

**Beyond the Rebel Girl:  
Women, Wobblies, Respectability, and the Law  
in the Pacific Northwest, 1905-1924**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of men and women associated with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the states of Oregon and Washington, from the time of the union's founding in 1905, to the release of a large group of political prisoners in 1924. IWW membership in this region has long been characterized as single, male, itinerant laborers, usually working in lumber or agriculture, and historians have generally focused on the perspective of this group of men. There were, however, women and men with wives and children who were active members of the organization, especially in the cities of Portland, Spokane, Everett, and Seattle. IWW halls in these cities often functioned as community centers, with family friendly events and entertainment.

Women were drawn to the IWW for its radical vision and inclusionary policies, but also for its birth control advocacy and emphasis on freedom of choice in marriage. The IWW also offered women an avenue for activism that did not focus primarily on the fight for suffrage. While female Wobblies (as members of the organization were known) were not against women having the right to vote, they believed that organization in the workplace was the only way to true emancipation.

Local law enforcement and vigilante groups often targeted members of the IWW, and women were no exception. During legal proceedings women were questioned about their personal lives and moral values, regardless of their charge. Judges, prosecutors, sheriffs, and city officials challenged their status as respectable women because they were associated with the IWW. Female Wobblies responded by rejecting their characterization as non-respectable women, and by providing their own definition of respectability, which included standing up for ones fellow workers and fighting for what was right.

During World War I and its aftermath, continual raids on Wobbly halls and massive arrests of members took a toll on the organization and the radical community in which it functioned, and many of the women in this study ceased to be active members.

Keywords: Industrial Workers of the World; Pacific Northwest; Respectability; Labor; Women's History

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## Introduction

On a sunny July morning, four hundred men, women, and children gathered to eat breakfast at a fully unionized restaurant. After breakfast they congregated on the nearby dock, and were entertained by a twenty-piece band while waiting for their excursion boats. The boats took the festive group to a picnic area on the mouth of the Chehalis River on the Washington coast, where they were joined by about four hundred others. Upon arrival, they feasted on \$200 worth of food, again served by unionized waitresses. There were games and prizes for children, and the day ended with songs and a lecture on industrial unionism.<sup>1</sup>

On another July afternoon, seven years prior, two men hopped off a freight train near Spokane, and started to look for work. The local farmers had no work to offer, and were not too disposed to charity, so the men stole a chicken from one of them. They then hiked to a hobo jungle and met up with several other men waiting for work on the harvest to begin that next week. They helped themselves to a few more chickens, and spent the next few days in the jungle, most likely singing songs and discussing industrial unionism.<sup>2</sup>

Both of these events happened during the period focused on in this study, and both featured members of the Industrial Workers of the World. But while scene two is the more familiar image of Wobblies in the region, scene one also portrays a very important part of Wobbly life and culture in the Northwest. This study seeks to round out the well-worn picture of Wobblies in the Pacific Northwest as young, single, male, itinerant workers. While those workers did form a large portion of the membership and were involved in important strikes in extractive industries such as the 1917 lumber strike, they are only part of the picture. In small towns across the Northwest and in the larger cities of Seattle, Portland, and Spokane, women played an integral role in Wobbly life. Not only single women, but families—husband and wife Wobbly teams—were often present during some of the biggest fights for free speech or in defense of jailed members. Yet in most histories of the IWW, discussion of women's roles is usually limited to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, the IWW's well-known female national organizer, and the roles of rank and

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<sup>1</sup> *Industrial Worker* July 7, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Industrial Worker* July 5, 1909 as cited in Greg Hall, *Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Workers in the American West* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2001), 46.

file women in the famous textile strikes of Patterson, New Jersey and Lawrence, Massachusetts. In fact women went on strike as part of and in support of the IWW, were arrested in its free speech fights, stood with the organization in speaking out against World War I, and were persecuted and prosecuted along with their male comrades. At the same time, the IWW engaged in women's issues, such as birth control agitation, and advanced an economic argument regarding prostitution, seeing "fallen" women as part of the working class and victims of the capitalist system, rather than as morally deficient, and identifying their position with that of the migrant laborer. Focusing on lumber camps and male Wobblies not only ignores female Wobblies, but inhibits understanding how the IWW approached social issues and how it functioned as part of the radical community of the Pacific Northwest. Focusing on women changes how we see the IWW in a fundamental way. We see that its reach went far beyond lumber camps and hobo jungles, and that it was a valid avenue for radical working-class women to organize, educate, and agitate for social justice.

I have two major goals in writing this thesis. The first is in the vein of classic women's history: since they have been ignored for so long in the study of the IWW, especially in the Pacific Northwest, this study recovers the story of female Wobblies and Wobbly sympathizers. This study also examines the multiple and contradictory ways that male and female workers, whether self-proclaimed Wobblies or IWW sympathizers, dealt with the "Woman Question" of their day—whether or not women should vote, work outside of the home, have access to birth control, or be subject to special laws regarding work hours or conditions. My second focus is more in line with current gender history. Attitudes towards "appropriate" male and female behavior affected how women approached the union, how they were treated by male Wobblies, and how they were handled by judges and police officers.

While "official" Wobbly ideology, as espoused by IWW newspapers, General Executive Board meetings, and annual membership meetings, did not offer much specific advice on the "woman question" other than noting the need to organize women, individuals within the union navigated the issues of sexuality, marriage, childcare, and domestic labor on a daily basis. While the free-footed Wobbly with no wife or kids to hold him back was held up by some as the ideal member who could hop a train to join the fight at a moment's notice, many Wobblies who were in relationships had to choose whether to get married, whether women would take part in the movement—and risk

arrest—alongside their husbands, whether to use birth control, and how to achieve the One Big Union ideal in daily life.

The title of this study is intended to take us beyond Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, often referred to as the Rebel Girl, and the focus on her in discussions of women and the IWW. Flynn, the organization's most famous female national organizer, spent considerable time in the Pacific Northwest and will still play a minor role in this thesis, but my goal is to not let her overshadow the other women who were valuable assets to the organization in a local capacity. While the title refers to female Wobblies, I do not want to limit myself to women who were dues-paying members of the organization. To do so would perpetuate a focus on leadership rather than those who only sporadically took part in IWW activities. I also examine working-class women's support for the organization's activities, like birth control agitation, and legal defense, such as took place after the Everett free speech fight of 1916. The IWW did more than offer women organization in an industrial union. The union also provided women the opportunity to participate in broader social and political issues. Unlike the Socialist Party, the mainstream feminist movement, or the craft unions of the AFL, the IWW was a way for working class women to move beyond the narrow issue of women's suffrage. Articles in IWW newspapers discussed issues affecting women such as marriage and free love, women's right to work, their role in the home, and birth control, as well as things not specific—but still important—to women, such as patriotism, war, the class struggle, and economics. Women organized with and alongside the men of the IWW, not in separate female auxiliaries as they often did in the AFL; they fought for their own interests as women workers, not just as adjuncts to men.

My approach to this project is influenced by the notion of a gendered labor history, as articulated by Alice Kessler-Harris in *Gendering Labor History*, and Ava Baron in her introduction to a 1991 collection of essays, *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor*. Baron explained that “the study of gendering is concerned with how understandings of sexual difference shape institutions, practices, and relationships.” She advocated research on “how both men's and women's participation in the labor movement was shaped by assumptions about gender built into union organization, policies, and tactics.”<sup>3</sup> This study examines both the successes and limits

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<sup>3</sup> Alice Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007) and Ava Baron, ed., *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 36, 39.

of cross-sex organization in a union that advocated a radical reconstruction of society based on working class solidarity, regardless of gender.

