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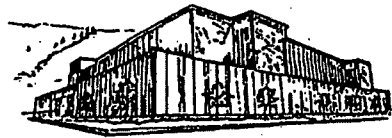
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**MONTANA'S OTHER STRIKE:
THE 1917 IWW TIMBER STRIKE IN THE KOOTENAI VALLEY**

by

Richard R. Aarstad

B.A. University of Montana, 1997

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

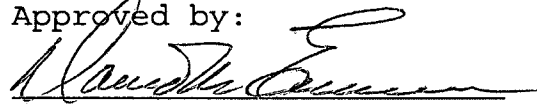
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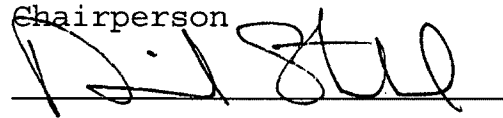
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Aarstad, Richard R., M.A., May 2000

History

Montana's Other Strike: The 1917 IWW Timber Strike in the Kootenai Valley as it pertained to the Eureka Lumber Company and the Libby Lumber Company.

Director: David M. Emmons *DME*

This thesis will cover the events of the 1917 IWW strike as it affected the Eureka Lumber Company and the Libby Lumber Company in the Kootenai Valley. Background information will be provided on the IWW, the two mills and early attempts by the IWW to organize the workers of the Eureka Lumber Company and the Libby Lumber Company.

The thesis will cover how the two mills dealt with the IWW, with generous quotations from IWW publications, *The Eureka Journal*, *The Western News*, and *The Timberman*. By drawing from the different publications and the company correspondence of the president of the Eureka Lumber Company, Charles A. Weil, I hope to create a balanced account of the events of the strike in the Kootenai Valley during 1917.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the following people for the support and assistance they offered me during the research and writing of my thesis: Beth Burrell and the Libby Mormon Church for kindly letting me use their microfilm machines; the Lincoln County Public Library for helping me obtain much needed materials through inter-library loan; Jeff Gruber and the Heritage Museum for showing me some outstanding pictures of Lincoln County's early logging operations and providing copies for me; Gary Montgomery of *The Trail* for providing me with pictures; Molly Miller and Kathryn Otto of the Montana Historical Society for providing me with a copy of the Lincoln County Council of Defense papers; and the creators of the IWW website.

Those who contributed most to my success the last two years are David Emmons, who showed me that history could be found in my own back yard; Mark White for finding the Eureka Lumber Company files in a box in Eureka and then allowing me to make my own copies; Rose Goyen who read the first draft; my parents and my brother and sister, for their support; but in the end there are two people who deserve the greatest amount of recognition--my wife and son. They tolerated my four year absence from their lives but always showed me love and support whenever I needed it, so to them I dedicate my thesis. This is for you Kim and Rick.

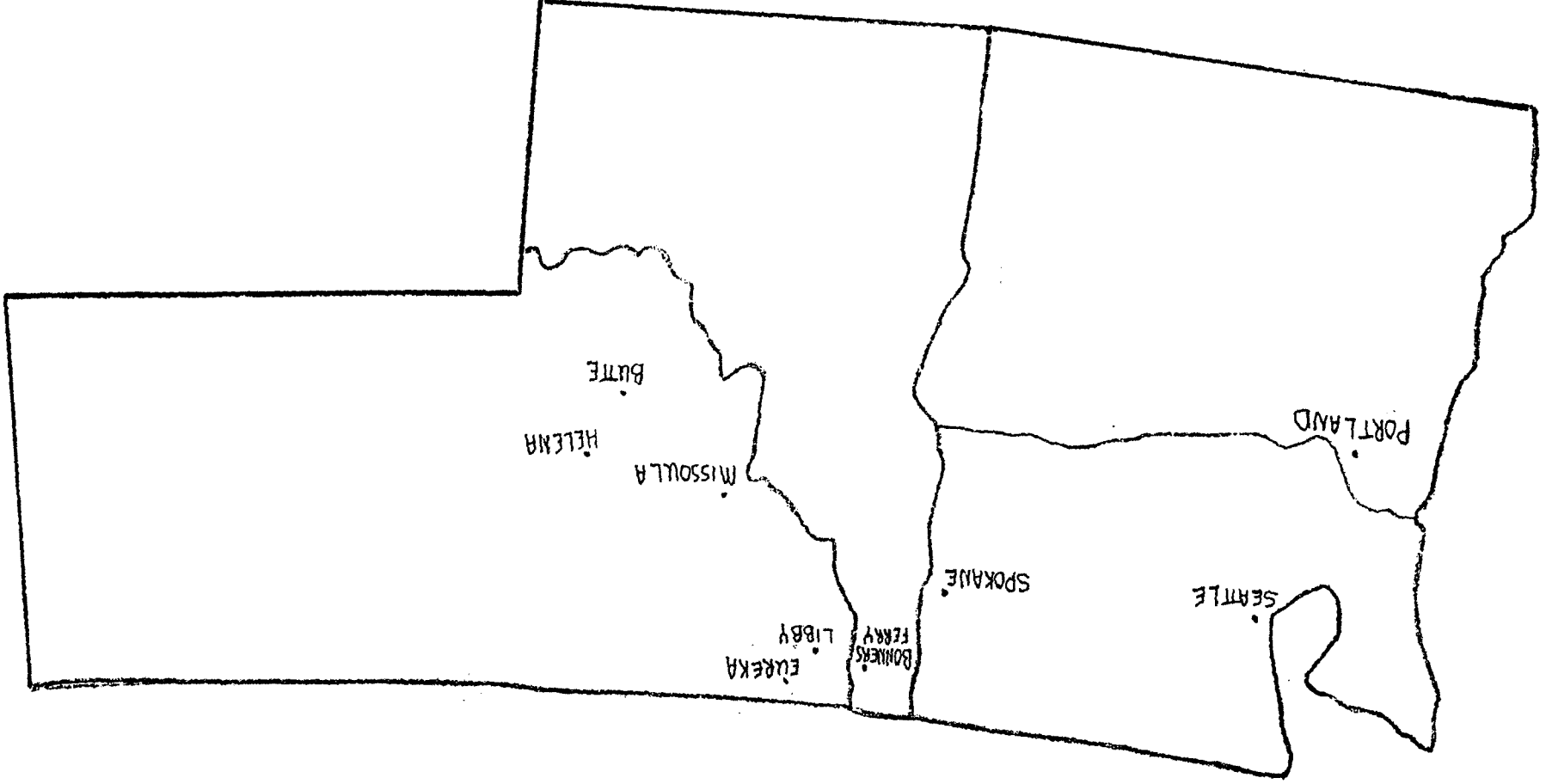
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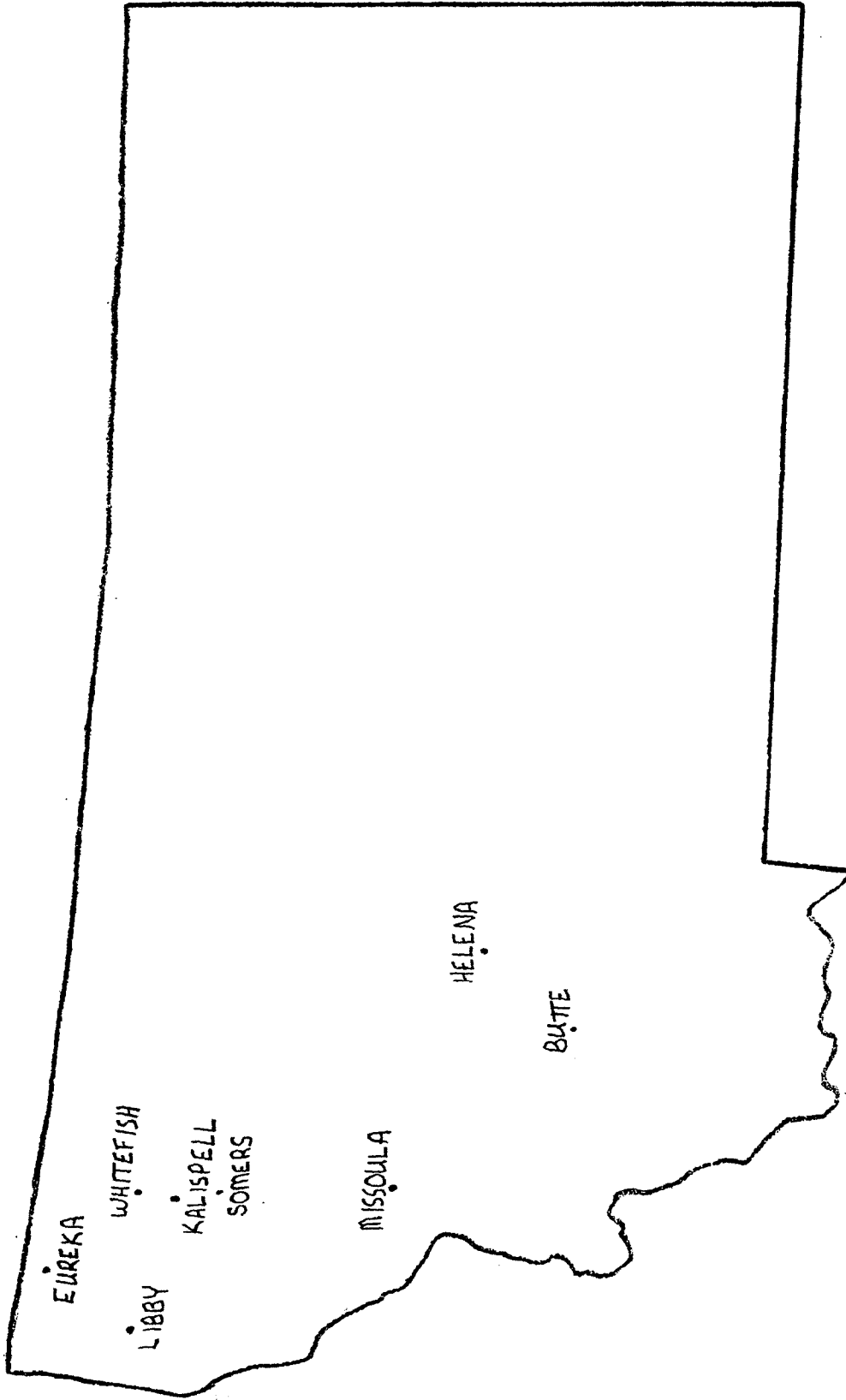
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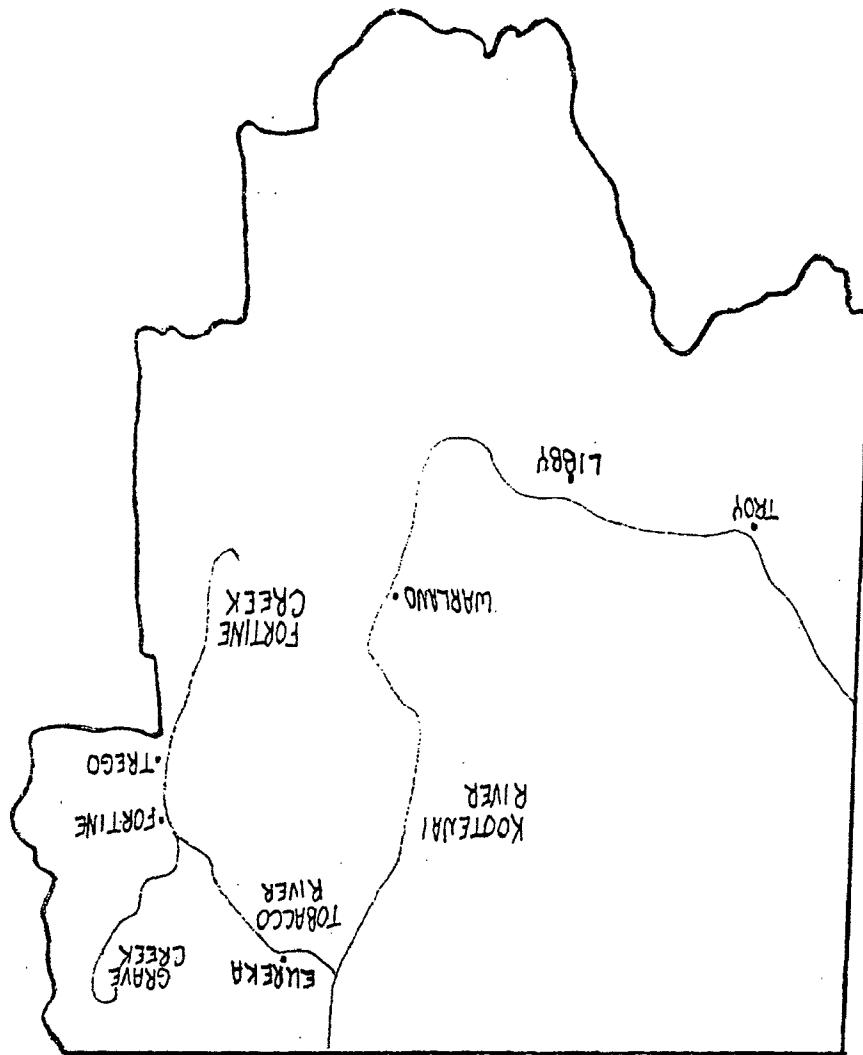
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PACIFIC NORTHWEST AND SHORT-LOG COUNTRY





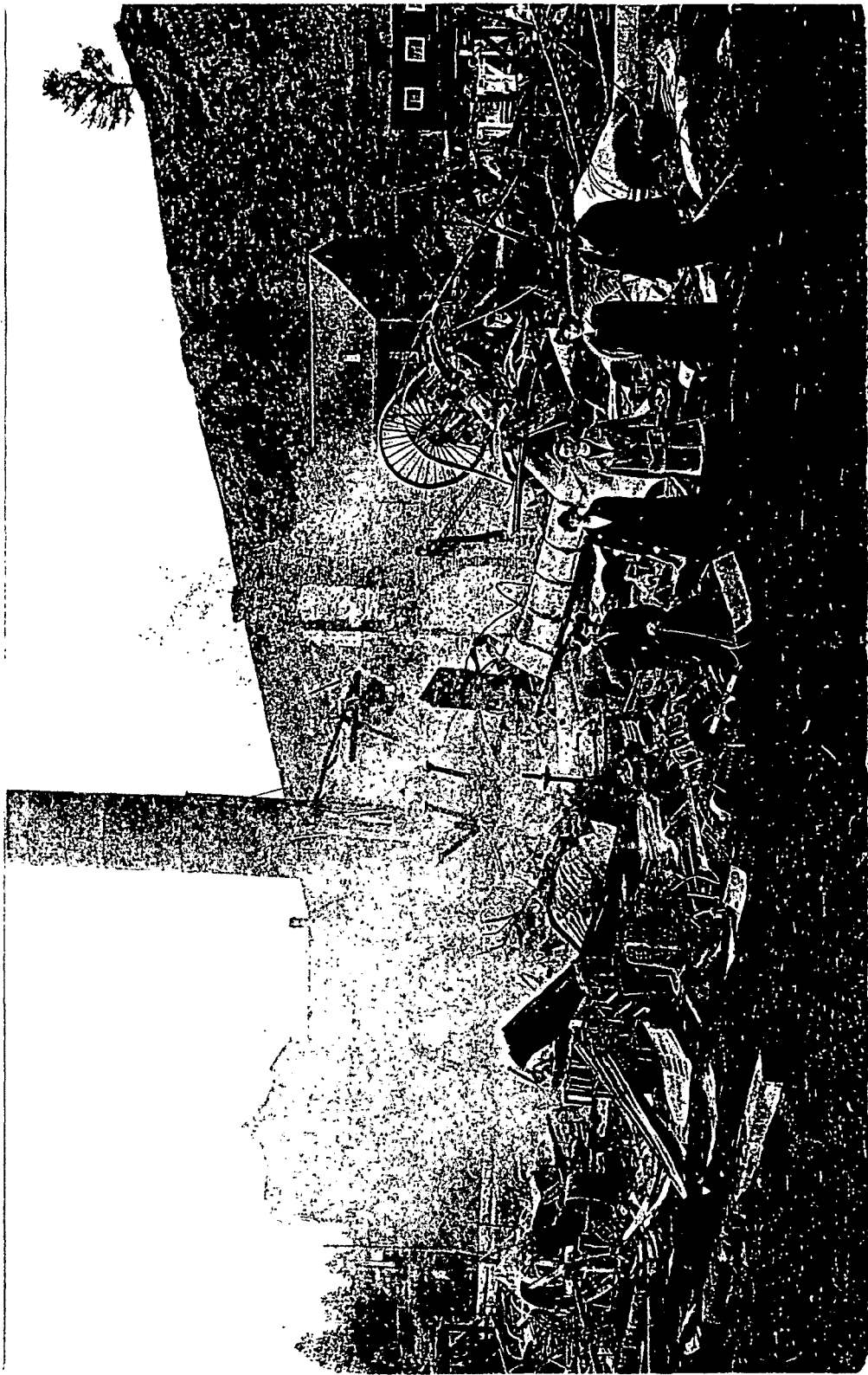


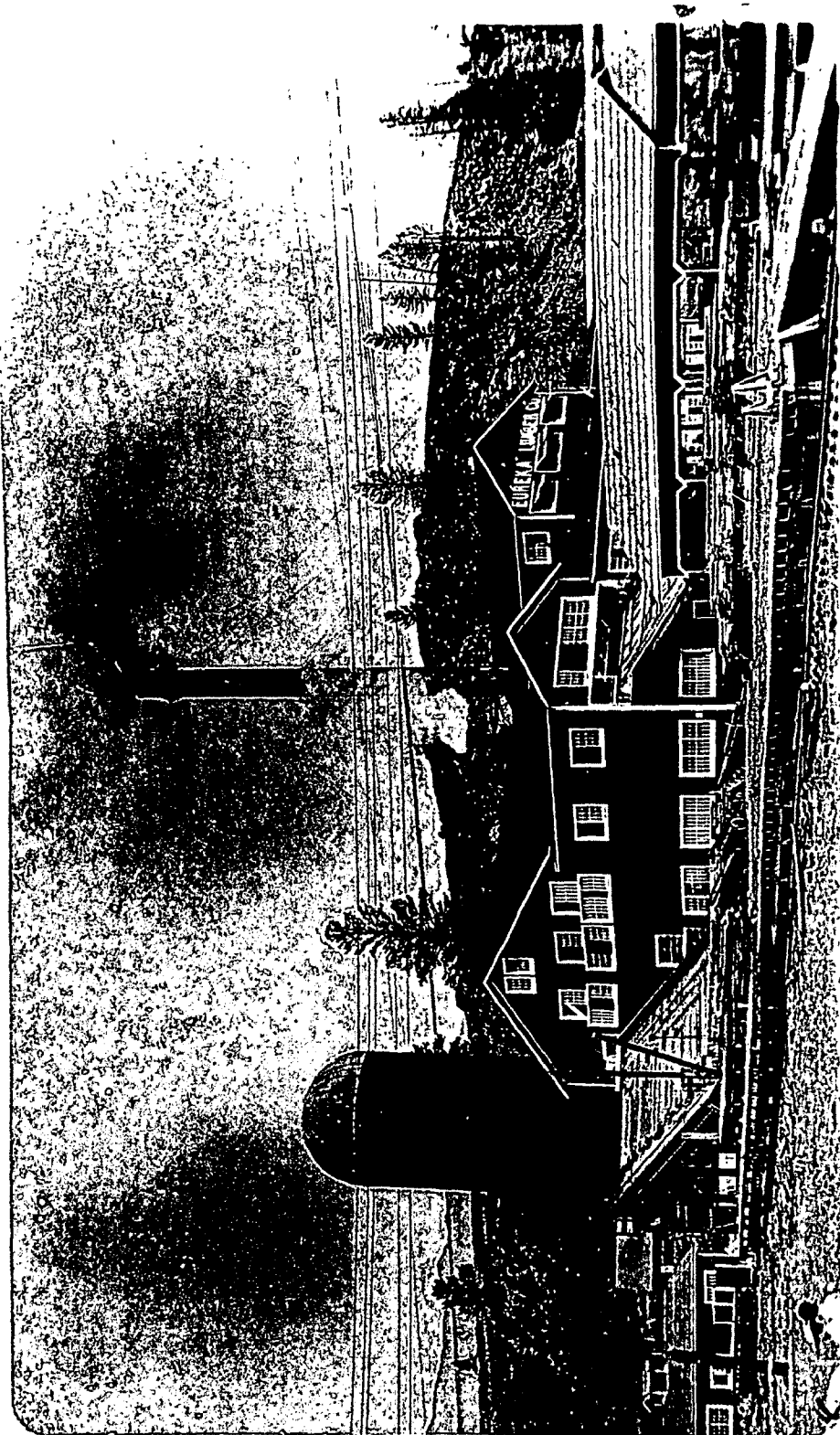
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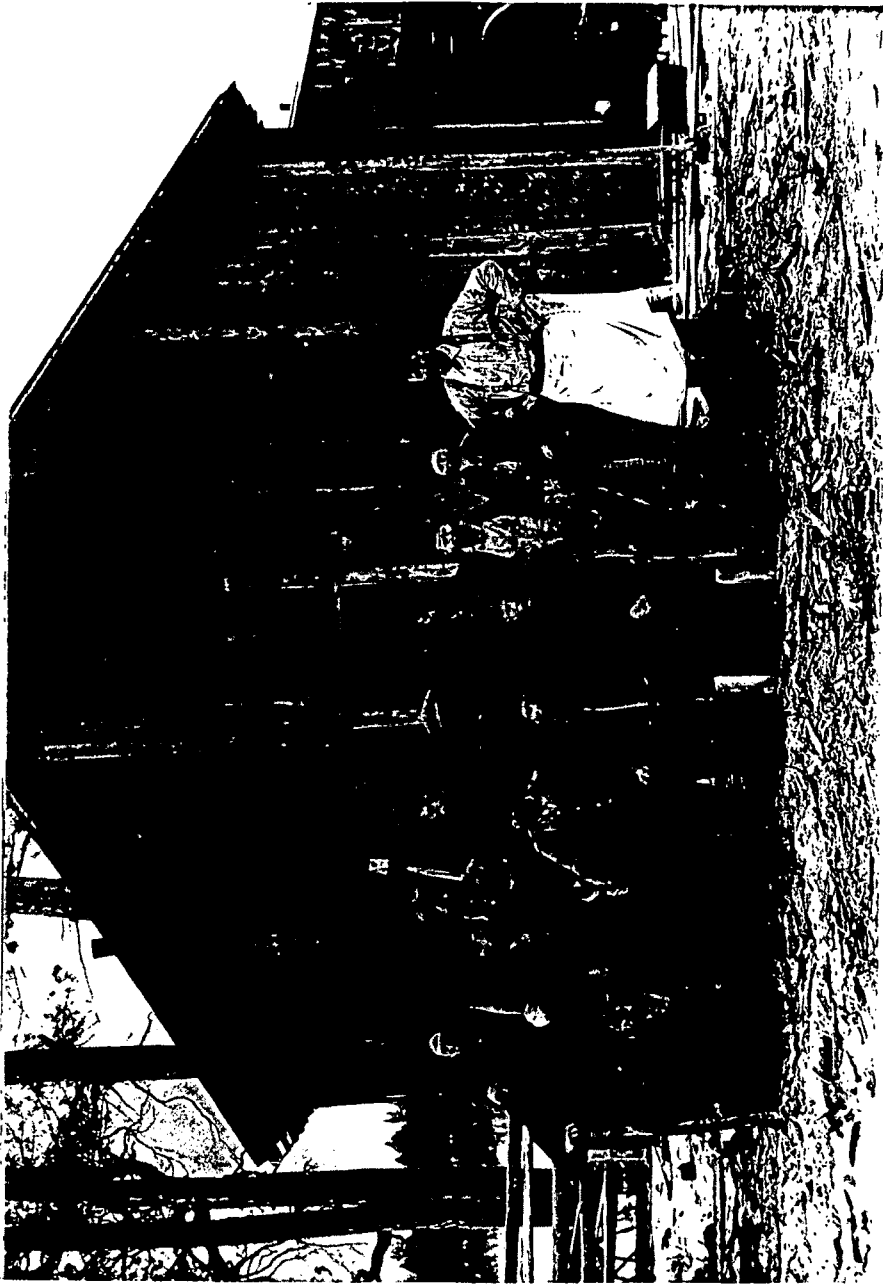
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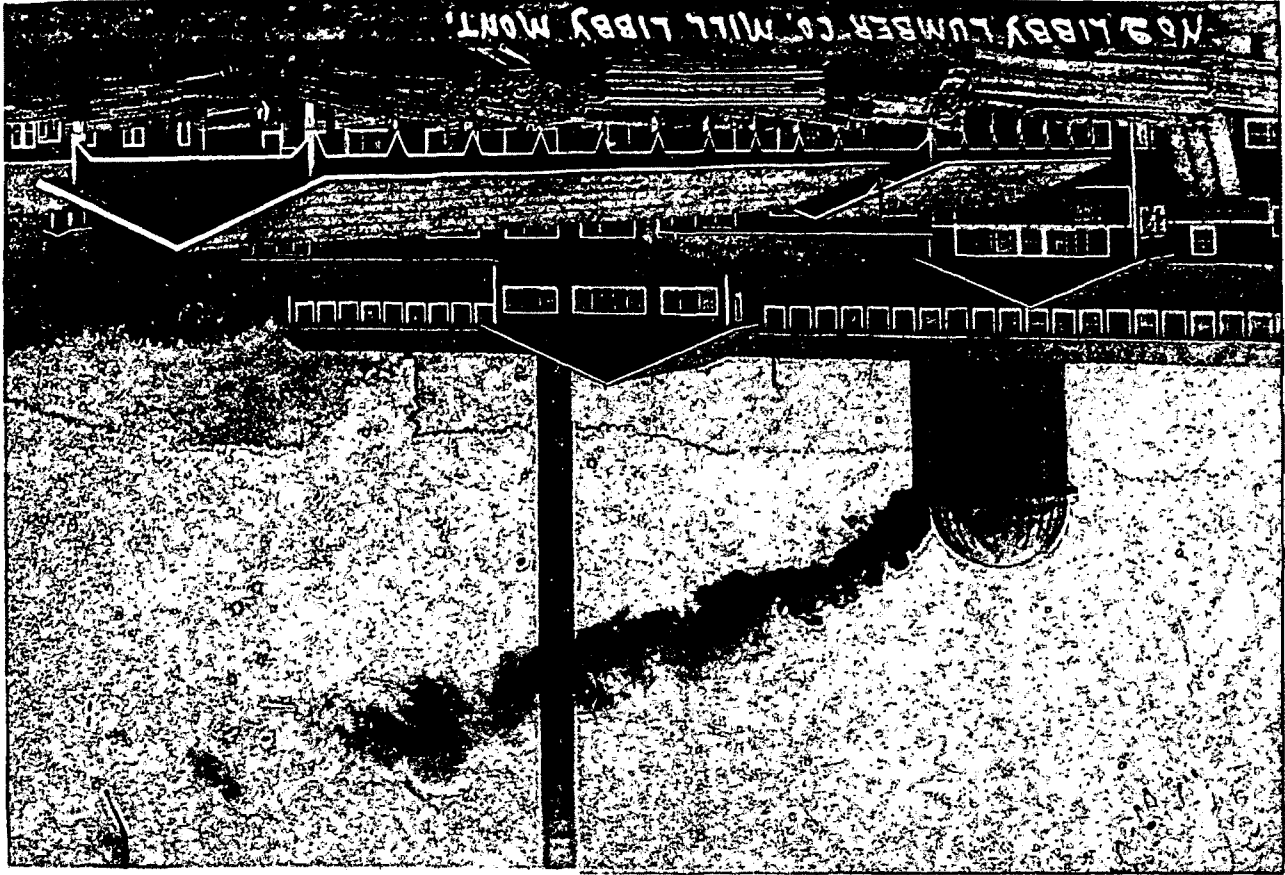
*The photographs of Rowan, Turner, Sheridan and Anderson were down-loaded and copied from the IWW website <http://www.iww.org/-deke/leavenworth>.



