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Article Summary: Between 1877 and 1917, as the United States become the world's leading industrial nation, power became centralized in the hands of a few individuals, and life for the working classes became increasingly unbearable. A movement termed the Industrial Workers of the World developed from three working-class elements: Negroes, immigrants, and Native Americans forced off the land. The I.W.W. is thought to have increased wages, shortened hours, and bettered working conditions in the Midwest. The wobblies were considered radicals and were very controversial, which led to conflict with law enforcement. By 1920 the remnants of the I.W.W. was largely forced underground.

Appendix I: Report on Settlement of Packing House Workers

Appendix II: "Fellow Workers" letter

Cataloging Information:

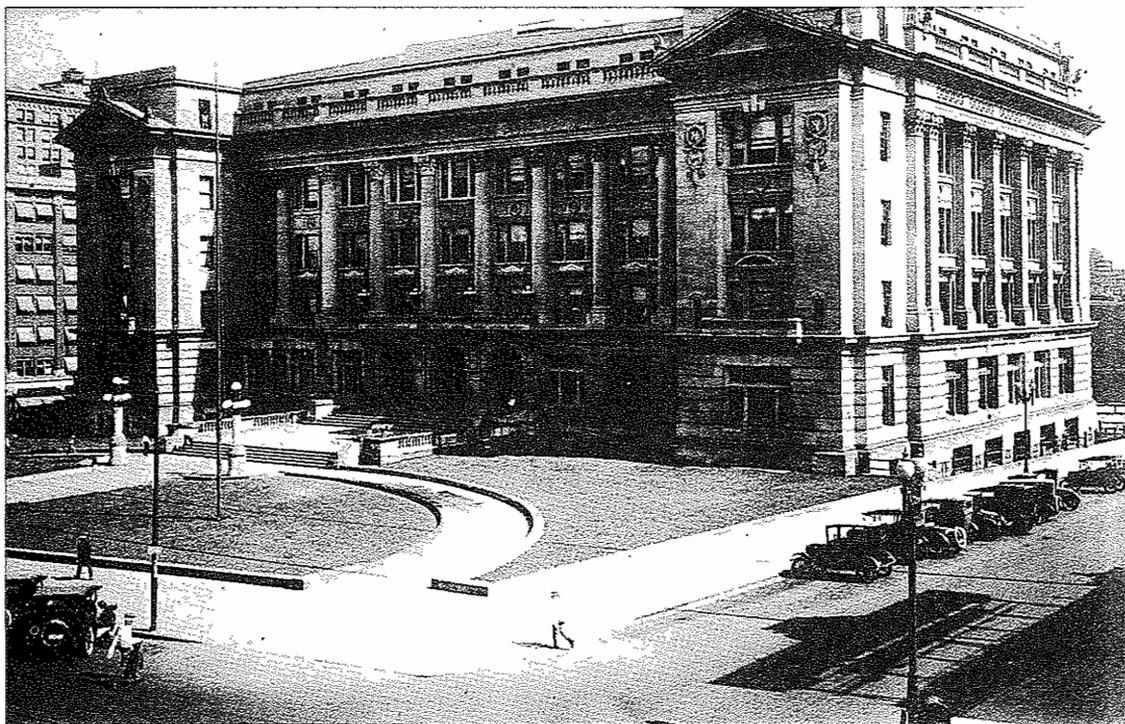
Names: Samuel Olsen, Frank Little, Bill Haywood, Walter T Nef, Ben Klein, J A Sullivan, Robert Carter, Karl Beghtol, John Madden, Augustine Hyers, Claude Hensel, Bert Anderson, Phillip Strawbu, Ralph Bigelow, William Burns, Jeff Fogelson, Leo Landers, Harry Clifford, James King, and James Riley, E R McNally, John Morehead, Walter Jardine, Charles H Kubat, W T Dineen, Albert Kugel, Victor Rosewater, Ed Carson, Norman Pearl, John Carlson, John Holden, Carl Madsen, Coleman Fimple, A S Bartlett, G P Ranson, S O Hall, Henry Willis Dunn, J J Rogers, John Gibler, Frank Lee, Elmer Lane, M F Dempsey, Vincent St John, Joseph Ettore, Ben H Williams, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Carlo Tresca, William D Haywood, Robert Graham, Ira E Tash, John Dee, G C Wilckens, T S Allen, Thomas P Reynolds, Richard Lee Metcalfe, Gunnard Johnson, Charles Richardson, J F Ryan, J R Hill, John McCaffery, John Myers, E M Boyd, John Doyle, John Boyle, Charles Walsh, W P Walton, L M Mitchell, Joe French, Bernard Johnson, Bob McDonald, John Fitzsimmons, Joe Ficher, Gordon Dimikrow, John McCurry, Jack Sneed, James Dahlman, Thomas J Flynn, Henry Heitfeld, T A Jenkins, Mrs Elmer Buse, E F Dix, Albert Watkins, Dan Thompson, Joseph Ratti, Jack St Clair, William Smith, Otto Olsen, E Wydell, D O Anderson, John Stine, William Eike, Samuel Block E F Doree, Michael Clark, George F Vanderveer, G W A Luckey, C E Persinger, Erwin P Hopt, F M Fling, Mrs Minnie Throop England, Albert Hansen, Charles Casey, A L Super, Fred Peterson, Steve Zinger, Wallace M Short, W H Jones, Milton Perry Smith, Edmund R Brumbaugh, Eugene V Debs, Kate Richards O'Hara, William D Haywood, Rose Pastor Stokes, Victor Berger, John Dean Ringer, Anton Novotny, Charles E Fanning, Eugene Maddox, George H Salow, S R McKelvie, Robert Carter, M F Dempsey

Place Names: Lawrence, Massachusetts; Kansas City, Missouri; St Joseph, Missouri; Omaha, Nebraska; Sioux City, Iowa; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Des Moines, Iowa; Fresno, California; Portland, Oregon; Kansas City, ; Missouri; Salt Lake City, Utah; San Francisco, California; Minden, Nebraska; McCook, Nebraska; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Fremont, Nebraska; Council Bluffs Iowa; Cadiz, Kentucky; Colby, Kansas; Redfield, South Dakota; Mitchell, South Dakota; Bisbee, Arizona; Jerome, Arizona; Hanscom Park; Beaver City; St Paul, Minnesota; Seward, Nebraska;

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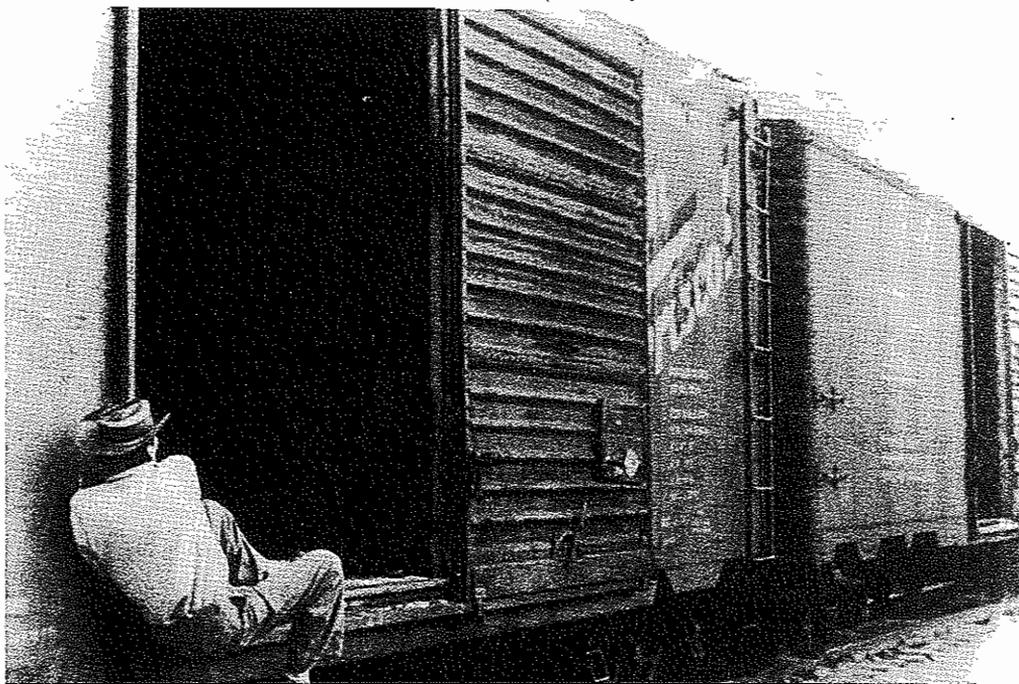
Pacific Railroad” “A W O” “Nebraska State Council of Defense” “Volunteer Guard” “Espionage Act” “Selective Service Act” “First Amendment” “Agricultural Workers’ Industrial Union” “Union No 110” “Swedish Auditorium” “Socialist Party” “Bohemian” “bindlestiff” “A F L” “packing house worker” “Swift & Co” “Armour & Co” “Morris & Co” “Cudahy Packing” “*Omaha World Herald*”

Photographs / Images: Douglas County Courthouse; “wobbly” using freight train for transportation; itinerant farm workers; Henry Willis Dunn; “Queen of the May” cartoon; Richard L Metcalf; Erwin P Hopt; “Rausch Mit” cartoon; Sokol Hall



The Douglas County Courthouse in Omaha (built 1912) was the scene of trials involving the I.W.W.'s, and its jail on the top floor (capacity 300) housed those found guilty. . . . The transient "wobbly," using the freight as a principal means of transportation, was a familiar figure in Nebraska during the 1910's.

(Courtesy, Lincoln Journal-Star)



THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD IN NEBRASKA, 1914—1920

By DAVID G. WAGAMAN

Radicalism which took the form of revolution was an outgrowth of the social and economic changes of the 19th century. The period between 1877 and 1917 saw the United States become the world's leading industrial nation. The dream of an agrarian society largely insulated from the social and economic conflicts of an increasingly urbanized and industrialized Europe was rapidly evaporating. As immense combinations materialized and power became centralized in the hands of a few individuals, life for the working classes became increasingly unbearable. From three working-class elements — Negroes, immigrants, and native Americans forced off the land — developed a movement termed the Industrial Workers of the World.

The I.W.W., called “wobblies” and “I Won’t Works” by their adversaries, played a disruptive role in the Midwest during the second decade of the 20th century. Its members in the grain belt were mainly itinerant wheat harvesters; its members elsewhere variously miners, textile workers, lumbermen, longshoremen, and other “working stiffs.” Militant in their relationships with employers, government, and even their colleagues who refused to join them, they were bumptiously pacifistic during World War I. Their militancy in the first instance and pacifism in the second gained them few friends in the rural Midwest. After 1920 I.W.W. influence declined, and only a few locals remained in the 1930's.

Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in the Industrial Workers of the World. Philip S. Foner, Melvyn Dubofsky, and Patrick Renshaw have compiled comprehensive histories of the wobblies.¹ Philip Taft and William Preston, Jr., have de-

tailed the suppression of the I.W.W.² Taft has also examined the I.W.W. in the grain belt.³

Reconstruction of the history of the I.W.W. has been no easy task. During the Justice Department raids on various I.W.W. headquarters in 1917 virtually all official records and correspondences were confiscated and held in Chicago until 1923, then incinerated by federal court order.⁴ Through the use of primary and secondary sources, much I.W.W. history has been assembled; however, events of the I.W.W.'s 1914-1917 organizational campaigns in the Midwest have not been fully detailed, nor have the Justice Department's November, 1917, raid of the I.W.W. headquarters in Omaha and subsequent events been reassembled. This article will trace some events surrounding I.W.W. activities in the Midwest from 1914 through 1920 with emphasis on Nebraska.

FORMATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL WORKERS ORGANIZATION

The I.W.W. began to decline rapidly from the "climactic heights" it reached after the Lawrence (Massachusetts) Strike in the spring of 1912. Not only was its treasury virtually depleted, but membership was declining.⁵ In 1913 in an attempt to reverse this trend, the I.W.W., relying primarily upon "soap-boxers," attempted to organize "harvest stiff" passing through Kansas City and St. Joseph, Omaha, Sioux City, Minneapolis, and other cities in the grain belt. However, the soapbox method did not provide a lasting organizational structure.