There has been relatively little scholarly work done on women within the IWW, compared to the amount done on the organization itself. A 1998 article on the historiography of the IWW by Robert Black notes that “A strangely neglected aspect of IWW history, considering current historical fashions, is the role of women in the IWW and the IWW’s conception of women’s roles....There are certainly unexplored opportunities here for historians of gender and culture alike.”<sup>4</sup> Few historians have availed themselves of these opportunities. The standard history of the IWW, *We Shall be All* by Melvin Dubofsky, makes little of women’s involvement. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn is mentioned during discussions of strikes she took part in, but no mention is made of IWW support for birth control or its view of women’s roles.<sup>5</sup> This is not surprising, however, as it was written in 1969, as women’s history was just developing into a field of its own. Successive treatments of the IWW have mostly been local or regional histories.<sup>6</sup> The foremost history of the IWW in Australia, by Verity Burgmann, does have a chapter on women, and provides some good information on their place in the American IWW.<sup>7</sup> Where one must turn for information on women in the IWW then, is to more general works on Socialist women or women in the labor movement. Two of these have provided the best analysis of women’s roles in the IWW and deserve to be discussed in detail.

Philip Foner’s *Women and the American Labor Movement*, includes a lengthy chapter titled “The Wobblies and the Woman Worker,” one on the free speech fights, and another on the Lawrence strike. He also criticizes the IWW for not facing feminism outside of the class question. He concludes his initial discussion of the Wobblies by writing, “Yet the fact remains that in many important respects, the IWW approach to and the treatment of the woman worker differed radically from that of the AFL. Unlike most other labor organizations of its time, and even many today, the IWW was not content merely to lament the status of working-class women in industrial society but set out to

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Black. “Beautiful Losers: The Historiography of the Industrial Workers of the World.” March 6, 1998. <http://www.infoshop.org/texts/iww.html>

<sup>5</sup> Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 132.

<sup>6</sup> In addition to the works discussed in detail, this includes Nigel Sellars *Oil, Wheat, and Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World in Oklahoma, 1905-1930* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998) and Peter Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive-Era Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Burgmann, Verity, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

organize the women....”<sup>8</sup> While women were not organized in large numbers in the Pacific Northwest, the IWW offered them a new avenue for class-based activism. Focusing solely on the workplace and major strikes ignores or downplays what the organization did offer women.

*The Rising of the Women: Feminist Solidarity and Class Conflict, 1880-1917*, by Meredith Tax, also has a chapter on “Rebel Girls and the IWW.” She uses many of the same sources as Foner (the two books were published only a year apart) and concludes that the IWW made two distinct contributions to the organizing of women. The first was that it brought housewives on to the picket line and “created new space for their own struggle as women, new bargaining power in the home, new political understanding for the future, as well as doubling the size of the working-class army.” The second contribution was the IWW’s “effort to integrate women’s fundamental demand for reproductive freedom with the general class struggle, to take the demand for birth control into the labor movement and bring out its class aspects.” She believes that this showed that the IWW could bring women’s issues and economic issues together in a way that no other group was doing at the time.<sup>9</sup>

Ann Schofield’s article “Rebel Girls and Union Maids: The Woman Question in the Journals of the AFL and IWW, 1905-1920,” looks at what the journals of the two organizations said about women’s roles rather than focusing on women’s actual experience with the unions. As with most discussions of women in the IWW, Schofield criticizes the Wobblies “economic determinism,” and their limited view of a revolutionary new society because of their “adherence to the standard Marxist view which saw capitalism, and not patriarchy, as the root cause of women’s oppression.”<sup>10</sup>

While the IWW can fairly be criticized on that point, I disagree with Schofield in her view that the IWW placed women in a fundamentally domestic role. She writes: Despite the Wobblies’ overt repudiation of bourgeois womanhood, and the compassion which they expressed for the misery of the working-class woman, they created a fundamentally domestic and inspirational image of femininity in the pages of their journals. Perhaps because they only confronted actual working women in any significant numbers in the textile industry the Wobblies focused their attention on an ideal of woman in her moral, domestic role. The sanctity of the home, and woman’s place in it, they

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<sup>8</sup> Philip Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, (New York: Free Press, 1979), 412.

<sup>9</sup> Meredith Tax, *The Rising of the Women: Feminist Solidarity and Class Conflict, 1880-1917*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980) 162-163.

<sup>10</sup> Ann Schofield, “Rebel Girls and Union Maids,” *Feminist Studies* 9 No. 2 (Summer 1983): 354.

seemed to say, would be neither threatened nor disturbed by the coming of the One Big Union.<sup>11</sup>

The Rebel Girl, in Schofield's view, is essentially domestic. "The Rebel Girl stood by her male comrade as muse or helpmate and instilled a pacifist and revolutionary ideology in her children."<sup>12</sup> While the Rebel Girl in ideology may have been all of those things, there were plenty of real-life Rebel Girls within the organization. In my findings the Rebel Girl is active in the public sphere. She stood up for what she believed in and fought alongside her male counterpart, not as a "muse or helpmate," but as an equal. Female participation was necessary to bring about One Big Union, not just an added bonus to speed up its inception. As to her role once it was in place, that was much more ambiguous than Schofield allows for. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was closest to it when she said that it was equally absurd to relegate women to the home or force her into the workplace. Women's place in the domestic sphere was left for the woman to decide.

While studies of the IWW in the 1960s and 1970s assumed its maleness, recent studies focusing on culture and ideology, but also influenced by gender theory, have concentrated on its masculinity. But to focus solely on issues of masculinity and femininity, in a region where IWW membership was predominantly male and workers were often exhorted to "be a man" and join the union, runs the risk again putting the focus on men and relegating women to the sidelines.<sup>13</sup> Francis Shor's article "'Virile Syndicalism' in Comparative Perspective: A Gender Analysis of the IWW in the United States and Australia" is the most comprehensive analysis of the gendered ideology of the organization. Shor argues that IWW ideology attempted to redefine what it meant to be a working-class man in the early twentieth century. To combat the emasculating tendencies of the state and the workplace, the IWW proposed an "oppositional masculinity and a brotherhood of working class solidarity."<sup>14</sup> In the process of doing this, according to Shor, it "downplayed the critical role that women performed in sustaining any social movement." I do not deny that the IWW employed masculine imagery and urged workers to "be a man" and join the IWW. Shor's analysis however, ignores the role that women did play in the organization. When he mentions the IWW in the

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<sup>11</sup> Schofield, "Rebel Girls," 344.

<sup>12</sup> Schofield, "Rebel Girls," 354-355.

<sup>13</sup> This danger of gender history becoming another way of focusing on men is expressed in June Purvis and Amanda Weatherill's response to Penelope Corfield's "History and the Challenge of Gender History" in *The Feminist History Reader*, Sue Morgan, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Francis Shor, "'Virile Syndicalism' in Comparative Perspective: A Gender Analysis of the IWW in the United States and Australia," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 56 (1999): 72.