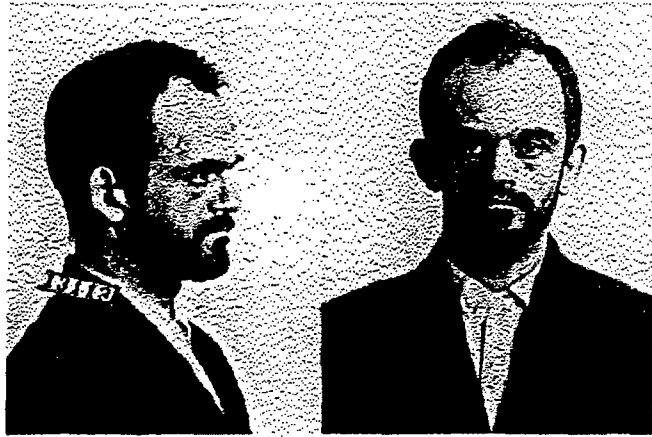








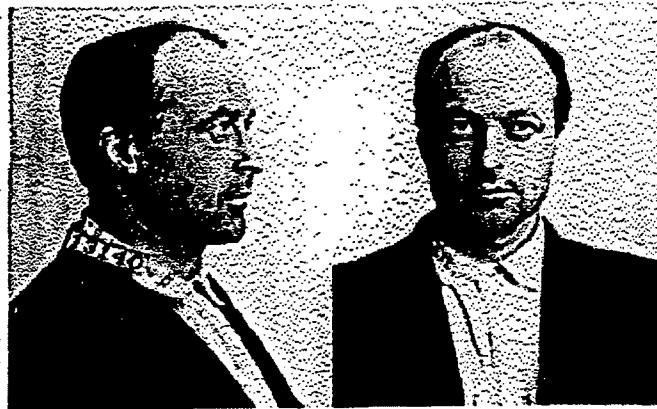




James Rowan--Leavenworth Prison Photograph



John I. Turner--Leavenworth Prison Photograph



Don Sheridan--Leavenworth Prison Photograph



Olin B. Anderson--Leavenworth Prison Photograph

INTRODUCTION

On the eve of the United States' entry into the Great War in 1917, events were unfolding in northwest Montana which would capture the attention of state and federal officials. Governor Samuel V. Stewart of Montana asked for federal troops to be sent to the northwest corner of the state (a region known for its isolation) ostensibly to protect citizens and private property from the scourge of the industrial world--the Industrial Workers of the World, better known as the Wobblies.

River drivers and loggers by the spring of 1917 had reached the end of their tolerance of an industry that marginalized their existence and trivialized their work. These men were no longer satisfied to work in camps that provided overcrowded, bug infested bunkhouses, inedible food, low pay and long hours. The IWW realized the potential power that resided with these transient woods workers and sought to organize them for the benefit of the working class in its struggle with capitalism.

The alliance of the IWW and the loggers of Northwest Montana, however, would be seen by the press, Governor Sam Stewart, the Montana legislature, and the federal government

as an internal threat to the security of the United States after its entry into World War One. Despite the legitimacy of the loggers' claims, they were victimized because of their association with the IWW. When the federal government decided to use troops in the timber industry and arrested IWW leaders on charges of treason and sedition, it effectively ended serious unionization of the West's timber industry for more than a decade and simultaneously denied the rank-and-file members of the IWW of its leadership.

The focus of this thesis will be to resurrect the events of the 1917 timber strike in the Kootenai River Valley. Eureka, Montana was the area hardest hit by IWW strike activity. The Wobblies seemed to have a special enmity for the Eureka Lumber Company, which the company reciprocated. Libby, Montana, also located in Lincoln County's Kootenai valley, experienced IWW agitation in 1917 as well, but with slightly different results. This thesis will focus on the IWW activity in these two communities and how they handled the situation during the tumultuous months after the United States' entry into The Great War.

The following chapters will cover a brief history of the development of each community's timber industry, Industrial Workers of the World union activity in the region, the events of the 1917 strike and the aftermath of the strike. While I will be concentrating on both the Eureka and Libby lumber companies, most of the thesis will

be based on the Eureka Lumber Company's activity countering the unionization of their workers.

The Industrial Workers of the World sponsored a strike against the timber industry of northwest Montana in the spring of 1917. The goal was to obtain from the lumber companies higher wages, better living conditions in the logging camps, and the eight-hour day. The strike began in Eureka, Montana on April 12, 1917, just six days after President Wilson's declaration of war was passed by Congress. River drivers for the Eureka Lumber Company struck the spring river drive and their actions would spread down river in the summer of 1917 to the town of Libby. More importantly, it was the dress rehearsal for the industry wide strike that the IWW was planning later in the year.¹

While this was responded to immediately by Montana's governor, the strike in the Kootenai valley was eclipsed by the Speculator Mine disaster in Butte, Montana, on June 8, 1917, which claimed the lives of 168 men. The Speculator tragedy and the IWW's agitation in Butte coupled with the murder of Frank Little in August caused the events of the timber strike in western Montana to founder in the backwash of the Butte strike.² Also, as the year progressed, the IWW

¹Benjamin G. Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," Pacific Historical Review, vol. 36 (1967), 197.

²David M. Emmons, The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 364-365.

continued to press its demands on an industry wide basis and the events in Lincoln County, Montana were overshadowed by the general strike that encompassed Washington, Idaho, western Montana and parts of Oregon.

The strike in Montana's timber industry and later the copper industry, in hindsight, were seen by the Department of Justice as "bona fide strikes for legitimate trade union objectives."³ Both the IWW and the American Federation of Labor had been urging their members to organize strike activity in 1917. The strike that was called in Northwest Montana's timber industry was led by the Industrial Workers of the World. There is abundant evidence that the striking loggers' "case had positively overwhelming strength. One official observer after another found the facts to be in favor of the strikers."⁴ During the apex of the 1917 timber industry strike, in the Pacific Northwest, approximately 50,000 men were "idle"; of that number, evidence suggests that only 20,000 were active on the picket lines. The timber industry was practically prostrate "for three months," causing timber manufacturers to seek extreme measures to break the strike and destroy the IWW.⁵

As the IWW grappled with a hostile state government and

³Record Group 60, Department of Labor File 20-473, Glasser File, NA. Hereafter referred to as Glasser File.

⁴Ibid., 1.

⁵Ibid., 2.

a reactionary federal government, the spark that started the growing conflagration was left to gutter in the breeze of indifference and anonymity. For the residents of the Kootenai Valley, strikers, scabs (who consisted of Chippewas from the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota, loyal mill workers and disaffected members of the union), lumber manufacturers, and local businessmen, the strike took on an urgency that left them, for a brief moment, exposed on the national stage. Under the glare of this scrutiny, the paradigm was formulated to deal with the striking timber and millworkers, as legitimate workingmen's complaints were shunted aside and the IWW was consumed by the red, white, and blue flame of patriotism. Passing anti-syndicalism legislation, the states attacked the Industrial Workers of the World; at the same time the United States government used sedition laws to pull down the union and destroy the Wobbly dream of "industrial democracy."

CHAPTER I
THE MONTANA WILDS

The Kootenai river is a dominate feature of the northwest corner of Montana as it winds its way through the mountains and forests. The river heads in British Columbia, flows southeast into the United States, carving a path past the Tobacco Plains for approximately fifty miles in a southerly direction before starting its westerly bend, which channels the river on a northwest course through the panhandle of Idaho before re-entering British Columbia and emptying into the Kootenai Lakes. The waters of the river are a mystic green, testimony to its glacial heritage and, before their taming by the Libby Dam, the river had taken out its fury on the small community of Bonners Ferry, Idaho, inundating the small panhandle town under raging flood waters. It is along the shores of the Kootenai that this narrative unfolds.

The area that the river flows through in Montana has always been sparsely populated. The first inhabitants of the Kootenai valley were the Kutenai Indians who used the river as a means of transportation and trade, while taking their "sustenance from its waters" and wild game from its

banks. It bound the upper and lower bands together "geographically and emotionally."¹ As the fur trade pushed westward from the United States and Canada, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, white explorers began entering the region for the first time.²

There were two constants in the records of these explorer/traders, the river and the trees. As one author noted, "nearly every explorer and trader who travelled up and down the Kootenai River commented on the thick forests."³ NorthWest Company explorer and cartographer, David Thompson wrote in his 1808 journal:

Along the River, in places are very fine woods of Larch, Red Fir, Alder, Plane and other woods: of the Larch, at five and a half feet above the ground I measured one thirteen feet girth and one hundred and fifty feet [of] clean growth. . . . This one of hundreds. I could not help thinking what fine timber for the Navy in these forests, without a possibility of being brought to market.⁴

While the NorthWest and Hudson's Bay Companies traded for fur, no permanent settlements were established on the banks of the river for almost eighty more years.

The period between 1864 and the 1890s was marked by

¹Donald E. Spritzer, Waters of Wealth: The Story of the Kootenai River and Libby Dam (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1979), 8.

²Spritzer, Waters of Wealth, 4-8.

³Ibid., 103.

⁴Olga Weydemeyer Johnson, ed., The Story of the Tobacco Plains Country: The Autobiography of a Community (Eureka, Montana: Published by "The Pioneers of the Tobacco Plains Country," 1950), 9.

sporadic gold rushes, first in the Wild Horse Creek area of British Columbia and then trickling down river to the Tobacco Plains, Fisher River and Libby Creek. Mineral wealth was seen as the primary resource and as a result the Kootenai Valley became dotted with small communities such as Eureka, Warland, Libby and Troy. No great deposits of gold were found, however, and the towns were barely clinging to life by the first decade of the twentieth century.⁵

The Great Northern Railroad penetrated the "Montana Wilds" in the early 1890s. James J. Hill pushed his railroad along the Kootenai River in order to construct a northern route for a transcontinental railroad. For the first time, residents of Eureka, Libby, Jennings and Troy had a market for their timber, selling ties and timbers to the Great Northern. The railroad also provided the opportunity to develop a lumber industry that had access to outside markets, but it was slow to emerge.⁶

Men started log drives on the Kootenai River in 1899, by floating the trees downstream to mills in Canada. To halt U.S. timber from going to Canada, a mill was built at Bonners Ferry, Idaho, called the Stein Lumber Company in 1900. It was later bought by Frederick Weyerhaeuser and became the Bonners Ferry Lumber Company. By 1913, "Big drives were the order of the day each spring on the

⁵Ibid., 34-35.

⁶Ibid., 103-104.

Kootenai, Pack, Priest, Couer d'Alene and St. Joe rivers. The 'river pigs' had considerable leeway in moving about."⁷ The appellation of river pig was not flattering and did much to identify these men's standing in society.

Around 1905, a mill was established at Eureka, Montana and it began to buy logs that would be milled locally.⁸ As the timber industry developed, a man was "judged by the quality of his ax, his gun, and his horse, and the shape he kept them in and the skill with which he used them."⁹ On February 3, 1906 the Bader Lumber Company merged with the Eureka Lumber Company. River drivers were used to run logs down Fortine Creek and the Tobacco River during spring run-off to feed the sawmill at Eureka. River drivers faced the difficult task of working in swift, cold water to keep the logs floating steadily downstream. A "log jam" was the river pigs' worst enemy, causing them to take extreme risks to clear it out.¹⁰

Small portable mills in the Eureka area contracted the sale of their rough cut timber to the Eureka Lumber Company for finishing. Working in conjunction with the portable

⁷Early Days in the Forest Service, "Some Incidents During My Employment With the U.S. Forest Service, 1913-1949," by C.S. Webb, vol. 2 (Missoula, MT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service Northern Region, 1955), 67. Hereafter referred to as Early Days USFS.

⁸Ibid., 109, 224.

⁹Ibid., 223.

¹⁰Ibid., 228.

mill operators and the Eureka Lumber Company were "gyppo"¹¹ operators, who logged the tracts of timber that the company deemed unprofitable. The camps of some of these small operators, and the bigger companies, provided one of the focal points for the 1917 strike, providing sparse and unsanitary living conditions for transient loggers.¹²

With the increase in the logging industry, came an increase in outsiders entering the valley to work for the lumber companies, in the logging camps or on the river. These "transient" loggers were viewed by Tobacco Plains settlers as "mostly 'drunken bums.'" While many local men worked on the log drives, enough "outsiders" would arrive each spring that they would establish "jungle camps" along the river when not working and whose "chief recreation was

¹¹Walter F. McCulloch, Woods Words: A Comprehensive Dictionary of Logging Terms (The Oregon Historical Society and the Champoeg Press, 1958), 76. The definition of a gyppo is a small operator who logs by contract for a large company. Dean McCulloch writes

"According to Colonel W.B. Greeley, the term began with western railroad building. Several laborers from a construction gang would form a little co-operative with a few old tools and mules. They would contract for grading a station or two on their own. They 'gypped' the regular gangs by working all hours of the day and night and so established the name gyppo for a small contractor who got by through gypping the storekeeper or boss or anybody he could. It meant an outfit that could stay in business only by cutting corners. So many one time little gypos have grown into medium sized or big operators that the term has become more respectable today, [and] does not mean gypping."

¹²Historic Overview of the Kootenai National Forest, vol. 1, ed. Christian J. Miss, U.S. Department of Agriculture, United States Forest Service (Seattle: Northwest Archaeological Associates Inc., May 25, 1994), 228. Hereafter referred to as Historic Overview KNF.

whiskey." Eureka's judge, Mr. Waller, would hold court every morning when the river drivers were not working "so as not to have the jail overcrowded." ¹³

The Bonners Ferry Lumber Company had cruised much of the timber on the upper Kootenai and by 1911 "the Company owned most of the timber from Dodge Creek [in the U.S.] to Gold Creek in Canada." ¹⁴ The big annual drives down river to the Idaho mill only lasted about ten years, however, because the state of Montana passed legislation that required Montana timber to be milled in the state. ¹⁵ Also, at about the same time "Canadian authorities prohibited the transportation of logs across the border." ¹⁶ Nevertheless, by 1915 the Eureka Lumber Company was milling "300,000 feet every twenty hours," running two shifts for the sawmill and one for the planer, with the three shifts comprised of 100 to 150 men each. ¹⁷

The timber industry in Libby, Montana developed much like that of Eureka's except instead of having river drives to get the logs to the mill, railroad logging had been introduced as an alternative. The town of Libby had been settled at its current location in 1890, along the Kootenai

¹³Ibid., 229.

¹⁴Ibid., 230-231.

¹⁵Spritzer, Waters of Wealth, 111.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Johnson, The Story of the Tobacco Plains Country, 233.

River, after B.F. Howard and others learned that the Great Northern was going to lay tracks along the river. They quickly moved from the settlement on Libby Creek and bought land near the river to sell as town lots in anticipation of the arrival of the railroad. The railroad reached Libby in 1892, but it was not followed by any immediate boom in the town's economy. Small mills provided ties for the railroad, but they were too small to sustain a permanent community for very long.¹⁸

A pivotal year for the Kootenai valley was 1906. The Kootenai National Forest was created, although its boundaries would not be fully defined and stabilized until 1973.¹⁹ Congress passed the Agricultural Settlement Act of 1906, which allowed the Secretary of Agriculture to open the national forests to settlement on 160 acre homesteads, which had less than 4,000 board feet of harvestable timber per acre and therefore could be designated agricultural land. This act was referred to by many as the Forest Homestead Act and by the forest rangers who had to examine each claim as "June 11" claims.²⁰

That same year also saw the complete destruction of part of the struggling community of Libby by fire, but hope was kept alive with the arrival of some Wisconsin lumbermen.

¹⁸Historic Overview KNF, 133-134.

¹⁹Spritzer, Waters of Wealth, 106.

²⁰Historic Overview KNF, 133-134.

Libby, like Eureka, had benefited from the establishment of the mill at Bonners Ferry, but the town had no large sawmill of its own. That changed when Wisconsin lumbermen bought fifty acres of land along the confluence of Libby Creek and the Kootenai River and established the Dawson Lumber Company. The new company hoped to employ 300 men and operate two shifts.²¹

As local historian Mark White noted, the Dawson Lumber Company proved that a railroad logging company could survive on the Kootenai National Forest. The mill produced 50,000 board feet of milled lumber a day and by 1910, it had doubled its milling capacity and extended its logging track an additional fourteen miles.²² In the fall of 1910 Julius Neils arrived in Libby and the Dawson Lumber Company was purchased by the J. Neils Lumber Company of Cass Lake, Minnesota. Neils and his partner Thomas Shevlin formed the Libby Lumber Company in 1911 and operated it jointly until 1915, when the partnership was dissolved between Neils and Thomas Shevlin's son. The Libby Lumber Company remained under the management and ownership of the Shevlin--Hixon

²¹Olga Weydemeyer Johnson, Flathead & Kootenai Series: The Two Rivers and the Land they flow in; The Two Indian Tribes and the White Settlements of this Final Frontier--Early Libby and Troy, Montana (n.p., 1958), 70-71.

²²Mark White, "Historic Logging in the Libby Vicinity," in Tapestries of Yesterday, (Libby, MT: Libby Montana Institute of the Arts Writers Group, Inc., 1993), 97.

interests.²³

The Eureka Lumber Company and the Libby Lumber Company sawmills were operated near already established communities, negating the need to build a company town for mill employees. However, temporary logging camps were set up by both companies, away from the towns, where the timber was being harvested.

The Libby Lumber Co. . . . hired their own workers and housed them in company camps Eureka Lumber Co. and Bonners Ferry Lumber Co. ran some of their own company camps but also contracted out much of their logging work. Contractors did their own hiring and housed men in their own camps, separate from those of the main company.²⁴

The two companies provided the cookhouse, bunkhouses, and commissary (if there was one). These camps were mobile in nature and could be moved either by railroad, wheels, skids or floated on barges to new locations.²⁵

As the communities developed and the timber industry grew, large numbers of "outsiders" entered the region to take jobs in the mills and logging camps. Most of these new arrivals were recent immigrants and they would become the backbone of the timber strike of 1917.²⁶

²³Paul Neils, Julius Neils and the J. Neils Lumber Company (Seattle: Frank McCaffrey Publishers, 1971), 14, 28-29.

²⁴Miss, Historic Overview KNF, 241.

²⁵James B. Allen, The Company Town In The American West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 14-15.

²⁶Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 195.

CHAPTER II
"THE TIMBER BEAST"

There are not many personal memoirs from the loggers who worked in the timber industry during the early decades of the twentieth century and so as Andrew Prouty writes, "the picture of the logger as a human being . . . is liable to be a reflection, derived from the writings of management . . .," or from the unions which were attempting to organize them.¹

The image of the logger is also obscured by conflicting interpretations of how this individual has been described in American folklore. Benjamin Rader, former assistant professor of history at the University of Montana, writes that the logger was seen as "fiercely independent, unconsciously intrepid, gigantic in physique, . . . close to nature," enjoying "an ideal way of life that nurtured superior men and superior virtues."² Historian Andrew Prouty, believes, however, that unlike other mythical figures of the American West, the logger has not been

¹Andrew Prouty, More Deadly Than War! Pacific Coast Logging, 1827-1981 (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985), 24.

²Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 192.

lionized, but rather stereotyped for the last three hundred years as "a destructive man with no morals."³ Whichever viewpoint one wishes to adopt, both Rader and Prouty agree that reality places the logger in one of the most dangerous, underpaid, and under appreciated professions of their era. That reality is the focus of the first chapter.

A logger cannot exist without a logging company and the men who established logging companies carved a niche for themselves in the annals of history. They were predominately self-made individuals, who because of talent and drive became lumber barons.⁴ They started in the East and worked their way South, North and West. By 1900, they spanned the continental United States and Canada. While some moved to the Pacific coastal regions to harvest the giant trees there, others moved into what was called the "short-log country" of eastern Washington, northern Idaho and western Montana. Many of these men came from the Great Lake states of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, when timber resources there became exhausted.⁵

By 1917 the "Northern Pacific and Anaconda [Copper Mining Company], plus 'four relatively small owners,'

³Prouty, More Deadly Than War, 5-6.

⁴Vernon H. Jensen, Lumber and Labor (New York-Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1945), 4.

⁵James Rowan, The I.W.W. In The Lumber Industry (Seattle: Published by the Lumber Workers Industrial Union No. 500, 1919), 9. See also Jensen, Lumber and Labor, 100.

controlled about eighty-percent of the privately held timberland in Montana."⁶ James Rowan, an IWW organizer, claimed that "practically all the timberlands are owned or controlled by the great Rockefeller-Weyerhaeuser combination of capital known as the Lumber Trust."⁷ Montana, meanwhile, had a number of small operators and in 1917 of the approximate 155 mills in the state, 122 of them "cut less than one million feet" annually.⁸

Because the lumber barons owned the timber and the land, they created, in the lexicon of the IWW, a monopoly obtained through the usual methods of "intrigue, fraud, bribery, corruption, legal chicanery, violence and murder."⁹ The lumber barons, according to the Wobblies, were stealing the "natural resources of the country" for their own benefit, while the working class loggers were left with nothing. This was one of the injustices of capitalism that the Industrial Workers of the World were determined to fight.¹⁰

The Industrial Workers of the World preamble read:

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common Between the two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world

⁶Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 191.

⁷Rowan, The I.W.W. In The Lumber Industry, 3.

⁸Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 192.

⁹Rowan, The I.W.W. In The Lumber Industry, 5-6.

¹⁰Ibid.

organize as a class, take possession of the wealth of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system.¹¹

The logger fit the bill perfectly. Because of the migratory status of most of them, they had no "voting rights or home ties" and were called upon to work and live under deplorable conditions. The IWW and the logger seemed to be naturally drawn together by the perceived wage system that defined the logger as a marginal human being and the militant stance of the IWW which promised to improve that condition.¹²

The quest, however, for the IWW was not only to improve the quality of life for workers in the present, but also to work toward the end of ". . . capitalist society by means of a final general strike." The one big union would then step forward and fulfill its "ultimate function: the unions would become the governing bodies of the industrial body."¹³ Before it could begin to organize the loggers, or any other industry for that matter, the IWW had to put its own house in order first.

As historian Joseph R. Conlin explains, "the story of the IWW's first years is not an account of strikes and progress toward the industrial democracy but, rather, of

¹¹Ibid., The preamble was printed at the beginning of the text, no page number was supplied.

¹²Jensen, Lumber and Labor, 7.

¹³Joseph R. Conlin, Bread and Roses Too: Studies of the Wobblies, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1969), 16.

debilitating internecine strife . . ."14 Among the first to abandon the strife torn organization was the Western Federation of Miners, with its 27,000 members, and the Socialist Party--both left in 1906. In 1908, the IWW underwent more radical changes as the two remaining factions fought for control. Daniel De Leon's Socialist Labor Party was purged from the IWW by William "Big Bill" Haywood's faction, who were backed by western workers and their "overall brigade."¹⁵ Haywood and his supporters wanted politics kept ". . . out of the union in order to avoid control by political parties (namely De Leon's Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist Party of America)."¹⁶

The IWW's western news organ, *The Industrial Worker*, stated in its March 12, 1910 publication that a majority of the industrial working class was left out of the political process due to the migratory status of the men who were constantly on the move looking for ". . . that will-O'-the-wisp" job. The focus, therefore, shifted from the political arena to the active union organization of the West's migratory workers--skilled and unskilled.¹⁷ Rowan claimed

¹⁴Ibid., 13.

¹⁵Robert E. Evans, "Montana's Role in the Enactment of Legislation Designed to Suppress the Industrial Workers of the World" (M.A. thesis, Montana State University, 1964), 11-13. Hereafter referred to as Evans, IWW Legislation.

¹⁶Conlin, Bread and Roses Too, 29.

¹⁷Ibid.

that the power of the worker came from the "industrial field" rather than the political field, because whoever controlled industry also controlled the economy and in his estimation, "economic power precedes and determines political power."¹⁸

Whatever "concessions" that the IWW could wring from the capitalist state that would "ameliorate the workers' position," tenement laws, child labor legislation, or minimum wage bills, the IWW embraced enthusiastically ". . . just as long as the workers did not view 'crumbs' as the entire loaf."¹⁹

The general perception was that when a logger went to work there was a high probability that he would not come back. Working out in remote logging camps where there were no hospitals or physicians, a logger had little chance of surviving when injured, especially considering the types of massive trauma endemic to the industry. Liability for the death or maiming of a logger or mill worker did not rest with the company because any individual choosing to work in the woods or around machinery supposedly understood the hazards and was willing to take the risk. To pursue compensation through litigation was wrong, therefore, because the risks had been readily assumed and the worker

¹⁸Rowan, The I.W.W. In The Lumber Industry, 20.

