organization's top official.

Inspired by the success of the drives in the harvest fields, the convention voted to reorganize its structure. Under the revised constitution, the I.W.W. was to be made up of industrial departments, industrial unions and their branches, and recruiting unions. The latter were to be composed of wage workers in whose respective industries no industrial union existed. Despite the influence of the A.W.O., Secretary-Treasurer Haywood expressed some misgivings over its widespread activity, which he claimed was more like that of a mass organization than an industrial union. He suggested that the A.W.O. abstain from organizing non-agricultural workers.¹⁹

In the meantime, the A.W.O. was achieving some success in other industries. In February 1916, Lumber Workers Local No. 315 became part of the A.W.O., and as a consequence the A.W.O. supported financially and organizationally a campaign in the lumber industry. A number of new locals were established. In March 1917, 13 delegates representing A.W.O. branches in Eastern Washington, Idaho, and Western Montana; the Middle Western lumber states of Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, as well as the lumber areas around Seattle and Tacoma, established Lumber Workers Industrial Union No. 500. The initial finances and manpower for this venture were provided by the Agricultural Workers' Organization.²⁰

Now for the first time in its history the I.W.W. was functioning regularly as a labor organization. It was using its finances and many new recruits to organize slowly and systematically some of the indus-

18. *Solidarity*, December 2, 1916.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 4. *Preamble and Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World*, 1908, p. 5; 1916, pp. 4-5.

20. James Rowan, *The I. W. W. in the Lumber Industry* (no place or date or publisher), p. 25.

trial areas it had staked out for itself. I.W.W. publications of the time reflect this change. Instead of emphasizing free speech fights, they now urged members "to get on the job." They stressed the virtues of employment, of improving conditions on the job, and of organizing new members.

The organizing work of the A.W.O. aroused considerable opposition in the grain belt. About 100 members were arrested in Kansas and in Oklahoma in 1915, most of whom were released after a day or two in jail. Some towns took steps to counteract the demands for a given wage, and recalcitrants might be asked to leave the community. In 1916, several grain belt communities took more vigorous action. But the Non-Partisan League, a farmer's political group functioning at the time mainly in North Dakota, suggested in the spring of 1917 that committees from the League and the I.W.W. meet and work out a schedule of wages, hours of work, and other conditions. A preliminary meeting was actually held. At the same time, the I.W.W.²¹ chartered the Metal Mine Workers Industrial Union No. 490 which was to embark upon its stormy career in Montana and Arizona.

Despite opposition from employers, the I.W.W. made its greatest organizational progress in 1916 and early 1917. Its shift away from the resultless, even though dramatic, free speech fights, and its concentration upon organization of the unorganized seemed to hold promise that it would be able to sink roots in some of the industries employing a large complement of unskilled labor. The harvest hands themselves did not always help in promoting organization, even though for several years they provided substantial funds. They were always a serious problem to those who were permanently attached to an industry and hoped to improve conditions through "organizing on the job." The "400 cats," as they were called, were seldom interested in steady employment; they were footloose, undisciplined, had few ties and fewer responsibilities. They were both envious and contemptuous of the steady-working "home guard," and his wife and brood. It was not unusual for the members of 400 "to blow up" a job, that is stage a spontaneous and purposeless "walkoff" or mass resignation. Such action usually came when a number were beginning to tire of the

21. *Solidarity*, June 9, 1917.

work after several weeks of employment; the "walkoffs" were unaccompanied by demands for improvement.

But the I.W.W. was reaching out for the lumber worker, the road construction hand, the metal miner and both the shoreside and sea-going maritime worker. These workers had considerable attachment to their industry, and normally thought in terms of job improvement as a means of permanent self-improvement. The same was true of the pipe liner and roustabout in the oil fields, largely semi-skilled and unskilled workers permanently attached to an industry, although they were likely to be more mobile than the average industrial employee.