In the spring of 1914, various locals of the I.W.W. in grain belt cities began sending delegates to harvest fields in an attempt to recruit members on the job. However, while this technique was superior to soapboxing, the lack of standard initiation fees and dues coupled with the competition among delegates from Kansas City, Omaha, and Minneapolis, tended to nullify any of the possible gains in membership or income. While there was little activity in Nebraska in 1914, a *Bee* item attests to its existence in Omaha: On July 20 Samuel Olsen, a 19-year-old I.W.W. organizer from Omaha, was killed when railroad officials attempted to eject him from a train in Salt Lake City. A gun battle erupted and Olsen was crushed between two freight cars.⁶

During the ninth annual convention of the I.W.W. in Septem-

ber, 1914, Frank Little, a half-Indian organizer, suggested that "some means should be taken for concerted and efficient action in the harvest fields next year." A resolution containing Little's proposal was carried, and a few months later Bill Haywood announced formation of the Bureau of Migratory Workers with the express purpose of further organizing and promoting job information among migratory workers.⁷

On April 15, 1915, a conference of representatives of local agricultural workers' unions from Des Moines, Fresno, Portland, Kansas City, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Minneapolis was held in Kansas City, Missouri.⁸ The delegates created the Agricultural Workers Organization (A.W.O. Local "400"). The organizers, known as job delegates, were responsible to "a recruiting or industrial union" and were expected "to organize at the point of production."⁹ The delegates resolved to ban "soap boxing," chose Walter T. Nef secretary-treasurer, and formulated these 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.¹⁰

The Agricultural Workers Organization opened its headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, in April, 1915. During the summer about one hundred wobblies were arrested in Oklahoma and Kansas. Despite considerable opposition the I.W.W. achieved most of its objectives in the region by August. The A.W.O. drew up stronger demands for northern harvest areas, and with membership and income rising, it opened a central office in Minneapolis in August. By year's end it claimed between 2,280 and 3,000 members and had \$14,113.06 in its treasury, largely accumulated through initiation fees of \$2.00 and monthly dues of 50 cents. Offices were established in Des Moines, Kansas City, Sioux City, Iowa, Omaha, Minneapolis, and Duluth, with plans underway for one in Sacramento.¹¹

THE ORGANIZING CAMPAIGN OF 1916

On May 23, 1916, the A.W.O. held its first annual conference in Kansas City, Missouri. The delegates reelected Nef as general secretary-treasurer and demanded: a minimum wage of \$4.00 per ten-hour day; 50 cents for every hour over 10 hours per day; good board and clean bedding; and hiring of harvest hands

through I.W.W. halls or through the I.W.W. delegates. Armed with these demands, Nef and his lieutenants sent about three hundred delegates into the field to begin "one of the most marvelous union organization jobs ever performed in the history of the world."¹²

By the time the A.W.O. "invaded" Nebraska in July, it had already achieved unprecedented success in Kansas. On July 10 and 11 an advance guard of about 155 I.W.W.'s arrived in Hastings, and organizers Ben Klein and J. A. Sullivan promised that an army of workers would "invade Nebraska in the next two weeks." On July 12 the *Hastings Daily Tribune* declared: "The Industrial Workers of the World have invaded the Nebraska harvest fields for the first time in the history of the state."¹³

Klein and Sullivan acted as police court attorneys before Police Judge Karl Beghtol and gained a suspended sentence for John Madden, who was jailed on July 11 for disturbing the peace. Madden had been struck in the face by one of the curb employment agents (called by the I.W.W.'s "employment sharks") who charged harvest hands 75 cents to \$1.00 each for providing jobs. The altercation occurred after Madden refused the agent's card, whereupon the agent threw a pack of cards in his face, and Police Chief Robert Carter arrested Madden.

"Most people misunderstand us," declared Klein. "They say we don't wish to work. That isn't true. Every member must be a producer. The migratory class is a necessity, just as the steadier working classes are. We're producers even though we are migratory." Klein indicated A.W.O.'s principal fight was against employment agents: "I don't believe in any man paying for the privilege of working."

The I.W.W. relationship with Hastings in 1916 seems to have been relatively "good." Klein sent sixteen I.W.W. members to the Chamber of Commerce for farm employment and placed sixty-five others in the harvest fields through his own efforts on July 11, alone. The *Tribune* commented that although the wobblies wanted \$4.00 per day, they settled for \$3.25 to \$3.50 and were good workers despite the fact that "they wanted more money than they needed and were pretty fussy about their bedding-and-board." A number of I.W.W.'s showed faith in Police Chief Carter. They used his office as "a safety deposit bank,"

leaving money and valuables with him while they went to the harvest fields.

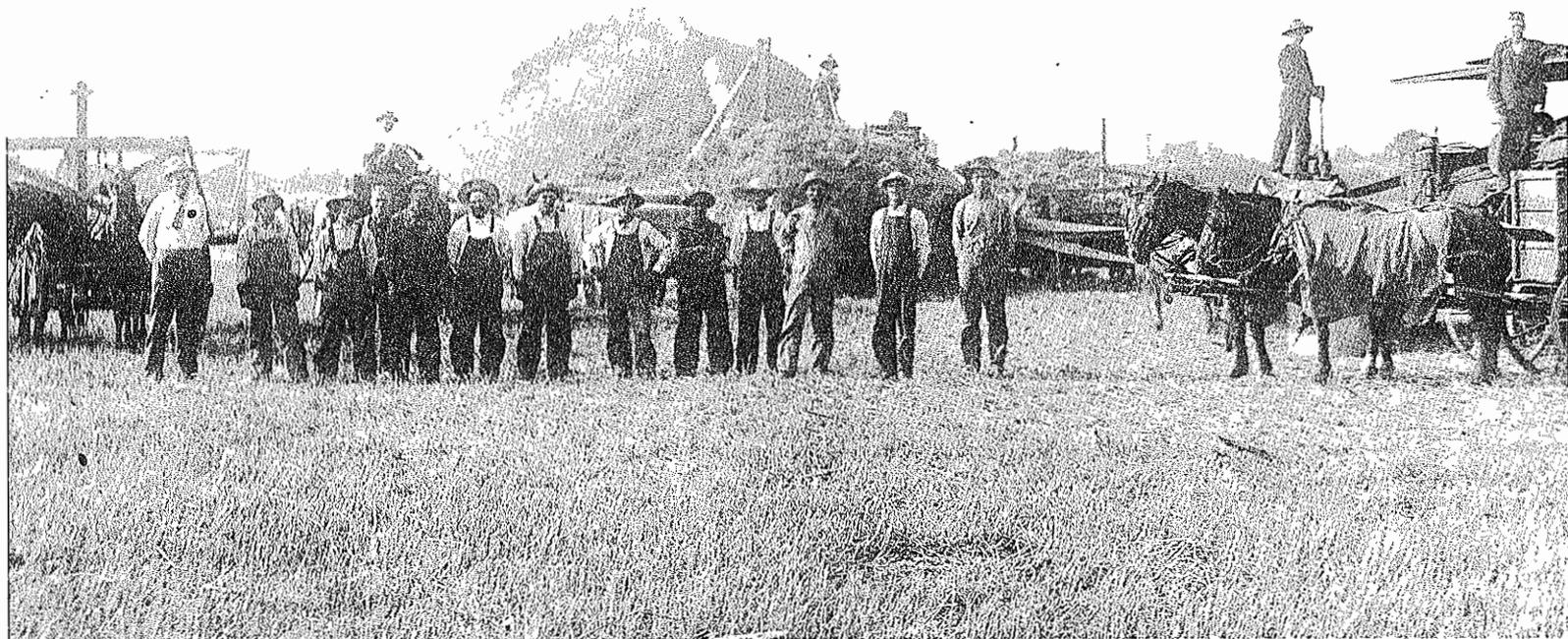
On July 14 about one hundred I.W.W.'s held a "convention" in Hastings. Both local I.W.W. and Omaha organizers attended. The convention voted to resist police attempts to jail their members. Though an estimated two hundred wobblies per day moved through the city during the week of July 10, only seven I.W.W.'s were jailed on "disorderly charges."¹⁴

Meanwhile on July 13, Sheriff Augustine Hyers of Lincoln mounted a campaign against harvest workers who had invaded the town. When Sheriff Hyers attempted to force thirty-five workers out of the city, five of them turned on the sheriff and struck his father with a frying pan. Deputy Sheriffs Claude Hensel and Bert Anderson quelled the uprising and jailed eight men: Phillip Strawbu, Ralph Bigelow, William Burns, Jeff Fogelson, Leo Landers, Harry Clifford, James King, and James Riley. The men attempted to send two telegrams — one to Kansas City asking for five hundred men to come and help them, the other to Omaha requesting financial assistance. Sheriff Gus Hyers refused to send either telegram.¹⁵

On July 15 an estimated eighty I.W.W.'s arrived in Lincoln, and a rumored 175 were coming from Hastings. On July 17, E. R. McNally, A.W.O. organizer from Omaha, arrived in Lincoln to confer with Labor Commissioner Frank Coffey and Governor John Morehead, who were urging Sheriff Hyers to release the men. He refused to do so unless the governor put his request in the form of an order. At this same time two hundred to three hundred harvest workers held an "indignation meeting" at 13th and K Streets, marched to the statehouse grounds, and failing to gain the release of the prisoners, voted to stay until the men were freed.

McNally stated the I.W.W. had an interest only in the release of James Riley and James King, held on charges of illegally riding a freight, and none in the release of the men charged with assault and battery. McNally also was quoted as stating, "The authorities will release these men or you won't know the town in a short time." One worker said, menacingly, "Blood will flow." Another said, "What do we care for lives?"¹⁶

When a group of wobblies attempted to "invade" the county



Itinerant farm laborers, among them I.W.W.'s, worked with threshing crews such as this in the pre-combine years. This typical threshing scene is of the Hellrigle crew northwest of Kearney (about 1910). Contrary to a popular misconception, many wobblies were good workers.

jail, Sheriff Hyers "beat them back with his gun butt." Approximately seventy-three I.W.W.'s lined up before the county attorney's office and asked to be jailed on the same charge — of stealing rides on freight trains — as had been Riley and King. Their request was denied. The men then began to beg in the streets, but the onlooking officers of the law refused to arrest them on vagrancy charges.¹⁷

After having met defeat in his attempts to have Riley and King released, McNally threatened to telegraph Omaha and Kansas City requesting that wobblies descend on Lincoln in support of their jailed comrades. He predicted that between 2,500 and 6,000 I.W.W.'s would respond. "We will have these men out of jail," said McNally, "or the people of Lincoln will suffer the consequences." When asked if he feared another attack on the county jail, Sheriff Hyers responded, "They ought to see the stock of firearms we have first."¹⁸

On July 19 the *Omaha Evening Bee* headlined: "I.W.W. Signs Peace Pact at Lincoln." According to Sheriff Hyers, hundreds of citizens called to assure him of their help if the I.W.W.'s attempted to force the county jail. However, the occasion to defend the jail never arose. McNally and Hyers came to an understanding whereby King and Riley, after finishing their assigned task of cleaning the courthouse, were released. McNally again stated he and the I.W.W.'s had no interest in the remaining prisoners. He assured the police that no more violence would occur and agreed to station an I.W.W. organizer at the jail to insure that end. Meanwhile Omaha police were arresting more than 150 "vagrant" I.W.W.'s on July 15. The men "contented themselves by spending the night singing songs and parodies of their organization."¹⁹

On July 16, according to the *Bee*, Omaha "doomed . . . two hundred vagrants, Industrial Workers of the World, and other unwanted flotsam [to] exile" by loading them into two North Western freight cars and shipping them to South Dakota. The decision to rid Omaha of "undesirables" via banishment to the harvest fields was made by Commissioner Albert Kugel, Commissioner Walter Jardine, and acting Police Magistrate Charles H. Kubat. North Western Railroad Police Chief W. T. Dineen arranged for the railroad cars which carried the men from town. The local secretary of the I.W.W. agreed that "a little work

would not harm the members much," and he sanctioned the trip. Even Holdrege did not escape the wobblies. On July 14 harvest workers there demanded \$5.00 per twelve-hour day and a ten minute recess each hour for "a smoke." Going wages in the area were reported at \$3.50 per day. On July 15 approximately eighty-five wobblies were in control of a Burlington freight as it passed through Alma heading west. On July 1 about 150 wobblies riding another train decorated the Alma depot with their emblems.²⁰

The wobblies seemed to be all over southwest Nebraska on July 17. In Wilsonville a score of them allegedly stole three crates of cantaloupes from the railroad platform "in broad daylight." They again descended on Holdrege and in groups of "two or four" asked housewives for handouts. At Minden they refused to work for farmers at \$4.00 a day. In Axtell in numbers exceeding the local male population over 15 years of age, they refused to work but insisted on being fed. At McCook a couple of young men from Pittsburgh were allegedly robbed by I.W.W.'s who had refused to work. In Fremont sixty-three I.W.W.'s were rounded up and jailed when they refused harvest-field work at \$3.00 to \$3.50 per day. After a night in jail they were started westward along the railroad tracks on July 18.²¹

Council Bluffs, Iowa, was invaded by "200 hoboes, most I.W.W.'s" who congregated around the North Western Railroad yards near Big Lake on July 18. A score of Negroes were in the group. On the same day armed police prevented an early morning invasion of Sioux City, Iowa, by several hundred wobblies. Five I.W.W.'s were jailed overnight for vagrancy, then were allowed to eat breakfast before being sent north by police.²²