¹⁹Conlin, Bread and Roses Too, 29.

duly compensated with his hourly wage.²⁰

The IWW referred to the Western loggers as "'timber beasts'" because of the bestial conditions they labored under.²¹ James Rowan identified the "causes of the miserable conditions," stating,

. . . the lumber companies are in business for one purpose--to make profits. They care nothing about the welfare of the workers; . . . The longer the hours, the lower the wages, the harder the work and the more inhuman the conditions, the bigger the profits of the companies.²²

Western lumber manufacturers reinforced this stereotype by keeping wages at subsistence levels. They recognized that "labor was the chief cost of production."²³

The goal of the IWW became the transformation of the "'timber beast' into a man."²⁴ Although Rowan indicted the lumber barons for their capitalist ideals, he believed that the loggers were at fault for their own condition. Because of their unorganized state, they left themselves open to oppression.²⁵ Melvyn Dubofsky writes:

. . . loggers were perfect IWW recruits. Mostly native Americans or northern Europeans, they spoke English,

²⁰Ibid., xxvi, 117.

²¹Melvyn Dubofsky, We Shall Be All: A History of The Industrial Workers of the World (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 128.

²²Rowan, The I.W.W. In The Lumber Industry, 14.

²³Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 128.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Rowan, The I.W.W. In The Lumber Industry, 14.

lived together, drank together, slept together, whored together, and fought together. Isolated in the woods or in primitive mill towns, they were bound by ties much stronger than their separate skill or job classification. Whether skilled or unskilled, they wanted to dry their clothes, clean bunks, decent bedding, and good food. They were tired of carrying bindles on their backs as they moved from job to job and camp to camp.²⁶

Haywood penned several platitudes on "Blanket Stiff Philosophy" for *The Industrial Worker* which he believed defined western workers and their goals:

A shorter day makes bigger pay.
 An officer of the law is a walking delegate of capitalism.
 Rags make paper. Paper makes money; money makes banks; banks make loans, loans make interest; interest makes poverty and poverty makes rags.²⁷

These pithy statements aside, the plea was for the logger to step up and organize. His betterment rested on his own manhood, which when flexed, the IWW believed, could lift him from the depths of capitalist exploitation. And lest he forget that this was a class war *The Industrial Worker* reminded him;

Your father was a wage slave before you. You are a wage slave. If capitalism permits you to raise children they will be wage slaves after you. There is no escape from your slavery unless the whole class escapes.²⁸

One way to begin the ascent from slavery was to turn a temperance eye toward "booze" that clouded the brain and

²⁶Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 129.

²⁷The Industrial Worker (Spokane, Washington), 15 February 1912, p. 4.

²⁸Ibid., p. 1.

"made for poor rebels." It was the IWW's belief that employers in the timber industry ". . . goaded lumberjacks into drinking" to better control their own labor situation.²⁹

The timber industry of course was uncooperative in the attempt to organize workers. The companies wished to reserve the right to hire anyone they chose without interference from labor organizations.³⁰ They "cashed in on the fact that . . . the men of the camps were unmarried, 'properly reckless,' and quite expendable."³¹

For mill work, married men were preferred because they had families and were deemed more stable, less rebellious and not as independent in spirit as "bindle-stiffs." This held true for the Eureka Lumber Company who desired men with families for their mill and who had an interest in settling permanently in Eureka.³² These men, married or not, and especially the sawyers, were marked by their profession--a missing finger, fingers, part of a hand or an entire hand. Rowan argued that statistics had proven that fewer accidents occurred on eight-hour shifts as opposed to ten-hour shifts.

²⁹Industrial Worker (Spokane, Washington), 22 May 1913, p. 2.

³⁰Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 128-129.

³¹Prouty, More Dangerous Than War, 48-49.

³²The Timberman (Portland, Oregon), April 1913, p. 38.

Therefore, it was wiser and safer to have the men work only eight-hours a day.³³

Due to the migratory nature of the woods workers, very few had families and those who did left them behind when they went to work in the woods. Andrew Prouty wrote that some companies preferred single men to married men because if an accident occurred, which maimed or killed a man, the company would not feel any responsibility to pay compensation to the family.³⁴

The work was extremely dangerous and the living conditions in many cases were horrible. The temporary camps were seen as cost effective for the owner, who by placing the camp at the work site eliminated "travel time," which could cut into profits. While this aided the boss, it placed the logger in an unsanitary environment where he needed little incentive to quit and move on to a different camp that was hopefully better. The propensity to move created the axiom of the "three crews, 'one coming, one going, and one working.'" Early loggers were almost constantly on the move.³⁵

Employment in western Montana's timber industry was only seasonal prior to World War I. Beginning in October, men would find jobs in the lumber camps which would provide

³³Rowan, The I.W.W. In The Lumber Industry, 8.

³⁴Prouty, More Deadly Than War, 46.

³⁵Ibid., 27.

semi-steady employment for the next four to six months. Mills and logging camps also shut down frequently as a result of industry wide recessions. The men usually worked some type of construction in the summer, as field hands in the fall during harvest and in the woods during the winter months.³⁶

Employment agents, who worked in the cities, charged a dollar to find men employment in the logging camps. Some camps and mills required a new man to have an employment ticket from an agency. A boss working with an employment agency would get a cut for each new person hired. Some bosses and agencies had a continual revolving door of new employees; the agent would keep sending men to the camp and the boss would fire the men who had been there the longest, lining the pockets of the two men at the expense of the workers.³⁷ *The Industrial Worker* in its March 18, 1909 edition warned transient loggers that this was occurring in northwest Montana. According to the paper, a Spokane employment agency had sent nine men to a lumber camp at Warland, Montana, who were subsequently told by the foreman upon their arrival that he had not sent for any new men. The men had paid a two dollar fee to the employment shark plus the expense for the trip (out and back to Spokane) for jobs that did not exist.

³⁶Evans, IWW Legislation, 31-32.

³⁷Rowan, The I.W.W. In The Lumber Industry, 12-13.

As stated earlier, if a logger got tired of a camp he simply asked for his time and moved on. This created a constant labor problem for the industry, but it also hampered organizational attempts of the IWW.³⁸ One could hardly blame the loggers, though, for moving from camp to camp. While some of the larger companies provided better camp conditions, the small operators' camps were in many cases a nightmare; "it was not uncommon for two men to have to share the same bed, and in some cases the bunks were nothing more than crudely constructed, large, wooden boxes."³⁹ Sometimes bug infestations would be so bad in the bunkhouse that loggers chose to sleep outside in the open to escape the nightly feast.⁴⁰

Camp conditions were bad, but in the short-log country they were considered barbaric--"more like cattle pens than the habitations of civilized men"⁴¹ The men worked long hours and when they returned to camp they had no bathing facilities unless they wanted to take a dip in an icy stream or lake. The conditions of the camp itself were unsanitary. Garbage was dumped outside the cookhouse and "dry, open toilets" were usually fairly close to the camp

³⁸Jensen, Lumber and Labor, 114.

³⁹Evans, IWW Legislation, 35.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Rowan, The I.W.W. In The Lumber Industry, 9-10.

also.⁴²

Bert Wilke, who worked as a logger in and around the Kootenai valley, reported that ". . . they [the loggers] all had to pack their own beds. . . . And they would pack bedbugs and lice from one tent to another." As for lice, Wilke said he got used to them but he hated the bedbugs and their constant gnawing because, "they'd keep me awake."⁴³ Wilke's situation was not unusual for "short-log" logging camps. Joe Halm, a former Forest Service employee wrote that while working at a logging camp in northern Idaho,

. . . twenty-eight men lived and slept in one squat and dingy shake-roofed log cabin 16'x28' with one door and two windows The double bunks made of poles and filled with boughs were double-decked and extended around the entire wall space except at the windows and doors. A Sibley stove occupied the center of the room and at night tiers of wet musty socks and other garments dangled like a Monday wash from the ceiling around the stove pipe. A wooden bucket and two basins near a window served for all the men, shaving was a luxury. What a scramble for socks in the morning, first come first served. Ours was not an exceptional camp for those days⁴⁴

A contemporary of Halm's further stated that ". . . when those wires were filled with lumberjacks' sox and underwear

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Bert Wilke, Oral History Transcript with Anne Hoffman, 1983. Transcript on file, University of Montana Mansfield Library.

⁴⁴Early Days USFS, "Some Highlights of My Career in the Forest Service," Joe Halm, vol. 1 (Missoula, MT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service Northern Region, 1944), 77.

the place needed ventilation."⁴⁵

The food in many cases was barely edible and a good cook could demand and get a high wage, if the company was willing to pay. To sustain the loggers in their ten hour days, they needed to ingest large quantities of calories. Andrew Prouty compared the daily caloric intake of a U.S. Army recruit in 1914, with that of a logger in the same year and discovered that while the soldier consumed 5,000 calories a day in order to stay healthy, a Washington state logger had to consume 8,000 calories. The necessity to provide large quantities of edible food, according to Prouty, gave the bosses their biggest headache and the workers indigestion.⁴⁶ For small operators, it was also one of the first areas they looked to when cutting costs; by providing less food of inferior quality, they could decrease expenditures.⁴⁷

The lousy food and living conditions added to the IWW organizer's appeal to the logger. Walking delegates promised that the One Big Union would work to create habitable conditions for men, who were used to a living and working environment that most of us would find hard to

⁴⁵Early Days USFS, Mark O. Watkins, vol. 3 (Missoula, MT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service Northern Region, 1962), 276-277.

⁴⁶Prouty, More Deadly Than War, 39.

⁴⁷Ibid. See also Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917."

imagine. The impetus for change was to join the ranks of the IWW and fight for what was rightfully theirs, according to Wobbly ideology--the fruits of their own labor.

Most historians focus on the poor living conditions, low pay and the quest for the eight-hour day when they study labor agitation in the timber industry and these reasons cited are listed as the causes for the 1917 strike. But, Andrew Prouty makes an interesting and very valid point in his book More Deadly Than War! Pacific Coast Logging, 1827-1981: men were not only living under horrible and unsanitary conditions, they were getting killed and maimed in greater numbers as the timber industry moved westward. The logs were getting bigger, the terrain rougher and, due to technological advances, machinery introduced to the industry was high powered and high speed. Men were being chewed up and spit out--missing body parts if they were lucky and getting killed if they were not.⁴⁸

It is Prouty's contention that the industry was not uncaring about the amount of bloodshed it was creating, but that it was simply not equipped at that time to deal with the new hazards that went along with a rapidly mechanizing industry. While the Wobblies (and most historians) focused on living conditions and the eight-hour day, according to Prouty, they missed "the [most] important grievance" while

⁴⁸Ibid., xviii. See also Jensen, Lumber and Labor, 110.

"striking over peripheral issues."⁴⁹

The validity of Prouty's point cannot be ignored. But, in my opinion, the reason the unions, and other historians for that matter, ignored the hazards of the job was because the men chose to ignore the risks. If you were willing to accept a job in the early twentieth-century timber industry, tacitly you were accepting the risk that went with it. What you did not have to accept were the long hours, low pay, bug infested bunks and inedible food. These were tangibles that could be changed now and while they would not ameliorate the dangers of the logging industry, they would help, to a degree, make them more palatable. These were the points that IWW and American Federation of Labor organizers promoted in their unionization efforts.

The Western Labor Union, allied with the Western Federation of Miners, according to IWW organizer James Rowan, actually made some headway as early as 1902 in organizing western Montana loggers. It later changed its name to the American Labor Union (ALU) and participated at the founding convention of the IWW in 1905. ALU territory was invaded by the American Federation of Labor, who according to James Rowan, was working in conjunction with timber and mining companies, thereby making it possible to

⁴⁹Ibid., xxii-xxiii.

weaken the ALU.⁵⁰

Strike activity started early in the Kootenai valley when the IWW tried to organize a strike on the Fortine River in 1909. Leonard Runwood, an IWW delegate, met with Eureka Lumber Company president Charles A. Weil and told him that despite the efforts of "booze vendors" to induce the loggers back to work, the men were standing firm for a wage increase. Runwood then wrote *The Industrial Worker* stating that the situation was critical and that the strikers needed \$2.50 to feed "forty men in one jungle camp at Fortine" if the strike was going to survive.⁵¹

Fred Heslewood, district organizer for the IWW and representative for the strikes, met C.A. Weil when the Eureka Lumber Company president walked into Heslewood's office and asked ". . . why he had not met him in Eureka." Heslewood, to the delight of *The Industrial Worker*, told Weil that he ". . . never lost much time visiting the bosses when he was organizing a strike."⁵²

Eureka's mill was not the only one threatened by IWW agitation in 1909. Under the ownership of the Dawson Lumber Company, strike activity moved to the Libby area. *The Industrial Worker*, in an article dripping with venom,

⁵⁰Rowan, *The I.W.W. In The Lumber Industry*, 21.

⁵¹*Industrial Worker* (Spokane, Washington), 20 May 1909, p. 1.

⁵²*Industrial Worker* (Spokane, Washington), 27 May 1909, p.1.

castigated Libby's newspaper, *The Western News*, for its "editorial against agitators." Calling it a "bosses' paper," The Wobbly paper wrote:

There is some fear that the I.W.W. will make trouble in Libby. The following is from an editorial from this sweet-scented upholder of 'law and order,' and shows what nice, kind people our enemies are: This newspaper will give a friendly word that **it will not be healthy** for any person to come here and attempt to create trouble. Any attempt along the lines indicated will be met with more than strong opposition by the people here. The chances are that it will be a strenuous opposition if not a **VIOLENT ONE**.⁵³

This warning, by the Libby paper, came despite assurances by the IWW that the strike would be carried out in an orderly manner.

The IWW said that county⁵⁴ ". . . officials . . . from the dog-catcher down to the hangman are intent on stirring up trouble and if possible blaming the same on the Union, and that the papers of the enemy are openly inciting to violence and lawlessness." The hangman they refer to was Flathead County sheriff Billy O'Connell, who busied himself, according to *The Industrial Worker* "interfering with the Union men and threatening them with arrest, etc., etc. He seems to think that the I.W.W. boys are afraid of him

⁵³Industrial Worker (Spokane, Washington), 3 June 1909, p. 1.

⁵⁴At the time of the 1909 strike Libby, Eureka and the rest of the Kootenai Valley were still part of Flathead County with Kalispell as the county seat. Lincoln County did not become a separate entity until 1910.

because he has just choked another lumber-jack to death."⁵⁵

Extolling its members to organize and "take by force what they have created," the IWW vented its spleen on religious institutions, regardless of denomination, which they believed made "cowards of the working people, and divide[ed] them." Churches, in their estimation, were in league with the politicians -- "always on the side of the upper dog, and against the oppressed and robbed." Simple case in point: they urged workers to attend a "fashionable" church on Sunday wearing "overalls" and see how fast they would be turned out.⁵⁶

As this opening salvo of strike activity spiked and quickly dropped, the IWW urged loggers to use *The Industrial Worker* as their own "information bureau" to "cut the employment shark out." The membership was "requested to send reports to the paper about the condition of camps, wages, hours, board (good or bad), and whether there [was] any chance of work."⁵⁷ Despite a positive start, the IWW began to lose ground quickly during the 1909 strike and any mention of agitation gradually faded from the pages of *The Industrial Worker*, without any explanation of the end

⁵⁵Industrial Worker (Spokane, Washington), 3 June 1909, p. 1. The man that the article was referring to was an insane logger that the county ordered O'Connell to hang.

⁵⁶Industrial Worker (Spokane, Washington), 19 August 1909, p. 1.

⁵⁷Ibid., 15 January 1910, p. 2.

result. Losing the strike in northwest Montana was a setback for the IWW but it was not catastrophic. The union continued its organization efforts in the timber industry.

On November 23, 1911, *The Industrial Worker* called its edition the "Loggers and Lumber Workers' Special" with articles calling for solidarity under the banner of the IWW's "National Industrial Union of Lumber Workers," with its headquarters in Seattle. The men and industry were described as "rotten ripe for organization."⁵⁸ Because wages were low, the IWW kept its dues down in order to accommodate the financial constraints of their members. Also, an IWW member was allowed to change his industrial occupation and transfer from one union to another without having to pay additional fees.

Strike activity was to begin in 1912 for the new IWW union. The demands were simple and straightforward:

1. All camps to supply single bunks with springs, mattresses and blankets furnished free of additional cost.
2. That the amount paid for board be actually used in purchasing necessary things such as vegetables in season.
3. The construction of individual clothes lockers equipped with lock and key.
4. Abolishment of employment sharks.
5. Regulation of payment of hospital fees.
6. Uniform wage scale.
7. Eight hour day.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Industrial Worker (Spokane, Washington), 23 November 1911, p. 1-4.

⁵⁹The Industrial Worker (Spokane, Washington), 30 November 1911, p. 2.

And finally, any contract that was negotiated by the Wobblies was to be void of any "no-strike clauses" because with the loss of striking privileges there was a loss of collective bargaining power for the union.⁶⁰

When strike activity was launched, *The Industrial Worker* printed an article by John Pancner entitled "A Few Don'ts" for the new union to be aware of.

For Organizers and Speakers

Don't waste your time prating about the flag and the church; talk about the One Big Union and its tactics. Don't put in all of your time knocking the A.F. of L. and the S.P. [Socialist Party] Don't be afraid to go out into the camps, mills, fields and factories. Don't forget the same speech all the time gets stale.

For Camp Delegates

Don't fail to get a list of radicals in your camp. Don't insult everyone in the bunk-house because they don't agree with you. Don't keep the boys awake until midnight; you will lose your influence. Don't forget to get subs [subscriptions] for the papers.

For Strikers

Don't forget to pull all the men out with you. Don't forget that every means should be used to get the men out before the police are organized by the boss; the men will not go back easily once they are out. Don't fail to establish camps and cook houses. Don't forget to protect your life against brutal thugs. Don't forget the irritation strike, sabotage and the boycott.

For the Membership

Don't forget to pay your dues. Don't forget to donate on payday. Don't be a chair-warmer.⁶¹

⁶⁰Rowan, The I.W.W. in the Timber Industry, 19, 23.

⁶¹The Industrial Worker (Spokane, Washington), 6 June 1912, p. 3.

The union touched off sporadic strike activity in the Pacific Northwest and one strike near Missoula, Montana, during 1912, but the union only remained in operation for a year before it succumbed to lack of funds and results. The AFL unions had refused to support IWW locals on strike and in some cases encouraged non-union workers to take the jobs of striking Wobblies. The lack of cooperation between the two unions was indicative of the IWW's on-going tug-of-war contest with their biggest unionizing competitor--the American Federation of Labor (AFL)--for the soul of the "timber beast."⁶²

Fred Heslewood attributed the defeat of the IWW union in Montana to the Montana State Union that the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) backed and the AFL's International Brotherhood of Woodsmen and Sawmill Workers. These two rival unions induced IWW members to change their allegiance to them. In Heslewood's opinion, the AFL union was supported by the owners because it ". . . could be handled by the masters . . . whose leaders would do their bidding." The lumber company owners, according to Heslewood, gave the loggers a choice, either join the AFL union or hit the road. Heslewood stated that the "old fighters to a man hit the trail."⁶³

⁶²Ibid., 23, 29.

⁶³The Industrial Worker (Spokane, Washington), 26 December 1912, p. 8.

As for the WFM, its relationship with the IWW had been over for the past six years and Heslewood claimed that the lumberjacks of Montana were duped into throwing their support to the Montana State Union by the WFM, ". . . who waxed warm in their praise of the Montana State Union" But when the timbermen went out on strike in 1908 Butte miners refused to back them and handled "scabbed lumber." Heslewood invited those IWW members who remained in the state to join the National Industrial Union of Forest and Lumber Workers and rejoin the One Big Union in its fight for industrial democracy.⁶⁴ Open hostilities between the IWW and the AFL earmarked the attempted labor organization of West's timber industry. AFL president Samuel Gompers viewed the IWW as an abomination, while the IWW saw Gompers as a capitalist puppet.

Both the IWW and AFL worked to organize the timber industry, but they spent as much time fighting each other as they did the companies. Although the IWW had been labelled as the more radical and revolutionary of the two, in reality their demands were primarily the same as the AFL unions.⁶⁵ Rowan believed, however, that the AFL brand of union organization was bound to fail because it did not unite its members; rather, it separated them according to craft or

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Jensen, Lumber and Labor, 114.

trade and when the AFL negotiated, they did so individually, so there were different contracts for each craft in the same industry. When a contract expired, it isolated those under that single contract while people in the same industry continued to work. Union organization, by craft, lacked solidarity in Rowan's estimation.⁶⁶

The two organizations also differed in ideology, because, according to James Rowan, the AFL believed that the "interests of Labor and Capital are identical," and they simply wanted "'a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.'" This slogan and AFL practice helped, in the eyes of the IWW and James Rowan, to perpetuate the capitalist system. The AFL was viewed as subversive in nature, according to IWW philosophy, because it served to "mislead and confuse the workers in the interests of the employers."⁶⁷

The industrial unionism of the IWW, on the other hand, was seen as highly efficient. The IWW organized according to industry, with "One Big Union" for each industry. Industrial unionism was created to deal with modern industry and the capitalists who controlled it. The goal of the IWW was the overthrow of capitalists so that the worker would receive all the profits of his or her labor. After the capitalist had been overthrown, workers would "establish in its place a system of Industrial Democracy." Before that

⁶⁶Rowan, The I.W.W. In The Lumber Industry, 15.

⁶⁷Ibid., 15-16.

could happen, the woods and sawmill workers had to organize in order to lift themselves from what Rowan referred to as their "state of industrial feudalism."⁶⁸

The IWW promised to clean up the camps, increase the pay and lobby for the eight-hour day. Its means to achieve these concessions would be "any kind of economic pressure designed to harass their [the loggers'] employers, such as pressure by boycotts, sabotage, strikes, and free speech fights." By uniting according to industry they hoped to defeat the "Lumber Trust" and rid the logger of his dreaded "bindle," which marked him as a tramp, vagrant or hobo.⁶⁹

The organization immediately ran into a stumbling block. The western lumber manufacturers were clamoring for solidarity among their own ranks to block IWW agitation. Lumber barons were determined to stamp out this cancer that was infecting their industry and established the West Coast Lumbermen's Association in 1911 to unite them against the union. Private detectives were hired to root out suspected union members and local authorities were used to stifle union activity. The Association, in 1912, was also successful in obtaining aid from "local federal officials" who could "investigate the IWW for alleged illegal activities"⁷⁰ Suspected union members or Wobbly

⁶⁸Ibid., 17-18, 7.

⁶⁹Evans, IWW Legislation, 15-16.

⁷⁰Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 335.

agitators were fired and quickly sent packing; blacklists circulated to keep union men from being hired on at different company camps and mills.⁷¹

Recruitment was hampered by the very nature of the industry and the IWW's own struggle over what its goal should be. Delegates were sent to the remote logging camps to recruit, but workers were not interested in long range plans; they wanted conditions improved immediately. Coupled with this worker impatience was the lack of a clear organizational aim on the IWW's part. Its leadership was still trying to decide if it was recruiting and making revolutionaries or helping the loggers obtain industrial power to combat the owners by establishing a union. Until a decision was made, Wobbly efforts of organization remained fragmented and weak.⁷²

The IWW had a difficult time penetrating the timber industry from 1912 through 1915, when membership dropped as the pressure against them was increased. Montana's timber industry was also in the throes of one of the frequent recessions that left the industry prostrate; any IWW walkout during this time would lack a strong following and leverage.⁷³ Wobbly leaders began to focus on the growing number of Finn, Greek and Scandinavian workers whose numbers

⁷¹Rowan, The I.W.W. In The Lumber Industry, 9.

⁷²Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 334.

⁷³Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 192-193.

were steadily increasing in the timber industry.⁷⁴ A look at the 1910 census records, for Lincoln County, Montana, bears this out, indicating a large number of Norwegian born workers who were listed as boarders and their occupation as logging.⁷⁵

Successful organization of the timber industry began with the organization of migratory farm workers in the Midwest, under the auspices of the IWW's Agricultural Workers Organization (AWO) Local 400, in April of 1915. The AWO decided in its fall meeting, which was held in Minneapolis, to expand their agitation into the timber industry of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Montana. The idea was that the AWO would support union members from the timber industry, until such a time that their numbers would allow them to form their own industrial union.⁷⁶

The IWW claimed that wages for timber workers ranged from \$9.00-25.00 a month in 1915 and due to its efforts, by the spring of 1916, wages had increased to \$30.00-50.00 per month. In the fall of 1916, AWO membership stood at 22,000 members of which it was estimated some 4-5,000 were lumber workers. A vote was taken and it was agreed that the lumber

⁷⁴Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 335.

⁷⁵U.S. Census Office, Population Schedules of the Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910. The census records viewed were for Lincoln County, Montana, 1910.

⁷⁶Rowan, The I.W.W. In The Lumber Industry, 24.

workers were ready for their own industrial union.⁷⁷

In Spokane, Washington, the Lumber Workers Industrial Union (LWIU) No. 500 was created on March 6, 1917. James Rowan was named secretary of the new union. The LWIU had about 3,000 members in 1917 and an even larger number of workers, who were not members, but supported the union's efforts.⁷⁸ The Wobblies seemed to be on the verge of success and the time to strike was now. With the war in Europe, the demand for timber products had increased so employers, according to LWIU leaders, would be more willing to grant the union's demands in order to remain operating. As March approached, the IWW believed that they had the situation in hand and were ready to move against the Eureka Lumber Company when spring run-off signalled the beginning of their log drive.

⁷⁷Ibid., 24-25.

⁷⁸Ibid., 30.

Chapter III

Lumber Workers Industrial Union #500

"My call is the call of battle. I nourish active rebellion. He going with me must go well armed. He going with me goes often with spare diet, poverty, angry enemies and desertion."¹

Winter in Northwest Montana is a time of gray skies and dark forests. The sun retreats further to the south leaving the landscape etched in frost and snow. As the weeks pass into December, January and February, the forests of the region lose their trade mark green tints as the sun starved evergreens darken in the distance to muted shades of black. The land lies dormant and seemingly unchanging as it waits for winter to pass with the first caress of spring rains that will transform every creek and river into a raging torrent as the high country snows are disgorged into the waiting valleys.