Northwest, it is solely in the context of the “brotherhood” and solidarity formed by life in the lumber camps. In *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America*, Todd Depastino also discusses the focus on hobos and masculinity, noting that “despite its inclusive intentions, however, Wobbly folklore propagated a fiction of working-class unity that discounted, and indeed erased, the gender, ethnic, and racial differences that divided the body of labor.” He does then recognize that this masculine image was at odds with the reality that the “homeguard” did play important roles in many Wobbly strikes.<sup>15</sup>

It is clear that the IWW appealed to male workers and that it employed a gendered discourse of masculinity to promote revolutionary unionism. Despite the masculine ideology, however, women were still drawn to the organization. Many of them created a gendered imagery themselves, deriding the manhood of strikebreakers, urging workers to be “real men,” and creating a new ideal of femininity, the Rebel Girl. This kind of female activism was used to shame men who were not taking such an active stance. Regarding the three women arrested in the Spokane free speech fight the *Industrial Worker* noted: “it ought to make some of you great, husky, imitations of men ashamed of yourselves when women suffer that you may have your right.”<sup>16</sup>

Frank Tobias Higbie’s *Indispensable Outcasts: Hobo Workers and Community in the American Midwest, 1880-1930* and Gregory Hall’s *Harvest Wobblies: the Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Laborers in the American West, 1905-1930* both look at what Hall calls the “worklife culture” of migrant laborers associated with the IWW.<sup>17</sup> These authors find that this culture was limited in its appeal to women, minorities, and workers with families. While I agree with their assessments of the culture and practices of migrant male workers, they ignore that the IWW attracted many women as members and sympathizers. Contrary to Hall and Higbie, I have found that women were an important part of the IWW. Once the story of women in the IWW is understood and demonstrated, we may then ask how men related to women who tried to organize workers in lumber camps and to female workers who belonged to the same IWW mixed local.

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<sup>15</sup> Todd Depastino, *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 123.

<sup>16</sup> *Industrial Worker*, November 10, 1909.

<sup>17</sup> Frank Tobias Higbie, *Indispensable Outcasts: Hobo Workers and Community in the American Midwest, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003). Greg Hall, *Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Laborers in the American West, 1905-1930*, (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2001).

If, as Hall and Higbie demonstrate, IWW culture appealed so strongly to male, migrant workers, what about it appealed to women? I argue that these Wobbly women were drawn primarily to the ideology of the union, and then to its culture. The revolutionary syndicalism of the union focused on direct action in the workplace and on the streets that gave women a role to play outside of the political realm, where many middle-class women focused on the fight for suffrage. While Wobbly women wanted equality, freedom of speech, better workplace conditions, birth control, and the freedom to choose whether to get married, they saw the answer to these problems in industrial organization, and did not look to the state to “save” them in the way that middle-class activists did.

Were these Wobbly women feminists? The question has been divisive when looking at women in other radical circles. As Jennifer Guglielmo notes when studying working-class anarchist Italian women in New York, most of them did not choose to use the word *femminismo* to describe their ideals, but instead used the word *emancipazione* “because it distinguished their activism from bourgeois feminisms and captured the all-encompassing nature of the freedoms they desired.”<sup>18</sup> Many radical and progressive women disdained the term “feminist” because of its association with white middle-class women. In Kate Weigand’s defense of her use of the term “red feminism” to describe women in the Communist Party in the 1940s and 1950s, she uses a much broader definition of feminism. Quoting Linda Gordon, Weigand’s definition of red feminism offered “a critique of male supremacy, formed and offered in the light of a will to change it, which in turn assumes a conviction that it is changeable.”<sup>19</sup>

The term “feminist” was coming into vogue during the early twentieth century, and it was associated primarily with white, middle-class women, whose main focus of activism was suffrage. Wobbly women saw more in common with their working-class brothers than these women, and so distanced themselves from the term. Even by Gordon’s more broad definition, most Wobbly women would still not be considered feminists. Their critiques focused on the evils of capitalism, and while they advocated more freedoms for women, most often did not offer “a critique of male supremacy” to go along with it.

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<sup>18</sup> Jennifer Guglielmo, “Transnational Feminism’s Radical Past: Lessons from Italian Immigrant Women Anarchists in Industrializing America,” *Journal of Women’s History* 22, no. 1 (2010): 12.

<sup>19</sup> Kate Weigand “Reply to Critics,” *Science and Society* 66 No. 4 (Winter 2002-2003): 533.

While studies of women and the mainstream labor movement have proliferated, little research has been done on women and the IWW in the last twenty years.<sup>20</sup> The best work to date on women and the IWW is Ardis Cameron's *Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1860-1912*, which examines the history of female resistance in Lawrence. Cameron's focus is on women's networks, which she found to be crucial in sustaining long-term strike activity. The IWW itself is peripheral to her analysis, as she is interested in women's activism before, during, and after the union made its brief appearance in Lawrence. She demonstrates that the organization recognized the strength and importance of women's networks, as well as local leadership of ethnic neighborhoods, and utilized them during the 1912 strike. The IWW did not, however, achieve a lasting presence in Lawrence. Cameron underscores that women played a role in constructing their own identity, but they also had to work within socially accepted notions of women's place in society. She finds that "at times women struggled against established meanings in order to participate in militant collective action while at other times women used their position as caretakers of the home and family to justify their radicalism and their use of violence."<sup>21</sup> Wobbly women in the Northwest, as well as in Lawrence, struggled against and utilized conceptions of femininity and women's place in the home in their activism.

A 2001 article on the state of Pacific Northwest women's history by Karen Blair listed several issues on which more work needed to be done, including politics, radicalism, movements to redress inequality, and sexual issues, all of which will be taken up in this study.<sup>22</sup> Historians have studied working-class women in the Pacific Northwest, but the work has primarily focused on trade union activism of the AFL variety. The best example of this is Dana Frank's *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919-1929*. Frank acknowledges that she is not primarily focusing on IWW activities, and tends to lump together Socialist, IWW, anarchist and other leftist critiques of trade unionism. What her analysis has to offer is how working-

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<sup>20</sup> Influential works on women and the labor movement include Illeen DeVault, *United Apart: Gender and the Rise of Craft Unionism*, (2004), Mary Margaret Fonow, *Union Women: Forging Feminism in the United Steel Workers of America*, (2003), Nancy Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers* (1990), Dorothy Sue Cobble, ed. *Women and Unions: Forging a Partnership*. (1993), and Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small Town Ontario, 1920-1960* (1995).

<sup>21</sup> Ardis Cameron, *Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1860-1912* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 10.