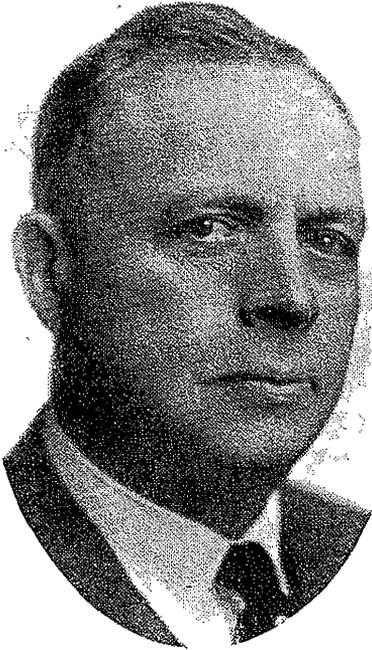
All this I.W.W. activity prompted Victor Rosewater, editor of the *Bee*, to comment:

Nebraska is just now having its first real experience with the I.W.W., the outcome of which is to be determined. Other western states have been visited and more or less disturbed by this band of migratory irresponsibles, whose inverted system of social economy makes them a problem as well as a nuisance. Ordinary treatment, such as confinement or repression, has little effect upon them other than to invite further visitations. Because of this, the remedy for them is not easy, but our peace officers may be depended upon to see that order is maintained and the law supported. Men with a constitutional grudge against all society, although not easily dealt with, must not be permitted to overturn all that man has accomplished. Nothing really serious has developed in connection with the I.W.W. in Nebraska, but the presence of these men itself is a menace, and authorities must be vigilant.²³

On July 20 after witnessing a brawl in Hastings, a Lincoln police officer "donned a black shirt and some overalls" and pretended to I.W.W.'s involved in the fracas he wanted to join the organization. No delegate being in Hastings to enlist him, he rode eastward with about forty wobblies toward Omaha, where he could pay a \$2.50 entrance fee – and 10 cents per month dues. Soon after leaving the station, a committee appointed to bar non-I.W.W.'s from the train forced about twenty men to leave. The officer learned from the train crew that the railroad never attempted to collect fares from the I.W.W.'s or throw them off the train because of the "power of their [I.W.W.] numbers." While on the train, the officer was forced by wobblies to agree not to work for less than \$4.00 per day in Nebraska. The officer also observed other traits of his fellow wobblies: Their average age was 25; some were educated, some illiterate; all were followers of the Socialist Party. Their conduct was good, and they claimed respect for law; they even abstained from alcoholic beverages. The officer, abandoning his "plan" to join the I.W.W., left the train when it stopped in Lincoln.²⁴

On the same day I.W.W.'s allegedly attacked three Omaha men who had made unfavorable remarks about the "cause." Two wobbly sentinels, Ed Carson and Norman Pearl of Cadiz, Kentucky, serving as look-outs for sixty-five men riding Rock Island freight No. 94 from Colby, Kansas, to Omaha, were attacked by four armed bandits near Fairbury. On July 21 the *Bee* observed that in Omaha "about a half dozen men" were beaten up by their own members, seemingly without provocation, though it seemed to have been an I.W.W. method of forcing doctrine on individuals. On the same day John Carlson, an I.W.W. from St. Paul, Minnesota, was charged with assault and battery by Herbert Berg of Council Bluffs.²⁵

I.W.W.'s riding Burlington trains were passing through Seward "by the dozens" by July 22 – as many as eighty-five on one train, with "only one robbery" being reported. Violence flared at Beaver City when two men claiming to be I.W.W.'s killed a fellow harvest hand who refused to join the organization. On July 25, Omaha policemen Sergeant Carl Madsen, Detective John Holden, and Officer Coleman Fimple arrested A. S. Bartlett, G. P. Ranson, and S. O. Hall, who were carrying I.W.W. cards as well as revolvers and blackjacks. On the same day 150



Henry Willis Dunn was Omaha police chief, 1912-1918, and commissioner of police and police judge, 1920-1921.

men were arrested in various railroad yards in the city on charges of trespassing and interfering with workmen. Officers of the I.W.W. said only fifteen of those arrested were their men; the others were "plain bums." One of those arrested was J. J. Rogers, secretary of the local Omaha I.W.W. He was sentenced to fifteen days in the workhouse. On July 26 Rogers and one other I.W.W. were pardoned on the recommendation of Commissioner Jardine. The other men arrested on July 25 were arraigned before Judge Kubat and given the choice of serving five days in jail or leaving town; most left town. On the same day six masked men, suspected I.W.W.'s, boarded North Western train No. 290 near Craig and robbed the crew.²⁶

Perspective is given the incidents involving "suspected" I.W.W.'s by Editor Victor Rosewater in the *Bee*:

All the hoboes, ruffians and petty criminals arrested nowadays assume to be members of the I.W.W., or are classed as such whether they assume to be or not, and no proof is exacted to support the title. But even the devil should have his due, and the I.W.W., odious and discredited as it is with many people, should not be loaded down with any more sins than belong to it. If the professional hoboes thought they would get off easier by masquerading as Y.M.C.A.'s or Salvation Armyists, or by any other name, they would slip the trick just as fast. So remember that by far in most cases I.W.W. is merely a convenient cover for the ordinary genus tramp who wants to make a living off the community without giving any return in work and has nothing to do with any body or organized labor much less with any real trade union of wage-earning mechanics.²⁷

The Missouri Pacific railroad offered its own solution to the "wobbly problem." Its construction department "had \$5,000 left over from its July budget because laborers were hard to hire."²⁷ The line would have liked "to impress 2 to 3 hundred I.W.W.'s to work on the roadbed between Omaha and Kansas City." While I.W.W.-related activities were simmering in Nebraska, Redfield, South Dakota, became the scene of a battle between three hundred wobblies and two hundred "independents" on July 27. Independents, organized in opposition to the I.W.W., "declared war" and descended on the wobblies in the North Western railroad yards. Three I.W.W.'s were wounded and approximately 150 shots were exchanged. A force of one hundred fifty deputy sheriffs drove the combatants out of town and two hundred deputies guarded against a rumored invasion of four hundred I.W.W.'s said to be marching on Redfield to Tulare, South Dakota. Three hundred wobblies forced the release of one of their number from the Ortonville, Minnesota, jail by threatening to destroy the building. But later a posse composed of nearly four hundred businessmen "armed with shotguns, baseball bats and other weapons," drove the wobblies from the town.²⁸

On July 28, Mitchell, South Dakota, vigilantes met a train carrying six hundred harvest hands suspected to be I.W.W.'s, and disarmed them. A half-dozen leaders, "upon whom . . . Industrial Workers of the World literature and membership cards were found," were jailed. The others were herded onto a north-bound train. The *Bee* on July 29 said that the I.W.W.'s were "shaking the dust of Omaha from their feet." It also sarcastically observed, "Plenty of pure drinking water and a loaf of the staff of life is the diet upon which the I.W.W. guests at the city jail were being fed." "Heavy food is very detrimental during heated periods," intoned Ben Keegan, supervising architect of the city workhouse in an article on how to keep healthy in the summer.²⁹

While the I.W.W.'s were, indeed, shaking Omaha's dust from their feet, they were doing so while heading toward Council Bluffs. On July 27 they began filtering into the hobo camp in the Big Lake vicinity of Council Bluffs, and soon there were approximately five hundred "harvest hands" encamped there.

According to police, who visited the camp, the crowd was orderly until noon. Only a few signs reading "four dollars a day or nothing" were seen around the camp which bordered on the North Western railroad yards. After noon, however, Park Policeman John Gibler sent in a riot call. A "battle" had begun between I.W.W.'s and "bodies of independents" as wobblies began using "terrorist methods" to force others to join their ranks. About twenty-five or thirty I.W.W.'s took possession of a North Western freight and refused to permit non-I.W.W.'s to ride, including Herbert Crawford and Ford Wilson, both of Shenandoah, Iowa. They were told to leave the yards if they did not join.³⁰

Crawford replied that he did not have the initiation fee. The *Bee* reported:

When he made this clear to the men who were pressing him he got a crack in the jaw and was told to beat it. The instant the blow was struck, Wilson pulled a revolver and began shooting wildly. The shots were returned and he fell with a nasty wound in the chin.³¹

Wilson then reloaded the revolver and "standing over his prostrate friend held the angry crowd of I.W.W.'s at bay until reinforcements of independents came to his aid." The shooting then became general, with I.W.W.'s lying on top of freight cars returning the fire of the independents. Railroad men on the scene "dodged behind anything that afforded protection from the flying bullets, and all escaped injury." By the time police officers led by detectives Frank Lee and Elmer Lane arrived, the I.W.W.'s had disappeared, and only trainmen Crawford and Wilson and a crowd of "ten or fifteen badly frightened independents" were left in the yards.³²

The I.W.W.'s disappeared from the headlines of the Omaha area papers on August 12, 1916, on the following sour note: A "postal [card] addressed to 'the chief of police' and signed 'I.W.W.' was delivered to Omaha's Acting Chief M. F. Dempsey via 'the crack beneath the door' route." The letter contained "threats of due calamity to the city and its officials." The writer called the "chief and his minions everything except 'scolars' [sic], gentlemen and diamonds in the rough."³³ The I.W.W. left the pages of the *Hastings Daily Tribune* on a somewhat different note. The *Tribune* carried the following story on August 7:

The last issue of the *Industrial Worker*, the official organ of the I.W.W. organization, contains a letter in its columns from one of the members complimenting Chief of Police Bob Carter of Hastings. The member's name is F. A. Neary from Giltner. He refers to the chief as the only decent cop I ever seen or heard of. Not only did Chief of Police Carter win the confidence and cooperation of the leaders of the I.W.W. organization in the task of handling an unprecedented number of harvest hands but those who have watched the situation closely during the movement of the workers through the city have expressed themselves as being pleased from the public safety standpoint. With a daily average of upwards of 200 harvest hands passing through the city, there was comparatively little street disorder and no robberies which might be attributed to the strangers. Mr. Carter is one of the few police officers in Nebraska or Kansas who handled the movement of harvest hands with no trouble and still maintained law and order. The Hastings Chief is to be congratulated.³⁴

The events of the latter part of July, 1916, seem to have somewhat tempered the editorial position of Victor Rosewater's *Bee*. In his July 31 editorial, "Problem of the Migratory Worker," he displayed remarkable insight into the problems of the migratory laborer and the appearance of the I.W.W. in the harvest fields. In part, he stated:

As was noted in *The Bee*, by no means all the migratory workers are members of the I.W.W., nor are all the offenses against law and order reported committed by these men. One of the most marked of phenomena attending social growth within the last decade has been the development of a class of migratory workers, properly so designated because of the habit of life forced on them by circumstances.

These men come from the unskilled and untrained, and are held in their social disadvantage by the fact that opportunity to rise rarely comes to a man whose only possession is ability to perform the rougher and distasteful kinds of work. And as this work is seasonable in its nature, with no possibility of permanency of employment, these workers become wanderers. They do not belong to the 'hobo' class although many end in that classification. Ambition has little place among them, and often a rooted resentment against what they deem the injustice of their situation possesses them.

What to do, *not with, but for them* is one of the biggest questions to be faced. Industrial readjustment is inevitable but it can not be made satisfactorily workable, until the growing army of migratory workers is given its proper place in relation to the whole. "Unemployment" and "vagrancy" are involved in this, and will be settled when the better balance is applied to our working methods. Then the I.W.W. will vanish, or at least retreat to the condition of mere annoyance.³⁵

REORGANIZATION OF THE I.W.W. AND A.W.O.

In October, 1916, the A.W.O. reported 18,000 members had been initiated since April, 1915. By November, 1916, the A.W.O. was receiving dues from 20,000 members, one-third of the I.W.W.'s enrollment. For fiscal 1916 the I.W.W. had an income of \$49,114.84 compared with \$8,934.47 for fiscal 1915. During fiscal 1916 the I.W.W. issued 116 charters, the most ever issued in a comparable period. The tenth convention

of the I.W.W. was held in Chicago from November 10 through December 1, 1916. A revised constitution was adopted, under which the I.W.W. was structured into industrial departments, industrial unions and their branches, and recruiting unions, the latter "to be composed of wage workers in whose respective industries no industrial union existed."³⁶

The convention also "put Haywood firmly in the saddle, ceding him the power . . . to ride where wanted when he wanted." In November before the convention, "differences of opinion" had led Nef, "the creator and guiding genius of the A.W.O.," to resign as secretary-treasurer and to move to Philadelphia to establish an I.W.W. local. Vincent St. John, Joseph Ettor, and Ben H. Williams faded into the background. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Carlo Tresca were headed for a split with Haywood. No one was left to challenge William D. (Big Bill) Haywood, who along with convention delegates began to soft-pedal soap-boxing and free-speech fights, while emphasizing the "virtues of employment, of improving conditions on the job, and of organizing new members." The I.W.W. was beginning to function as a labor organization for the first time. In March, 1917, the reorganization of the I.W.W. was made virtually complete. A.W.O. local 400, stripped of its non-agricultural members, was rechartered as Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union No. 110. It was restricted to organizing only agricultural workers, and its members became known as the "one-ten cats."³⁷

"On the eve of America's entry into the First World War [April, 1917] the I.W.W. stood poised to open a new and more successful chapter in its history."³⁸ The war was to change the outcome of that chapter.