Winter was not a time for leisure in the forests of the Kootenai Valley. The stillness of frosted mornings was broken by the sounds of ringing axes, rasping crosscut saws, and cursing lumberjacks, as timber was felled and stacked on

¹Walt Whitman, "A Fragment," The Industrial Worker (Seattle, Washington); 12 February 1910, 2.

roll-aways for the spring drive. The men of the IWW and the lumber manufacturers of Northwest Montana were also busy preparing to do battle when the snows of 1916--1917 receded. Aware that the IWW was preparing to pounce upon them in the spring of 1917, some lumber companies realized that to effectively combat the IWW, they needed to clean up the camps, provide better living conditions and supply better food. This in itself, they believed, would do much to thwart labor discontent for the coming year.²

As 1916 ended and 1917 began, timber prices increased and the IWW believed the time was ripe for action to push the demands of the loggers and the eight-hour day. Concentrating on the short-log country, the IWW held a convention in Spokane March 5-6, 1917, forming the Lumber Workers Industrial Union #500. Their demands were simple: better pay, better board, recognition of the union and the eight-hour day.³

The time of the workers was now. Instead of merely surviving on subsistence pay they would, according to the LWIU's James Rowan, "consolidate together into one great world wide combination of labor"⁴ and take what was theirs. Their sweat had produced the wealth that the capitalists were living from and this parasitic existence would end.

²Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 337.

³Jensen, Lumber and Labor, 125.

⁴Rowan, The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry, 18.

The LWIU #500's membership swelled to 6,000 as delegates from Spokane, Duluth and Seattle travelled into the camps to organize the loggers.⁵

While the unsanitary living conditions and low pay were legitimate issues, the LWIU focused on obtaining the eight-hour day with no loss of pay as their primary goal. The union also wanted the employer to pay travel time from the camp to the job site. In defense of the shorter work day, Rowan claimed that statistical evidence proved that there were fewer accidents on eight-hour shifts as opposed to ten plus hour days.⁶ Despite any claim by the union, the majority of Northwest logging companies refused to grant the eight-hour day, stating they could not afford the reduction in their production.⁷

IWW historian Melvyn Dubofsky wrote,

Most district lumbermen believed in the traditional Calvinist ethos: work, however miserable, was a blessing, not an exaction; the longer a man toiled, the better he was for it. Rather than see their employees labor fewer hours in the woods and mills and squander their extra leisure on books or drink, lumbermen preferred to work their hands longer, and in the process make them better men.⁸

This managerial creed, however, was seen by the IWW union as merely a means to control the existence of the laborers and

⁵Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 361.

⁶Rowan, The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry, 8.

⁷Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 363.

⁸Ibid.

keep them mired in the drudgery of everyday apathy, while the bosses grew fatter and richer.

Kootenai Valley logger James Gardam described what conditions were like in some of Lincoln County's logging camps during the winter of 1916--1917. Employed as a swamper, Gardam lived in a bunkhouse that was overcrowded, poorly ventilated and vermin infested. However, he only worked for two and a half days before he was let go--deducted from his meager paycheck was the one dollar hospital fee, leaving Gardam to speculate that

. . . the more the camp can dismiss the more hospital fees they collect, so it is to their [the logging company's] advantage to change unskilled laborers in so far as the supply of men are adequate to their needs.⁹

Moving to a second camp that winter, Gardam complained that the quality of the food was the fault of the cook and the lack of proper storage facilities: "he had thro' the cold days of Winter no place to keep his meat except on a cask in the dining room to keep it warm so he could cut it . . ." ¹⁰ Camp policy required lights-out at nine p.m., leaving the men, in Gardam's words,

. . . an evening of about two hours free, all the men do is to sit around on an eight inch board about the bunks exchanging their troubles and how conditions should be and are not, and so a general discontent the

⁹J. Gardam to President Woodrow Wilson, August 11, 1917, Eureka, Montana. Record Group 60, Department of Justice File 186701-27 (Missoula, MT: University of Montana, Mansfield Library microfilm), 4. Hereafter referred to as J. Gardam to President Woodrow Wilson, August 11, 1917, Eureka, Montana.

¹⁰Ibid.

material which fill the minds of these men, and it finally brews into results not conducive to Peace but revenge.¹¹

According to Gardam, the camp was "the property of one of the richest men in Minneapolis, and [was] representative of camps owned and controlled by Lumber Merchants."¹²

The river drivers were not to be forgotten either: they worked ten hours or more in streams fed by the spring run-off, the cold water soaking shoes and pants to the knee, numbing the legs in their icy depths; guiding the logs downstream, wading out to pit muscle and sinew against rushing currents and stubborn log jams; the thermometer would fall during the night to just above freezing; the river driver stumbled from his bedbug ridden bunk to don damp socks, pants and boots to begin the day again. Gardam asked, "Do you imagine working in such is a delight? Can you wonder then that men do desire some bit of comfort when the day has closed?"¹³

When you are in Church on Sunday and you see the ladies in silk, and the Gentlemen in well groomed clothes, hearing the strain from the wonderful pipe organ; if just them way off in the back woods of 'the west' some poor lumberjack is not washing his stockings or shirt!" God of Hosts be with us yet! Lest we forget, Lest we forget!!¹⁴

According to the LWIU #500, the plight of the logger

¹¹Ibid., 5.

¹²Ibid., 5.

¹³Ibid., 8.

¹⁴Ibid., 5.

should not, however, be a permanent condition. By the spring of 1917, IWW membership in the Northwest swelled and past tactics of lockout, blacklist, violence, mob rule, thuggery and murder were no longer successful tools of the companies in the Wobblies' opinion.¹⁵ Organization was strong and the cause just.

Waiting in the wings and also preparing for the coming season of strife were the lumber company managers. Shunning political party affiliation and working from the ground up, the IWW faced an opponent that strode the halls of power on the state and federal levels. In Lincoln County, *The Timberman*, a Portland, Oregon based news organ of Pacific Northwest lumbermen, lauded C.A. Weil's recent election to Montana's state legislature, writing that Weil promised to be "an influential and efficient worker in the house. Mr. Weil is president and general manager of the Eureka Lumber Co., a manufacturing establishment employing several hundred men, the largest of its kind in the state" ¹⁶

Weil wasted no time in making his presence felt by voting for legislation aimed at denying the IWW of one of its much touted weapons--sabotage. *The Industrial Worker*, August 10 1911 published a poem by, Ralph V. Chervinski, defending sabotage.

¹⁵Rowan, The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry, 26-27.

¹⁶The Timberman (Portland, Oregon), February 1917, 66.

Our Weapon

What is the weapon workers hold
That will not shoot, nor sheath, nor fold,
Unlike the arms of present days
Used in the battles and affrays?

What is that weapon that will not
Kill a man, nor draw his blood--
To gratify the tyrant's whim
In blood wars of this regime?

What is that weapon, a death knell song
In workers' hands to owners throng,
That weapon of the coming age?
It's 'Pearled strike,' the SABOTAGE!

By workers' mind this weapon's forged;
With workers' hand our master scourged;
This weapon is a death knell song
to tyrants' ears and owners' throng.¹⁷

This weapon of the workingman could be easily applied to the timber industry in the form of spiked trees, which wrecked the mill saw when the high speed blade came into contact with the metal spike. This, along with purposely vandalized machinery, targeted the boss in his most vulnerable place, the pocket book, while demonstrating the "intelligence" of the workers who used sabotage to "whip" the master.¹⁸

P.N. Bernard, a Republican from Flathead County, introduced House Bill (H.B.) No. 72 on January 16, 1917, aimed at outlawing tree spiking. The bill was described as,

An Act to prohibit the driving, placing or imbedding of spikes, nails, or other metallic substances, stone or rock, in saw logs intended for manufacture into lumber or other timber products, and prescribing the penalty

¹⁷The Industrial Worker (Spokane, Washington), 10 August 1911, 3.

¹⁸The Industrial Worker (Spokane, Washington), 30 November 1911, 4.

therefor.¹⁹

The bill was amended with the words "'with malicious intent'" after "'stone and rock'"²⁰ and quickly passed through the House by a vote of 87 ayes (Weil was one of the ayes), 1 nay, and 6 absent.²¹ Governor Stewart notified the Speaker of the House of Representatives that he approved H.B. 72 on February 20, 1917.²² *The Timberman* discussing what it called the "blight of sabotage," congratulated other states (Washington, Idaho, California), besides Montana, for passing legislation "dealing with . . . sabotage."²³

Labor, however, was not without its allies in Montana's legislature. Company compiled "black lists" had been circulated during 1915--1916 and all suspected Wobblies were terminated immediately. The war in Europe changed this, to an extent, because of the rise in demand for American lumber. Hiring practices were somewhat looser and the IWW obtained a foothold. Black lists, however, were continued.²⁴ In response, state representative Ronald

¹⁹House Journal of the Fifteenth Legislative Assembly of the State of Montana, House Bill No. 72 (16 January 1917), 85. Hereafter referred to as Montana, Fifteenth Legislative Assembly, H.B. 72.

²⁰Ibid., 124.

²¹Ibid., 243.

²²Ibid., 496.

²³The Timberman (Portland, Oregon), March 1917, 28.

²⁴Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 336.

Higgins, a Republican from Missoula County, introduced H.B. No. 188.

A Bill for an Act entitled, An Act defining and prohibiting blacklisting and unlawful interference with laborers, and providing for the punishment thereof and the recovery of damages thereof, and defining what shall be accepted as evidence in blacklist cases.²⁵

The bill went to the Committee on Judiciary but Chairman Mason recommended that the bill not pass and his report was adopted.²⁶ Labor unions might have had their friends, but they were too few in 1917.

James Rowan wrote that "at one time a law was passed in Montana, prohibiting the carrying of blankets in that state on the ground that it caused the spread of disease."²⁷ The law, however, was never enforced in Rowan's opinion because then the employers would have had to furnish bedrolls at their own expense.²⁸ The ever present "bindles" of the loggers marked them not only as transients, but also served as a reminder to them of their maligned social status.

As spring approached in 1917, the Eureka Lumber Company was not relying only on legislation to combat the IWW.

²⁵House Journal of the Fifteenth Legislative Assembly of the State of Montana, House Bill No. 188 (1 February 1917), 189. Hereafter referred to as Montana, Fifteenth Legislative Assembly, H.B. 188.

²⁶Ibid., 277.

²⁷Rowan, The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry, 12.

²⁸Ibid.

According to T.H. MacDonald, Flathead County Attorney, "several lumbermen" were employing private detectives to infiltrate the IWW in Northwest Montana.²⁹ The Eureka Lumber Company was no exception, employing the Thiel Detective Service, Spokane office, to furnish an operative to infiltrate the logging camps in the Eureka area. The agency was established by Gus Thiel, who had previously worked as one of Allen Pinkerton's "most valued operatives as an agent during the Civil War."³⁰ He worked for Pinkerton until 1873, when due to a falling-out, he quit and formed his own agency, first in St. Louis and then Chicago. It was not long before he gained "a major foothold in the West."³¹

Anthony J. Lukas, author of Big Trouble, stated that the American people of the nineteenth and early twentieth century were enamored with the private detective. William Haywood, leader of the of the IWW, had a far different perception of the occupation.

A detective is the lowest meanest, most contemptible thing that either creeps or crawls, a thing to loath and despise.

²⁹T.H. MacDonald, Flathead County Attorney, to Thomas W. Gregory, Attorney General of the United States, 21 August 1917, Kalispell, Montana. Record Group 60, Department of Justice File (Missoula, MT: University of Montana, Mansfield Library microfilm), p. 1.

³⁰Anthony J. Lukas, Big Trouble (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 85.

³¹Ibid.

When a detective dies he goes so low he has to climb up a ladder to get into hell . . .³²

Mingling among the loggers of the upper Kootenai Valley, his identity unknown, this man was despised and feared by the IWW. He was Ed Rawley, a Thiel Detective agency operative, dispatched to the region at the behest of the Eureka Lumber Company to report on IWW activity.

His first report was sent to Weil on February 22, 1917. It stated, "There are a good many idle men around Eureka and nine out of every ten are I.W.W.s and most of them are not looking for work but are out agitating trouble."³³ A member of the union had informed Rawley that "conditions in this vicinity are bad; that a man can not make expenses at the wages they get" and if the company refused to raise the pay to \$4.50 a day and "improve the camps by furnishing mattresses and better board," the "boys" would strike the company.³⁴

Oscar Lundgren told Rawley that the strike would begin "about March 4th" in an attempt to tie up the spring drive.

³²The Industrial Worker (Spokane, Washington), 4 January 1912, 1.

³³Ed Rawley to C.A. Weil, 22 February 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 1. Eureka Lumber Company File. The author has in his possession a copy of the files containing original correspondences of the Eureka Lumber Company during the 1917 and 1919 IWW strikes. The original file is at the Tobacco Valley Improvement Association Museum in Eureka, MT. Hereafter all correspondence in these files will be referred to as ELC Files.

³⁴Ibid., 2.

Rawley believed that Lundgren posed a threat to the company and after providing a description of the thirty-year-old Swede, he wrote, "it would be a good thing to see that he did not secure work in any of the camps."³⁵ Lundgren boasted that he was not afraid to use dynamite or any other means to achieve the men's demands. Countering this threat of violence was IWW organizer John I. Turner, who told Rawley that ". . . Lundgren was no good and that he did the order more harm than good." The Wobblies were in no way advocating what Turner called "rough work."³⁶

In the small town of Fortine, Montana, Rawley learned that the men were not planning any move until after the March 4 convention of the IWW in Spokane, when the Lumber Workers Industrial Union #500 would be formed. Only then would they receive their instructions on how to proceed with their organization attempts in Northwest Montana.³⁷

As IWW members gathered in Spokane the first part of March 1917, rumor spread that the IWW planned to ". . . make an example of the Eureka Lumber Company this spring and summer-- . . . by former arrangement, at a critical time,

³⁵Rawley to Weil, 23 February 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 1. ELC Files.

³⁶Ibid. Rawley refers to R. Turner in his report, but copies of *The Industrial Worker* and *Solidarity* identify the IWW delegate as John I. Turner. On the basis of this evidence I use John Turner rather than Rawley's R. Turner.

³⁷Rawley to Weil, 24 February 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 1. ELC Files.

to so handle the River Men as to effectually hang up [the] drive."³⁸ W.C. Ufford, of the Spokane Lumber Company, informed P.L. Howe that a number of the Eureka Lumber Company's men had been seen in town although not by him. He also wrote, ". . . perhaps the Montana situation is such as warrants unusual preparedness on the part of your people this spring and it would seem well for them to at least know who the leaders there are if they can find out."³⁹

Appreciative of the heads-up, Howe wanted Weil to fence the company's property in Eureka immediately and reach "a thorough understanding with Sheriff Brown."⁴⁰ He also urged Weil to "talk things over with Governor Stewart so that we could get action there quickly if needed."⁴¹ Howe believed that the company needed to use this time to make their plans now and ". . . very thorough plans at that."⁴²

In the mean time, Rawley continued to send Weil reports on IWW plans for the spring strike and also hints at a larger industry wide strike for the short log country of Montana, Idaho, and Eastern Washington. The men continued

³⁸W.C. Ufford, Manager, Spokane Lumber Company to P.L. Howe, President Eureka Lumber Company, 2 March 1917, Spokane, Washington. ELC Files.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰P.L. Howe to C.A. Weil, 3 March 1917, Minneapolis, Minnesota. ELC Files.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

to act "meek" in the logging camps, biding their time until the most opportune time to strike arrived. It was estimated that approximately seventy-percent of the men around Eureka and Fortine were "members of the I.W.W.; that they were going to make it hot for the Eureka Lumber Company this spring;" ⁴³

Four Swedes told the detective that they intended to "spike the logs and this would raise h___ with the mill One of the Swedes said that they would demand beds, springs, mattress and pillows and that the day of every man carrying his own bed was a thing of the past." ⁴⁴ Down river at the small town of Troy, Montana, the city marshal had told IWW members there that they either had to remove their union buttons or get out of town. Rawley believed that sixty of these men were on their way to Eureka and would be arriving soon. ⁴⁵

Some of the local saloons were joining in the taunting of the Eureka Lumber Company. Buck McCarty, who owned two saloons in Fortine, was assisting the organizers by feeding them and providing them with a bed at his own expense. According to Rawley, "he [McCarty] has no use for the Eureka Lumber Company and is not a bit backward in letting it be

⁴³Rawley to Weil, 2 March 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁴⁴Rawley to Weil, 3 March 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁴⁵Ibid.

known."⁴⁶ Meanwhile, Coffman and Nelson's saloon, scene of a Saturday night brawl by "a bunch of Finns" was sporting a sign calling for "1,000 men" to fill up the company's camps.⁴⁷

The IWW was well organized in Montana and Northern Idaho, according to Lincoln County under-Sheriff B.P. Thomas, who informed Weil that despite the bad reputation of the organization, they had as much right as any other labor union to organize and strike in the region "as long as they [did] so in a quiet and peaceable manner."⁴⁸ As for providing extra deputies for the area, Thomas' hands were tied without the consent of the commissioners, except in the case of an emergency.⁴⁹ It seems likely given Weil's standing in the community that he would have little difficulty in getting a strike in Eureka declared an emergency to get the necessary help to protect company property.

Weil was already bending Governor Stewart's ear on the company's plight as the spring drive approached. It was his belief that the company had neither a quarrel with their employees nor the men with them. The crux of the

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Rawley to Weil, 12 March 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁴⁸Lincoln County Undersheriff, B.P. Thomas to C.A. Weil, 13 March 1917, Libby, Montana. ELC Files.

⁴⁹Ibid.

approaching labor strife rested with the "bunch of trouble makers" who were invading the peaceful community.⁵⁰ These men were not legitimate laborers looking for honest work, but rather "Bums . . . of the worst kind."⁵¹ The company would not countenance labor disturbances from such men.

Not adverse to bringing in some muscle of their own, Howe told Weil of a man named Scott Goodwin, a "half-breed" Indian that Howe had used before in northern Minnesota river drives. He was, according to Howe, "our stand-by in all bad situations . . ." and could be counted on for his loyalty to the company.⁵² The only draw back was that he liked to drink, but when he was sober, Howe assured Weil, Goodwin could handle "anywhere from six to ten ordinary I.W.Ws."⁵³ Howe wanted R.R. Betcher, agent for the Imperial Lumber Yard in Ida, MN, to find Goodwin and tell him that Howe wanted him in Eureka and that the company would reimburse him for his travel expenses. Unfortunately for Howe, Goodwin was already engaged.⁵⁴

⁵⁰C.A. Weil to Governor Samuel V. Stewart, 13 March 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁵¹Rawley to Weil, 13 March 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁵²P.L. Howe to C.A. Weil, 13 March 1917, Minneapolis, Minnesota. ELC Files.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴P.L. Howe to R.R. Betcher, Agent, Imperial Lumber Yard Ida Minnesota, 14 March 1917, Minneapolis, Minnesota. ELC Files.

While Howe was working on physical muscle, Weil participated in the formation of an Industrial Protective Association in Eureka. The goal of the association was to exert pressure on the IWW in an attempt to keep them from gaining a foothold within the community. Among the approximate fifty members were Mr. Mason of the Forestry Department in Missoula; Billy O'Connell, Governor Stewart's representative; Kalispell Mayor R. Pauline; general manager of the Somers Lumber company, W.R. Ballord; Superintendent of the Great Northern, H.W. Sheridan; and J.F. Fennessy, representing the Libby Lumber Company.⁵⁵

The newly formed Industrial Protection Association, created in Eureka's Masonic Lodge on March 13, 1917 was, according to *The Eureka Journal*, going to work in concert with other associations throughout the county and state to "resist the I.W.W."⁵⁶ The association quickly passed three resolutions that would have a direct effect on the IWW's activity in the area.

Resolved, That it is the unanimous sense of this meeting that the threatened interference of the spring log drive on the Tobacco river by the I.W.W. or kindred labor organization is unjust, and a menace to the welfare of our community, and should be resisted by all law-abiding citizens, and to that end, we each and all, pledge our support to any and all lawful means to suppress the same.

It is further resolved that we are not opposed to

⁵⁵Weil to Howe, 14 March 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁵⁶The Eureka Journal (Eureka, Montana), 15 March 1917.

organized labor, and all steps looking to its welfare, and the payment of reasonable wages, but we do not believe that the threatened interference with the present log drive is in the interest of organized labor.

Resolve[d], That we extend our appreciation to the officers of the county and in the city of Eureka for the vigilance and efforts in the premises, and we promise them our earnest cooperation in their efforts in that behalf in the future.⁵⁷

The Eureka Journal was not the only county paper to endorse the protective association. *Libby's Western News* was also of the opinion that there was "no room for agitators."⁵⁸ The Libby Chamber of Commerce joined the fray, stating unequivocally that they would ". . . do everything in their power to prevent the establishment of an I.W.W. stronghold" in Libby.⁵⁹ The paper went on to report that the local "millhands and loggers" would be the "most serious handicap against the organization of the I.W.W. . . ."⁶⁰ The workers of Libby had neither sent out any "distress signals" according to the paper, nor ". . . expressed a wish to enroll under a banner that has left a train of lawlessness, disgrace and murder wherever it has been carried."⁶¹ The paper informed the community of Libby that

⁵⁷The Eureka Journal (Eureka, Montana), 17 March 1917.

⁵⁸The Western News (Libby, Montana), 15 March 1917.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

. . . the record of the I.W.W. is a black record from first to last, with nothing in the way of accomplishment for labor or service to humanity to show for many years of activity--if we keep these things in mind there will be no encouragement for the agitators in Libby, and no matter how much they come and go, they will make no black mark of shame on the fair name either of Libby or of Libby's people.⁶²

One wonders if this was not meant more as a exhortation to the Libby Lumber Company's workers to behave rather than an accurate portrayal of the loggers' true feelings.

Governor Stewart's personal representative, Billy O'Connell, recommended to Weil that the company try to hire only "reliable" men for the drive under the proviso that they would stay on for the duration of the season with the promise of "something extra" at the end of the drive.⁶³ The law offices of Noffsinger and Walchli, of Kalispell, suggested a signed contract that set the daily wage for the entirety of the drive and a modest ten-percent bonus if the "deportment" of the employee was good.⁶⁴

An anonymous individual suggested to the Eureka Lumber Company that a "bull-pen" be built--ready and waiting when the IWW began their strike. Going into some detail, this helpful individual believed that the "bull-pen" should have

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Billy O'Connell to C.A. Weil, 16 March 1917, Kalispell, Montana. ELC Files.

⁶⁴W.N. Noffsinger to W.R. Ballard, Somers, MT and C.A. Weil, Eureka, MT, 16 March 1917, Kalispell, Montana. ELC Files.

three strands of barbed wire on the top, with only marginal shelter and near a fire hydrant ". . . so that a hose [could] be attached and be ready in short notice in case it [was] needed to quiet the inmates. There is nothing that takes the tuck out of these fellows more than a good-sized stream of cold water."⁶⁵ Joe Ratti, secretary of Whitefish, Montana's IWW local told Ed Rawley that "the people of Eureka would be sorry for . . . building a bull pen there;" and that they would burn it down.⁶⁶

The detective reported to Weil on March 28, 1917, that an IWW agitator named McDonald had told him that the union was "stronger than many people thought" and "they would stick to the last man."⁶⁷ Not all of the men in the area were as staunch in their support. The early preparations made by the company had resulted in some men leaving the area, while at the same time it left the men there who were strongest in their resolve to see the coming strike through to victory.⁶⁸

The IWW was not blind to the prospect that their ranks

⁶⁵ELC File. This was an unsigned and undated letter addressed to the Eureka Lumber Company.

⁶⁶Rawley to Weil, 26 March 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁶⁷Rawley to Weil, 28 March 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files. Ed Rawley did not provide the first names of most of the men that he talked to during the course of his undercover work.

⁶⁸Ibid.

had been infiltrated by a Thiel detective. Word leaked out to Somers Lumber Company manager, W.R. Ballord that the Wobblies were "laying for" two men they suspected of being spies and he told Weil that if the Eureka Lumber Company's informant was named either Gregory or McGraw he had better pull him in.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, March dwindled into April and tensions mounted; the spring rains came; the snow melted in the mountains; the creeks and rivers of the valleys began to rise and the labor situation in Eureka began to reach critical mass as both sides squared off for the coming run-off and the strike that would surely follow.

⁶⁹Ballord to Weil, 28 March 1917, Somers, Montana. ELC Files.

Chapter IV

"Here Comes the One Big Union"

While March begins with a drip and ends with a trickle, April takes over as a stream that turns into a flood. The spring sky, with patches of blue visible, is etched by towering storm clouds, black with the promise of rain. The warm breeze slides gently through the forests making the trees sigh in appreciation for the nourishing sunlight and ground soaking moisture, but it does not take much for the breeze to turn into a knifing wind that penetrates the clothing and chills the bones with a sense of foreboding that is as terrifying as it is awe inspiring.

Working within this environment, the spring river drivers returned to work as streams and rivers begin dispersing the snow of the high country throughout the land, on their way to the Columbia River and then the Pacific. Reporting to the banks of Northwest Montana's Graves Creek and Fortine Creek were the men hoping to work for the Eureka Lumber Company in the spring of 1917. Also on the scene were members of the IWW and its affiliate the LWIU #500 who hoped to close down the company and squeeze from it recognition of the union's demands.

Used like "workhorses," the loggers' and river drivers' basic needs were largely ignored as long as they performed the work outlined for them.¹ It was little wonder that the turnover rate in their industry was an "extraordinary figure of over 600 percent."² It was not surprising, therefore, that some of the men of the timber industry saw the IWW as a benevolent organization that cared about their needs and more importantly, their betterment. All of them did not necessarily believe wholeheartedly in the IWW's rhetoric, but they did use the organization as a means to come together in "a bond of groping fellowship."³

The obstinacy of the lumber companies in dealing with the complaints of their men helped create the leadership role that the IWW achieved.⁴ The Wobblies expressed a willingness to become the mouth-piece of labor; a collective organization that matched industrial capital with numerical superiority. The increased demand for Montana timber was threatened by the impasse between owners and the IWW. The lumber companies were unwilling to negotiate with the IWW

¹F.A. Silcox, "Labor Unrest in the Timbering Industry--North Idaho and Western Montana" [1917], RG60 Department of Labor File 20-473, Glasser File (Missoula, MT: University of Montana, Mansfield Library microfilm). Hereafter referred to as F.A. Silcox, Glasser File.