<sup>22</sup> Karen Blair, "The State of Research on Pacific Northwest Women," *Frontiers* 22 (2001): 51. Blair also edited *Women in Pacific Northwest History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988).

class women perceived their role in the home as work in the same way women working in factories viewed their work. While women could not strike at home, they held power at the point of consumption. They used this power to further workers' causes, either by forming cooperative stores, purchasing union labeled products, or boycotting goods produced unfairly. This women's activity is an important aspect of working-class women's activism, although the women I will be focusing on are attempting to foster a much more radical change in society. They focused most of their efforts on publicly standing up for their ideals, rather than on consumption. Frank's analysis also examines the ways the male-dominated trade union movement either disregarded or did not understand the issues facing women when they made choices about consumption, and therefore could not fully integrate women's interests into the labor movement.<sup>23</sup>

In her article on the debate over married women's wage-work in Seattle, Maurine Greenwald examined how working-class feminists framed that issue between 1914 and 1920. She argues that they had difficulty "in balancing their individual and collective aspirations as women with loyalties felt as members of the working class."<sup>24</sup> My work on the IWW, however, suggests that women in the union sought solidarity with working-class men, and denied that a common bond existed between women that transcended classes. As early as 1907 Lillian Forberg advocated women organizing with men. She wrote in the IWW newspaper the *Industrial Union Bulletin*, "wherever women are engaged in Industry let them organize, not by themselves, but together with the men with whom they work; let them take an active part in the control of the organization and the education of the unorganized; by doing so they will become a part of the embryo of the Industrial Commonwealth which is forming within the shell of capitalism."<sup>25</sup> Deriding upper-class women, and their well-fed dogs, was also a common theme in IWW papers. I am not suggesting that these few anecdotes mean that women never felt that their interests as workers and as women were in conflict, but that women who advocated revolutionary industrial unionism often felt that ties of class were stronger than ties of sex. Mari Jo Buhle notes that during this period many immigrant working class women found middle-class suffragists wanted to "divert them from active class consciousness to

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<sup>23</sup> Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> Maureen Greenwald, "Working-Class Feminism and the Family Wage Ideal: The Seattle Debate on Married Women's Right to Work, 1914-1920," *The Journal of American History* 76 (Jun. 1989): 121.

<sup>25</sup> *Industrial Union Bulletin*, April 9, 1907.

a more abstract transclass loyalty, from the vision of the general strike to an endless electoral tug of war.”<sup>26</sup>

When speaking specifically of the IWW and the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, Laurie Mercier notes that “labor scholars’ focus on individual male workers, their industries, and their unions has often failed to recognize their interdependence with their communities, families, and women.”<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Jameson counteracts that failure in her study of the working-class community in Cripple Creek, Colorado, emphasizing that within that community, relationships “connected personal and group identities; they connected work and class to other sources of social identity and social identities to behavior and action.”<sup>28</sup> Acknowledging how social relationships inspired or limited political action gives us a much fuller picture of working-class history than focusing solely on strikes and organizations.

Historians of the IWW, and some Wobblies, have often traced the radicalism of migratory workers, like those in the lumber camps, to their lack of family ties. The popular association of the Wobbly as a single, male, transient was utilized by the press, business owners, politicians, church leaders, and the American Federation of Labor to insinuate that Wobblies were not “respectable” citizens—that they did not possess the social respectability that came along with having a family. Respectability, often identified as having a family and owning a home, was utilized by the middle class and the “labor aristocracy” of the AFL. Philip Dreyfus, in an article on the IWW in Grays Harbor, Washington, gives many examples of mill owners, politicians, newspapers, and unions using language that privileged not simply white men, but white *family* men.<sup>29</sup> The politics of respectability were often used against the IWW, and family status was a key part of that. But the importance of family status was contested ground. The IWW in some instances played up that its members had wives and children or were mothers themselves, but it also rejected the argument that those with families should be treated differently than those without.

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<sup>26</sup> Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 228.

<sup>27</sup> Laurie Mercier, “Reworking Race, Class, and Gender into Pacific Northwest History,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies*, 22 No. 3 (2001): 10.

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Jameson, *All That Glitters: Class, Conflict, and Community in Cripple Creek*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 8.

<sup>29</sup> Philip Dreyfus, “The IWW and the Limits of Inter-Ethnic Organizing: Reds, Whites, and Greeks in Grays Harbor, Washington, 1912,” *Labor History* 38 (Fall 1997): 456, 457.

Historians and social scientists often refer to the “politics of respectability” as the movement by African-Americans in the early twentieth century to counteract racist stereotypes by promoting “respectable” behavior in areas such as language, dress, and sexuality. But as Farah Jasmine Griffin points out in her article on W.E.B. DuBois and black feminism, “the politics of respectability seeks to reform the behavior of individuals and as such takes the emphasis away from structural forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, and poverty.”<sup>30</sup> Griffin argues that the politics of respectability also invokes a “promise of protection” for black women, who were denied protection afforded white women by virtue of their status in society as virtuous moral guardians. In his article on the Railroad Brotherhoods, Paul Michel Taillon emphasizes how the brotherhoods’ temperance crusade constructed an idealized image of the respectable manhood, which “involved self-control, self-improvement, and unflinching defense of one’s rights against unjust repression.” Beyond being active in his union and mastering his craft at his workplace, this respectable union man also “earned a family wage, sustained a household as a responsible breadwinner, contributed to his local community, and actively participated politically through voting and associating on a free and equal basis with his fellow citizen-men.”<sup>31</sup>

Both of these images of respectability have obviously gendered dimensions. For African-American women, respectability meant combating the image of black women as overly-sexualized or morally deficient. For the railroad men, this meant providing for their families, providing a stable home, and making a family wage so that their wives had no need to leave the home for wage labor. In her book on women’s auxiliaries of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Melinda Chateauvert ties respectability to domesticity. Women’s claims to citizenship were only validated by domesticity; if they worked outside the home they were not good mothers and therefore lacked the necessary respectability to make public demands. Only by functioning primarily in the home was it acceptable for them to step out of those boundaries to speak on behalf of their families.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Farah Jasmine Griffin, “Black Feminists and DuBois: Respectability, Protection, and Beyond,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568 (March 2000): 34.

<sup>31</sup> Paul Michel Taillon, “‘What We Want Is Good, Sober Men:’ Masculinity, Respectability, and Temperance in the Railroad Brotherhoods, c. 1870-1910,” *Journal of Social History* 36, No. 2 (Winter 2002): 324-325.

<sup>32</sup> Melinda Chateauvert, *Marching Together: Women of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 3.

Male members of the IWW faced accusations that they lacked respectability, and therefore, in the views of some labor leaders, politicians, and vigilantes, forfeited claims to First Amendment rights and sometimes even legal protection. Not all of these adversaries defined respectability the same way. For conservative union members, virtually all male, respectability included knowledge of a skilled trade, union activism within his craft, stability in a community, and a family. The respectable union man's wife would not work outside of the home if at all possible, and was an active member of the union's women's auxiliary. For politicians, the Wobbly's defiance of laws they saw as unjust and the organization's uninterest in signing contracts with employers denied it respectability. Vigilantes obsessed with 100% Americanism viewed the IWW as unpatriotic and un-American. Respectability was also tied to sexuality, race, ethnicity, and religion, with heterosexual, white, Anglo, Protestant workers as the standard-bearers.

Female Wobblies faced different criteria for respectability. As will be discussed in my chapter on women and the 1913 Oregon Packing Company strike, the public roles that many female Wobblies played during strikes, speeches, and rallies took them out of the private sphere of the home and into the public arena. Middle-class women had gained more acceptance as public speakers in progressive causes and suffrage campaigns, speaking to women and about women's issues. Female Wobblies used the language of working-class solidarity and spoke to a mixed-sex audience and with male speakers during free speech fights such as the one in Everett. They therefore bore a double threat to their respectability.