THE SUMMER OF 1917

I.W.W. activity lagged in Nebraska during 1917 but increased elsewhere among miners, lumbermen, oil field workers, and maritime workers.³⁹ However, its presence and the memories of its past activities were still felt in the Midwest. On June 25, 1917, the Nebraska State Council of Defense received a request from Robert Graham and Ira E. Tash of Alliance to organize a Volunteer Guard. The letter stated in part:

The need is imperative. This being a railroad center, with large round house, stock yards and machine shops, to say nothing of the three large warehouses, filled with



Queen of the May

Editorial cartoon from the Omaha Bee, May 2, 1918.

binding twine, and harvesting machinery it is a temptation to the I.W.W.'s and pro-Germans. We have two of them in jail now. A dozen I.W.W.'s could take the city and cause havoc, with our inadequate police protection.⁴⁰

On July 3, 1917, the *Omaha Evening Bee* ominously reported the I.W.W. strike leaders at its Bisbee, Arizona headquarters "claimed to have received telegrams . . . from the agricultural division of the Industrial Workers of the World offering support to the strike and stating that 'workers in the field are going to use Industrial Workers of the World tactics.'" ⁴¹ The Bisbee and Jerome, Arizona, deportations of July 10-12 brought almost immediate editorial response from the *Bee*. In an editorial of July 14, "Dealing with the I.W.W.," Rosewater showed a somewhat surprising grasp of the significant social, political, and economic issues surrounding the activities of the I.W.W. He observed:

Efforts of state and military authorities throughout the west just now are centered on the serious problem of how to deal with the I.W.W. It may be questioned if some of the proceedings are just what might be called for, particularly when they assume the character of censorship over telegraphic communication by private individuals, as was done in Arizona. The I.W.W. represents a particular phase of the industrial life of the United States, a maldevelopment suddenly become acute through presence of a state of war. Deportation, often tried, merely shifts the mass of desperate men from one community to another, but gets nowhere near the solution. Just now the labor power of these men is sorely needed. Their attitude is unreasonable and unreasoning and their capacity for annoyance is considerable. In numbers they are few compared to the general population of the country, but in the thinly populated districts, where they are mostly found, their presence is a perpetual source of trouble. The constitutional authorities will be able to put them down and to find means for checking their destructive efforts, *but suppression does not remove the cause.* The *Bee* has in times past discussed the situation of the migratory or casual worker, whose condition always has been a menace to industrial stability. The I.W.W. may have to go over until after the war, but some time it will have to be dealt with on a more rational basis than the exercise of arbitrary police power.⁴²

By July 15, 1917, "large numbers of I.W.W.'s were heading north on freight trains, having left the southwestern states as a result of the Bisbee deportations. On July 15 Lincoln Night Chief of Police John Dee and a squad of officers met a north-bound Rock Island freight carrying forty men, all of whom produced I.W.W. cards. Dee refused to allow them to alight in Lincoln, and the train moved on to Omaha."⁴³

The Bisbee deportations and the subsequent I.W.W. migration into Nebraska caused the *Omaha World-Herald* to print a statement from the Justice Department assuring the public that it would support the attorney general's office in Omaha in the event of disturbances. The I.W.W. did not create the chaos in

Nebraska harvest fields that many had expected in 1917. However, in August an incident occurred in Lincoln which proved to be a sign of the coming change of fortunes for the I.W.W. Around August 10 Gurt G. Wilckens, a German-born I.W.W. who came to the United States in 1906, was arrested by Tom Smith, a Burlington watchman. Smith charged that Wilckens had made treasonable remarks against the government and had declared that he would not fight for the United States. When jailed, Wilckens denied having said anything against Uncle Sam; however, he stated that he did not want to fight for any country. But a letter written by Wilckens to a New Mexico friend fell into the hands of authorities in Omaha; it contained statements considered disloyal, and on August 24 Federal District Attorney T. S. Allen ordered Wilckens interned at Fort Douglas, Utah.⁴⁴

The Nebraska State Council of Defense became increasingly concerned with the activities of the I.W.W.⁴⁵ Thomas P. Reynolds, chairman of the Commission of Labor, State Council of Defense, made the following report on his handling of a strike of packinghouse workers, which began in South Omaha on September 4, 1917:

On Tuesday evening, Sept. 4th at 8:00 P.M., as chairman, Committee on Labor State Council of Defense, I took charge of the situation and found that there was an attempt at organization among the workers. Fearing the I.W.W. propaganda or other organizations antagonistic to the government, I urged them if an organization was contemplated to join the Union to affiliate with the American Fed. of Labor, as that was the only loyal organization supporting the government and felt sure it would protect their interests.⁴⁶

At the tenth session of the Council of Defense on September 18, 1917, R. L. Metcalfe, Governor Keith Neville's secretary, said "special agents were closely watching the I.W.W."⁴⁷

An I.W.W. letter exposing the merits of the "committee plan" found its way into the Defense Council's files. The letter, addressed to "fellow workers" and signed simply "industrially yours" could be dated between late July and November.⁴⁸ It demonstrated awareness on the part of I.W.W. members of the deleterious effects of government activity on the I.W.W. and the merit of a more decentralized organization.

During the summer of 1917, successful organizing campaigns increased I.W.W. income steadily. According to the *Chicago Daily Tribune* and *New York Call*, between April 1, 1917, and September 1, 1917, its income, totaling \$276,297.34, was

divided as follows: initiation fees \$63,647.75, dues \$75,419.75, other sources \$37,729.84. Approximately 32,000 new members were recruited in the five-month period.⁴⁹

In response to nationwide success of the I.W.W., Midwest vigilante groups, organized for the most part by "urban-based commercial clubs, bankers, editors, and politicians," began harassing the I.W.W. Beatings, jailings, and tarring and featherings were risked by wobblies on entering many towns. With the passage of the Espionage and Selective Service Acts, "the drive to suppress these labor radicals . . . developed two additional and unforeseen phases: use of federal troops under the wartime emergency and judicial prosecutions by the federal government, also under the cover of war."⁵⁰

July and August of 1917 saw federal troops or vigilantes raid I.W.W. offices throughout the country. However, it was not until September that the Justice Department moved against the I.W.W. openly. While the I.W.W. had not advocated "draft-dodging," it had, through its general anti-war and anti-capitalist stance, alienated public opinion, and only a minority of the population objected to the government violation of wobblies' First Amendment rights which began in earnest at this time. On September 5, 1917, Bureau of Investigation agents raided simultaneously I.W.W. headquarters, locals, and residences of members throughout the nation. Sixty-four I.W.W. headquarters yielded tons of membership lists, pamphlets, books, and letters. Raids continued throughout the fall.⁵¹

Although not directly connected with Justice Department activities, a particularly shocking incident occurred in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on November 8, 1917. On November 5 eleven I.W.W.'s had been arrested, tried in police court, and convicted on vagrancy charges seemingly because one man, Gunnard Johnson, did not have a Liberty Bond; they were fined \$100. Six I.W.W.'s testifying on behalf of the other eleven were arrested after their lawyer, Charles Richardson, moved to appeal the case. Bond had been fixed at \$200 each, but all seventeen were held because none could post bond.⁵²

Jailed were J. F. Ryan, secretary of the I.W.W.; J. R. Hill, a printing pressman; I.W.W. members John McCaffery, John Myers, E. M. Boyd, John Doyle (or Boyle), Charles Walsh, W. P. Walton, L. M. Mitchell, Joe French, Gunnard (or Bernard) John-



Richard L. Metcalf (left) headed the Committee on University Matters which investigated the anti-war professors at the University of Nebraska. Five professors were asked to resign as a result of the inquiry, one of whom was Erwin P. Hopt (right), a teacher of agriculture. (He was selected to the Nebraska Hall of Agricultural Achievement in 1939.)

son, Bob McDonald, John Fitzsimmons, Joe Ficher, Gordon Dimikrow, John McCurry, and Jack Sneed (not an I.W.W.). Around 11 o'clock that night, the men were taken from their cells supposedly to return to I.W.W. headquarters, where they were to be released upon promising to leave Tulsa. However, the touring cars in which they were being transported were stopped by "black shrouded [and] hooded" members of the "Knights of Liberty" armed with rifles and pistols. The policemen escorting the men were disarmed by the knights and the I.W.W.'s searched and bound. Six more automobiles carrying knights "similarly clad and armed," arrived and the entire procession moved to a "wild ravine" in the Osage Hills beyond the city limits.^{5 3}

The automobiles formed a circle with their headlights shining on an oak tree. The wobblies were unbound and ordered to disrobe to the waist as the hooded figures kept their guns trained on them. One by one the I.W.W.'s were tied to the tree and "lashed on the back until the blood ran," with a double piece of new rope made of 5/8- or 3/4-inch hemp. A brush was used to apply hot tar to the bleeding backs as the black-robed men in charge of the "ceremony" uttered the words: "In the name of the outraged women and children of Belgium." After the appli-

cation of the tar, handfuls of feathers were rubbed into the men's backs.^{5 4}

Several of the abused men boldly proclaimed their allegiance to the Industrial Workers of the World as the tarring and feathering proceeded. One of the older men, possibly Jack Sneed, pleaded for mercy. "I have lived here for 18 years," he said, "and have raised a large family. I am not an Industrial Worker of the World. I am as patriotic as any man here." He was shown no mercy by the robed men. After each I.W.W. had been flogged at the whipping post, they were lined up facing the west. "Let this be a warning to all Industrial Workers of the World to never come to Tulsa, Okla., again," said the ringleader. "Now get." With these words, gasoline was poured on the men's clothing and a match applied. As the wobblies fled down the rough road, a fusillade of shots was fired after them.^{5 5}

According to police officers interviewed after the incident, none of the knights could be identified because the black robes, hoods, and masks hid all distinguishing features. Later that night large printed signs appeared throughout Tulsa bearing these words: "Warning Posted. Notice to the I.W.W.'s: Don't let the sun set on you in Tulsa! — Vigilance Committee." After successfully evading the hail of bullets without injury, the I.W.W.'s made their way through a barbed wire fence, wandered around the hills, and finally struck a railroad track. Sneed remembered he knew a farmer in the vicinity, and he and J. F. Ryan set out to find the house while the rest built a fire to keep from freezing. The farmer refused Sneed and Ryan food and clothing, but by 3:00 a.m. an I.W.W. friend was found who led the men to a shack, where kerosene was used to remove the tar and feathers. The men eventually received money and clothing from friends later in the day and presumably left the area.^{5 6}

The Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union (industrial union of the I.W.W.) called a special convention for Omaha on November 12, 1917. According to the *Bee*, "delegates who arrived early for the convention stood around in a room at I.W.W. headquarters smoking corncob pipes and discussing the high cost of eating and traveling." According to Harry Jenkins, local I.W.W. secretary, only a business meeting and smoker was to be held. He denied reports of a huge influx of members and predicted nearer 400 than the 4,000 that had been speculated.^{5 7}

Richard Metcalfe, Governor Neville's secretary, and Omaha Mayor James Dahlman held a conference on November 11 at the Fontenelle Hotel, after which Dahlman said he would allow no demonstrations. Marshall Eberstein, chief of the Bureau of Investigation, cautioned: "They have a perfect right to hold a meeting if they desire. . . . We have no authority to molest them unless a law has been violated or there are reasonable indications of such a fact." The *Bee* ran a front page cartoon in its November 12 edition which summed up the position of most Omahans on the I.W.W. at the time. It invited the I.W.W. to leave.⁵⁸

On November 12 the bulletin board at the I.W.W. headquarters at 13th and Douglas Streets announced a business meeting and smoker for that evening. Admission was 50 cents and a ticket entitled the holder to an I.W.W. membership. Chief of Police Henry Dunn sent two policemen into the headquarters disguised as I.W.W.'s. They reported everything calm and only about seventy-five "strangers" in attendance. A number of women in the Hanscom Park area telephoned the *Bee* to report begging on the part of I.W.W.'s, and one asked, "Couldn't we people of Omaha follow the fine example of the Oklahoma vigilantes who tarred and feathered them?"⁵⁹

Despite an orderly convention with no seditious remarks,⁶⁰ the Justice Department raided the headquarters on November 13 and confiscated materials found. The raid, "authorized in Washington," was led by U.S. Marshal Thomas J. Flynn under the direction of Chief Marshall Eberstein. Police Captain Henry Heitfeld led the "morals" squad which assisted Flynn. Among the sixty-four⁶¹ alleged I.W.W.'s arrested were T. A. Jenkins, local secretary who arrived after the raid was in progress; Mrs. Elmer Buse, St. Louis, only woman arrested; E. F. Dix, chairman; Albert Watkins, Sidney, Australia; Dan Thompson, "a well-known Omaha character"; Joseph Ratti, a painter from Omaha; Jack St. Clair, a British subject; and William Smith, Otto Olsen, E. Wydell, D. O. Anderson, John Stine, and William Eike. Those arrested were from Missouri, Indiana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Oregon, Texas, California, Colorado, Illinois, Australia, and Great Britain.⁶² Upon arrest the wobblies were searched and about \$250 was taken from them. No weapons were found, but one bottle of carbolic

acid was confiscated. Twenty-five of the prisoners were taken to the city jail where "in the best of spirits" they broke out "in chorus several times." Thirty-nine prisoners were taken to county jail because of the overcrowding in the city jail.⁶³