Of course, the industries the I.W.W. sought to win were very difficult to penetrate. Except for the metal mines there was not much of a tradition of labor unionism in most of them. Employees in these industries had, moreover, fewer resources than the average industrial worker, and very likely a lower propensity for remaining organized. Yet it might have been possible to establish some foothold in at least parts of these industrial divisions had not World War I intervened. World War I came when the I.W.W. had partially completed the first extensive organization campaign in the lumber industry, and had established several units in the metal mining camps of the North and Southwest. The lumber and metalliferous strikes, in which it would have been difficult to gain victory under the most favorable circumstances, came in the summer of 1917 at a time when the country was in the first throes of war fever, whipped up by the burgeoning advertising arts. The I.W.W. espousal of direct action and sabotage was interpreted as a violation of the criminal syndicalist laws, which the legislatures of the Northwestern states began to enact in 1917. In addition, the federal government indicted in June 1917 the entire top leadership of the I.W.W., and the secondary leaders who replaced the first group were often subjected to prosecution and harassment largely by the federal authorities during World War I and under state criminal syndicalist statutes throughout the 1920s.

During World War I, I.W.W. publications were suppressed and many of the halls forcibly closed. The hostility against radicalism, expressed by the Palmer Raids in the period after World War I (they were directed by United States Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer),

fell heavily upon the I.W.W. Yet the organization was able to survive and actually staged a minor comeback after World War I.²² But the postwar suppression through the criminal syndicalist laws continued to rob the I.W.W. of its potential leaders. Organizing became increasingly difficult and the organization slowly withered away, after an enervating controversy over whether the federal prisoners should accept conditional pardons.

The Communists had little effect upon the I.W.W. The average wobbly was not temperamentally good material for Communist discipline. Most members of the I.W.W., especially the non-foreigners who comprised the largest part of the organization, were extreme individualists who would not subject themselves voluntarily to the orders of their organizational superiors upon which Communist discipline is based. With the exception of Haywood and several of the editors of foreign language papers who fled to the Soviet Union after their conviction under the espionage law, few leaders of the I.W.W. went over to the Communist Party. Among the more than 150 who were convicted of violating the espionage law during World War I, only Harrison George and George Hardy became permanently active in the Communist movement. George became an active Communist journalist, and Hardy, a Comintern agent. Charles Ashleigh, who had returned to England after his release from federal prison, was for a time active in the British Communist movement. While serving as a correspondent in Moscow, he was asked to leave the Soviet Union for non-political reasons. The I.W.W. delegate to the founding convention of the Red Labor Union International, George Williams, bitterly assailed the "delegate packing" he had witnessed in Moscow, as well as the arrogance and officiousness of the promoters of the Red Trade Union International.²³ Williams declared that the Congress had been filled with delegates from non-existing organizations, and that the Red Labor Union International would inevitably be dominated by the Communist Party. On December 10, 1921, the General Executive Board recom-

22. The General Defense Committee estimated that at the beginning of 1920 more than 2,000 members of the I. W. W. were in jail on charges of vagrancy, criminal syndicalism and sedition. *New Solidarity*, January 17, 1920.

23. *The First Congress of the Red Trade Union International: A Report of the Proceedings by George Williams, Delegate from the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago, Illinois: Industrial Workers of the World, no date).

mended that "this organization do not affiliate in any manner with the Red Trade Union International."²⁴ The view was reiterated in the following year, when the Board again rejected affiliation.²⁵ There is thus no evidence that the Communists had much influence on members of the I.W.W.

It is, therefore, possible to assume that if events had not overwhelmed the I.W.W., it might have been able to carve out a place for itself in the industrial sectors which had, up to the thirties, been unattractive to the old line labor organizations. Indeed it is possible that were it not for the effects of World War I, the I.W.W. would have been transformed into an economic organization of predominantly unskilled and semi-skilled workers. It is unlikely that the I.W.W. would have ever presented a serious challenge to the hegemony of the A.F.L. But were it not for wartime persecution, it might have achieved the status of the Swedish syndicalist organization, the Central Organization of Labor. It is also likely that with the winning of job control, the free transfer of members between unions, which was bound to arouse opposition from those in control of a labor market, might have been repealed. Even the signing of contracts might have been accepted as an evil necessary for the exercise of job control. But events foreclosed these possibilities.

24. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

25. *The I. W. W. Reply to the Red Trade Union International (Moscow) by the General Executive Board* (Chicago, Illinois: Industrial Workers of the World, 1922).