Sherri Broder points out that definitions of respectability not only differed between social classes, but also between ethnic and racial groups. She explains that "roughness and respectability, then, could divide men and women within each racial and ethnic group, even while the defense of respectability united men and women of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds in the organized labor movement."<sup>33</sup> Simon Cordery warns against creating dichotomies while discussing respectability, writing that many historians display "a tendency to see the concept in terms of a clear-cut choice between two opposing behavior patterns readily interpreted as respectable or nonrespectable."<sup>34</sup> To borrow Broder's terminology, roughness and respectability have a dialectical relationship

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<sup>33</sup> Sherri Broder, *Tramps, Unfit Mothers, and Neglected Children: Negotiating the Family in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 56.

<sup>34</sup> Simon Cordery, "Friendly Societies and the Discourse of Respectability in Britain, 1825-1875," *The Journal of British Studies* 34, No. 1 (January 1995): 39.

rather than a static, dichotomous one. It is a relationship that is forged by issues of class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, and age.

Sociologists have also demonstrated that as recently as the 1980s, and into the present, “nonlegal indicators of respectability will affect the sanctions that female defendants incur.”<sup>35</sup> Wobbly women were often arrested due to their connection with the union, and while on trial or being interrogated by the police they were questioned about their personal lives on matters that had nothing to do with the case at hand. Prosecutors utilized relationship status to signify the defendant’s lack of respectability, and therefore increase the likelihood that a jury would find them to be disreputable in other ways.

David Goodshaw defines the core of respectability as a focus on “economic independence, on orderliness, cleanliness and fidelity in sexual relations.” Though he notes there is flexibility within this definition, he also compares respectability to E.P. Thompson’s definition of class, meaning that respectability was “defined against other people.”<sup>36</sup> Those “other people” would be the rough, the disreputable people who did not meet the norms set by the in-group. Wobblies were often seen as outsiders, the very definition of the “other.” But they fought back against this definition of respectability with one of their own based on solidarity, courage in the face of repression, and free choice in personal matters.<sup>37</sup>

Members of the IWW both used and rejected family status as a signifier of respectability to press their own interests. For example, a 1918 cartoon in *The New Solidarity* showed a mother and two children sitting at a dinner table. One of the chairs is empty, and has the words “in Leavenworth” written on the back.<sup>38</sup> This image is meant to provoke sympathy for the families left behind in the aftermath of government repression, counteracting the prevailing stereotype, still evident today in the historiography, of the jailed Wobblies as bums, tramps, and wanderers. Conversely, the IWW members at times rejected the “respectable” status of women or workers with families. After the Spokane free speech fight C.M. Connors refused the suspension of his four-month sentence, which was advocated by the court out of sympathy for his family.<sup>39</sup> He did not

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<sup>35</sup> Candace Kruttschnitt, “Respectable Women and the Law,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 23 (Spring 1982): 221.

<sup>36</sup> David Goodshaw, “Working-Class Respectability: The Example of the Western Areas of Johannesburg, 1930-1955,” *The Journal of African History* Vol. 41 No. 2 (2000): 241-242.

<sup>37</sup> Mark Leier makes a similar point in *Red Flags and Red Tape: The Making of a Labor Bureaucracy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) and in *Rebel Life: The Life and Times of Robert Gosden, Revolutionary, Mystic, Labor Spy* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1999).

<sup>38</sup> *The New Solidarity*, November 30, 1918.

<sup>39</sup> *Industrial Worker*, January 15, 1910.

accept that his status as a head of household entitled him to a lighter sentence than his fellow Wobblies.

My work will build on that of Colleen O'Neill on the Bisbee Deportation of 1917, who found that the strikers, the mine owners, and the wives of those deported "all constructed the parameters of the struggle around the discourse of familial responsibility."<sup>40</sup> In some cases this is also true in the Northwest. During the trial following the Everett Massacre, the IWW insisted that its female members and women in the community who supported the union bestowed respectability to the organization. The notion of respectability was also used against women, as happened to Mrs. Thompson in Spokane. She was accused of being an unfit mother because she frequented the Wobbly hall with her son. These examples help counter the prevailing notion that the Northwest Wobblies were largely motivated by their lack of family ties.

The women in this study were not all wage earners themselves. Many were wives of IWW men and did not work outside the home. The question of whether housewives could be members of the IWW was explicitly posed to the *Industrial Union Bulletin* in 1908. The IWW constitution stated that none but wage earners could be members. Sophie Vasilio wrote in to ask if non-waged working-class women had a right to belong to a mixed local of the union, that is, locals that did not represent a specific industry, but all members regardless of occupation. The editor responded that "no reason is apparent women, married and wishing to aid in the propaganda work, should not be admitted to a mixed local; but no provision is made for such a person when the mixed local ends its activities and its members take their places in Industrial Unions."<sup>41</sup> The editor also said that the issue would be addressed at the next convention, though it never was.<sup>42</sup> IWW housewives did not, however, wait for official confirmation of their role. Besides the women mentioned earlier in connection with the Everett Massacre, housewives also played parts in free speech fights and defense committees. Clearly women's roles in the IWW have been more profound and complicated than most historians have suggested.

Thus this thesis will follow those historians of gender and class who have begun to shift their focus from the workplace to the household and the community. Alice

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<sup>40</sup> Colleen O'Neill, "Domesticity Deployed: Gender, Race and the Construction of Class Struggle in the Bisbee Deportation," *Labor History* 34 (Spring/Summer 1993): 258.

<sup>41</sup> *Industrial Union Bulletin*, April 25, 1908.

<sup>42</sup> Meredith Tax, *The Rising of the Women: Feminist Solidarity and Class Conflict, 1880-1917* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), 131.

Kessler-Harris advocated this approach in her 1993 article “Treating the Male as ‘Other’: Redefining the Parameters of Labor History.” Kessler-Harris points out that “the broader conception of economic activity encompasses the workplace and the household/community in a reciprocal and changing relationship where each participates in shaping the other. Part of the shaping process involves the subjective experiences, understandings, and expectations of men and women for whom gender *may* be the most salient part of their sense of social order.”<sup>43</sup> This study takes this inclusive approach, and looks at women and the IWW in the workplace, community, and household, while attempting to understand how class and gender shaped their experiences in all of those areas. Focusing on the Pacific Northwest allows me to examine small cities and resource towns, rather than lumber camps. The demographics are very different as a result, and therefore expand our notion of what a Wobbly was, and how the Wobbly community functioned outside of the lumber camp and hobo jungle.

This thesis will also make a contribution to the history of radicalism. While the role of women in labor organizations like the AFL and CIO have been the subject of study, no one has yet analyzed the relationships between men and women in the IWW. The Pacific Northwest is a good place to start, not only because it is often viewed as the bastion of the young, single, male population of the IWW, but also because the IWW was involved in so many activities outside of the specific realm of the workplace. It offered women, even those who were not wage earners, a way to act directly in support of industrial unionism, free speech, birth control, and other social issues. They did not focus their efforts on suffrage and political parties, but in direct confrontation with local, state, and federal governments, as well as employers.

This dissertation focuses on the states of Oregon and Washington. A regional rather than a local study is important, because women’s participation in the organization was not significant enough in any one city to warrant a smaller local study and because women did not limit themselves to a single city. One of the women who will figure prominently in my study, Edith Frenette, travelled around the region, showing up in free speech fights and strikes in Port Alberni, British Columbia, Everett, Seattle, and Spokane, Washington, and Missoula, Montana. A regional perspective will also illuminate how the radical community of the Northwest functioned. Wobblies often held meetings in conjunction with Socialists, and hosted anarchist speakers such as Emma

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<sup>43</sup> Alice Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 150. Italics added.