Approximately two tons of literature was confiscated in the raid. A "great variety" of pamphlets were found, including one on the "gentle art of sabotage," as well as I.W.W. song books, dues stamps, money orders, account books, several typewriters, a phonograph with many records, and membership lists. The *Bee* commented that "machinery for bringing in cash from members is shown to be especially complete," and "in some cases it cost a man as much as \$9 to become a member." It added sarcastically, "The 'capitalist' class couldn't improve on that. . . . The receipts . . . appear to have been sufficient to satisfy any 'capitalist.'"⁶⁴

Also confiscated were pictures, "chiefly caricatures showing the downtrodden workingman and the diamond-studded capitalist." One drawing was entitled "The Blanket Stiff"; behind the framed picture of Joe Hill, legendary I.W.W. martyr, was an envelope containing grains of ashes of his body. At the time of the raid, I.W.W. leaders refused to open the headquarters safe, then relented. Its contents included a vast number of blank I.W.W. membership cards, \$78.00 in cash, and a letter from a prisoner in a Minneapolis jail requesting a copy of the pamphlet "Speeches from the Dock."⁶⁵

From the vast number of "filled out" and empty membership cards, U.S. Attorney T. S. Allen theorized that Omaha was to be the next national headquarters of the I.W.W. Previous raids in Kansas City, St. Louis, St. Paul, and Chicago pointed to Omaha as a likely candidate. The vast number of filled-out indexed membership cards, several gunny sacks of red cards, and other material too great for local use pointed to this possibility.⁶⁶

The events surrounding the activities of the I.W.W. throughout the nation in 1917, and the entrance of the United States into World War I, brought about a minor reversal in the editorial position of Rosewater's *Bee*. On November 15, he stated:

The prompt action of the federal authorities in arresting the I.W.W. gang assem-

bled in Omaha will have the approval of right minded folks. These brazen advocates of disorder openly advertized their gatherings here, announcing plans for their meetings and promising a demonstration that happily has been checked. What the outcome might have been can only be conjectured, but experience of other communities is warrant for believing that Omaha has been spared a serious infliction by the act of the United States Marshal in getting the "delegates" behind bars. A visitation of these malcontents and apostles of disloyalty is unwelcome at any time and particularly now is their presence for any purpose undesirable. Sympathy for men in their industrial position must not blind any to the danger that follows allowing them freedom of action. Our government is alive to a full sense of the menace from this source and we trust the move made here will aid in some way the efforts being made to render the I.W.W. harmless. America suffers enough from Bolshevism in time of peace and the doctrine and its advocates are alike intolerable in time of war.⁶⁷

Chicago attorney Samuel Block, on orders of Acting Secretary E. F. Doree of Chicago, was sent to Omaha to defend the imprisoned wobblies. On November 16 without having communicated with the prisoners, Block stated that none of the imprisoned men were disloyal, none had made seditious remarks, all were "fundamentally opposed to imperialism and autocracy in any form," and none were in sympathy with the German cause, as implied by the government. The wobblies attempted to convert other prisoners to the I.W.W. cause in their initial week of imprisonment. The *Bee* observed on November 21: "Several of them insisted on created such a disturbance . . . that they were put into a cell and the hose was turned on them, which lowered the temperature of their oratory materially." On November 27 the Justice Department began the slow process of release of the I.W.W.'s. Mrs. Elmer Buse, when questioned by Assistant District Attorney Howard Saxton and Chief Marshall Eberstein, said she had only affiliated with the I.W.W. a few days before the convention for the purpose of serving refreshments and should be released. The Justice Department also released Albert Watkins, who claimed he had "been induced" to join and attend the convention.⁶⁸

Thanksgiving dinner proved a "memorable event" for the I.W.W.'s held in jail. The *Bee* observed: "Previous Thanksgiving day feeds of the fraternity of conscientious objectors to honest labor have consisted of beans a la tomato can, cooked jungle style near convenient tracks." The sheriff, Michael Clark, however, regaled the prisoners with turkey and cranberry sauce on the fifth floor of the courthouse. "Fainting Bertha," one of the "social leaders" present at the meal, was observed by Sheriff Clark to be one of the most fluent conversationalists he had

ever entertained in "his marble halls." After dinner the I.W.W.'s were returned to their cells where they "held song service until the fire hose was unlimbered. Not wishing to bathe immediately after dinner the meeting was adjourned."⁶⁹

George F. Vanderveer, Seattle attorney defending I.W.W.'s indicted in Chicago, visited Omaha on November 30 to confer with Chief Eberstein and Assistant District Attorney Saxton, and to visit the prisoners. Afterward Vanderveer stated: "The organization is non resistant. . . . The strike is their weapon. They do not believe in violence because the minute they start violence the troops are called out, and they fail to gain their ends." When Vanderveer was confronted with confiscated I.W.W. pamphlets advocating sabotage, he declared the I.W.W. publication house merely printed and sold them but didn't "put any official endorsement on them." Before he left Omaha, Vanderveer attempted to obtain records seized in the raid; however, U.S. Commissioner Neely refused to grant him an order.⁷⁰

On December 1 twenty imprisoned I.W.W.'s were bound over to a federal grand jury after a hearing before Commissioner Robert D. Neely. They were charged with conspiracy to violate the Selective Draft Law, the Espionage Act, and the President's Proclamation. Bond was set at \$5,000 each. None of those initially bound over gave Omaha addresses. The forty-one I.W.W.'s not among the twenty bound over were kept in jail, and Saxton said they would be "weeded out" by February when the grand jury would convene in Omaha.⁷¹

On December 11 thirty-one more I.W.W.'s were held over for the grand jury. Among those prisoners released on this date was Dan Thompson, who sent messages to authorities stating he cared nothing for the I.W.W. and wanted to "leave them and go to work in the smelter." E. J. Burkhart, who was jailed when the raid occurred, was also released. William Smith, E. Wydell, D. O. Anderson, John Stine, and William Eike were given the opportunity to enlist in the Army—at their own request. After passing examinations complaints against them were dropped. Otto Olsen, when released on January 9, 1918, stated the first thing he was going to do was "get a square meal." On the same day Jack St. Clair renounced all I.W.W. sentiments and was escorted to the local British recruiting mission by Sergeant



Rausch Mit

Editorial cartoon from the Omaha Bee, November 12, 1919.

Joiner (or Joyner) to enlist in the British Army. The fifty-one I.W.W.'s bound over were not brought to trial in 1918 because the Justice Department knew it had a weak case and did not want to jeopardize its case in Chicago with a dismissal, acquittal, or reversal in Omaha.⁷²

THE SPRING, SUMMER, AND FALL OF 1918

The I.W.W.'s activities as a labor organization in 1917 did not go unnoticed in Nebraska. The *Fifteenth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics of the State of Nebraska* included a section on the I.W.W. in its year-end report published in 1918. It concluded:

But of the I.W.W. this fact is patent: The organization is growing each year in numbers, and each year is the cause of more strife and hindrance in the amicable solution of labor problems. When resisted the organization becomes more bold and defiant. How to deal with them, how to meet their demands, just and unjust, presents a problem which calls for deliberate thought and cool and impassionate action.⁷³

The Nebraska State Council of Defense was also concerned with the I.W.W. and its sympathizers. As early as July, 1917, the council had directed the attention of the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, to "several professors who had persistently given encouragement, publicly and privately, to those who are out of harmony with the American cause." On April 19, 1918, the council "advised action" on the part of the regents, who arranged a public hearing.

At the hearing a "Committee on the University Matter" agreed to confront the regents with statements made by citizens concerning the conduct of certain professors. The committee, headed by Richard Lee Metcalf, made complaints against twelve instructors:

The evidence discloses that these university instructors have, for one reason and another, assumed an attitude calculated to encourage among those who come under their influence, within and without the University, a spirit of inactivity, indifference, and opposition towards this war and an undesirable view with respect to the several fundamental questions inseparable from the war.⁷⁴

The committee, particularly concerned with the position of professors concerning the I.W.W. and its activities, also stated:

This evidence discloses partiality on the part of more than one instructor for the I.W.W., an organization that is practically at war with America. You will find where one instructor spoke "very feelingly" in regard to the treatment of the I.W.W. referring to "tyranny" in this country and the alleged misuse of the common people and presenting excuses for the behavior of the organization against which our government

is now proceeding. Another instructor declined to subscribe for Liberty Bonds, explaining his unwillingness on the ground that he was opposed to all war and for that reason could not support the government. On one occasion when an instructor (hereinafter referred to) announced that he intended to write a paper in defense of the I.W.W., this instructor urged him to prepare the paper and expressed entire sympathy with his views. Another instructor made many apologies and excuses for the attitude and behavior of the I.W.W. . . . This . . . instructor announced that he intended to prepare a paper in defense of the I.W.W., asserting that they were misrepresented and mistreated, and that there was a concerted effort to discredit them. He insisted that the I.W.W. were misjudged and maligned. The general attitude of this instructor has been distinctly out of sympathy with the war and with questions relating to it.⁷⁵

On May 28, 1918, the Council of Defense released the names of ten faculty members against whom charges were brought. Of the original ten charged, three were eventually directed to resign for being "negative, halting or hesitating in support of the government." They were Dr. G. W. A. Luckey, professor of education, C. E. Persinger, professor of American history, and Erwin P. Hopt, professor of agriculture. In addition two instructors, F. M. Fling and Mrs. Minnie Throop England, were asked to resign for being conservative "agitators" in the university faculty and for "casting suspicion" on their fellows but remained on the faculty.⁷⁶

Between June 6 and June 27, 1918, Albert Hansen, new I.W.W. secretary in Omaha, was arrested three times, the final time on vagrancy charges along with Charles Casey, A. L. Super, Fred Peterson, and Steve Zinger. Provost Marshal Crowder gave them a "work or fight" ultimatum. By July 8 these five I.W.W.'s and one nameless wobby decided that Crowder's order was no joke and agreed to work if sedition and vagrancy charges were dropped.⁷⁷

During the remainder of the summer, fall, and winter of 1918, I.W.W. activities in the Midwest declined. Not wanting to prejudice the case of their leaders standing trial in Chicago, the wobblies refrained from attention-getting activity despite the fact that I.W.W. membership was estimated at between 100,000 and 250,000.⁷⁸

THE SPRING OF 1919

On April 21, 1919, the Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union No. 110 convened in Sioux City, Iowa. Mayor Wallace M. Short, refusing to ban the meeting, appeared before the convention and "extended a welcome to the delegates, but cau-

tioned that any 'red flag' displays or revolutionary methods would be quickly checked by city authorities." However, on April 22, Sheriff W. H. Jones and more than one hundred fifty deputies raided I.W.W. headquarters. Joined by Deputy U.S. Marshal Milton Perry Smith and other federal agents, they confiscated and padlocked records, books, and literature. Advised to leave town, the I.W.W. agreed to call off the convention and to abandon the hall for a week. Approximately one hundred citizens of Sioux City demanded the resignation of Mayor Short because of his "alleged friendly attitude" toward the I.W.W.⁷⁹

Between April 10 and 30 the I.W.W.'s imprisoned in Omaha for a year and one-half were released. Of all the wobblies arrested in November, 1917, this was the only group not prosecuted. As to why the Omaha group was not prosecuted, Melvyn Dubofsky speculates: "Perhaps some of them [Justice Department officials] had pangs of conscience about the propriety of sentencing another large group of probably innocent men to prison."⁸⁰ Preston comments:

After holding the trial in abeyance, the Omaha Office eventually cancelled the prosecution, probably believing that public opinion had by then been satiated. Allen himself felt self-rightously content. Dismissal of the proceedings, he reported, would prove to the radicals that when the government did have a weak case, "it was ready to recognize that fact."⁸¹

On May 1, 1919, the Socialist Party and the I.W.W. scheduled a joint meeting for the Swedish Auditorium in Omaha. Circulars announcing the meeting were signed "First of May Committee, Socialist Party of America, Twenty-fourth and Cuming; Industrial Workers of the World, 104 North Thirteenth street." One side of the circular read: "International Labor Day, first of May. May day—the day of labor's international and never before a May day so thrillingly significant."⁸²

Edmund R. Brumbaugh of the local Socialist committee stated the program would include "written addresses" by Eugene V. Debs, Kate Richards O'Hara, William D. Haywood, Rose Pastor Stokes, Victor Berger, and four other men sentenced for violation of the Espionage Act. Mayor Edward P. Smith declared he would not allow the meeting to take place. He had previously attempted to distinguish the Socialist Party from the I.W.W., he said. However, since they presumably were

now working for a common cause and adopting common policies, he stated he would treat them alike:

[I want] the I.W.W. to understand . . . that there is no place for them in Omaha. I was disgusted at the action of the mayor of Sioux City when he gave an address of welcome last week to these people. We don't propose to have these fellows sow seeds of discord in Omaha. There never was a time in the history of Omaha when relations between employers and employees were better. . . . Any meeting that seeks to glorify Debs, O'Hara, Haywood, and Mooney must not be held in the City of Omaha.⁸³

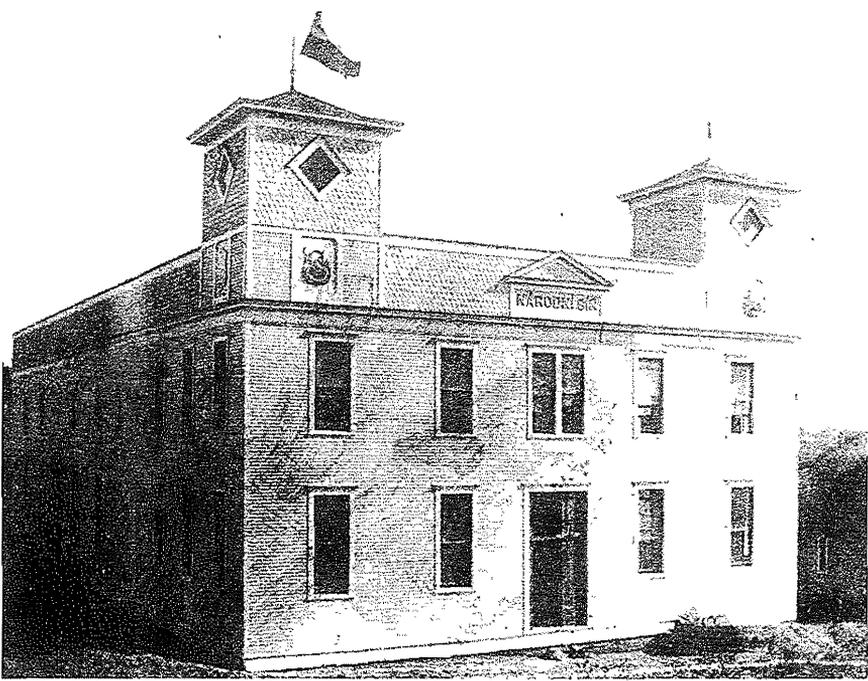
The mayor wrote Police Commissioner John Dean Ringer requesting him to instruct Chief of Police Eberstein that the Swedish Auditorium was not available for the proposed meeting, nor was he to permit the I.W.W. to meet elsewhere in Omaha. The mayor wrote Victor Danielson, manager of the auditorium, requesting him to cooperate in the ban and Danielson complied. But the meeting was held in Omaha despite the mayor's orders. On April 30 at Socialist headquarters a Miss Kerns and a Mr. Kapinski, chairman of the committee on arrangements, planned the celebration. On the evening of May 1, more than five hundred men and women met at Tel Jed Sokol Hall, 13th and Dorcas Streets, to hear Anton Novotny, head of the Bohemian Socialists in America. On instructions of Kate Richards O'Hara, red carnations were worn, and many persons signed a petition protesting the imprisonment of Eugene V. Debs.⁸⁴

Although Mayor Smith had warned against the use of any language but English, Novotny spoke in "Bohemian." Three policemen attending the meeting arrested no one for violation of the mayor's instructions, as Novotny used mildly inflammatory rhetoric (the *Bee's* translation):

"I am a bolshevist" he shouted in a voice pitched high with excitement. Every eye in the house was riveted on the speaker. "I am a socialist," he continued with all the emphasis of his nature, and a deafening roar of applause bespoke the unanimous approval of the audience. He continued: "I protest the imprisonment of Eugene V. Debs, Kate Richards O'Hare and all others who expressed their sincere and candid opinion about the war. The war is supposed to be over. The most autocratic European nations have released their political prisoners. Only here in the United States does a 'democratic' administration still throw men and women into prison for having spoken their honest convictions. I demand freedom for all political and industrial prisoners. I demand this freedom without delay."⁸⁵

Those responsible for these meetings were never arrested or prosecuted.⁸⁶

The anarchist and syndicalist bombings (many of which



Anton Novotny, head of the Bohemian Socialists of America, delivered a May Day speech on April 30, 1919, in Sokol Hall, 5601 South 21st, Omaha. Five hundred people attended, many of them I.W.W.'s.

were attributed to the I.W.W.) which swept across the U.S. in May, 1919, did not go unnoticed in Omaha. Postmaster Charles E. Fanning stated: "We are watching Chief of Police Eberstein's mail very closely . . . as the chief, before leaving the department of justice, arrested 40 I.W.W.'s who were recently released." The *Bee* also reacted to the bombings by running a cartoon (figure 2) on the front page of its May 2 edition. Acting Mayor George Dayton of Lincoln announced on May 5 that no I.W.W. would be permitted in the city after an advance man a few days previously had posted notices of a forthcoming meeting in Lincoln. Police notified the advance man that "the roads out of Lincoln were in condition and that he better make use of them as quickly as possible and he accepted the invitation." Dayton added that returning World War I soldiers would be called out to drive I.W.W.'s out of town if necessary.^{8 7}

On July 24, 1919, the Omaha area had one of its last recorded encounters with the wobblies. Eugene Maddox, a Negro harvest worker, was jailed in Council Bluffs for possession of a concealed revolver. He claimed he bought it for protection after being robbed of \$56.00 by I.W.W.'s and charged that only belligerent wobblies could ride the freights in safety. The same

day George H. Salow, a harvest itinerant and discharged veteran from Montgomery, Alabama, was arrested in Council Bluffs by North Western Railroad detectives. He said he was awakened from a nap in a freight car near Valley, Nebraska, by I.W.W.'s who stole his money and attempted to brand him with their insignia. He escaped but received cuts, bruises, and a closed eye when thrown from the train. The *Bee* commented that incidents of I.W.W.'s branding harvest hands on the chest or arm had been reported elsewhere.⁸⁸

While the I.W.W. seems never to have had the spectacular impact in Nebraska that it had in other states, its presence was still felt in 1919. In a speech entitled "Some of the Activities of the State During 1919," Gov. S. R. McKelvie included this reference to the I.W.W.:

Though Nebraska is an interior State, and its industrial activities are fairly limited, it became none the less apparent that the radical elements, particularly the I.W.W., were gaining a foothold here. Therefore instructions were sent out to county attorneys to enlist the services of local police officers in apprehending these radicals and taking them into custody. The last legislature passed quite a comprehensive act, bearing upon this subject, and it is our purpose to see that it is enforced to the letter. If relief cannot be obtained through this channel, then these radicals will be turned over to the Federal Government. Nothing is being left undone to prevent their operating in this state.⁸⁹

The effect of May Day, 1919, also carried over into 1920. Governor McKelvie proclaimed May 1, 1920, Americanization Day in response to "the recurrence of May 1 demonstrations by radicals who are opposed to organized government and the enforcement of law."⁹⁰ By the fall of 1920 the I.W.W. had entered a downward spiral — "almost half a century of declining virility and approaching senility." The I.W.W. was never again a vital presence on the American radical scene nor was its presence as a labor organization felt appreciably again in the Midwest.⁹¹ In the words of Taft and Perlman, "The marvel is not that the I.W.W. declined, but that for seven terrible years it was able to survive without crumbling into dust."⁹²

SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Other authors previously cited have analyzed I.W.W. activities throughout the United States. All that can be attempted here are some observations concerning I.W.W. activity in the Midwest, since only activities in this region were covered in this paper.

As Dubofsky has noted, the A.W.O. became the most active recruiting union for the I.W.W. between the spring of 1915 to the fall of 1916, largely through the efforts of Walter T. Nef, whose ability as an organizer cannot be over-exaggerated. He was responsible for the establishment of the \$2.00 initiation fee which helped fill the I.W.W. coffers. He was also responsible for the "short-run" objectives of a ten-hour day, a minimum wage, overtime pay, good board, and clean bedding, with which advantages the A.W.O. delegates entered the harvest fields in 1915. Nef's later success in organizing the longshoremens in Philadelphia point to his ability to build a sound union. Nef, who exemplifies the importance of a strong leader within any movement, figured strongly in the reversal of lagging I.W.W. fortunes in 1915.⁹³

The importance of the *strong* individual is also exemplified by the actions of Police Chief Robert Carter of Hastings as opposed to those of Sheriff Gus Hyers of Lincoln and Acting Chief M. F. Dempsey of Omaha. When confronted with somewhat similar situations, Hyers and Dempsey heightened the tension between local residents and the wobblies in 1915, whereas Carter, who maintained relative "calm," was even respected by the I.W.W.'s.

While the A.W.O. had largely foregone the use of soap-boxing in 1915, some tactics reminiscent of the free-speech fights lingered. The A.W.O. substituted organization "at the point of production" for the soap-box method. However, in 1915 it still used some less-than-genteel tactics to gain release of its jailed members: the threat of violence; actual invasion of towns; civil disobedience by large groups whose incarceration would overtax a town's facilities; and storming of jails.

The I.W.W. used strong-arm tactics in organizing harvest hands. Incidents related in this article support Taft's position that these tactics did produce an increase in membership and dues payment.⁹⁴ One incident of an attempted branding is also related in this article. That there was an element in the I.W.W. — or at least one associated with it — primarily composed of bandits and highwaymen cannot be denied. The evidence presented here detracts from Foner's position that no evidence exists to support Taft's contention.⁹⁵ However, Victor

Rosewater's warning should again be stressed. Lawbreakers on occasion used concentrations of wobbly workers as "cover," but the I.W.W. organization itself could not be held responsible. The I.W.W. membership increase between the spring of 1915 and the fall of 1917 can hardly be attributed merely to strong-arm tactics by A.W.O. organizers. No loose-knit organization spread over the entire country could be expected to maintain membership rolls or dues payment solely through the use of force. Many men must have joined voluntarily and perceived some personal gain from the organization.

The I.W.W. is thought to have increased wages, shortened hours, and bettered working conditions of "bindlestiffs"* in the Midwest. However, the I.W.W. effect on wages and working conditions cannot be separated from the improved prices for agricultural products brought on by World War I. Whether the worker would have realized the same benefits during the war-induced prosperity between 1915 and 1917 without I.W.W. help is speculative.

Thorstein Veblen's conclusion that vigilante groups which harassed I.W.W.'s were primarily spurred on by oil companies has not been fully substantiated. However, the article from the *Hastings Daily Tribune* concerning the 1915 harvest lends support to Veblen's position that it was not the farmer who was most vehemently opposed to the I.W.W. On the other hand, the composition of vigilante groups is not known, and they conceivably could have been made up largely of farmers.

The existence of the I.W.W. in the Midwest seemed to act as a spur to A.F.L. organizational drives in Omaha in 1917. Only one reference labeling the A.F.L. "the lesser of the two evils" is cited in this paper, yet newspaper accounts of militant I.W.W. activities and conservative A.F.L. craft-union activities in Nebraska give the impression that the A.F.L. gained a better image in the Midwest because of its relative conservatism.

While the I.W.W. was not strong numerically, its presence was felt, as the incidents, editorials, speeches, proclamations, and activities of the Nebraska State Council of Defense abundantly attest. Yet, prosecution of the I.W.W. leaders, its identification as "anti-American," the breakdown of the organization in the 1920's, and the introduction of improved farm machinery —

*A bindlestiff was an itinerant who carried his belongings in a *bundle* (bundle).

replacing much of the migratory labor — tended to dissipate any long-term impact in the Midwest.

The ability of the federal government, along with the oil, mining, and lumber interests, to brand (with some justification) the I.W.W. as opposed to the war effort — advocating draft dodging, pacifism, and sympathy for Germany — was the major element turning public opinion against I.W.W. in 1917. This shift in public opinion — which is reflected in Victor Rosewater's editorials — permitted the Justice Department and local vigilantes to violate the I.W.W.'s First Amendment rights without raising a public outcry. This carried over into the Omaha case, where I.W.W.'s were arrested and jailed for one and one-half years with little cause.

The I.W.W. stigma rubbed off on university professors who dared to find redeeming elements in the I.W.W. or who simply were pacifists. By 1919 the stigma left on the I.W.W. by its anti-war stance and the court cases involving its members was so complete that Mayor Wallace Short of Sioux City was denounced for treating I.W.W.'s kindly. Indeed, by 1920 the remnant of the I.W.W. was largely forced underground.

APPENDIX I

REPORT ON SETTLEMENT OF PACKING HOUSE WORKERS.

On Tuesday, Sept. 4th [1917], the workers in the packing houses of South Omaha went on strike, asking for five cents an hour increase in pay and the betterment of their working conditions.

The representatives of the Packing Companies refused to meet or even discuss the questions involved, which finally involved all employees of the four great packing industries.

On Tuesday evening, Sept. 4th at 8:00 P.M., as Chairman, Committee on Labor State Council of Defense, I took charge of the situation and found that there was an attempt at organization among the workers.