²"Report of the President's Mediation Commission, January 9, 1918," 19-21. Glasser File.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

which demanded "all or nothing" just when the companies were making their biggest profits in years.⁵

The workers wanted wage increases to keep them on par with cost of living increases. Without a raise in pay, they were subjected to economic hardship at the same time their employers were raking in huge profits from government contracts.⁶ The refusal to improve working conditions or even negotiate with the more moderate AFL affiliated unions, left the lumberjacks and river drivers with little recourse that spring.⁷ Meanwhile, preparations for the Eureka Lumber Company's drive continued as seventy five men arrived from Spokane on a special railroad car, to take their place next to the rivermen already in the area. The company was hoping to move an estimated sixty million feet of timber down Graves Creek, Fortine Creek and the Tobacco River that spring to feed their waiting sawmill.⁸

When the Wobblies arrived in Eureka, in April, they rented a house from James Gardam, who was immediately approached by Eureka's police chief, who questioned the logger on the wisdom of renting a house to "undesireables."⁹

⁵Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 199.

⁶Evans, IWW Legislation, 31.

⁷Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 360.

⁸The Eureka Journal (Eureka, Montana), 12 April 1917.

⁹J. Gardam to President Woodrow Wilson, August 11, 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 7. Record Group 60, Department of Justice File 186701-27.

While not a member of the IWW, Gardam did support the demands it was going to be asking for and refused to evict the men. The plan was to work for a while, then approach Charles Weil with the men's demands. If the Wobblies lacked sufficient strength to take all the river drivers out on strike, then the men would go back to work, but still continue to press their demands.¹⁰

Men were arriving from Libby and Sandpoint, Idaho, according to Thiel detective Ed Rawley, but he did not believe that they would stay in Eureka very long because they lacked the necessary funds to support themselves if a protracted strike occurred. Fred Hegge was agitating for the IWW, but he lacked the appeal of John Turner, whom Rawley believed would return to Eureka soon to ". . . look after the interests of the I.W.W."¹¹ Meanwhile, Louis Miller and Turner had been circulating among the logging camps in the Libby area drumming up support for the union and Rawley believed that ". . . eight men out of every ten were lined up with the I.W.W."¹² Through the rumor mill, Rawley also heard that the Spokane local was going to send approximately five hundred men to Eureka to size up the

¹⁰Rawley to Weil, 5 April 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 1. ELC Files.

¹¹Rawley to Weil, 7 April 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 1. ELC Files.

¹²Rawley to Weil, 9 April 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 1. ELC Files.

company's resolve for the coming strike.¹³

The knowledge that a strike would occur was beneficial to the company and P.L. Howe worked hard, from his Minneapolis office, to secure reliable workers for Weil in Eureka. Two men, R.R. Betcher and Alfred Remark, were scouring the White Earth reservation in Minnesota for drivers, but they were meeting only with marginal success.¹⁴ The company turned to Pacific Northwest employment agencies in an attempt to hire men without an IWW card, but there could be no guarantees that the men were going to be a hundred percent loyal once they arrived in Eureka.¹⁵

A national event began to unfold the first part of April, 1917 that would have a tremendous impact on the community of Eureka and the IWW. President Wilson, after winning re-election in 1916, asked Congress for a declaration of war against Germany and its Allies. Congress passed the declaration on April 6, 1917 and the United States entered the Great War. Six days later, on April 12, 1917, thirty-four men from "dam #1" and thirty men from "camp #2" of the Eureka Lumber Company walked off the job.¹⁶

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴R.R. Betcher to P.L. Howe, 8 April 1917, Ada, Minnesota. ELC Files.

¹⁵G.W. Fortlach to C.A. Weil, Western Union Telegram, 9 April 1917, Spokane, Washington. ELC Files.

¹⁶ELC File, 12 April 1917. See appendix A for a list of the names of the sixty-four men who started the strike.

The Eureka Journal was quick to finger the IWW for the strike and accused the strikers of intimidating "loyal employees" to keep them from going to work.¹⁷

In the spirit of international brotherhood, the IWW denounced the United States' entry into the war, which in turn caused many Americans to view the organization as a subversive element.¹⁸ The Wobblies did not help their own cause by denouncing the politicians' declaration of war and the religious community's justification of it. It was the IWW's belief that these two groups were working in concert with the economic powers to deceive the working man into enlisting. "IWW spokesmen insisted that allegiance to the working class superseded national loyalty. Workers were urged to recognize only one war, the inevitable class war."¹⁹ Gustave Herve had been quoted in a 1912 edition of *The Industrial Worker*, on the subject of patriotism:

. . . what confounds the intelligence is that in all countries, the poverty stricken, the disinherited, the overworked beast of burden, ill fed, badly housed, badly clothed, badly educated, as are three-fourths of the inhabitants of every country, march like one man, at the first call, whatever may be the cause of the war. People who would not take one step to render a service to their neighbors, workers like themselves, march hundreds of miles in order to get killed for the masters who sweat them.²⁰

¹⁷Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 197.

¹⁸Evans, IWW Legislation, 2.

¹⁹Ibid., 26-27.

²⁰The Industrial Worker (Spokane, Washington), 8 February 1912, 3.

The IWW found itself in a perilous predicament. Rhetoric like this was not forgotten and during the war it haunted the organization like a specter, damaging any cause the Wobblies undertook, including that of the striking river drivers'.

The lumber companies immediately recognized that the war would bring a windfall of profits for them as the United States moved to mobilize. The price of lumber solidified as orders flooded the mills of the Pacific Northwest and the federal government "quietly but quickly [began] buying lumber for immediate war needs."²¹ Lumber was quickly declared an essential war material to be used in the construction of "camps and other facilities, railroad cars, crates and containers, and a thousand wooden cargo ships."²² The maze of trenches in Europe was shored up by lumber and more was needed for "entanglements stakes, buildings, road-and-bridge construction, containers, docks and warehouses . . . as well as firewood."²³

Since lumber was so vital, as indicated by the plethora of government contracts, Western lumbermen hoped that the urgent need to fill military contracts could be used to induce the government to help them with their vexing labor

²¹The Timberman (Portland, Oregon), April 1917, 30.

²²David A. Clary, Timber and the Forest Service (Lawrence Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 68.

²³Ibid., 69.

problems, namely the IWW. "Employers not only pleaded for federal intervention; they also beseeched local and state officials to repress the IWW."²⁴ Montana's Governor, Sam Stewart, proved to be a willing ally for the Eureka Lumber Company in squelching the company's labor problem.

The patriotic fervor of America's entry into World War I was matched by a growing hysteria concerning subversive elements within the United States. These elements, many believed, would attempt to sabotage the war effort and foment revolution on the home-front. Unfortunately for the IWW, it was identified as perhaps the greatest threat to the internal security of the United States, and Western lumbermen played on this assumption to step down on all forms of labor protest that they were quick to portray as treasonous.²⁵

The Wobblies became victims of their own inflexible dogma, by refusing to temper their criticism of the war, which was deemed blasphemous as well as unpatriotic, they alienated the vast majority of Americans.²⁶

The label of subversive was applied liberally to all activities of striking river drivers and lumberjacks who were affiliated with the IWW. Regardless of the fact that the strike in Eureka was being conducted in an orderly fashion, the stain of false accusation could not be removed

²⁴Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 379-381.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Evans, IWW Legislation, 28.

from the strike, as their demands suddenly became unpatriotic.²⁷ James Rowan countered the charge, by challenging the patriotism of the "Lumber Trust." Here was an organization, in Rowan's estimation, that called men traitors for refusing to work for low wages, while they continued to raise the price of their lumber, creating a larger profit margin for the companies and their investors. Spruce, so vital in the construction of airplanes and ships, jumped from sixteen dollars per thousand feet to one hundred and sixteen dollars.²⁸ Who was not being patriotic?

Ed Rawley had warned Weil that the strike was about to start and urged that the company ". . . stick the Delegate in jail" in an attempt to behead the leadership of the union. Rawley's warning, however, came on April 12, the same day that the strike started and the company was caught temporarily off guard.²⁹ The next day when logs stopped arriving from up river, Weil sent the remaining four hundred workers of the Eureka Lumber Company home. "The company refused to resume work until the IWWs and pickets were moved

²⁷J. Gardam to President Woodrow Wilson, August 11, 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 8. Record Group 60, Department of Justice File 186701-27.

²⁸Rowan, The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry, 41.

²⁹Rawley to Weil, 12 April 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 1. ELC File.

at least ten miles from the mill and the river."³⁰

The machinery of the mill whined to a stop after only being open a week;³¹ Weil hired armed guards and posted them to protect the mill, while Lincoln County's sheriff swore in special deputies to help guard company property and Weil requested that Governor Stewart "send military assistance."³² W.W. Dibley, head of the Thiel Detective Service office in Spokane, informed Weil that if he did not have enough guards that ". . . we are well supplied with good sober trust-worthy guards and could send you the men on short notice."³³ The Eureka Lumber Company manager told Dibley that at the time more guards were not warranted but if ". . . the necessity for this precaution arose . . . " they would call on him immediately for assistance.³⁴

While not needing any more guards, Weil did let Dibley know that the company would no longer be requiring the services of Ed Rawley. Rawley had somehow slipped up and Weil wanted him replaced with a new operative, who had experience with log drives and could be used to infiltrate the different company camps and ". . . intelligent enough to

³⁰Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 197.

³¹The Eureka Journal (Eureka, Montana), 19 April 1917.

³²Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 197.

³³W.W. Dibley to C.A. Weil, 12 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

³⁴Weil to Dibley, 14 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

make detailed written reports daily to our office here at Eureka."³⁵ Ed Rawley, returning to Spokane on the train, passed on one last bit of information to Weil, telling the manager that he heard that the IWW ". . . had all the lumber jacks lined up between Libby and the Somers [Lumber Company] outfit,"³⁶ and that Turner was going to stay and run the strike on the Upper Kootenai from Eureka and Fortine, while Ratti, Louis Miller, Fred Hegge and Knight backed him up.³⁷

To replace Rawley, Dibley chose J.H. Black, whom he described as ". . . a young man who has had experience as a driver. This man can not write a fancy report, but if you can arrange to meet him at intervals and go over the situation with him in detail, you will find him able to give a good account of himself."³⁸ When Black arrived in Eureka sometime on April 15, 1917, he presented Charles Weil with a letter:

Dear Sir:

This will serve to introduce to you, our Operative J.H. Black whom I am sending you to work among the I.W.W. on the drive.

Yours truly,
WW Dibley
Manager ³⁹

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Dibley to Weil, 14 April 1917, Spokane, Washington. ELC Files.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

IWW organizer John Turner was hard at work in the Eureka area; he wrote *The Industrial Worker* that union organizers could not get a meal in Eureka, accusing the town of "trying to starve out the I.W.W. organizers . . ."⁴⁰ He claimed that the recently built "bull-pen" in town had been constructed of lumber donated by the Eureka Lumber Company and asked that "live rebels--who are interested in putting the I.W.W. on the map in Montana, more than in booze--are asked to come here and help along the good work."⁴¹ John Turner sent a short letter to Don Sheridan, describing what the situation was like at Eureka.

Fellow workers

We have called A strike against the Eureka Lumber Co on the fortine river drive and as A consequence the mill tied up we have established headquarters here and are picketing and organizing to the limit of our power. The shut down is bringing forth A savage groth from the beasts of capitalism but we are confident we have them at bay in their dens they are beginning to respect our power which is gaining recrutes dailey the boys are staunch but well behaved and sober which elicits the confidents of the community at large but to reckon and cope with the impending crisis and fortify ourselves and you in this criceal hour we are in great need of financial help at once⁴²

J.H. Black moved among the ranks of the sober Wobblies in Eureka, gathering information for the company, leaking

⁴⁰The Industrial Worker (Seattle, Washington) 14 April 1917, 4. Washington State Library. Seattle Washington. The Industrial Worker April 1, 1916-May 4, 1918, microfilm. All issues of The Industrial Worker dated 1916-1918 are from this reel of microfilm.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²ELC File, Copy of a letter written by Turner to Sheridan, April 1917.

new demands to Weil and informing the manager that the IWW's goal was to win the Eureka strike that spring ". . . for the good it [would] do on the big strike later."⁴³ Black told Weil that an industry wide strike was planned for later that year to begin sometime in June. The goal was to pull every lumberjack out of the woods and every mill worker out of the mills, shutting down the timber industry of the entire Pacific Northwest. The demands were going to be along the same lines as those offered the company just a few days before: eight-hour day, twenty men per bunkhouse, steel bunks, sheets washed once a week, paid travel time to and from the job site, a dry house and a wash house and recognition of the union.⁴⁴

On April 16, 1917, at 11:30 a.m., John Turner and seven other delegates representing the strikers, showed up at Weil's office. In the presence of Lincoln County's sheriff, the strike committee, in Weil's words

assured . . . that they would not tolerate, and were not encouraging any physical persuasion on any man they could not induce to join their order, or who desired to work on the drive, but that they would endeavor to accomplish their purpose in a peaceable, law-abiding manner, and that we [the company] need have no fear of any destruction to our property from their members, but on the contrary, they would do everything they could to

⁴³J.H. Black to C.A. Weil, 16 April 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 3. ELC Files.

⁴⁴Ibid., 2-5. See appendix B for a photocopy of a LWIU #500 handbill on the eight-hour day.

prevent any such possibility.⁴⁵

Weil responded by explaining the company's pay scale and tried to dispel the rumor that the company was going to work the men twelve hours a day rather than ten, and that "\$3.50 per day meant ten hours actual work, but did not include nooning and lunches."⁴⁶ Weil assured Turner that the company would ". . . not [make] any compromise offers," and Turner "wished," Weil, "to understand the same was true on their part."⁴⁷

While the leaders of the strike were at Weil's office, Black took the opportunity to rifle the IWW headquarters shack. Unable to find anything incriminating among the food stuffs and dishes, Black, nevertheless, was present when the delegation returned. Turner and one other man went to the "upper camp" to tell the men that their terms had been rejected. Turner also scheduled a meeting for that night to see if the men wanted to continue the strike. Black related to Weil that the IWW was serious about having a well disciplined strike. Two union men had only recently arrived from town in an intoxicated state and they were immediately stripped of their membership cards and buttons the next

⁴⁵Weil to Howe, 16 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

day.⁴⁸ It was obvious that Turner wanted to keep the men in line as much as possible so they would continue to picket and not provide any ammunition for the local papers or bosses to use against them.

As April entered its second full week, Weil was desperate for drivers. He contacted Thiel Detective Service manager, W.W. Dibley in Spokane and requested that the agency send "fifteen river drivers, well shod and corked ready for work at Camp One immediately on arrival."⁴⁹

Dibley responded that they needed to hire the men in small numbers in order to keep other IWW members from joining the ranks of the strikers in Eureka. Dibley managed to round up seventeen men, but twelve suddenly refused to go. Dibley believed that ". . . in some manner the I.W.W. got in touch with some of these men and caused dissension among them by telling them there was all kinds of trouble over there [in Eureka] and threatened to do them bodily injury in case they went."⁵⁰

The IWW in Eureka turned their attention to the mill workers, in hopes of getting them to support the river drivers by demanding half pay while the mill was closed.

⁴⁸Black to Weil, 16 April 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 1-5. ELC Files.

⁴⁹Weil to Dibley, 17 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁵⁰Dibley to Weil, 20 April 1917, Spokane, Washington. ELC Files.

Weil, however, learned from his spy that some of the strikers were already losing their resolve and Black believed that some kind of agreement could possibly be reached with this disaffected element. The detective confided that the company's continued efforts to bring in scabs made the strikers "pretty sore" and a few of them wanted to ". . . beat up on some of the men that [were] up on the River," but strike leaders would not let them.⁵¹

With Weil occupied on the home-front so to speak, Howe took it upon himself to write Governor Stewart personally in hopes of spurring Montana's governor into some type of action. Howe could not figure out why the river drivers were striking, especially over wages, since the company had agreed to pay them thirty-five cents an hour for ten-hours with five meals provided a day. Since they had gone out, Howe reported, "jungle camps" had been established along the river and the strikers were "intimidating men that we send out to work; that is, men that would be glad indeed of an opportunity to work, if they felt safe and secure doing so."⁵² Howe suggested that the Governor provide protection for the mill so that it could re-open, because the closure had resulted in hundreds of men being thrown out of work and

⁵¹Black to Weil, 20 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁵²Howe to Stewart, 14 April 1917, Minneapolis, Minnesota. ELC Files.

many of them had families to support. He cautioned Stewart that there was "considerable disloyalty to the flag developing and some [were] quite outspoken in their disregard, bordering on contempt for it."⁵³ He assured Governor Stewart that it was ". . . no time for 'watchful waiting.'"⁵⁴

Howe received a letter from Weil that with approximately 200 strikers at Eureka and Fortine, he needed drivers soon or the mill would ". . . close for want of logs" ⁵⁵ Howe responded that he was trying to hire "at least 75" men from the White Earth reservation but that Weil would need to outfit them with shoes and "warm underclothes" at the company's expense.⁵⁶ At this juncture, Howe informed Weil that the railroad (Great Northern) was "putting on Guards to protect right of way, Bridges and trains . . ." and perhaps he should urge Governor Stewart to provide a "company for protection . . ." at Eureka because of the precarious situation.⁵⁷ Perhaps Howe believed that with Weil's position in the state legislature, Stewart would respond quicker to an appeal by a fellow Montana public

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Weil to Howe, 16 April 1917, Western Union Telegram, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁵⁶Howe to Weil, 16 April 1917, Western Union Telegram, Minneapolis, Minnesota. ELC Files.

⁵⁷Ibid.

servant.

Governor Stewart did not need much encouragement to begin lobbying for troops. He responded to Howe's letter of April 14, 1917 and assured him that he had talked to the military and told them that they needed to ". . . give particular attention to that part of the country in and about the town of Eureka."⁵⁸ Stewart had also written Weil in Eureka and told him that he had asked the War Department to send troops there as soon as possible.⁵⁹

Helping to grease the cogs of bureaucracy, Weil wired Montana senators, T.J. Walsh and H.L. Myers, informing them of the company's situation and the community's plight. Weil claimed that many of the IWW "agitators" were foreigners who ". . . [were] waving the red flag from their tents," and who had previously been "driven out of Idaho and Washington."⁶⁰ "The Mayor and patriotic citizens," Weil continued, "endorsed the company's appeal for troops."⁶¹ At the same time he wrote Governor Stewart that the situation was deteriorating, claiming that ". . . the strikers, by threats and intimidation, and other tactics, [were keeping] our men

⁵⁸Stewart to Howe, 17 April 1917, Helena, Montana. ELC Files.

⁵⁹Stewart to Weil, 17 April 1917, Helena, Montana. ELC Files.

⁶⁰C.A. Weil to U.S. Senators H.L. Myers and T.J. Walsh, Western Union Telegram, 19 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁶¹Ibid.

from performing the work necessary to get logs to our mills. These strikers now have pickets along this river covering approximately ten miles."⁶²

Aiding the Eureka Lumber Company's bid for federal troops was a hostile press, which was not adverse to printing lies about IWW strike activities, thereby exciting the tensions between strikers and the federal government. To the delight of the lumber companies, the pen of the press described the strikers as pawns of the subversive Industrial Workers of the World. Willing allies, the press and company owners hoped to persuade the government that there was a great need for troops to protect against this internal threat.⁶³ These press releases also had the added benefit of creating a "state of public hysteria," even though the charges were "unfounded" and based on "gossip and rumor."⁶⁴

Governor Stewart was the first to request federal troops to help stamp out IWW activity in a state.⁶⁵ Since Montana's national guard had already been pulled into federal service, Stewart wanted federal troops ostensibly to protect the Great Northern Railroad's route through the state. He wanted to post a company at Eureka that could do

⁶²Weil to Stewart, 18 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁶³Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 200.

⁶⁴RG60, Glasser File, NA.

⁶⁵Dubofsky, We Shall Be All 382.

double duty--protect the railroad and protect the Eureka Lumber Company's property. The Governor was careful with his request, though, and made no mention of any extracurricular duties the troops might perform such as guarding private company property in the hopes that no orders would be issued that would prohibit the troops from helping out Weil.⁶⁶

When James Gardam learned that Governor Stewart had requested troops for the area at the behest of local businessmen and the company, the local logger was astounded. The county sheriff himself had already, according to Gardam, reported to the governor that ". . . there was no disturbance whatever, that all was quiet and orderly . . ."⁶⁷ Rather than rushing in troops, it was Gardam's belief that the matter needed to be investigated fully; just because the IWW was leading the strike was not cause enough to justify a measure this extreme. In Gardam's opinion, the entire organization should not be vilified because of a few bad apples: ". . . there [were] 'no goods' under every initial, be they I.W.W. or any other."⁶⁸

The Wobblies, however, presented a problem for the federal government during the war. The government was aware

⁶⁶Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 197.

⁶⁷J. Gardam to President Woodrow Wilson, August 11, 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 9. Record Group 60, Department of Justice File 186701-27.

⁶⁸Ibid., 10.

that IWW literature advocated a revolution of the working class and it was afraid that Wobbly activity could harm the war effort. The only recourse, therefore, was to "restrain the Wobblies from interfering with national security:"⁶⁹ If that required the use of federal troops, so be it. Solid citizens of the state of Montana, along with its governor, had claimed that the situation was tenuous and they required assistance; the government accepted these pleas at face value and responded accordingly.

Senator Walsh informed Weil by telegram on April 19, 1917 that the War Department had ordered General Barry to send the necessary troops to the Eureka area.⁷⁰ On April 21, Captain Gobel arrived from Whitefish, Montana, and placed twenty-five of his men at Fortine and twenty-five at Eureka, with the rest stationed along the railroad between Paola and Rexford, Montana. He informed Weil, though, that if trouble arose from the IWW, he would place ". . . the entire company with gatling gun here [in Eureka] if necessary."⁷¹ The next day one hundred and fifty men from the Vancouver Barracks arrived in Eureka and set up camp on Eureka's Fair Grounds. Captains Blanchard and Johnson agreed to "furnish squads as required at all [company]

⁶⁹Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 401.

⁷⁰Walsh to Weil, Western Union Telegram, 19 April 1917, Washington D.C. ELC Files.

⁷¹Weil to Howe, 21 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

camps," while Captain Gobel's troops were to be used exclusively to patrol the railroad.⁷²

The arrival of the troops in Eureka and the purpose of their presence was unusual. President Wilson had on March 25, 1917 called all national guard units into federal service under the Dick Acts. When war was declared on April 6, the President was free to use this "federalized force to guard public utilities under his power to see that the laws were faithfully executed."⁷³ The troops that arrived in Eureka on April 22 were the first used "at the scene of a labor dispute after America's entry into the war."⁷⁴ The protection of the lumber company's property, therefore, fell under President Wilson's war powers. "There appeared no limit to the extent of this use of troops as long as it was founded in a purpose to protect points vital to the prosecution of the war."⁷⁵

It seems hard to believe that the first place the United States felt was threatened by the possibility of German espionage or subversive activity was the tiny hamlet of Eureka, Montana--a town far removed not only from the

⁷²Weil to Howe, Western Union Telegram, 22 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁷³"The Lumber Industry of the Pacific Northwest and the Inland Empire," Record Group 60, Department of Labor File No. 20/473, p. 52. Glasser File.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid., 53.

points of mass production of America's industry but also a town isolated from the mainstream industry in its home state. Historian Melvyn Dubofsky believed that Eureka was chosen solely because of the IWW activity that was occurring there that spring and one cannot help but agree.⁷⁶

While the arrival of troops was a shot in the arm for the company and local businesses, it was greeted with far less enthusiasm by the strikers. John Turner and Louis Miller continued to press for solidarity, but the strikers split because of the arrival of the "militia." Black, on the other hand, secretly rejoiced at the arrival of the troops. Believing that it gave him extra leverage, he circulated among the strikers, quietly urging them to accept the company's offer. Some of the men argued with the strike committee that it was futile to stay out now that troops were involved and that there was no sense in continuing a lost cause. Turner countered that the strike was close to being won; the company had lost "the head of the water . . . above Trego" dam, making the drive an impossibility to continue even if scabs did arrive.⁷⁷ That too was about to change.

Unable to import enough strike breakers and river drives, the company was at an impasse. So far the strike

⁷⁶Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 401.

⁷⁷Black to Weil, 22 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

leaders had managed to keep the men out and firm on their demands of five dollars a day, for eight hours. Some time between April 21 and April 22, sixteen Chippewas arrived in Eureka from the White Earth reservation.⁷⁸ Much to Weil's chagrin, however, they would not go to work. The company, it seems, had tried to shield them from news of the strike, but at Havre, Montana, a Great Northern brakeman, according to Weil, "succeeded in posting them quite thoroughly regarding the matter, so that they were pretty well frightened when they arrived here, so much so that they yesterday refused to go to work until the strikers were driven out."⁷⁹ Even more galling to Weil was the fact that the new arrivals managed to send two telegrams back to White Earth describing the situation and urging others back in Minnesota not to come to Montana.⁸⁰

Weil had other problems to worry about besides stubborn Chippewa river drivers. Recent warm weather made the exasperated manager fearful that the "spring freshet" had started and if relief did not arrive soon, from some avenue, hopes of getting the logs above Trego dam down to the mill would be dashed. He had received permission from Howe to up the offer on wages another fifty-cents, but was reluctant

⁷⁸Howe to Weil, Western Union Telegram, 21 April 1917, Minneapolis, Minnesota. ELC Files.