Goldman when she came through town. Major events such as free speech fights drew in Wobblies all over the continent to participate. Restricting the study of the IWW to a city or industry restricts our understanding of it as a community and a movement.

A regional study is also important because Oregon and Washington differed socially, politically, and economically from big cities in the East and Midwest that have traditionally been the focus of labor historians. The region was rapidly growing and changing at the beginning of the century, and this growth set the stage for the environment that the Wobblies were living in. The industrialization that took place over a century in a city like New York happened in roughly three decades in Washington State. The two northwest states were not connected with the rest of the country by railroad until the late 1880s, at which point industries such as lumber, mining, and agriculture started booming. These were mostly male-dominated industries, with females tending to work in telephone operation, canning, laundry, and domestic jobs. Most studies of women workers during this period focus on women working in large factories, but the particular development of the Northwest, with its focus on resource industries, meant their experience was significantly different.

The Pacific Northwest also differed from other regions of the country due to its ethnic makeup. From 1890-1920 both Oregon and Washington maintained a primarily white population, with larger Asian and Native American populations than of African Americans. The category of “white” does little to tell us about whether these people were native-born, or which region of Europe they came from. The Northwest was far from the point of entry of Ellis Island for many European immigrants, and most had settled for awhile somewhere else in the country before migrating to the region. Of the European immigrants, Scandinavians were the most numerous. The similarity of climate, geography, and industry to countries like Sweden and Norway was said to be a motivating factor bringing them to the region. Most had previously lived in the Midwest, where similar conditions prompted them to immigrate there initially. As the center of the lumber industry shifted from the Midwest to the Northwest, immigration patterns followed. It has proven difficult to find demographic information for many of the women in the study, but when it is available it shows that the majority were born in the United

States or Canada. Therefore racial and ethnic difference among these radical women were not deemed significant enough to be a major category of analysis in this study.<sup>44</sup>

The first chapter focuses on the Spokane free speech fight. It was one of the early notable Wobbly-led fights in the Northwest, and one of the first that brought women into the picture. Elizabeth Gurly Flynn, Edith Frenette, and Agnes Thecla Fair all spent time in the jails of Spokane during the fight, and their treatment caused a public outcry over the deplorable conditions that jailed women faced. The second chapter examines a small strike in Seattle in 1912. While the strike itself was minor, the treatment of two of the strike leaders sheds light upon how authorities tried to stigmatize and punish Wobblies for unorthodox beliefs in love and marriage.

Chapter three examines the 1913 Portland cannery strike. While the IWW did organize female laundry workers, waitresses, and domestics in the region, details of these labor struggles are difficult to come by. The Portland strike was the largest and most significant in the Northwest that primarily involved women. The cannery strike evolved into a free speech fight with several women involved, and also introduced the Portland Wobblies to an 18-year-old girl named Lillian Larkin, arrested on suspicion of prostitution. This provides a welcome example to study how the union related to prostitutes and saw prostitution as a byproduct of industrial capitalism.

Chapter four focuses on the Everett Massacre and ensuing trial. The little-known role that women played in the events in Everett was the inspiration for this study to begin with. Women were jailed for speaking in Everett, and the audiences at most of the street speaking events were comprised primarily of women and children. This chapter will examine women's pivotal role in the events leading up to the Massacre, how women were used by both sides during the ensuing trial, and examine Wobbly beliefs on the institution of marriage.

Chapters one through four examine the ways in which respectability was utilized by both the Wobblies and their detractors during legal proceedings and in public discourse. These two tactics, of both judging respectability on behalf of the law, and defending respectability on behalf of the Wobblies, held strong until the beginning of World War I. As war hysteria mounted, respectability shifted and became more strongly tied to 100% Americanism, which meant patriotic support of the war. While questions of sexual morality did not stop completely, they were no longer the primary focus of

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<sup>44</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the Finnish radical community in Gray's Harbor, Washington, see Aaron Goings, "Red Harbor: Class, Violence, and Community in Grays Harbor, Washington" (PhD diss., Simon Fraser University, 2011).

interrogation. If officials felt that Wobbly beliefs threatened the traditional family before the war, they reasoned that Wobbly political beliefs threatened the entire nation during the war. The war also subsumed focus on women's issues such as birth control. Radical birth control activism peaked in 1915, and became less of a focus and most radical activists turned their attention to the war.

Marie Equi and Louise Oliveriau are two great examples of women connected to the IWW that shifted their focus from women's issues to antiwar activism. Chapters five and six examine the cases of these two women who were arrested for speaking out against World War I. Their cases were widely known in the Northwest, and as two infamous IWW supporters, are essential to understanding the region during this period. The treatment that Equi and Oliveriau received from federal officials and the support (or lack thereof) that they received from the IWW reflected the changing environment of a nation at war.

This study concludes with a look at the multiple ways less well-known women were affected by the crackdown on the IWW during the war. Women were arrested for work they did in support of the organization, and many threatened with jail time or deportation. Women also played a role in supporting the male Wobblies who were arrested around the Northwest. Through the examination of the tensions that split the organization, and how individuals suffered due to persecution and federal repression, we come to understand how the war years ultimately led to a decline in the family and female friendly aspect of the organization, and how the radical community of the Pacific Northwest ceased to function as it had in the years prior to the war.

Repression of the IWW led to the destruction of the much of the organization's official records. During the 1917 raids, Wobbly halls all over the country were emptied of pamphlets, membership lists, and official correspondence and much of this material was destroyed by the authorities. The voices of individual Wobblies come through most clearly in articles, letters, and editorials in the organizations newspapers, which included in this time period the *Industrial Union Bulletin*, *Solidarity*, the *Industrial Worker* (the only one located in the Northwest), and the *One Big Union Monthly*. I have also supplemented this with local newspapers, which often took a very anti-Wobbly stance. Other sources used include legal records, spy reports, correspondence, and pamphlets put out by the union or by members.

## Chapter 1

### IWW Origins in the Northwest and Women's Role in the Spokane Free Speech Fight, 1905-1910

The migratory nature of work in extractive industries, the mix of native-born Americans with immigrants from China, Japan, and the Scandinavian countries, and the popularity of socialist politics, labor activism, and utopian communities together made the Northwest an environment conducive to the inclusive unionism imagined by the Industrial Workers of the World. This region became the site of several IWW strikes and political actions, and the organization was known by workers and feared by employers by the early 1910s. Spokane, the largest city in the Eastern Washington agricultural region, was the site of one of the union's most active locals as well as the location of the *Industrial Worker*, the newspaper of the western branch of the organization. It was in Spokane in 1909 where the IWW held one of their most successful free speech fights and cemented the reputation of the organization in the region.