Fearing the I.W.W. propaganda or other organizations antagonistic to the government, I urged them if an organization was contemplated to join the Union to affiliate with the American Fed. of Labor, as that was the only loyal organization supporting the government and felt sure it would protect their interests.

After numerous meetings held day and night, during the entire week, the workers attempting in the meantime to reach an understanding with the packers, but with no success, and all means being exhausted for an adjustment, the matter was taken up with the Government thru the Dep't of Labor, by Hon. W. B. Wilson.

On Monday, Sept. 10th, Fred L. Feick arrived in Omaha, having been detailed here by the United States Government. After a conference between Mr. Feick and myself at my home regarding questions involved, he took the matter up with the managers of the four packing companies.

These conferences lasted for two days between the committee representing the workers, the packers, Mr. Feick and myself, when an agreement was finally reached which was as follows, and was unanimously accepted by all concerned:

Omaha – South Side, September 11, 1917.

Articles of Agreement entered into between the
Packing Plants of Omaha and the United States Mediator.

1. All employees to receive a 2½¢ per hour increase in wages, which was given prior to the arrival of the United States Mediator.
2. All employees who have been out to be re-employed without discrimination.
3. No discrimination to be shown against any man or woman employed, for belonging to a Union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor or advocating unionism in accord with the principles of the American Federation of Labor.
4. The firm or company to agree to meet with a committee of their own employees to bring about settlement of grievances whenever they arise, in a friendly manner and to the best interests of all parties concerned.
5. Agree to have the hiring all done by one man in each plant.
6. Any man dissatisfied with the treatment he received from the employment agent may appeal to the Superintendent or Manager of the plant.
7. Where common laborers feel they are not getting full employment if they will take the matter up with the men doing the hiring he will use every effort to place them in a department where they will get full time.

[Signed] Armour & Co., R. C. Howe, G.M.
Swift & Co., H. O. Edwards, Mgr.
Morris & Co., C. B. Spangler.
Cudahy Pkg. Cp., M.R.M.

Fred L. Feick,
Representative U. S. Gov.

This settlement was of great importance particularly at this time owing to the great number of men and women (7,000 to 8,000) being affected, but of still greater concern to the government owing to the necessity of the meat supply for the army.

On taking charge of this situation every thing seemed to be in a turmoil. They were almost wholly unorganized, the only organization being a butcher workmen union, comprising 103 members. The only definite information I could obtain was that the workers were asking an increase of five (5¢) per hour. I used every effort to find out the cause of this strike or who was responsible for it – thinking it might be enemy propaganda, but was unable to find anything along those lines – but instead proved their patriotism by accepting the settlement agreed upon by Mr. Feick and myself without a dissenting vote some six to eight thousand men and women.

In rendering this report, I cannot let the opportunity escape me of saying a word in behalf of the men representing the government in this controversy.

I only regret that every member of this Council, had not the opportunity to hear the wonderful appeal to the workers from the lips of this man, which brought tears to the eyes of hundreds of men and women who know the greatest hardships in their everyday life.

The basis of this agreement not only settled the question in Nebraska, but also all over the country where disputes prevailed in the packing industry, and therefore I feel that the Nebraska Council of Defense should feel proud of having taken part in so important a settlement.

Respectfully submitted,

[Signed] T. P. Reynolds
Chairman, Com. on Labor,
State Council of Defense.⁹⁶

APPENDIX II

FELLOW WORKERS:—

I feel called upon to drop you a few lines concerning a matter which in my humble estimation is of vital importance to the left of 800 as well as to the protection of the miners. I sincerely trust that you will in no way feel that the writer is foisting upon you a burden.

In Arizona, as well as in many other states, fellow workers in the role of officials, agitators, or members (rank and file) have been deported, lynched, tarred and feathered, beaten up, jailed, etc., by conscious and unconscious tools of the different industrial Barons. These many acts of violence practiced upon our membership have been condoned by the press, business men, pulpits and government officials with but few exceptions.

I feel that the Slaves realize by now, in view of past and every day reoccurring experiences of the nature as above referred to, that they can hope for no protection other than that which could be afforded to them by a strong and mobile class organization of their own. In other words, they, I trust, realize by now their class interests.

The question arises, in view of the fact that they are not permitted to meet openly (the raiding of the hall at Butte and the breaking up of the dance at Miami, for instances); that if they were, Company stools would report those attending; that with an organization depending upon a Secretary and few delegates, wherein the arresting of the Secretary and the delegates, along with the closing of the hall, means the temporary disruption of their offensive strength thereby destroying and retarding in a measure their effectiveness. Also the constant danger of the tar and feather, lynching and deporting parties ever present to carry out the mandate of the Copper Barons. These aforementioned and ever present conditions demand a *Mobile* organization. Suppose in Bisbee, for example, that you, or any other official of the organization, or active member, were taken out to be tarred and feathered, lynched or what not, and the Miners (members and non-members) knew of the above referred to performance about to be carried into effect, what could they do? The answer is that it all depends as to whether they had a Mobile organization to thwart the will of their masters — to protect their Fellow Slave. Remember, I am not getting hysterical; not at all, it is but a case of sounding a warning.

Well, then, here goes the Committee Plan. The Committee Plan should, by my way of thinking, be comprised of a Central Committee of say from 4 to 10 members, who, in their turn, will choose other committees; these second committees we will refer to as sub-committees, and they may be composed of from 2 to 5 members each. These sub (sub. No. 1.) committees, may if the occasion necessitates, form a sub-sub-

committee (Sub. No. 2.). These sub committees should determine the delegates subject to approval of the Central Committee and in turn, if they see fit, subject to the district secretary and he should be subject to the district committee which will naturally be formed after the increase in membership warrants it. The sub-committees (No. 1) are subject to the Central Committee, and the sub-committees (No. 2) are subject to their respective sub-committees (No. 1), etc.

The sub-committees (No. 1) would, in all probability, be composed of one or more Spanish, one or more English, one or more Finnish, one or more Austrian (Slavic) speaking, etc.

The sub-committees (No. 2) would be to cover boarding houses, rooming houses, etc. Of course in a camp where there are several small mines they could, if the Central Committee deemed it expedient, have a sub-committee to each mine.

Now, under this plan, each committee could hold its meeting in a room separate and independent of other committees, without publicity. It could be arranged that one or more representatives from each committee could meet from time to time with the Central Committee. Also the delegates could meet once or twice a month by themselves.

Analyzing the features of the committee plan, we find that in the event of companies finding out a few of the members of said committees and supposing said members had to leave the camp, the other committees could fill their places forthwith. In any case it would be difficult for the company to have all of the members of the different committees arrested at the same time. Again, take three individuals: You know, at least you feel confident that they could line up at the very least, three members per week, or at any rate they could work out leads for the delegates.

In the event of a strike your committees are already formed and know their ground. Again, in the event of a danger arising (say an attempt to lynch) deport or tar and feather one or more class conscious Slaves), the other Slaves could, through committees, be readily and quickly rallied to the rescue. This matter would have to be threshed out and ways and means plans laid for emergencies which may arise from time to time.

Remember, the Companies have apparently a secret organization, besides they have, in many instances, machine guns, hundreds of high power rifles, and millions of rounds of ammunition stored away (in hiding). I do not know the hiding places — Nuf-sed.

The boys in Jerome, I believe, know the game. I have been corresponding with a few of them for some time.

Now then, if you think well of the proposition as roughly set forth, good. The next thing to do is to get it in operation. It is difficult to cover the matter on paper. However, I feel that you will see the merits and find some means of putting it into effect in the camps of Arizona.

By the way, it is better to have at least three men in the Central Committee who you or some other class conscious rebel knows to be O.K. (men who have passed the acid test), than it is to have more than three when the others are unknown quantities. These are strange times and the Slave Owners have in the past seen to it that a few skunks ingratiate themselves into the good graces of the Slaves. I mention this simply as a matter of precaution.

Again, it is quite possible that in the near future arrests of officials will take place, so in the interim we should build up the committees plan. Our Masters, the Slave owners, are few in number although it is true that they have armed forces at their beck and call. But then the Slaves are many and if the occasion arises, providing they are properly mobilized, we have nothing to fear. We are forewarned. What are we

going to do? It is up to the Slaves. Are we to continue living in a fool's paradise or are we to protect ourselves? Non-resistance is crap, especially when the other fellow is sharpening the weapon with which to slit our throats.

A Central Committee by itself is not to be tolerated.

Suppose in a camp there are but three members. The method I would suggest is that these three form a Central Committee, providing that the three are competent and dependable (otherwise others would have to be chosen for the Central Committee). As soon as they can get other members lined up and active, one or more subcommittees should be formed. In this way the existence of the Central Committee is protected. For, in the event of the Central Committee being broken up, the subcommittees could reform forthwith their Central Committee.

Hence, I should judge that a traveling organizer, instead of attempting to line up workers himself, would employ his efforts and energy toward the building up of committees, so that in the event of his being run out of the camp or arrested, the organization would continue.

Man has in the past formed organizations, or groups for his protection when his life and liberty was endangered. Are the Slave owners to continue striking fear into the hearts of the Slaves?

Trusting that the contents of this communication will be accepted in good grace, I beg to remain

INDUSTRIALLY YOURS.⁹⁷

NOTES

1. Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States: the Industrial Workers of the World, 1905-1917* (New York, 1965); Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All* (Chicago, 1969); Patrick Renshaw, *The Wobblies: The Story of Syndicalism in the United States* (New York, 1968).

2. Philip Taft, "The Federal Trails of the I.W.W.," *Labor History*, 3. (Winter 1962), 57-91; Philip Taft, "The Bisbee Deportation," *Labor History*, (Winter 1972), 3-40; William Preston, Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933* (Cambridge, 1963).

3. Philip Taft, "The I.W.W. in the Grain Belt," *Labor History*, (Winter 1960), 53-67; Philip Taft and Selig Perlman, *History of Labor in the United States, 1896-1932*, IV (1935), 386-432. George Griesel did one of the earliest works on the personnel of the I.W.W. in the Midwest, but it is extremely superficial; George Henry August Griesel, "Study of the Personnel of the I.W.W. Movement" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1920).

4. Dubofsky, 531.

5. Preston, 91; Foner, 462, 474.

6. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 21, 1914, 9; Foner, 474.

7. Foner, 474-475. Foner says one of the duties of the Bureau of Migratory Workers was "to circumvent the schemes of labor bureaus and employment sharks whose exaggerated accounts of labor shortages produced a surplus of labor, driving down wages and forcing many unemployed harvest hands to resort to begging and stealing."

8. Dubofsky, 315; Stuart Jamieson, *Labor Unionism in American Agriculture*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 836 (Washington, 1945), 399. Both Foner, 475, and Taft, "The I.W.W. in the Grain Belt," 59, date the conference as April 21, 1915.

9. A.W.O. "No. 400" was a "sardonic I.W.W. comment" on Mrs. Astor's ballroom and New York City society's famous "400." Haywood considered that "the new union was being formed by the elite of the working class," the migratory harvest worker — who was going to carry out the more difficult tasks of organization and regeneration of the labor movement. Joyce L. Kornbluh, *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1964) 230; Taft, "The I.W.W. in the Grain Belt," 59; Dubofsky, 315; Renshaw, 135.

10. Jamieson, 400; Dubofsky, 315; Taft, "The I.W.W. in the Grain Belt," 59; Foner, 475.

11. Foner, 477, 484; Dubofsky, 315, 316; Taft, "The I.W.W. in the Grain Belt," 60; In Vincent St. John's 1919 revised edition of *The I.W.W.: Its History Structure, and Methods*, 1, he notes that the I.W.W. general organization, "does not allow any union to charge over 50 cents per month dues, or \$2 initiation fee"; See Leo Stein and Philip Taft (editors), *Wages, Hours, and Strikes: Labor Panaceas in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1970). However, it seems some unions may have charged initiation fees above the maximum and monthly dues considerably below the maximum.

12. Foner, 478.

13. Foner, 479; according to the *Hastings Daily Tribune* of July 12, 1916, 8: "The demand upon Kansas farmers which finally brought the \$3.50 wage last year include a minimum wage of \$4.00/day of not more than 10 hours; double time for each hour overtime worked above the ten hours constituting a day; good clean board; good clean places to sleep in, with plenty of clean bedding; no discrimination against union men (I.W.W.);" *Tribune*, July 12, 1916, 8. The section of this paper devoted to the Hastings incident is largely based on a summary of a *Tribune* story entitled "The Wobblies — a Labor Story," *Historical News*, Adams County, Nebraska, Historical Society, 5 (October, 1972), 1, 5.

14. This underscores the predominance of bandits, tinhorns, and gamblers, hiding in the I.W.W. and "harvesting the the harvesters"; Taft, "The I.W.W. in the Grain Belt," 62; Foner, 477, 478; *Lincoln Daily Star*, July 14, 1916, 11.

15. *Lincoln Daily Star*, July 13, 1916, 1, and July 19, 1916, 1; *Omaha World-Herald*, July 14, 1916, 1; *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 14, 1916, 10. While the various newspapers claim seven men were arrested, eight names appear. The *Bee* refers to Philip Strawbu as Philip Strauer.