⁷⁹Weil to Howe, Western Union Telegram, 23 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁸⁰Ibid.

to put it on the table just yet. He wanted to wait until Howe had received his letter of April 23 before he acted, writing that if "there should be no break in the ranks of the strikers before you receive this letter, you will please wire me to that effect. . ."⁸¹ If nothing happened by that time, the offer would be made and Weil was sure that he could get a new crew almost immediately although "it would amount to really a recognition of the IWW demands."⁸²

Howe wired Weil and wanted to know if there was something Captain Blanchard could do to ameliorate the situation. He wanted to know if Blanchard had the authority to "either compel this disloyal flag baiting gang to either peaceably go to work or disperse and leave that part of the country."⁸³ He continued,

They are threatening the livelihood of over three hundred law abiding people. They pay no taxes and are not citizens of the State of Montana. If he has not the authority would it not be well for us to get it. I think we can at Washington. Answer quick!⁸⁴

In the meantime, Howe was in the process of rounding up more

⁸¹Weil to Howe, 23 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁸²Ibid., 1-2. Weil never came right out and said what the wage being offered was but the company paid its river drivers that year \$4.50 a day for ten hours. It is my belief that the extra fifty-cents Weil was holding back would have made the pay scale \$5.00 a day and that is why he thought by offering it, it would be tantamount to giving into the IWW. He never mentioned compromising on the other demands.

⁸³Howe to Weil, Western Union Telegram, 23 April 1917, Minneapolis, Minnesota. ELC Files.

⁸⁴Ibid.

men from Minnesota to be sent out later in the week and this time ". . . protection [would] be given to the extent that no one whatever be permitted to talk with our men . . ." on the trip out.⁸⁵

Weil advised that they should hold off from such extreme measures such as declaring martial law or having the strikers forcibly dispersed for now. He did not think that the strike would last much longer; some of the old crew was still working and he had told the White Earth bunch that they either go to work on April 25 or ". . . get out!"⁸⁶ Local merchants were also lending their support in a stronger manner by "notifying strikers to go to work or get out."⁸⁷

The union leaders in Eureka were beginning to show signs of strain. Turner was acting very apprehensive and Black had seen him carrying a gun. The detective saw a possible opportunity with Turner carrying a weapon. He wanted to wait until he was sure the labor organizer was packing his pistol and then have Weil's deputies swoop down on the labor leader and "grab him." With John Turner in jail, Black believed the strike, which was already extremely

⁸⁵Howe to Weil, Western Union Telegram, 22 April 1917, Minneapolis, Minnesota. ELC Files.

⁸⁶Weil to Howe, Western Union Telegram, 24 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁸⁷Ibid.

shaken, would collapse completely.⁸⁸

Forty men, Black opined, were ready to pull out of the union if something did not happen by April 24. He wrote, "the IWWs are just as good as broke up now they are afraid if they don't go to work they will be chased out or held under guard here."⁸⁹ The same day, the detective was caught by Louis Miller trying to persuade some men to return to work. Miller demanded Black's union card, but the spy refused to give it up and went to see Turner. For some reason, perhaps preoccupied with trying to hold the bickering strikers together, Turner chose to ignore Black's transgression. The Thiel detective managed to retain his position in the union and keep his identity secret.⁹⁰

The next day Weil sent a telegram to Howe stating that ". . . about forty drivers including Remark's crew [were] at work this morning, and [there are] indications for further breaks in the IWW ranks." Weil now believed that ". . . no further extraordinary expenses [were] necessary . . ."⁹¹ Governor Stewart was next to be notified of the good news. Weil informed the governor that "the IWW [were] quarreling

⁸⁸Black to Weil, 23 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁸⁹Black to Weil, 24 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Weil to Howe, Western Union Telegram, 25 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

among themselves, and agitators and leaders [were] tearing up their membership cards in that organization."⁹² Weil praised the governor and the troops he had sent to Eureka, calling them "a noble lot of men"⁹³

Howe responded to Weil's cable with one of his own: "Wire twenty-fifth. Congratulations. Wish I were there to congratulate you in person. You certainly are there in a pinch. P.L. Howe."⁹⁴ While this was certainly good news for the company, they were a long way from having a full crew and April's run-off would soon be losing its impetus. It was important that word of the forty men returning to work be spread to all local and state newspapers. By notifying the press that the strike was broken, men who had been avoiding the area for just that reason would now know that they could get work with the Eureka Lumber Company. Weil especially wanted Spokane's *Spokesman Review* notified of the union's failure to tie up the Eureka Lumber Company drive.⁹⁵

The Eureka Journal, however, reported that the strike had not been called off against the company, but that the

⁹²Weil to Stewart, Western Union Telegram, 25 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Howe to Weil, Western Union Telegram, 25 April 1917, Minneapolis, Minnesota. ELC Files.

⁹⁵C.A. Weil to F.D. Becker, Secretary of Montana Lumber Manufacturers' Association, Western Union Telegram, 25 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

\$4.50 a day that was offered by the management, while still fifty cents short, was acceptable to approximately seventy-five of the strikers. The paper denied allegations that the troops in Eureka had been sent to guard against the IWW strikers, claiming that Montana companies had already been stationed across the state at industrial centers and along railroads, so the situation in Eureka was not overly unique.⁹⁶

Weil hoped that the company would have three camps of drivers open by the night of April 26 and the mill up and running by the following Monday. As for the IWW agitators, Turner and Miller had been arrested the night before on vagrancy charges and former deputy sheriff (currently deputy game warden) Frank Baney transported them to Libby for prosecution.⁹⁷ Although the situation, in Weil's words, was "improving slowly" with approximately sixty men back to work the IWW presence was still strong.⁹⁸ Captain Gobel wired Weil that Whitefish lumbermen had received a "Red Hand" postcard from Seattle saying ". . . three days more. We mean Business . . ." ⁹⁹ Weil responded back to Captain

⁹⁶The Eureka Journal (Eureka, Montana), 26 April 1917.

⁹⁷Weil to Howe, Western Union Telegram, 26 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁹⁸Weil to Howe, Western Union Telegram, 28 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁹⁹Weil to Captain Gobel, Western Union Telegram, 28 April 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

Gobel the next day that one of the "Red Hand postals" had just arrived in Eureka on the number two train.¹⁰⁰ They still needed to be vigilant.

IWW delegates were still in the region and Black had attended a meeting held by the former, on April 29, aimed at recruiting members to participate in the general strike that was supposed to happen in June. Turner also made light of the vagrancy charges brought against him and Louis Miller. He ended the meeting by venting his spleen, according to Black, in a tirade denouncing Eureka's mayor and the local businessmen for not backing the strikers.¹⁰¹

On the surface the Eureka strike had been won, but in reality it was simply a precursor to a much larger demonstration that the IWW was planning on carrying out later in the year. As summer approached, the storm that had enveloped tiny Eureka in April "spread west over the Cascades to the Pacific coast . . ."¹⁰² In its wake, the handling of the Eureka strike would serve as the paradigm for other states' assaults on the IWW. Their radical rhetoric of "direct action, sabotage. . .conscientious withdrawal of efficiency and opposition to militarism," gave

¹⁰⁰Captain Gobel to Weil, Western Union Telegram, 30 April 1917, Whitefish, Montana. ELC Files.

¹⁰¹Black to Weil, 29 April 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 1-3. ELC Files.

¹⁰²Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 189.

it a reputation that it could not shake.¹⁰³

The executive board of the IWW, hoping to keep the federal government off their backs, advised its members to register for the draft and its organizers to tone down open opposition to the war. . Already branded as subversive, the lumber companies and newspapers played on this reputation, stoking the fires of community fear and patriotism, to quell the voice of labor.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³Ibid., 196-197.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

Chapter V

The General Strike

With logs slowly trickling into the mill at the end of April, the Eureka Lumber Company had persevered over the IWW's attempt to keep the mill closed until all demands were met. The company still did not have a full crew and the IWW was continuing to agitate in the Eureka area, so Weil and Howe still must have felt some apprehension over the company's current situation. They had also been forewarned by Thiel detective J.H. Black that they could expect an industry wide strike sometime during the summer of 1917 which could pose a new threat to their already tenuous condition.

Portland, Oregon's *The Timberman* made light of the Eureka Lumber Company's labor troubles:

About two weeks ago they expected some trouble with the labor agitators, who succeeded in tying up their log drive temporarily. There was no trouble in securing competent men to work on the drive, so that they were but slightly inconvenienced as a result of the strike.¹

This rather benign portrayal was far from the truth. The company had come extremely close to giving in to at least some of the IWW demands that spring and their labor issues

¹The Timberman (Portland, Oregon), March 1917, 69.

were far from resolved.

John Turner was still floating in and out of the area doing his best to buttress the spirit of the men still out on strike and informing the strikers and open minded citizens of Eureka of the IWW's role in the coming class war.² The organization was still promoting the continuation of the strike and urging others to join them; far from using tactics of intimidation, no detective, sheriff deputy or private company guard could honestly report that he had seen the IWW using anything other than "moral suasion" in their organization endeavors.³

By the first of May, 1917 another crew had arrived from Minnesota, bringing the total number of men working on the drive to eighty. Weil estimated that there were still one hundred and fifty men in the area who were refusing to work and the company still needed to find more men to bring its crew to full strength.⁴ Howe went ahead and authorized Betcher to hire another twenty men in Minnesota to send to Eureka as soon as possible. With the late start and only a partial crew, the company was facing the possibility of not

²The Industrial Worker (Seattle, Washington: Washington State University, microfilm), 1 May 1917, 7.

³MacDonald to Gregory, 21 August 1917. Record Group 60, Department of Justice File.

⁴Weil to Howe, 1 May 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

getting all their downed timber to the mill that year.⁵

The IWW's Eastern news organ, *Solidarity*, reported that the Eureka Lumber Company was attempting to continue its spring log drive by the means of "Indian Warfare."⁶ The paper found it amusing that the Chippewas arrived at Eureka and after a quick survey of the situation refused to work. *Solidarity* tried to claim that they had joined strikers also, but in reality they just did not want to be caught in the middle of a labor dispute between the company and the IWW. Of greater importance than why the Chippewas refused to work was the constant necessity for money. According to *Solidarity*, "every penny counts. It is necessary to WIN this strike for it is one of the most important of the log drives to be tackled and the success of following strikes depends largely on present success."⁷ All donations were to be sent to Don Sheridan, financial secretary of the LWIU #500, in Spokane, who would then distribute the money to the most needy of the strike areas in the short-log country.⁸

Although the strike was fractured and the strikers demoralized, Weil still chafed at the presence of the

⁵Howe to Betcher, 1 May 1917, Minneapolis, Minnesota. ELC Files.

⁶*Solidarity* (Chicago, Illinois), 5 May 1917, 1.

⁷*Solidarity* (Chicago, Illinois), 5 May 1917, 3.

⁸Ibid.

Wobblies along the route of the river drive.⁹ He urged Montana Senator T.J. Walsh to use his "influence to enact some law defining treason, so that it [would] reach the IWW organs and membership, with punishment appropriate to the misdemeanor."¹⁰ Montana's other U.S. Senator, H.L. Myers, assured Weil that as soon as legislation was formulated that would suppress IWW publications "from publishing . . . any kind of slurs it may desire against the Government or anybody connected with the Government, or against the conduct of the war,"¹¹ he would wholeheartedly endorse and vote for such legislation. ✓

Exacerbating the situation, Black reported that the union was planning to bring suit against Eureka county officials for false arrest, concerning the incarceration of Turner and Miller on vagrancy charges.¹² The detective, while continuing his role as a company informant, was coming under more and more suspicion as some of the Wobblies began to follow him around, sure that he was meeting with Weil on the sly. Black planned on avoiding the company manager for awhile, until the situation cooled down, but he wanted Weil to know that Coffman had begun agitating among the men for

⁹Weil to Becker, 3 May 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

¹⁰Weil to Walsh, 5 May 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

¹¹Myers to Weil, 7 May 1917, Washington D.C. ELC Files.

¹²Black to Weil, 2 May 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 1-4. ELC Files.

the IWW. The strikers did not need much encouragement as they travelled down to the river everyday to heckle the men working, calling them scabs and ". . . holding their noses when the boys [went] by."¹³

As for Coffman, he seemed to be directing the bulk of his energies in an attempt to organize the mill workers under the IWW banner. He was urging the strikers to hold out even if it took all summer, because the paucity of logs that were now reaching the mill would not be sufficient to keep the company going.¹⁴ It is unknown exactly why the saloon-keeper worked so hard on behalf of the IWW. It seems that he would be in line more with the company, because the sooner the men returned to work the quicker they could spend their money in his establishment. The strike certainly made for some interesting alliances.

Approximately one hundred drivers short for the successful completion of the drive, Weil was frustrated at every turn. The Columbia Employment Agency, in Portland, Oregon, wrote Weil that they were having trouble filling his order for men. Word had travelled there that the strike in Eureka was still on and the IWW had the effrontery to picket

¹³Black to Weil, 5 May 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 1-14. ELC Files.

¹⁴Black to Weil, 6 May 1917, Eureka, Montana, p. 1-2. ELC Files.

the agency in protest of its attempts to hire scabs.¹⁵ The guarantees of "100 days work at \$4.00 per day and board" were not enough at present to bring in any more strike breakers.¹⁶

Some relief did arrive from Minnesota, though, in the form of thirty-five more Native American river drivers from the White Earth reservation. These men were immediately sent to Trego to reinforce the scant crew working there.¹⁷ The shortage of men, however, cannot be attributed solely to the efforts of the IWW; one must remember that the United States had just entered World War One and men were enlisting in droves to serve their country.

The patriotic fervor that had engulfed the nation was also used as a weapon against the IWW membership. Fred Hegge, IWW organizer, who had been working with Turner on the Eureka strike was arrested in Fortine for allegedly pulling down the stars and stripes then ripping and stamping on it, while uttering "uncomplimentary remarks about the flag."¹⁸ To add insult to injury, he supposedly ran a red flag up the flag pole in an act of defiance. When John

¹⁵J.M. Harris to C.A. Weil, 6 May 1917, Portland, Oregon. ELC Files.

¹⁶Weil to Becker, 3 May 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

¹⁷C.A. Weil to H.W. Sheridan, Superintendent Great Northern Railway, Co. Whitefish, MT, Western Union Telegram, 11 May 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

¹⁸The Eureka Journal (Eureka, Montana), 10 May 1917.

Turner learned of Hegge's arrest and the charges, he stated that if they were true, his compatriot would have to face federal charges, but it was his belief that since President Wilson had issued an order against agitation during the war, it was "chiefly on these grounds that Hegge was placed under arrest," and not for desecration of the flag.¹⁹

Meanwhile, Turner and Miller's own case had come to trial Eureka. The prosecution, according to IWW press committee member Olin B. Anderson, tried to convict the men on the grounds of their unpatriotic stance. In Anderson's words, "they tried to . . . bring special criticism against us from a so-called PATRIOTIC standpoint--claiming we ought to be driven out of town by an enraged public for our lack of loyalty in the present war crisis."²⁰ The Wobblies pointed out, in their own defense, that a wage increase and eight-hour day plus a "better standard of living" was necessary to "strengthen" themselves "not only in [their] own personal defense, but of [their] COUNTRY, thereby showing [their] cause to be in harmony with the demands of the present crucial hour."²¹

Regardless of the tactics used by the Lincoln County prosecutor, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty against the two IWW leaders. Anderson believed that the

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Solidarity (Chicago, Illinois), 12 May 1917, 1.

²¹Ibid.

company hoped that by arresting the leaders of the strike, the men still out would rapidly lose their already deteriorating resolve. The not guilty verdict, in Anderson's eyes, only reinforced the IWW's position and strengthened their own claim that they were being persecuted by the capitalist class.²²

With each passing day the men still on strike watched the spring run-off being daily depleted by warm weather-- weather that brought the promise of summer's approach and the realization that the day of the industry wide strike was rapidly arriving.²³ But mother nature is fickle in northwest Montana during the spring and two days of rain caused Graves Creek to rise and helped the company bring in one million feet of timber for each water storage dam. Weil still beseeched Howe that he could use thirty more river drivers "to good advantage immediately."²⁴ Neither side could depend upon the vagaries of spring to bring success, but they both used the time to prepare for the larger face-off that summer.

Mother Nature did not show favoritism to either side, but Montana's governor was firm in his conviction concerning the perfidy of the IWW. Weil had the assurances of Governor

²²Ibid.

²³The Industrial Worker (Seattle, Washington: Washington State University, microfilm), 12 May 1917, 4.

²⁴Weil to Howe, Western Union Telegram, 14 May 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

Stewart of his regard for the Eureka Lumber Company manager and his total support in defeating the IWW. Stewart was adamant that he would not be led astray by local literature that was supportive of the strike. He wrote Weil,

As far as I am concerned I can say to you without any palaver or hesitation that while I have not seen a single individual connected with the strike I know the I.W.W. and I know that they do not always measure up to the high standard of patriotism that some of your citizens seem to think they do. My experience with that class of people is that they will bear watching. They are always better when they are under surveillance. I am glad to know there is sufficient military guard there to justify at least a measure of security in so far as property rights and personal safety are concerned.

You may be assured that I am not going to be led off by that kind of a thing, and I do not believe those in Washington will be either. I am writing to the Senators and explaining matters to them, and trust that you will do the same, and have some of the other prominent citizens there do likewise, so there will be no misunderstanding.²⁵

Governor Stewart was not inclined to accept anyone else's assessment of the situation if it was contrary to his own preconceptions about the IWW or those of his fellow public servant, Charles A. Weil.

At Libby, the Libby Lumber Company's general manager T.A. McCann was using a different tactic in early May to defuse that company's labor crisis. He arrived in town and immediately announced that the company was raising the pay of its employees at the mill and in the logging camps. Rather than give credit to successful agitation of the IWW

²⁵Stewart to Weil, 16 May 1917, Helena, Montana. ELC Files.

in the area, Libby's paper, *The Western News*, credited the company for raising the wages out of a desire ". . . of its officials to assist their employees in meeting the general increase in living costs."²⁶ The local newspaper went on to print an editorial that applauded the farsightedness and fairness of the company.

If any deluded and optimistic 'I Won't Worker' had dreams last week of stirring up trouble in Libby he must have awaked with a rude shock to the futility of his ambition when he learned that the relations between the local company and its men are upon such a broad and friendly basis that the company is glad to raise wages WITHOUT EVEN BEING ASKED TO DO SO.²⁷

Another possibility for the raise that the paper seems to have overlooked was the growing apprehension over the much advertised general strike for that summer. It is just as likely that McCann raised the wages in an attempt to gain the workers' loyalty before the general strike and thereby demonstrate the company's willingness to reach a compromise with its employees.

The Western News had applauded the arrival of troops in Eureka, in the belief that the odious reputation of the IWW and its minions of "toughs and bad men deterred the honest working men of Eureka from going back on the job."²⁸ It was the "sincere hope" of the paper "that the people of the nation [would] soon cease to defend these cowardly traitors

²⁶The Western News (Libby, Montana), 17 May 1917.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸The Western News (Libby, Montana), 31 May 1917.

who spread their sedition under the cover of false labor standards"29

As the Eureka Lumber Company's strike stretched into its fifth week, IWW leaders from Spokane and Eureka were urging that members continue to donate money to keep those men who were not working fed and out on the picket line to harass the scabs.³⁰ Attempts to discredit the IWW had failed so far and the strike activity had spread to the Flathead and Stillwater river drives.³¹ The Eureka Lumber Company was disgusted by the actions of the IWW strikers along the route of their drive. They accused the Wobblies of slipping liquor to the approximately one-hundred Native American river drivers, in an attempt to intoxicate the men and hinder their ability to work. Weil believed that there had to be some kind of legal means to stop this and urged the United States Marshal's office in Helena to find one. To compound the problem, local liquor vendors were selling their product whenever the opportunity arose and to whomever they chose. The company did not think that this was fair behavior on the part of the IWW and demonstrated their point that the organization would stoop to any means in its

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰The Industrial Worker (Seattle, Washington: Washington State University, microfilm), 26 May 1917, 1.

³¹Solidarity (Chicago, Illinois), 26 May 1917, 1.

efforts to beguile honest working men.³²

The logging counties of western Montana were doing their best to rid themselves of the IWW menace. The northwest part of the state, however, was no longer the state's hotbed of agitation. The Speculator Mine disaster, which occurred in Butte, Montana on June 8, 1917 and claimed the lives of one hundred and sixty-eight men, had resulted in the formation of a union in that city. Tom Campbell and Joe Shannon organized the independent mine workers into the Metal Mine Workers' Union (MMWU), and attention shifted to the dramatic and sensational events that would soon grip Butte.³³

The local residents of Lincoln County were glad that the focus of attention was shifting from their region. Though the spotlight was gone, the IWW was not:³⁴ strike camps continued to form along the Kootenai River and at Kootenai Falls the men of the Bonners Ferry Lumber Company set up their own picket along the river.³⁵ In preparation for the general strike, committees were formed throughout the short-log country and delegates were sent to Spokane for

³²Weil to U.S. Marshal's office in Helena, Montana, 28 May 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

³³Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 366.

³⁴The Eureka Journal (Eureka, Montana), 7 June 1917.

³⁵Solidarity (Chicago, Illinois), 16 June 1917, 4.

information on their role in the shut down.³⁶

James Rowan was pleased with the present results of the short-log strike. Even though they had been unable to break the Eureka Lumber Company completely, the strikers were still putting a severe crimp in the company's profit margin for that year. It was decided that the general strike would be called for July 1. Rowan was sure that the union had sufficient support from the loggers to win this one.³⁷ The main focus of the strike would be to agitate for the eight-hour day. The lumber companies of the Pacific Northwest were adamant in their refusal to grant a shorter work day and according to Rowan, "by a sophistry of avarice the Lumber Trust sought to prove that an eight-hour day, while legal for government employees, was treason when demanded by lumber workers."³⁸

Western News editor and manager, C.A. Griffen, did his part to portray the IWW as a treasonous and seditious organization. He wrote, "People still exist who stand up on their hind legs and declare that the assembling of troops at points where I.W.W. strikes are started is wrong."³⁹ The editor claimed that this kind of thinking was the result of a disease; a disease of no name, that he attributed to the

³⁶Rowan, The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry, 32.

³⁷Ibid., 31.

³⁸Ibid., 42.

³⁹The Western News (Libby, Montana), 21 June 1917, 2.

". . . blindness of habitual democracy."⁴⁰

They know the nation's necessity demands uninterrupted production of metals in the mines of Butte and Troy; unchecked operation of the lumber mills, unhampered operation of the transportation lines. . . . They have thought of capital as a cut-throat, and of labor as a martyr, so long they will uphold any blood-stained, barbaric, piratical and anarchistic flag that seems to, or pretends to, lead the forces of labor, even when their better judgement tells them that flag is a natural enemy to the triumph of Old Glory.⁴¹

Those who sought to protect the rights of such an organization, in Griffen's estimation, were diseased. The "real laboring man," the vocal editor believed, deserved his due and should be met "in the spirit of friendliness and fairness. . .," but any who approached under the "banner" of the IWW, which held within its ranks "dynamiters, anarchists, tramps, hoboes, loafers, drones and slackers . . .," they should be met by boys in khaki--"it is the only sure antidote for the poison."⁴²

When July 1 arrived, Rowan called the strike in the short-log country to become a general industry wide strike of all members of Lumber Workers Industrial Union #500.

The raise in the cost of living has made the present wages insufficient to maintain a man in decency. There is only one thing to do about it. Strike and force the greedy lumber barons to give us living wages and human living conditions.⁴³

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Solidarity (Chicago, Illinois), 30 June 1917, 6.

Rowan cautioned the strikers to refrain from violence and avoid all individuals who advocated violence lest they become entangled with "agent provocateurs."⁴⁴

When the strike occurred, employers liked to claim that seventy-five percent of the woodsmen not working were doing so out of "intimidation" rather than outright support of the strike, but the statement rang false when compared to the increasing numbers of striking loggers who joined either the IWW or AFL unions that summer.⁴⁵ In response, the lumber owners got together and on July 9, 1917 formed the Lumbermen's Protective Association to combat the IWW. A war chest of half a million dollars was collected and any member who did not continue to work his employees' ten-hours a day could be fined five hundred dollars a day.⁴⁶ By the middle of July, 1917, federal troops were stationed in Arizona, Washington, Oregon and Montana to maintain peace and order in the mining and timber districts of the West.⁴⁷

The Libby Lumber Company experienced its first direct strike activity on July 5, 1917 when logging crews walked out on Saturday; no demands were immediately made.⁴⁸ Local citizens' committees joined the fray by exerting their

⁴⁴Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 362.

⁴⁵Ibid., 126.

⁴⁶Jensen, Lumber and Labor, 125.

⁴⁷Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 402.

⁴⁸The Eureka Journal (Eureka, Montana), 5 July 1917.

influence "to check the lawlessness of the Industrial Workers."⁴⁹C.A. Griffen of *The Western News* struck back, claiming that the IWW was receiving money from the Germans to feed strikers their "'mulligan' three times a day."⁵⁰ Griffen believed that IWW dues were not sufficient to support the strikers for two reasons; one, strikers made no money to pay dues and two, "the dues of the organization [were] small and in normal times they go first to support the lazy parasites who swarm around the I.W.W. like flies on a manure pile, with glittering titles such as 'district organizer, walking delegate, corresponding secretary, etc.'"⁵¹

He further claimed that it was a sure bet that these "vermin" had not saved enough money to finance the strike.

Like blindfolded sheep the members are following a dream of easy money and slothful existence. The gang of traitors 'on the inside,' their hands full of enemy gold are leading the flock rapidly toward the inevitable destruction that comes to traitors--that came to Benedict Arnold and Judas Iscariot.⁵²

Arriving to save the community of Libby from such a treacherous and base organization were one hundred and thirty-two enlisted men and four officers of Company G of the recently federalized Oregon National Guard, who set up

⁴⁹The Timberman (Portland, Oregon), July, 1917, 43.

⁵⁰The Western News (Libby, Montana), 5 July 1917, 2.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

camp at the city park on July 12, 1917.⁵³ These were the same troops who had until recently been stationed in Eureka.

The arrival of G company from Eureka to Libby drew some sharp words from the editor of *The Eureka Journal* for his counterpart at *The Western News*. The Eureka editor blasted Griffen for his apparent lack of decisiveness. According to the Eureka paper, Griffen had denounced Montana's governor for the use of troops to stop workers from gaining a fair wage and then boldly claimed that no IWW agitators would be allowed to stop in Libby. But, when the IWW showed up in Libby, he was among the ones who were partly responsible for the transfer of troops to that community.⁵⁴ The editor of Eureka's newspaper claimed that the residents of Eureka had also supported the strikers until "they refused to settle on a reasonable basis."⁵⁵ When that occurred, they believed that the presence of troops had become a necessity. The Eureka editor assured his colleague that his readers understood that C.A. Griffen's fence setting position in the beginning had only resulted in embarrassment and a "sore ass" for *The Western News* editor.⁵⁶

The presence of troops in the Kootenai Valley complicated the situation for the IWW, and its local leaders

⁵³The Western News (Libby, Montana), 12 July 1917, 1.