The Spokane Free Speech Fight is significant to the history of the organization in that it popularized a form of protest the Wobblies would use throughout the west. It provided publicity for the organization in its early years, and it was seen as a success for the IWW. Thus the story of the events in Spokane has been told many times. In this chapter I am less interested in the logistics or tactical aspects of the fight than in what it tells us about women in the IWW. The fight was the real introduction of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn to the Northwest. The famous "Rebel Girl" of the IWW, the organization's most prominent female organizer, was nineteen and pregnant at the time of her arrival in Spokane, and she was one of the two Wobblies charged with conspiracy to break the law. The fight also involved other female members of the organization who spoke on the streets and supported the many Wobblies in jail. One woman, Edith Frenette, was jailed several times throughout the fight. Because she was not held as long as the men were, she was able to go right back out on the street, only to be arrested again. Women involved with the IWW also publicized the conditions in the women's jail, and ended up spurring the middle-class reformers of the city to investigate and advocate the hiring of a matron for the jail. Analyzing these aspects of the fight help us understand how male and female Wobblies could be treated differently under the law, how women involved with the IWW actively participated in and risked their freedom to fight with the union, and how the IWW provided women with an avenue to make their voices heard and in turn

shed light on the conditions that lower class or “low” women faced.

The Industrial Workers of the World was formed at a convention that began 27 June 1905 in Chicago. There were 203 delegates present including Bill Haywood, Lucy Parsons, Mother Jones, Eugene Debs, and Daniel DeLeon. There were representatives from many unions, the largest of which were the Western Federation of Miners and the American Labor Union. The avowed purpose of this new organization was to liberate the working class from their capitalist masters and put them in charge of the means of production. This would be accomplished through industrial unionism, inclusive of all workers, regardless of sex, race or skill. This was in direct opposition to the American Federation of Labor and its practice of craft unionism. From its inception, the IWW explicitly rejected the methods of the AFL, which separated workers into craft unions and often ignored or overtly discriminated against unskilled workers, women, and minorities.

At the founding convention of the IWW, 12 of the 203 delegates were women. Only one, Mother Jones, signed the founding document of the IWW, the *Industrial Union Manifesto*, and none were on the executive committee. Besides Mother Jones, the most notable female attendant was Lucy Parsons, widow of Haymarket martyr Albert Parsons. On the third day of the convention, Parsons addressed the crowd:

We, the women of this country, have no ballot, even if we wished to use it, and the only way that we can be represented is to take a man to represent us. You men have made such a mess of it in representing us that we have not much confidence in asking you....We are the slaves of slaves. We are exploited more ruthlessly than the men. Wherever wages are to be reduced, the capitalist class uses women to reduce them, and if there is anything that you men should do in the future, it is to organize the women.<sup>1</sup>

Parsons made clear the necessity of women’s organization and participation in the union from its very beginning. When the question of dues arose, she spoke of female textile workers who only made \$3.60 a week, and the delegates had this in mind as they adopted a policy of low dues and initiation fees. The second convention lowered dues even further for women.<sup>2</sup>

The IWW, though often referred to as “outsiders” by the press and by business owners, had to learn how the communities they wanted to organize functioned, be able to work within preformed formal and informal alliances, and understand what the community was looking to achieve. Although there were a few paid organizers in the

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<sup>1</sup> Philip S. Foner, ed. *Women and the American Labor Movement: From Colonial Times to the Eve of World War I*. (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 393.

<sup>2</sup> Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, 394. Carolyn Ashbaugh, *Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary*. (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1976), 217.

IWW, every member was encouraged to spread the word about the union and its philosophy in their workplace and promote membership. As the organization grew, members were able to function as their own community, with locals that served not only union members but also as gathering places for women and families. If the organization gained regional popularity after a 1907 sawmill strike in Portland, the 1909 free speech fight in Spokane is when it gained national notoriety.

The year prior to the Spokane Free Speech Fight was a transformational year for the IWW. The question of political action had inspired debate among leaders, and Daniel DeLeon, head of the Socialist Labor Party, and his supporters tried to take control of the union. At the 1908 convention, held in Chicago, DeLeon and his supporters were the delegates from New York. In Portland, notorious IWW organizer James H. Walsh gathered a group of men and began what came to be known as the infamous Overalls Brigade. Nineteen men in overalls boarded the “red special” and hopped trains all around the Northwest on their way to Chicago, singing and propagandizing all way. Mrs. Walsh joined them, though she rode in the passenger car. Mrs. Walsh, whose first name is unknown, helped set up meetings as the group traveled, for when the men left the jungles to head into Centralia, she was there waiting for them with “the whole bunch of congregants.”<sup>3</sup> After that they stopped in Tacoma, Seattle, and Spokane before heading further east. DeLeon derogatorily referred to them as “the bummers” upon their arrival. The debate between the two factions was over what role politics should play in the organization. Did political action need to happen to make industrial action possible? Or would voting distract workers from necessary action in the workplace? Would the IWW be a union affiliate of the Socialist Party, or something else entirely? The convention at that point decided to remove any reference to political action from the preamble of the constitution. This was an important transitional moment for the organization, and although most have viewed this as the triumph of the “hobo element,” the organizers themselves, Mr. and Mrs. Walsh, were not hobos. Todd Depastino argues that the Overalls Brigade rang in a new era of hobo imagery in the West. He notes that Walsh “and his floating fraternity celebrated their identities as 'sons of rest' who preferred 'the simple life in the jungles' to the workaday world of the homeguard.”<sup>4</sup> While this may have

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<sup>3</sup> Walsh, JH, “IWW Red Special Overall Brigade,” *Industrial Worker* September 19, 1908, as quoted in Joyce L Kornbluh, *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964), 41.

<sup>4</sup> Todd DePastino, *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America* (University Of Chicago Press, 2005), 96.

been the case for some, Walsh himself was obviously “tied down” to his wife, since she accompanied and helped them on their journey. While this imagery of the hobo jungle and distrust of the “homeguard” is prevalent in IWW literature, when examining many of the major IWW events in the Northwest, it is clear that women were involved and that many men involved were married. This “triumph” of the bummers at the 1908 convention was less about the power of the male migratory workers and hobo imagery, and more about focusing on the workplace and community, rather than on political action. A focus on political action would have given females who did not yet have the right to vote no role to play, and left untapped the real strength of the organization finding imaginative and daring ways to improve work and community life in the region.

In March 1909, due to lack of funds, the GEB suspended publication of the IWW newspaper, the *Industrial Union Bulletin*. Though *Solidarity* took its place later that year, the future of the union was still uncertain, especially in the east. But events in 1909 led to one of the Wobblies’ most memorable fights, and one of their biggest victories. Spokane had a population of 104,402, and 39% were women.<sup>5</sup> It had quickly become one of the largest IWW strongholds in the West. Workers engaged in the lumber industry or in agriculture came to Spokane to find jobs or as a place to stay during the break between forest work and harvest season. Spokane was also the home of the *Industrial Worker*, the official western organ of the IWW, from 1909 to 1913. By April of 1909, the IWW hall in Spokane boasted a library with a reading room—no talking or smoking allowed—a cigar and newsstand, and an assembly hall that held hundreds. The hall showed motion pictures at five cents admission, though the *Industrial Worker* lamented the fact that due to a lack of revolutionary films, comedies were the only ones shown. Workers could buy hospital insurance at the hall for fifty cents a month, which guaranteed them \$10 a week protection. The *Industrial Worker* estimated 1200-1500 members in good standing locally, with 3000 or so in total on the books.<sup>6</sup>

The Spokane IWW hall was more than a community center: it was a place where people could gather for entertainment as well as for information, films and lectures, help finding employment, and a place to sleep and store their belongings. The Spokane hall welcomed families of members, as well as those who were active members themselves. By June of 1909 the IWW band in Spokane boasted four female members: Mrs. Blebel,

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<sup>5</sup> 1910 United States Census.