16. *Omaha World-Herald*, July 18, 1916, 1, July 19, 1916, 3; *Lincoln Daily Star*, July 18, 1916, 1; *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 18, 1916, 1.

17. *Lincoln Daily Star*, July 18, 1916, 1.

18. *Lincoln Daily Star*, July 18, 1916, 1; *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 18, 1916, 1. It had been reported by the *Omaha Evening Bee*, that Lincoln Chief of Police H. H. Antles had received a letter from Kansas City stating I.W.W. official T. J. Thorne would invade Lincoln with 500 wobblies. However, the *Lincoln Daily Star* reported that E. R. McNally stated there was no official of the I.W.W. by the name Thorne in Kansas City and that he, McNally, was the spokesman for the I.W.W. in Lincoln at this time.

19. *Lincoln Daily Star*, July 19, 1916, 4; *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 16, 1916, 1,

July 19, 1916, 14.

20. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 16, 1916, 3, July 17, 1916, 3; *Lincoln Daily Star*, July 14, 1916, 11.

21. *Omaha World-Herald*, July 18, 1916, 4, July 19, 1916, 3.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 19, 1916, 8.

24. *Lincoln Daily Star*, July 21, 1916, 1.

25. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 20, 1916, 7, July 21, 1916, 9.

26. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 22, 1916, 5, July 25, 1916, 5, July 26, 1916, 7, July 27, 1916, 1.

27. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 22, 1916, 4.

28. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 27, 1916, 1, July 28, 1916, 4.

29. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 29, 1916, 1. For more detail on the South Dakota incidents see Foner, 479-483; *Bee* July 29, 1916, 1, 5.

30. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 29, 1916, 1, 5, July 30, 1916, 1.

31. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 30, 1916, 2.

32. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 30, 1916, 2. The *Bee* noted that the police found a bottle of whiskey in Wilson's pocket, and Crawford admitted both had been drinking. And, other witnesses stated Wilson had been "flourishing" his revolver before he was cracked in the chin. The *Bee* also noted on July 29, 1916, 5, that, up to this time, the Council Bluffs police, had "found very few weapons among the thousands of men who passed through the city."

33. *Omaha Evening Bee*, August 12, 1916, 1.

34. *Historical News*, Adams County (October, 1972), 5; *Hastings Daily Tribune*, August 7, 1916, 5.

35. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 31, 4. Emphasis supplied.

36. Taft, "The I.W.W. in the Grain Belt," 62-63; Foner, 479, 484; for a chart of the revised structural organization of the I.W.W. see Paul F. Brissenden, "The I.W.W.: A Study of American Syndicalism," *Studies in History, Economics and Public Law*, LXXXVIII (New York, 1919), Appendix III, 351. This chart can be compared with the chart of the I.W.W.'s structure in 1912, found in Vincent St. John, *The I.W.W.: Its History, Structure and Methods* (Chicago, 1912), 2.

37. Dubofsky, 317, 334, 345; Foner, 550-551; Kornbluh, 232; Jamieson, 339; Taft, "The I.W.W. in the Grain Belt," 63, 64; Haywood exercised his power to increase the centralization of the organization. Foner also notes that many of the able organizers were, therefore, not available for the 1911 campaign.

38. Dubofsky, 345.

39. Taft, "The I.W.W. in the Grain Belt," 65.

40. *Nebraska: State Council of Defense*, Series 3, Box 15, Folder 28, "Correspondence: Home Guard, 1917," Nebraska State Historical Society, Manuscript Collection.

41. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 3, 1917, "Special Sports" edition, 1.

42. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 14, 1917, 4. Emphasis supplied.

43. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 16, 1917, 11.

44. *Omaha World-Herald*, July 19, 1917, 1; *Lincoln Daily News*, August 24, 1917, 1; *Lincoln Star*, August 12, 1917, 2.

45. The state councils of defense were similar in nature to the Council of National Defense. They were created in the Spring of 1917 and became operational on May 3, 1917. Their purpose was to coordinate the war activities of each particular state.

"Report on the Organization and Activities of State Councils of Defense, June 18, 1917," 1, *Nebraska: State Council of Defense*, Series 1, Box 1, folder 1, Nebraska State Historical Society, Manuscript Collection.

46. "Report on Settlement of Packinghouse Workers," *Nebraska: State Council of Defense*, Series 1, Box 1, folder 3, Nebraska State Historical Society, Manuscript Collection. [reproduced in full in appendix I.] For further information on the strikes by the A.F.L. Unions in Omaha in the Summer and Fall of 1917 see: "Partial Report, Board of Mediation and Investigation of the Labor Troubles in Omaha: June 18 to August 1, 1917," Department of Labor, State of Nebraska, August 1, 1917; Russell Lowel Beebe, "History of Labor Organization and Legislation in Nebraska to 1918," (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1938).

47. "Minutes of the Tenth Meeting of the Nebraska State Council of Defense," September 18, 1917, 3, *Nebraska: State Council of Defense*, Series 1, Box 1, folder 3, Nebraska State Historical Society, Manuscript Collection.

48. *Nebraska: State Council of Defense*, Series 3, Box 15, Folder 29, Nebraska State Historical Society, Manuscript Collection. [The letter is reproduced in Appendix II.] From whom, or where, the letter emanated has not been established.

49. Philip Taft, "The Federal Trials of the I.W.W.," *Labor History*, 3 (Winter, 1962), 58.

50. Thorstein Veblen, "Using the I.W.W. to Harvest Grain," *Journal of Political Economy*, 40 (December, 1932), 797-807. In the Midwest vigilante groups spurred on by oil companies, especially in Oklahoma and Kansas, took their toll of wobblies in 1917; Dubofsky, 383, 384; 40 Stat. 76-83, 217-231 (1917-19); Preston, 103.

51. Some *individual members*, however, did advocate draft dodging; Dubofsky, 353-360, 374, 375; Foner, 554, 555; Preston, 103, 118, 119.

52. The following section on the Tulsa incident is based on three articles: *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 10, 1917, 2; *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 12, 1917, 9; *Liberator*, April, 1917 [as quoted in Kornbluh, 332-334].

53. *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 10, 1917, 1; *The Liberator*, April 1917, says police were actually party to the plot about to materialize. One wobbly recalled, "I never thought any man could reach so high as those policemen did." *The Liberator* [in Kornbluh], 333. According to *The Liberator* the police fled and members of the Knights of Liberty drove the cars, while the *Bee* states the police remained in the cars.

54. *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 10, 1917, 1, November 17, 1917, 1. The *Bee* reports a cat-o'-nine-tails being used; *The Liberator* [in Kornbluh], 333.

55. *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 17, 1917, 2.

56. According to six I.W.W.'s, the chief of police and a detective named Blaine were clearly identifiable as two of the hooded figures. *The Liberator* [in Kornbluh], 333; *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 17, 1917, 2.

57. Dubofsky, 442; Taft and Perlman, 418; *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 12, 1917, 1.

58. Governor Neville also empowered Mayor Dahlman to call in the troops from Fort Crook if the situation warranted. *Omaha World-Herald*, November 13, 1917, 4; *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 12, 1917, 1, November 13, 1917, 4. See page 29 of the November 13 issue for one woman's reaction. The *Bee* carries other opinions on the I.W.W. in editions in late November.

59. *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 13, 1917, 1.

60. Federal authorities later admitted it was orderly. Preston, 137.
61. The actual count of I.W.W.'s taken varies: the *Bee* originally sets it at 69 or 65, the *Omaha World-Herald* and the *Chicago Tribune* at 63, the *New York Times* at "about fifty." However, Preston gives it as 137, Dubofsky, 442, and later *Bee* editions say 64.
62. *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 14, 1917, 1, November 27, 1917, 1, December 12, 1917, 4; *Omaha World-Herald*, November 14, 1917, 1, December 15, 1917, 9; *New York Times*, November 14, 1917, 4; *Chicago Tribune*, November 14, 1917, 3.
63. *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 14, 1917, 1; *Omaha World-Herald*, November 14, 1917, 1.
64. *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 14, 1917, 1; *Omaha World-Herald*, November 16, 1917, 5.
65. *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 14, 1917, 1, November 15, 1917, 1.
66. In addition to the raids on headquarters of the I.W.W. throughout the nation, wobblies were rounded up "on the job" in many areas, especially in Kansas oil fields. Approximately fifty I.W.W.'s were rounded up in the Butler County, Kansas, between November 19-21. For details on this incident see, Taft, "The Federal Trials," 79; "Amnesty for Political Prisoners," testimony of Caroline A. Lowe, *House Judiciary Committee on House Resolution 60*, 67 Congress, 2nd Session 31-37; *Omaha World-Herald*, November 21, 1917, 2; *Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 1917, 3; Winthrop P. Lane, "Uncle Sam: Jailer," *The Survey*, September 6, 1919, 812, 834; *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 15, 1917, 1.
67. *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 15, 1917, 8. Rosewater's statement concerning the I.W.W. promise of a "demonstration" seems unfounded. Tom Jenkins, local secretary, stated, "I can tell you one thing, though — all this stuff about this being a big general convention is all rot! There's just a few delegates here to talk over a little business. The chairman will be elected from the floor. The meeting may last a day or a week or a year — I dunno!" *Omaha World-Herald*, November 13, 1917, 4.
68. *Omaha World-Herald*, November 16, 1917, 5, November 17, 1917, 7, November 28, 1917, 5; *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 22, 1917, 1.
69. *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 29, 1917, 9.
70. *Omaha Evening Bee*, November 30, 1917, 4, December 1, 1917, 1; *Omaha World-Herald*, December 2, 1917, 5.
71. *Ibid.*
72. *Omaha Evening Bee*, December 12, 1917, 4, January 9, 1918, 1; *Omaha World-Herald*, January 10, 1918, 1; Preston, 137.
73. *Fifteenth and Sixteenth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, State of Nebraska*, 1917-1918, 15, 16 (Lincoln), 39, 40.
74. *Nebraska: State Council of Defense*, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 3, "Minutes of the Twenty-fifth Meeting," May 17, 1918, 1-2. Nebraska State Historical Society, Manuscript Collection.
75. *Ibid.*, 2-4. It should by no means be assumed that the twelve instructors were "complained against" only because of their views on the I.W.W. and the nature of war in general. A number were vocally defensive of the German position.
76. "Minutes of the Twenty-fifth Meeting," 2.
77. *Omaha Evening Bee* (night-final edition), June 28, 1918, 1, July 8, 1918, 1.
78. Dubofsky, 445, 450; In Sioux City, Iowa, Mayor Wallace M. Short, defending the I.W.W.'s right to hold a meeting on July 12, 1918, was denounced by constitu-

ents. This incident gained regional attention. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 13, 1918, 3.

79. *Omaha Evening Bee*, April 23, 1919, 1; Joseph J. Metro, *The Red Conspiracy* (New York, 1920), 116.

80. The date is not known. It has been narrowed to this three-week period from the data in Preston, 136, 138, and the *Omaha Evening Bee*, May 1, 1919, 1; Dubofsky, 442, 443; Taft, "The Federal Trials," 76.

81. Preston, 138.

82. *Omaha Evening Bee*, April 30, 1919, 1.

83. *Ibid.*

84. Eberstein left the Justice Department to become chief of police in Omaha sometime between January 1918 and April 1919. *Omaha Evening Bee*, April 30, 1919, 1, May 1, 1919, 1, May 2, 1919, 1.

85. *Omaha Evening Bee*, May 2, 1919, 1.

86. The *Omaha-World Herald* stated that no I.W.W. or Socialist meetings were held; that while more than 1,000 people clustered around the Swedish auditorium, no meetings or any violence occurred on May 1; that the meeting Novotny addressed was not held by the Socialists or the I.W.W. However, the *Herald* offers no alternative to the *Bee's* translation of Novotny's speech which seems to indicate a pro-Socialist position. *Omaha World-Herald*, May 1, 1919, 3, May 3, 1919, 12.

87. *Omaha Evening Bee*, May 1, 1919, 1, May 5, 1919, 4.

88. *Omaha Evening Bee*, July 25, 1919, 4.

89. *Governor Samuel R. McKelvie: Speeches and Proclamations, 1919-1922*, Series 2, Box 5, Folder 2, "Some of the Activities of the State During 1919," 13, 14. Nebraska State Historical Society, Manuscript Collection. The act passed can be found in *Nebraska Session Laws, Thirty-Sixth (Extra Ordinary) Session, 1918*, House Roll No. 5.

90. *Governor Samuel R. McKelvie: Speeches and Proclamations, 1919-1922*, Series 2, Box 5, Folder 2, Nebraska State Historical Society, Manuscript Collection.

91. Dubofsky, 473.

92. Taft and Perlman, 432.

93. Dubofsky, 315, 448.

94. Taft, "The I.W.W. in the Grain Belt," 59-62.

95. Foner, 482.

96. Nebraska State Historical Society, MSS, "Records and Proceedings, Nebraska Council of Defense, May, 1917-June, 1917.

97. *Ibid.*, Correspondence, labor, 1917-1918.