⁵⁴The Eureka Journal (Eureka, Montana), 12 July 1917.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

realized that they needed to keep the strike short in order to win. The longer it played out, the greater the possibility of the men breaking under the strain and returning to work without any gains, and the greater fear that the federal government would use the troops to start arresting IWW members. Rowan wrote, "Remember Fellow Workers, we do not believe in long drawn out strikes. We do not believe in violence in strikes. We do not believe in booze . . . Stay and picket the job. Let each man do his duty."⁵⁷ If they could not settle the strike quickly then the men would return to work where they could "hoosier" it up on the job. The term "hoosier" referred to a man that was green to the woods and therefore mistake prone; to "hoosier" on the job meant an experienced man should "louse up the job" on purpose.⁵⁸

In response, T.A. McCann returned to Libby and initiated another pay raise of twenty-five cents an hour. This brought the daily pay of a common laborer in the woods to three dollars and twenty-five cents up from the previous year's wage of an average of three dollars a day.⁵⁹ The new wage scale went into effect immediately. McCann told the Libby paper that "the policy of his company to make things

⁵⁷Solidarity (Chicago, Illinois), 14 July 1917, 6.

⁵⁸McCulloch, Woods Words, 89.

⁵⁹State of Montana, Second Biennial Report of the Department of Labor and Industry, 1915-1916 (Helena, Montana), 16-17.

as pleasant and employment as profitable as possible for its men thoroughly justified the increase in operating costs."⁶⁰ Rowan, on the other hand, believed that actions such as this, made by small lumber companies, were merely a ploy to fill at least some of the company's contracts and when the strike was broken, all benefits previously granted would be stripped away. It was decided therefore not to allow mills, like the Libby Lumber Company, to operate on a separate settlement, but to stay out and fight the entire Lumber Trust.⁶¹

According to *The Western News*, IWW attempts to keep the men out were failing when it came to the Libby Lumber Company. C.A. Griffen stated, ". . . [the] lazy little party of slackers who are eating free I.W.W. mulligan in the strikers' camp of that organization near here is getting smaller."⁶² Charles Knight, a Libby area IWW agitator, expressed frustration with the scabs and their failure to recognize that the higher wages they were receiving were a result of the strike and not the benevolence of the company.⁶³

Fred Yagatich and Louis Johnson, IWW organizers helping

⁶⁰The Western News (Libby, Montana), 19 July 1917, 1.

⁶¹Rowan, The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry, 32-33.

⁶²The Western News (Libby, Montana), 19 July 1917, 2.

⁶³The Industrial Worker (Seattle, Washington: Washington State University, microfilm), 28 July 1917, 8.

Knight, were arrested in Libby on vagrancy charges by "special policeman" John Clark. Clark had seen them loafing in town before and ordered them to leave. When they returned and were spotted trying to dissuade workers from returning to their camps Sunday night, Clark arrested both men.⁶⁴ The actions of Libby's "special policeman" were not unique through the turbulent months of summer. "Throughout July 1917, as vigilantes hunted Wobblies, Western businessmen, congressmen, and governors insistently hammered upon the theme that only federal action could stamp out the IWW."⁶⁵

Of the two large mills in Lincoln County, Eureka suffered the most from the presence of the IWW. Louis Miller believed that millions of feet of the Eureka Lumber Company's timber had been left in the woods that summer because of the strike. Miller saw little likelihood of strike breaking and that would mean that the logs would have to remain on the ground until the following year, giving "the worms and sap rot" a chance to reduce their value by half.⁶⁶ The motley crew of drivers working for the company comprised of "a bunch of fussy-faced 'English cut' pocket edition school kids, a herd of shiftless Indians or a drove

⁶⁴The Western News (Libby, Montana), 26 July 1917, 1.

⁶⁵Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 393.

⁶⁶The Industrial Worker (Seattle, Washington: Washington State University, microfilm), 28 July 1917, 4.

of chinwhiskered stump ranch hoosiers" were not going to be able to salvage the company's moribund drive.⁶⁷

The summer of 1917 was hot in another way that was equally terrifying for its residents. The end of July and the beginning of August mark the start of fire season; and fires were the bane of the timber industry. Since the great conflagrations of 1910, the Forest Service had worked diligently to hone its fire fighting techniques to ensure that the National Forests would not be subjected to another horrendous scorching. While no person who lives in the woods likes a bad fire season, 1917 proved to be just such a year. The fires, in fact, helped the strikers by providing them a means to make money to support themselves while at the same time they were striking the lumber companies.⁶⁸

Charles Knight reported that most of Eureka's strikers were helping the Forest Service fight the numerous fires. While this gave the men a chance to earn some money, it also thinned out the picket lines.⁶⁹ Supervisor Glenn Smith of the Kootenai National Forest had approximately five hundred men working on fires in Northwest Montana⁷⁰ and the presence of striking Wobblies on the fire lines was met with some

⁶⁷Solidarity (Chicago, Illinois), 21 July 1917, 4.

⁶⁸Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 212.

⁶⁹The Industrial Worker (Seattle, Washington: Washington State University, microfilm), 28 July 1917, 8.

⁷⁰The Western News (Libby, Montana), 26 July 1917.

trepidation by Montana's press which continued to blame the organization for the fires. In fact of the seven individuals charged with arson during that season not one was a member of the IWW.⁷¹

James Rowan defended the strikers who fought fire, stating,

At Missoula, Montana, the fire fighters were hired from the I.W.W. hall, nearly all the fire fighting gangs had I.W.W. men as foremen, and the U.S. fire warden repeatedly stated that the I.W.W.'s were the most efficient and reliable men he had.⁷²

This claim was substantiated, to a degree, by Region One forester F.A. Silcox, who complimented the IWW men for their refusal to ignore the crisis or hold up the Forest Service for substantial wage increases. The men policed themselves to keep agitation out of the fire camps and treated the Forest Service "fair." Silcox believed that the IWW adopted this stance because of the open way in which the Forest Service defined its working policy and that speaking "frankly to the men went a long way toward helping out in the situation."⁷³

The actions of the lumber companies were not quite as stellar. Silcox was approached by several lumber company managers, who wanted the Forest Service to help them in their struggle with the IWW. They wanted Silcox to select

⁷¹Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 212.

⁷²Rowan, The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry, 35.

⁷³F.A. Silcox, 1917, Glasser File.

his fire fighters through "their employment agency" so no Wobblies would be hired and they wanted the Forest Service to post "Federal fire warning notices in their private timber" to give the impression of Federal protection. Silcox refused these demands, claiming that if his agency had acquiesced to company demands, it would have proved the IWW's point that the Government was "owned by the employers."⁷⁴ Silcox's refusal to bend to the will of the lumber companies was admirable and there were others like him, who refused to see the situation solely from the viewpoint of the West's companies.

Governor Lister, of Washington state, tried to ameliorate the strike situation, by urging the mill owners to implement the eight-hour day, but met with stiff opposition as "*The American Lumberman*" editorialized, "[it is] 'pitiable to see the government . . . truckling to a lot of treasonable, anarchistic agitators . . .'"⁷⁵ Instead the magazine believed that the situation could best be dealt with "'a little firmness.'"⁷⁶ The situation intensified when ships' carpenters at Grays Harbor "refused to handle lumber from ten-hour mills," resulting in a shortage of lumber at Camp Lewis.⁷⁷ Senators Poindexter (WA), Myers

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Jensen, Lumber and Labor, 127.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

(MT) and King (UT) "condemned the IWW and advocated the use of military force to drive them out" of their respective states.⁷⁸

The situation was becoming precarious despite the positive tone the IWW was projecting. The decision to strike for the eight hour day during the war, when the companies were loaded with orders, was backfiring.⁷⁹ The so called avarice of the lumber trust paled in comparison to the feeding frenzy the local and state presses were creating; neither the American people nor the federal government would countenance much more from the Industrial Workers of the World.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹The Industrial Worker (Seattle, Washington: Washington State University, microfilm), 28 July 1917, 7.

Chapter VI

"Their minds were poisoned:"

The Timber Industry's Response to IWW Success

August of 1917 was an intense month in Northwest Montana. The woods were on fire and the temperature soared to the nineties and higher on occasion. The sky in August took on an angry red hue that resembled an infected cut. The blistering heat baked the forest and one could almost smell the sap boiling in the trees; add the haze of smoke from the forest fires that surely hung in the valley to the mix and you had an environment edged in tension and ready to ignite at the slightest spark.

As the first month of the general strike waned and August approached, some government officials believed that the majority of the loggers out on strike were not associated with the IWW or influenced by IWW agitators. The strike was instead a result of "long delayed revolts against unbearable living and working conditions in the logging camps."¹ Rowan stated that since the timber companies had been unable to break the strike "the press, acting as the mouthpiece of the Lumber Trust, began to make insistent

¹Evans, IWW Legislation, 34.

demands for martial law in the strike zone."² Press reports circulated, on a widening scale, that stated that "\$100,000 a month was received at strike headquarters from the Kaiser . . . to obstruct the U.S. government in the conduct of the war"³

Union halls had already been closed in Whitefish, Montana and Bonners Ferry, Idaho, and in an attempt "to force the City of Spokane to close the I.W.W. offices and drive the organization out of town, the businessmen of Idaho instituted a boycott against the Spokane wholesalers. The lumber workers retaliated by boycotting the retail merchants of Idaho."⁴ Montana's situation was no better. Local residents of Missoula, wrote Senator Myers, were complaining of IWW "agitators . . . openly preaching treason and threatening reprisals for the murder in Butte of IWW organizer Frank Little."⁵ Frank Little had been lynched on August 1, 1917, adding to the already tense situation in Butte. Speculation arose that suggested the IWW had actually taken it upon itself to end Little's diatribes against the United States and its entry into the war because

²Rowan, The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry, 36.

³Ibid., 35.

⁴Ibid., 45.

⁵C.H. McLeod, Kenneth Ross, Martin J. Hutchins, E.H. Polleys and J.O. Newcomb to Henry L. Myers, 2 August 1917, Missoula, Montana. Record Group 60, Department of Justice File. See Evans, IWW Legislation, 62-66.

of the damage that it was causing the organization. Some believed that Little was actually an agent provocateur. The miners, however, believed that the mine owners of Butte had the IWW organizer killed and they were incensed by the brutality of the murder. The patriotic citizenry of the state demanded that the Montana senator use his influence to have federal troops "disperse or arrest these disturbers of peace and traitors."⁶

The use of federal troops, however, in Northwest Montana was rapidly approaching an end. The soldiers who had been stationed along different points of the Kootenai River were all ordered to Libby where they would be sent by train back to Oregon. Future protection of the "mills and other industries" would have to be provided by company hired guards; U.S. Marshals, deputy sheriffs and private guards were being used at the expense of the companies to safeguard mills and mines in the Kootenai Valley.⁷ The county papers claimed that there was a growing concern that with the troops gone the IWW could now act with impunity and disrupt the Great Northern.

For *The Eureka Journal* "one of the amazing phases of the I.W.W. movement in Montana [was] the insidious invasion of older and recognized labor unions by the Industrial

⁶Ibid.

⁷The Eureka Journal (Eureka, Montana), 2 August 1917, 6.

workers."⁸ The paper did not specify or identify any "older and recognized" unions that existed in the area that the IWW had supposedly pushed aside and there is no evidence to suggest that there was a craft union organized for either mill in 1917. A craft union would have consisted of only skilled workers and between the two sawmills there were only eighty-five skilled workers and one hundred and fifty unskilled workers.⁹

River drivers and loggers were not considered skilled labor and therefore the companies did not see any legitimate reason for them to organize. The very fact that these men were considered unskilled laborers was the reason that the IWW chose to organize the ranks of the "timber beasts" and "river pigs." It is not surprising, therefore, that these men joined the IWW; it was the only organization that was offering them legitimacy. The American Federation of Labor had tried to organize the timber industry, but they advocated craft unionism, which smacked of the elitism that had left the loggers and river drivers adrift, in a modern industrial society, which saw nothing special about their skills.

The lumbermen of the Pacific Northwest were annoyed when the Council of National Defense urged them to uphold

⁸The Eureka Journal (Eureka, Montana), 30 August 1917, 5.

⁹State of Montana, Third Biennial Report, 120. See table no. 6, Montana Manufacturers, Saw Mills.

their patriotic duty by negotiating with legitimate unions, operate at full capacity and grant the eight-hour day. They were disgusted especially with the request that they grant the eight-hour day. The Southern timber companies were still working ten and twelve-hour days and no one was telling them they had to do differently. The Pacific Northwest lumbermen did not think they should have to acquiesce to government interference when their Southern counterparts were free to operate as they always had.¹⁰ It seems reasonable to assume, though, that since the production of the South was not being disrupted by as much labor agitation and the Northwest was all but shut down, that the government would target the region hardest hit and unravel the worst tie-up first.

It was obvious that some type of compromise had to be reached but neither side was willing to make the first move. The IWW tightened their noose on the industry and the companies and towns struck back whenever and however they could. Libby was doing its part to make it rough for the IWW. A *Solidarity* article stated, "This burg wants to try issues with the I.W.W. The night bull is some hardboiled according to late reports. Any union member stopping there can feel assured of the support of the organization in the exercise of his rights."¹¹ Fred Yagatich and Louis Johnson

¹⁰Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 411.

¹¹Solidarity (Chicago, Illinois), 18 August 1917, 7.

had been tried in Libby for vagrancy and once again the IWW accused the prosecution of trying to convict the men on the grounds of their unpatriotic stance of agitating during a time of war, rather than on the charges that had been specified. The vagrancy charges were dropped on both, but Yagatch, who had been born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was held over to be tried for treason at a later date.¹²

The IWW notified Governor Alexander of Idaho and Governor Stewart of Montana that they wanted all their members who had been arrested in the last few weeks released by August 20 or they would apply the strike activity to all "mining sections, harvest fields and fruit orchards" of both states.¹³ *The Timberman* announced in its August issue that

Due to labor shortage and other causes, it is estimated that the cut of the Inland Empire, which includes Eastern Oregon, Eastern Washington, Idaho, and Montana, will be reduced in 1917 about 25 per cent from a normal cut of 1200 million feet.

. . . Due to the fact that logging has been practically suspended and that logs for next year's cut are not being put in the water, the shortage of pine lumber next spring will be the greatest in the history of the Inland Empire. Some mills operating at present are running with only a few days supply of logs ahead and with the unsettled labor conditions in the woods, there is not very much prospect for general improvement.¹⁴

This information had been supplied to the Portland based magazine by the Western Pine Manufacturers' Association.

¹²Ibid., 4 August 1917.

¹³The Timberman (Portland, Oregon), August 1917, 31.

¹⁴Ibid., 36.

Also within the pages of *The Timberman* were constant calls for more rolling stock, a problem that sorely vexed Charles Weil of the Eureka Lumber Company on a number of occasions. The reduction in cut for 1917, although attributed to the strike, failed to take into account the fact that a growing number of loggers were entering military service, which reduced the labor pool; fewer men meant less work was being accomplished and the army recruited heavily among sawmill and woods' workers to fill the ranks of their forest battalions.

Addressing the labor shortage and advocating the need for aliens to take up some of the slack in the labor pool, *The Western News* supported a plan put forth by a guest speaker in Libby, who advised that a ten-dollar-a-month tax be levied against all aliens working in the United States. The paper justified this tax by citing the recent example of the trial of Fred Yagatich, who as it turned out was not even a citizen of the United States. C.A. Griffen editorialized,

. . . all aliens should be forced by special taxes, to become citizens of this country or return to their native shores. . . . We do not want to prohibit immigration. We need the alien immigrant. . . . [But] aliens such as Yagatich, traitors by every standard of rights and justice, should meet speedy and terrible punishment.¹⁵

Yagatich's lack of citizenship helped fuel the fires in the Kootenai Valley that the IWW was filled with foreign

¹⁵The Western News (Libby, Montana), 8 August 1917, 2.

subversives who had no allegiance to the United States. The organization did not care about the demands of the loggers, the story went, they were only using the misguided strikers as pawns to disrupt the industry for the benefit of the Kaiser.¹⁶

Senator Myers, seeing the state's timber industry shut down and mining close to being shut down, wrote Assistant Attorney General William C. Fitts demanding that the government respond to the pleas of his constituency. It was his belief that if they failed to act soon "I fear their loyalty may in time waver some."¹⁷ Fitts assured the senator that his department was "carefully" investigating the IWW "and any violating of Federal laws by them have been, and will be, prosecuted."¹⁸

The local law enforcement agencies had already begun taking matters into their own hands; IWW members were arrested for vagrancy, disturbing the peace or any other misdemeanor offense applicable or they were jailed for "several days without any charges being brought against them."¹⁹ Spokane's *Spokesman Review* called for the closure of all IWW halls and the suppression of all publications and

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷H. Myers to W.C. Fitts, 10 August 1917, Washington D.C., p. 1-3. Record Group 60, Department of Justice File.

¹⁸Fitts to Myers, 6 August 1917, Washington, D.C. Record Group 60 Department of Justice File.

¹⁹Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 205.

literature of the IWW, which they considered to be treasonous and seditious while organizers and agitators should be "placed under restraint."²⁰ Libby, in the spirit of this decree, arrested eight IWW men, who had arrived from Spokane to join the picket lines, on the ubiquitous charge of vagrancy. Four of the men were summarily convicted and sentenced to serve thirty days in the county jail.²¹ But it was not enough.

Libby's vocal newspaper editor wanted the state to call a special session of the legislature to pass some type of legislation "establishing a perpetual open season on I.W.W. agitators." The paper stipulated that ". . . the way Governor Stewart has thought and acted toward the I.W.W. hellmakers during the last six months has been a source of gratification to *The Western News* and its readers." His vision was not checked by "the issue of 'workingman's rights'" that the IWW allegedly used as a smoke screen to hide their ". . . goal of industrial paralysis and abolition of constitutional government."²² With his strong sense of purpose, Stewart (Griffen believed) could guide a special session quickly through the processes of passing IWW legislation, without being sidetracked by any other demands

²⁰The Western News (Libby, Montana), 16 August 1917.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

for superfluous legislation.²³

United States Attorney Burton K. Wheeler tried to prevail on cooler heads to look more closely at the labor strikes and not pay so much attention to the press.

I do not state this hastily, but it is a fact that the Press of Montana generally have published reports of labor conditions which are in truth unfounded; these reports have magnified the activity of the I.W.W. element;²⁴

It was his belief that the newspapers were "acting at the request of the employers" to persecute the IWW by claiming that they were creating a "lawless situation" in the state of Montana that had to be dealt with immediately.²⁵ This was simply not true, Wheeler asserted. He wrote, ". . . in truth and in fact any strikes which are now on are being conducted in a most orderly manner, no violence or public disturbances are had;" ²⁶ Wheeler's voice, however, was lost in the flurry and fury of editorials like *The Western News*' that called for IWW blood.

The federal government finally made a decisive move and on August 19, 1917, the Spokane office of Lumber Workers Industrial Union #500 was raided and James Rowan and twenty-

²³Ibid.

²⁴B.K. Wheeler to U.S. Attorney General Gregory, 21 August 1917, Butte, Montana, p. 1. Record Group 60, Department of Justice File.

²⁵Ibid., 2.

²⁶Ibid.

six other IWW members were arrested. The raid had removed the steady leadership of James Rowan, John Turner and others from the forests of northwest Montana and the other regions of the short-log country. Those who remained free such as Charles Knight, Louis Miller and Olin B. Anderson faced the difficult task of rallying the men to stay out on strike despite the recent arrests. The Labor, War and Justice departments had by the fall of 1917 learned to work together, as Melvyn Dubofsky wrote, to "deprive the rank-and-file Wobblies of their leaders, to separate the leaders from their followers, and to supply Western employers with an ample and malleable labor force."²⁷

The Industrial Worker urged striking loggers not to see this as an end to their struggle or let it weaken their resolve--no one man was the strike, solidarity was the key to their success.²⁸ Arthur Smith of the Missoula local assumed leadership of the short-log strike,²⁹ but with Rowan gone, the Spokane office closed, and the distribution of funds to keep the men fed cut-off, the situation was indeed bleak.³⁰ The fear that the federal government would step in had become a reality and the strikers were faced with the

²⁷Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 398.

²⁸The Industrial Worker (Seattle, Washington: Washington State University, microfilm), 22 August 1917, 1.

²⁹Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," 205.

³⁰Rowan, The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry, 46-47.

bitter prospect of having to return to work without gaining their demands.

The Eureka Journal believed that raids would snuff out the general strike at last and all the men would return to work.³¹ *The Western News* was equally optimistic. T.A. McCann had recently arrived and reported that the Libby Lumber Company was no longer worried about the IWW strike; the mills and camps were producing and there was "nothing whatever to complain about."³² The men were returning to work.

The Industrial Worker claimed, in September, that the men were going back to work, but that the lumber barons and the "capitalist press" were erroneous in their reports that the strike was over; a new tactic would be tried--the "strike on the job."³³ The IWW feared that a growing number of workers would return to work, so they changed their strategy in an attempt to remain in control of the situation.³⁴ Rowan claimed that the decision to return to work and end the walkout was done to prevent the total collapse of the IWW, stop the growing use of scabs, and keep the "weak kneed" who returned to work from causing the

³¹The Eureka Journal (Eureka, Montana), 23 August 1917.

³²The Western News (Libby, Montana), 23 August 1917.

³³The Industrial Worker (Seattle, Washington: Washington State University, microfilm), 19 September 1917, 1.

³⁴Jensen, Lumber and Labor, 127.

strike to "fizzle out."³⁵

Another positive of returning to work was that it would keep the spirit of the men up. They were not giving up, though, "They advocated poor work for poor pay, poor food and poor conditions. . . ." ³⁶ The "strike on the job" was a way to have "three meals a day , at the expense of the boss, and drawing their pay besides."³⁷ While the men returned to work, operations were far from smooth as some of the disgruntled workers committed acts of sabotage--tree spiking became a fast favorite, along with working eight-hours and then simply quitting for the day. Anything that disrupted the normal operation of the industry was considered a just and fair tactic if it hit the companies where it hurt the most--their pocket books.³⁸

This type of job action was deemed just as effective as a traditional strike, without the added hazard of the possible arrest of the organizers. Rowan believed that the Lumber Trust's efforts to break the strike illustrated amply to the men "that a working man had no 'rights' under the present capitalist system, except such as his organized power [could] maintain."³⁹ By October, the situation had

³⁵Rowan, The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry, 48-49.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Jensen, Lumber and Labor, 128.

³⁹Rowan, The I.W.W. in the Lumber Industry, 50-52.

cooled considerably in the Kootenai Valley. The IWW needed the men working now about as badly as the employers did. With the majority of their leaders in jail and facing trial, money was needed to provide for court costs and attorney's fees and these expenditures required donations from the men to ensure they were paid.⁴⁰

The Eureka Lumber Company was strangely silent during the summer of 1917, but the Libby Lumber Company was happy to report that it would soon be running two crews again at its mill and *The Western News* stated that recent actions on the part of the federal government had "knocked" the IWW organization "into a cocked hat."⁴¹ *The Western News* extended a hand to men who had been striking earlier in the year. Although the paper had always believed that the leaders of the IWW were the "most insidious and damnable criminals," it never extended that indictment to the true workingman. In fact Griffen believed that the only thing the "common members" were guilty of was "delusion and folly. . . Their manhood and patriotism were mere articles of barter for Haywood"⁴²--a reference to William Haywood who was an IWW leader in Chicago. And if "properly treated" these misguided souls could be "made into good citizens and

⁴⁰Solidarity (Chicago, Illinois), 6 October 1917, 3.

⁴¹The Western News (Libby, Montana), 13 August 1917.

⁴²Ibid., 4 October 1917, 2.

patriots."⁴³

It was in this spirit that Libby's local paper printed a story about Charles Knight, who had worked as a walking delegate in the area during the general strike. Knight, the paper reported, threw in the towel after the arrest of Haywood and other IWW leaders; he tore up his IWW card and was working as a swamper at Libby's Windsor Hotel. *The Western News* was ready to "declare its friendship and unhesitating good-will toward [any] I.W.W. member who now [saw] his mistake, and [was] man enough to admit it."⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Western Montana lumber manufacturers were trying to solve their labor problems by addressing some of the demands made earlier. A few companies began installing bathing facilities, steel bunks and company supplied bedding. More importantly "wholesome literature" was to be made available in the hopes that a better educated logger would not be so easily "beguiled" by the IWW.⁴⁵ The problem of the inedible food was discussed and the University of Montana's domestic science department was consulted about "preparing a menu for the camps" that would serve the dual purpose of providing better food and cutting down on waste in accordance with war ration quotas.⁴⁶

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵The Timberman (Portland, Oregon), October 1917, 30.

⁴⁶Ibid.

Among the lumber companies of Montana that were cleaning up their camps was the Eureka Lumber Company. They had remodeled the bunkhouses providing "iron beds, springs, mattresses, bath tubs and other modern conveniences."⁴⁷ What had been a non-negotiable issue during the spring drive was now provided by a benevolent company that only had the interests of their men in mind.

Despite the fact that the striking loggers themselves had demanded cleaner living conditions, *The Timberman* was unwilling to accept the culpability of its subscribers in creating and perpetuating the hell holes in which these men were forced to live. Instead, the Portland based news magazine adopted a position that placed a large part of the blame on the loggers. *The Timberman* cautioned:

It can not be hoped, however, to change the mental attitude of the men in a brief period and bring about a regeneration of mind and a desire for personal cleanliness by the mere installation of facilities for better and more sanitary living. Development along this line comes slowly, sometimes most disappointingly so, and patience and tact will have to be used before permanent betterment may be expected.⁴⁸

A clean logger was not enough; the companies had to take responsibility for the intellectual development of its work force, if it hoped to keep it compliant. The blindness of the owners to the basic need of educating their employees, according to *The Timberman*, had left the men open

⁴⁷Ibid., December 1917, 64.

⁴⁸Ibid., October 1917, 30.

to the IWW and its brand of education. "In season and out of season, in the bunkhouses they taught their doctrine of hate. . . . Their pupils accepted the theories and became inoculated with the bacilli of malice and hatred. Their minds were poisoned."⁴⁹ The implication is clear. The failure to properly educate the loggers had left these poor, simple men of the woods open to the malignancy of the IWW and that was the root cause of all the timber industries' labor troubles in 1917.

The final irony had to have come when members of the Loggers' Club, attending a meeting in Spokane, "decided to wage an aggressive campaign for the adoption of the national eight-hour day and to inform all employes of the situation."⁵⁰ Until such legislation was passed, however, they would continue to work their men ten hours a day in the short-log country's sawmills and logging camps.⁵¹

The fall and winter of 1917 were remarkably quiet for the Eureka Lumber Company after the turbulence of spring and summer. Their labor troubles were rapidly becoming a thing of the past and the mill hoped to produce forty million feet of lumber that winter, while they kept a crew of three hundred men working in the woods, stockpiling logs for the 1918 spring drive. The company's lumber would go to support

⁴⁹Ibid., November 1917, 41.

⁵⁰Ibid., October, 1917, 64n.

⁵¹Ibid.

the war effort and timbers would be cut to be used in Butte's mines.⁵²

The damage done by the IWW to the Eureka Lumber Company was considerable according to Charles Weil and *The Eureka Journal*. The paper had reported that Weil had received several death threats during the course of the strike and the manager believed that his ranch house at Big Arm, Montana had been burned down by one or more IWW sympathizers.⁵³ The greatest damage, however, had been incurred by acts of sabotage, which were attributed to the IWW. The use of sabotage, according to IWW policy, was to cause slow downs by disabling machinery; it did not mean, as public opinion was led to believe, overt attacks that threatened human life. Violence was only to be used in self-defense.⁵⁴

A spiked log did little damage to a worker, but it wreaked havoc on high speed saw blades and it was one tactic that the Eureka Lumber Company claimed the IWW used prolifically in 1917. Weil was asked by F.A. Finn, Acting District Forester, Region One, what was the cause of all the trouble for the Eureka Lumber Company in 1917 and Weil responded that it was the IWW. In a letter Weil went into some detail concerning recent past events.

⁵²The Eureka Journal (Eureka, Montana), 10 November 1917.

⁵³Ibid., 4 October 1917, 6.

⁵⁴Evans, IWW Legislation, 16.

The Eureka Lumber Company, when the strike was negotiated, paid \$3.50 per day wages, hired all the men it could get, called on the State and County officials for protection from lawless actions, and the result was that several fires occurred during the strike, destroying camps, timber logs, and other equipment, with the loss of \$5,000. It was necessary to protect laboring men with officers from molestation on the part of the I.W.W.s. The result has been that our logging operations have been curtailed 12,000,000 feet and that the cost of those put in has been increased about one dollar per thousand, or about \$40,000 loss.

. . . [I] will say that the loggers or river drivers this year were entitled to an increase of wages over previous years on account of the higher cost of everything, which we voluntarily granted and at the beginning of the logging season we increased wages to \$4.00, and later to \$4.50 per day, of ten hours, including board. . . . The difficulty with the negotiations with the I.W.W. was that as soon as you concede what they want, the next day they want something additional and you are continuously in a strike unless you pay constantly a higher wage than that of the other employers of the surrounding country.

As to the eight hour day, we are in favor of it, but in logging operations it is impracticable unless two crews are put on for the reason that the driving season is so short, and logs must be driven as many hours as possible every day to move the desired output. The labor of driving is usually not laborious, further than watching, pushing the logs off the bank where stranded. Hence, usually the men prefer to work the longer hours and get additional pay for over-time, which we have always paid.

We generally believe in the right of men to organize and collectively negotiate regarding wages. This, we believe, is especially true among skilled laborers but log drivers and lumber woodsmen are usually uneducated and are peculiarly susceptible to influence of labor agitators.

My notion of the basis of this strike and the I.W.W. trouble throughout the Country is that the Government and people generally have been too lenient in favor of free speech and leaders have been permitted to abuse the political party in power or all parties and the Government itself without being held responsible therefor, either as to the correctness of

the things said or the application⁵⁵

Weil was equal in his opposition to having his loggers and river drivers organized by either the IWW or the AFL.⁵⁶

The Eureka Journal recognized, as surely as Howe and Weil had, that although the IWW had been broken, the demands of the union were being met. Wages had been increased, and according to the paper "the demands for better quarters, etc., in the camps, are being met by every large concern in the northwest, the local one being no exception"⁵⁷ The paper went on to report that the ". . . cut this year was not quite as large as usual," due to the shortage of men, but the mill had enjoyed the longest ". . . sawing season" of its history.⁵⁸ Eureka's and Libby's mills both ran only single shifts until the early part of fall, and like other lumber industries of that year, production was down.⁵⁹

⁵⁵C.A. Weil to F.A. Finn, Acting District Forester, 19 November 1917, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files. See appendix C for the entire contents of the letter.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷The Eureka Journal (Eureka, Montana), 6 December 1917, 2.

⁵⁸Ibid., 12 December 1917.

⁵⁹Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 398.

Chapter VII

"I is a better citizen of America as you is!"

The IWW had threatened the ability of the lumber manufacturers to make huge profits in 1917, therefore, they were willing to go to any lengths to see the IWW suppressed either by local or state law enforcement agencies or privately hired detective agencies. The spies who infiltrated the IWW, like Thiel detectives Ed Rawley and J.H. Black, were not above exaggeration to maintain their employment status.¹ This propensity to perpetuate a detective's job resulted in reports that embellished facts with bits of fiction that served the purposes of the lumber companies in their battle with the IWW.

President Wilson bowed to western governors and businessmen, who attacked the IWW. The strikes fomented by the Wobblies did disrupt America's war time production efforts, therefore, the President allowed himself to be persuaded that the IWW was subversive and financed with "German gold."² Mine owners as well as the lumber companies placed the blame for their labor unrest on the IWW, whom

¹Evans, IWW Legislation, 41-44.

²Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 396.

they disparagingly referred to as "I Won't Work[ers]," "Imperial Wilhelm's Workers" and other sobriquets aimed at casting suspicion on the organization.³

Special Assistant United States Attorney General, W.E. Gibson wrote Eureka mayor D.I. Robertson in early 1918, that the federal government was preparing its case against the IWW and needed ". . . evidence of overt acts, strikes, assaults, threats and damage done by the I.W.W."⁴ He wanted witnesses who could supply evidence to the fact that

. . . first, a strike occurred; second, the play in it by I.W.W.'s [how the IWW was involved in the strike at Eureka]. And third, the result of the strike, that is, whether or not the output of lumber was stopped or curtailed at the particular place where the strike occurred and to what extent; place where the lumber was being shipped and the purpose for which it was to be used, whether to build ships, aeroplanes, ammunition boxes etc.⁵

Gibson was aware the James Rowan and John Turner had played a part in the Eureka strike during the spring and he wanted specifics that would prove these men had instigated or participated in overt acts of sabotage.⁶

Mayor Robertson responded back immediately that Gibson needed to come to Eureka and speak to Charles Weil "and others" including himself, who would be ". . . glad to

³Evans, IWW Legislation, 55.

⁴W.E. Gibson, Special Assistant United States Attorney General, to D.I. Robertson, Mayor City of Eureka, 24 January 1918, Butte, Montana. ELC Files.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

furnish . . . the necessary information."⁷ Weil corresponded with the assistant attorney general and informed him that the company was ". . . unable to give any direct evidence showing that sabotage was actually committed by these men [Rowan, Turner, and Miller] or through their instigation."⁸ Weil did know for certain though that logs had been spiked and several saw blades had been damaged as a result of these malicious actions. The company compiled a record that showed the mill had gone through twenty saw blades in 1917. This figure seems high, except in the previous year their records showed that they had used thirty-one saw blades.⁹ L.E. McGee stated that the average number of saw blades used during a ". . . season's cut of a double shift, would be sixteen." Still, McGee claimed that "98% of the ruined saws was caused from spikes in the logs . . ." ¹⁰

Statements were taken and sent to Gibson outlining IWW actions during the spring and summer strike in Eureka. F.E. Sabin remembered that "The I.W.W's were quite free in stating that they would use dynamite or other violent

⁷Robertson to Gibson, 26 January 1918, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁸Weil to Gibson, 24 April 1918, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

⁹L.C.J. to Weil, 11 June 1918, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

¹⁰L.E. McGee, 1918 statement, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

methods on 'scabs.'"¹¹ He attended a meeting on April 22, 1917 that featured Rowan and Turner as the keynote speakers. Sabin heard Rowan refer to the recently arrived National Guardsmen as "'yellow legs'" and "'gunmen.'" He further recalled that Rowan outlined the IWW goal of taking over all industries which Sabin believed would be attempted by ". . . fair means or foul (Mostly foul) and make beggars out of the men with the brains who have made all this work possible."¹²

George Patterson corroborated Sabin's statement in regard to acts of intimidation. Both men stated that the strikers had threatened to blow-up John Vaughn and Camp #2 when he was working there. According to Sabin other "notes were sent to the camps and masked men stopt river drivers on the railroad track and threatened their lives."¹³

Patterson, meanwhile, believed that several fires were started by the IWW later on. About 200,000 feet of timber was burned above Trego dam on the Fortine Creek "roll ways" and the Eureka Lumber Company's camps at Stewart Creek were also destroyed by fire about the same time. He estimated the damages to be around five thousand dollars for the company.¹⁴

¹¹F.E. Sabin statement, 1 February 1918, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴George Patterson statement, February 1918, Eureka, Montana. ELC Files.

Finally, to combat the IWW directly, Governor Stewart called a special legislative session in February of 1918 and laws were passed against "sedition and sabotage." Among those present when the legislation was passed was Charles Weil of the Eureka Lumber Company.¹⁵ The measures enacted were in regard to criminal syndicalism which the IWW used, implemented, and advocated during the 1917 strike. The state of Montana ". . . made it a crime to utter or print abusive language about the form of government of the United States, the Constitution, soldiers, and the flag."¹⁶ The enactment of this type of legislation on the state and federal levels forced the IWW into full retreat as far as serious organization efforts were concerned in the Kootenai Valley.

Not everyone had subscribed to the Machiavellian machinations of the mine owners, lumber companies and the press that charged the IWW as the root cause of all evil in the West's industries during the war. According to Labor Department magazine *Survey*,

The labor revolt in the West is an expression primarily of social unrest, of revolt at low wages and hard conditions in industry and impatience with the slow evolution of economic democracy through the organized labor movement.¹⁷

The Labor Department's investigation was unwilling, however,

¹⁵The Timberman (Portland, Oregon), March 1918, 100.

¹⁶Evans, IWW Legislation, 206.

¹⁷Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 410.

to give up on the theory that some of the IWW strikes in the Pacific Northwest and Inland Empire, had been influenced by the Germans. After all, according to their estimates, sixty to sixty-five percent of the IWW's membership was "foreign born," and therefore suspect,¹⁸ but for the most part

. . . almost every impartial investigator, including a number of Federal officials, have reported that the source of the organization's hold on the workmen is the employers' failure to correct the undoubted evils from which the men are suffering.¹⁹

Even President Wilson's specially appointed investigative commission, comprised of Labor secretary W.B. Wilson, J.L. Spangler, Vernon Reed, John H. Walker, E.P. Marsh, and Felix Frankfurter, reported that the loggers were not disloyal to the United States but were labelled as such when they went out on strike. As a matter of fact, ". . . the commission revealed that the operators took advantage of the popular prejudice against the I.W.W. as an unpatriotic organization to break not only the strike but all the unions."²⁰

The Mediation Commission discovered that Pacific Northwest lumber companies were unwilling to grant the eight-hour day, while the more farsighted lumber companies of the Inland Empire accepted the shorter work day ". . .

¹⁸"The Lumber Industry of the Pacific Northwest and Inland Empire," Record Group 60, Labor Department File No. 20/473. Glasser File.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Jensen, Lumber and Labor, 128-129.

not by way of yielding to threats, but as introducing a wise innovation recognized as a desirable national policy for industry."²¹

The state of Montana undertook its own investigation headed by Labor Commissioner W.J. Swindlehurst and a State Board of Health representative. Over a period of twelve months, starting in August, 1917, Swindlehurst toured Flathead, Granite, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, Powell and Sanders counties. Conditions were bad, but the companies were by then in the process of cleaning the camps up. Swindlehurst did comment that ". . . all work incident to logging, from felling trees to transporting logs to the mill, either by teams, logging railroads or river driving, [were] notoriously dangerous."²² Swindlehurst was of the opinion that the loggers should have "more voice in adjusting labor controversies and grievances."²³--a voice, however, that was not part of a collective union organization such as the IWW.

F.A. Silcox, of the United States Forest Service, had his own theory why the timber industry was racked by labor disputes. He believed that the problem lay deeper than simply the granting the eight-hour day, decent food, better

²¹"Report of the President's Mediation Commission, January 9, 1918," p. 19-21. Record Group 60, Department of Justice. Glasser File.

²²Evans, IWW Legislation, 36.

²³Ibid., 37.

wages and sanitary living conditions. It was his contention that the greatest deterrent to the settlement of labor strife was the lack of stable communities to act as support networks for the loggers. Silcox believed that there had to be "' . . . some permanency to forest communities to eliminate the migratory worker. . . ,'" and a "' . . . recognition of and response to the spiritual needs of the men.' "24

He estimated that "'Because of the uncompromising attitude of the industry to any form of organization . . . " approximately ninety to ninety-five percent of Region One's (Western Montana and Northern Idaho) loggers threw their support to the IWW in 1917.²⁵ Among those percentages were ". . . many of the best workers" who joined in protest of the companies' refusal to address their demands; Silcox wrote, "to attempt to kiss or kick away such a protest is only to invite disaster,"²⁶ and that is what Montana's lumber did when they ignored the demands of their men. Unfortunately while Silcox made his report in late 1917, no one was inclined to listen to the insightful Forest Service employee and the statement was shelved.

The criminal cases against the IWW began in 1918, and C.A. Weil was subpoenaed to appear in Chicago on June 15,

²⁴F.A. Silcox, Record Group 60, Glasser File.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

1918 to testify in the trial against the Wobblies.²⁷ Its not known what Weil's testimony--if any--was, but the trial brought convictions against Lumber Workers Industrial Union #500 leaders James Rowan, John Turner, Don Sheridan and Olin B. Anderson under the espionage act. Rowan was sentenced to twenty years, Turner and Sheridan to ten and Anderson to five years in prison.²⁸ The IWW called a general strike for all of the organization's western members involved in the timber and copper industries for October 1, 1918 to protest the guilty verdicts, but the call went unanswered.²⁹ J.M. Kennedy, chairman of the Lincoln County Council of Defense, was happy to report that all "men in the Montana woods [were] 100 percent American."³⁰

After the war, most lumber companies realized it was to their benefit to give small concessions rather than butt heads continually with labor. Some, refusing to learn from past mistakes, tried to revert to old methods but quickly found strikes were still a no win situation. The West Coast Lumbermen's Association created an industrial relations board to ensure that the loggers and millworkers received a

²⁷Sathre, Deputy U.S. Marshal to C.A. Weil, Western Union Telegram, 11 June 1918, Browning, Montana. ELC Files.

²⁸<http://www.iww.org/-deke/leavenworth/sentences.html>, 6 March 2000.

²⁹Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 450-451.

³⁰The Timberman (Portland, Oregon), September 1918, 39.

"'square deal,'" in 1919.³¹ Part of that deal was better housing and higher wages to attract family men, who would be less likely to be as susceptible to IWW agitation as single, transient loggers seemed to be.³²

The Eureka Lumber Company continued to struggle with a much depleted IWW organization. P.L. Howe purchased the mill outright in 1919 and named it the P.L. Howe Lumber Company. The IWW led strikes against the mill in 1919, 1923 and finally in 1925. The company did not grant the eight-hour work day until 1923 and the strike two years later closed the mill for good, although the company was about to pull out anyway because all the accessible timber had already been harvested.³³

The Libby Lumber Company was purchased by the J. Neils Lumber Company in 1919. George Neils arrived later that year and was adamant that past mistakes of 1917 were not going to be repeated. He initiated a program to clean up the camps and provide steel bunks with springs. The company would also supply bedding to be washed weekly and better food was going to be prepared, because if a ". . . man got up from the breakfast table with a grouch on then he was no good for the rest of the day."³⁴

³¹Dubofsky, We Shall Be All, 446-447.

³²Ibid.

³³Johnson, Tobacco Plains, 233.

³⁴Miss, Historic Overview KNE, 254.

If nothing else, the IWW helped to dispel the myth of the logger as a manly woodsmen, nature's child, who toiled in noble labor to provide the lumber to build a nation. Walt Whitman had written of the logger and his environment in "Song of the Broadax."

Lumbermen in their winter camp, daybreak in the woods,
 stripes of/
 snow on the limbs of trees, the occasional
 snapping,
 The glad clear sound of one's own voice, the merry
 song, the natural/
 life of the woods, the strong day's work,
 The blazing fire at night, the sweet taste of supper,
 the talk, the/
 bed of hemlock-boughs and the bear-skin;³⁵

This naive depiction was exposed due in part to the IWW's role in the 1917 timber strikes. The conditions under which the loggers had toiled were physically draining; the food was barely edible and conversation was forbidden in most cookhouses. The environment in which they slept was assaulted by the pungent odors of wet wool and old sweat, while their fragrant bough-lined bunks were breeding grounds for lice and bed bugs.

Loggers were neither paragons of moral and industrial virtue, nor were they beasts of burden; and if their labor was noble, why had it earned them names such as river pig, bindle-stiff, hobo and bum--appellations that identified them as outside of the social order. These men had been simply trying to make a living and the IWW had promised to

³⁵<http://www.bartleyby.com/142/81.html>, 30 March 2000.

help improve their lot in life. For that reason, their cause was condemned in 1917, not because their demands were unjust, but because the organization they chose to represent them threatened the established order of the status quo.

The unionization of the Kootenai Valley timber industry did not occur until the 1930s and was facilitated by the Great Depression. The first Labor Day celebration held in Lincoln County did not occur until 1934, when the Lumber and Timber Union sponsored the event at Libby.³⁶ The IWW was rapidly becoming a faded memory, a story to be told to the new generation of loggers who were reaching maturity.

The organization's reputation for treason, with its union halls filled with foreigners was part of the past. The second generation loggers were descended from the foreign "outside workers" who filled the woods in 1917 and demanded to be recognized. The strongest cry for acceptance from that first generation still rings with the accent of tie-hack Hobo Kanute, who ". . . argued hotly," with a native in Klinke's store at Fortine, Montana, "'I is a better citizen of America as you is! I is a citizen by choice by you is citizen by accident!'"³⁷

³⁶Spritzer, Waters of Wealth, 115.

³⁷Johnson, Tobacco Plains, 225.

APPENDIX A

List of Eureka Lumber Company workers
who went out on strike April 12, 1917
Eureka Lumber Company Files.

Strike Apr. 12 - Dam #1 - 34 men.

Pat Burk
Pete Burklund

C.H. Clark
Al Charleboy
W.W. Cook
Chas. Corbett

Joe Earnest
Ole Ellingson

Hugh Foster
L. Finnerty

Elmer Gilbertson
Dan Gravell
Lenard Garey
Ande Gagnon

Nelse Hage

Jack Iverson

H. Klabo
Harry Kapsland

Joe Laferries

M. McPherson
Fred McClure
Angus McDonald

Rudolph Naeyart

Frank Parrish
Chris Peterson

Tom Reed
Henry Richards
Leo Rolleztghe
A. Ryan

I. Simmonds (Geo.)
John Simmonds
John Smith

Jess VanDalen

Segar Wilson

Walk out Camp #2 April 12 30 men

Roy Brown
Ed Burns
Wm. Carter
Pete Costello
Ben Corbin
Thos. Carlson
Pete Dear
M. Fitzwilliam
C.E. Gallam
Wm. Green
Ben Hanson
Nick Jigum
Frank H. James
N. Krineski
Jas. Kelley
F.M. Kosman
O. Landall
Wm. Miller
Jas. Miller
Wm. McIntyre
P. McNab
O. Niemi
Andrew Osman
Andrew Palto
N. Parkovich
O. Peirson
O. Roberg
Ben Slezewski
F.M. Utecht
Geo. Vangsness

APPENDIX B

LWIU No. 500 Eight-Hour Day Handbill
Eureka Lumber Company Files.

Eight - Hour Day for Lumber Workers

One year ago the lumber workers were practically unorganized. Today thousands of the loggers and the sawmill workers of the Northwest are lined up in Lumber Workers' Industrial Union No. 500, I. W. W. In Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin, as well as the Southern states, the slaves of the Lumber Barons are falling in line.

At this writing, the eight-hour day, with five dollars and board, has already been won on some of the rivers by the organized river drivers. In Montana, Washington and Idaho the bosses are tearing down their old bunkhouses and building better and more sanitary ones, with steel cots, springs and mattresses.

Any Lumber Worker who cannot see that, through organization, we are already beginning to gain better conditions, must be mentally blind or asleep. But this is not all we want by any means—our main issue for this year (1917) is the EIGHT-HOUR DAY.

The United States Industrial Relation Commission's report, page 94, reads: "The physical well-being, mental development and recreational needs of every class of population demand that under normal circumstances the working day should not exceed eight hours."

Now, it is only through organization that we can win a shorter workday. And INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM is the most practical and up-to-date system of organization ever put forth. As the workers are grouped in industry for production, regardless of race, creed or color, so should they organize into ONE BIG UNION of all the workers.

Fellow workers, we have been slaves of the Weyerhausers long enough! Join the Union of your class! To remain unorganized means INDUSTRIAL SLAVERY. To organize means life and freedom—INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY.

It is up to you, fellow workers; on which side do you stand?

LUMBER WORKERS INDUSTRIAL UNION No. 500
I. W. W.



APPENDIX C

Copy of the letter that C.A. Weil sent to
Acting District Forester F.A. Finn and also
the National Industrial Conference Board.
Eureka Lumber Company Files.

November 19, 1917.

Mr. F.A. Finn, Esq.,
Acting District Forester,
Missoula, Montana.

Dear Sir:

Answering in detail your favor of the 5th relative to the labor troubles in Northwestern Montana, and especially at Eureka, I beg to say:

The troubles here have all been caused by the I.W.W. Hence this letter applies to them only.

(1) The demands of the I.W.W. here were \$5.00 per day for eight hours, board included, four meals per day, separate drying tents and shower baths with hot and cold water. A strike was called because of our refusal to comply with these demands. It may be worth while to state that the I.W.W. leaders contended that if granted their demands they reserved the right to strike at any moment for additional demands. Hence the organization is one that it is impracticable to enter into any contract or do business with.

(2) The logging operations of the Eureka Lumber Company have been curtailed this year to the amount of 10,000,000 feet, and sawing operations have decreased there from approximately 12,000,000 feet.

(3) The Eureka Lumber Company, when the strike was negotiated, paid \$3.50 per day wages, hired all the men it could get, called on the State and County officials for protection from lawless actions, and the result was that several fires occurred during the strike, destroying camps, timber logs, and other equipment, with a loss of \$5,000. It was necessary to protect laboring men with officers from molestation on the part of the I.W.W.s. The result has been that our logging operations have been curtailed 12,000,000 feet and that the cost of those put in has been increased about one dollar per thousand, or about \$40,000 loss.

F.A.F.

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(4) In answer to question 4 will say that the loggers or river drivers this year were entitled to an increase of wages over previous years on account of the higher cost of everything, which we voluntarily granted and at the beginning of the logging season we increased wages to \$4.00, and later to \$4.50 per day, of ten hours, including board. As to the other demands, the eight hour day and separate drying tents in which to dry their damp clothing, also the shower baths, will say that we believe the separate drying tents are alright, a shower bath with hot and cold water is impracticable on the log drive, in fact we don't believe the men would use it. Of course it would not cost much and our company would not stand out on account of a little matter like that, or the separate drying tents either. The difficulty with the negotiations with the I.W.W. was that as soon as you concede what they want, the next day they want something additional and you are continuously in a strike unless you pay constantly a higher wage than that of the other employers of the surrounding country.

As to the eight hour day, we are in favor of it, but in logging operations it is impracticable unless two crews are put on for the reason that the driving season is so short, and logs must be driven as many hours as possible every day to move the desired output. The labor of driving is usually not laborious, further than watching, pushing the logs off the bank where stranded. Hence, usually the men prefer to work the longer hours and get additional pay for over-time, which we have always paid. Hence we can say that we do not feel that there is any real reason for dissatisfaction among the log drivers or lumber employees generally.

(5) We generally believe in the right of men to organize and collectively negotiate regarding wages. This, we believe, is especially true among skilled laborers but log drivers and lumber woodsmen are usually uneducated and are peculiarly susceptible to influence of labor agitators. Among such men we have gotten the best results and believe employment and consequent individual advancement for merit or dismissal to us to be the natural law of supply and demand and advancement of individuals and we believe is more favorable to the laborer than a Union organized under the American Federation of Labor.

(6) My notion of the basis of this strike and the I.W.W. trouble throughout the Country is that the Government and people generally have been too lenient in favor of free

F.A.F.

-3-

speech and leaders have been permitted to abuse the political party in power or all parties and the Government itself without being held responsible therefor, either as to the correctness of the things said or the application and I.W.W. agitators and Socialists have been making speeches without any attempt on the part of the public or anyone to contradict or in any manner curb such false statements until there is in the Country a considerable body, mostly of well-meaning men, who have been misled by these erroneous statements and false logic and unreasoning pictures of the future, until they have become diseased. Some of the leaders are fundamentally bad, to who have flocked a number of worthless, lazy citizens and the great body are misled by these. We feel it to be the duty of the Government to punish the leaders and, as important as Hooverizing, to have speakers and literature to take care of the membership and show them the unreasonableness and falsity of the teachings of the I.W.W.s. This strike we feel sure is against the wage system in general. As you know their professed attempt is to destroy all capital.

For your further information, we wish to state that our logging camps proper are well equipped with hot and cold water baths, steel beds, springs and mattresses, and that we have had no strikes in these camps or in or around our saw and planing mills, only on the log drive as above stated.

Very truly yours,

Eureka Lumber Company

By

President.

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