<sup>6</sup> *Industrial Worker* (Spokane) April 29, 1909.

Bessie Blebel, Jenne Corbin, and Ann Arquett.<sup>7</sup> Women frequented the hall, and resented any suggestion that it was a disreputable place that no respectable woman would patronize.<sup>8</sup>

Many of the women involved in the free speech fight, such as Ann Arquett, could often be found at the Spokane Wobbly hall. Others, such as national organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, traveled to Spokane for the event. While Flynn had been working for the IWW for two years, she gained national notoriety for her role with the organization during the Spokane free speech fight. Flynn grew up in New York, the child of parents who were involved in both the Socialist and Irish nationalist movements. At the age of 16 Flynn gave her first speech, "What Socialism will do for Women." She joined the IWW in 1906, and was organizing for the union by 1907. She was involved in many of the major strikes of the 1910s including the Bread and Roses strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912, the silk-weavers strike in Patterson in 1914, and the Mesabi Iron Range strike in 1916.<sup>9</sup>

Edith Frenette, also arrested in Spokane, is one of the many female members of the IWW whose stories have not been recorded in the history of the organization. In her autobiography, Flynn described Frenette as a camp cook. Frenette took an active role in the free speech fights in Missoula, Spokane, and Everett. She and her husband Charles traveled and worked in both Washington and British Columbia in the early 1910s. We can find a few details about the Frenettes as they were living in Tacoma, Washington during the 1910 census, and Port Alberni, British Columbia during the 1911 census. Charles was born in 1878 in Minnesota, to parents who were born in Canada and were classified as French by ethnicity. Edith was born in 1881 in Maine, to parents who were both born in Canada and listed as Scotch. Interestingly for a Wobbly, in the Canadian census Edith listed her religion as Methodist, while Charles listed none.<sup>10</sup>

During the free speech fight, the Wobblies gained another female recruit who would be with the organization for the rest of her short life, then 10-year-old Katie Phar, the "songbird of the IWW." Katie began singing for the organization during the fight, and

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7 *Industrial Worker* (Spokane) June 17, 1909.

8 This became especially clear in the case of newsboy Joseph Thompson's arrest, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

9 For more about Flynn's life see Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *I Speak My Own Piece* (New York: International Publishers, 1973), Rosalyn Baxandall, *Words on Fire: The Life and Writing of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn* (Rutgers University Press, 1987), and Helen Camp *Iron in Her Soul: Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and the American Left* (Pullman, Washington State University Press, 1995).

10 1910 United States Census, 1911 British Columbia Census, as available on ancestry.com

the local repaid her with a locket that Christmas. She took out her first red card in 1916 during the Everett trial, paid for by defendant Tom Tracy. Katie continued to be a member of the organization until her death in 1943, and the IWW honored her with a memorial edition of the Little Red Songbook in 1945.<sup>11</sup> Phar was remembered far and wide by Wobblies as a tremendous singer, and was active in the organization her entire life. While famous Wobbly singer and martyr Joe Hill was in prison awaiting execution, Phar wrote to him, and he replied to her with a copy of "The Rebel Girl." He expressed his hope she would sing it when Gurley Flynn came to speak in Spokane, "because Gurley Flynn is certainly some Rebel Girl and when you and her get together there will be 'two of a kind.'"<sup>12</sup>

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11 Letters between W.H. Westman and W.F. Moudy, February 1945, IWW Records box 91, IWW Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University.

12 Franklin Rosemont, *Joe Hill: The IWW and the Making of a Revolutionary Workingclass Counterculture* (Chicago, Ill: Charles H Kerr, 2003), 289.



Figure 1 Katie Phar holding an IWW Flag, c. 1915 (University of Washington Library, Special Collections)<sup>13</sup>

Together with Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Katie Phar, Agnes Thecla Fair was

<sup>13</sup> <http://guides.lib.washington.edu/content.php?pid=318431&sid=2643198>

another female Wobbly cited as inspiration for Hill's "The Rebel Girl."<sup>14</sup> Fair, a well-known female hobo, had lived for a time in Alaska and published a book of poems and songs titled *Sour Dough's Bible* in Seattle in 1910. There is little evidence of Fair's activism in Wobbly sources after her arrest in Spokane until her tragic suicide in January 1917. "Weary with illness," Fair threw herself in front of a train in Portland.<sup>15</sup> Her fellow Wobblies rumored that she never recovered from Joe Hill's execution, and that caused her to end her life.<sup>16</sup> Many Wobblies were present at her funeral, including Dr. Marie Equi. Harry Lloyd, an IWW organizer who was arrested with Fair during the free speech fight, gave the oration. Her mourners spread red carnations on her casket and then sang Wobbly songs in her memory. The *Oregonian* noted that the body was to be cremated, and the ashes were to be taken by Fair's ex-husband, W. P. Dougherty of Coalings, California.<sup>17</sup>

While Fair, Flynn, and Frenette made headline news in Spokane, this was not the first free speech arrest for the latter two. A previous IWW free speech fight had taken place in Missoula, Montana in 1908. Flynn and her husband Jack Jones had been organizing in Missoula, which was near the centers of lumber and mining in western Montana, as well as a university town, when street speaking was banned. The police arrested several Wobblies, who were sentenced to fifteen days in jail, before they put in the call for more to come to the city. Both Flynn and Edith Frenette were arrested during the fight. The *Industrial Worker* reported that "when Mrs. Frenette was arrested there was an enormous crowd followed her to the jail, and while not riotous, were certainly indignant."<sup>18</sup> An anonymous Free Speech Fight Diary published in the *International Socialist Review* in November 1909, noted that Mrs. Charles Frenette was a member of the Spokane local and a member of the advisory board. The diarist also noted that when she was arrested the crowd was a little more than indignant, and "threw stones at the police, severely injuring Officer Hoel" while they were taking Frenette to jail.<sup>19</sup> In her autobiography, Flynn recalled that college professors joined in the fight for free speech once the two women had been arrested. The women were "treated with kid gloves by the Sheriff and his wife," though Flynn noted that this same sheriff had badly beaten up

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14 I have seen her name also spelled Agnes Thesla Fair and Agnes Thesia Fair.

15 *Industrial Worker* January 11, 1917. The article was reprinted from the *Oregonian*.

16 Rosemont, *Joe Hill*, 299-304.

17 *Industrial Worker* January 11, 1917.

18 *Industrial Worker*, October 20, 1909.

19 Foner, Philip, ed. *Fellow Workers and Friends: IWW Free Speech Fights As told by Participants* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1981): 28.

her husband a few days prior.<sup>20</sup> This points to one of the most important contributions IWW women made to free speech fights: they were usually released earlier and often treated more leniently than male Wobblies. While most Wobbly women objected to the preferential treatment, it allowed them to be out on the street within a few days, publicizing their experiences and continuing the fight.

In Missoula the free speech fight continued, with new tactics, such as what Flynn described as “an amusing tussle” over who would be feeding all of the Wobblies in town. “We held our meeting early so the men would go to jail before supper. The police began to turn them out the next morning before breakfast, forcing us to provide rations for the day.”<sup>21</sup> The authorities finally caved, and the charges against the men arrested were dropped. The Missoula fight was declared over by the 20 October issue of the *Industrial Worker*, while 25 October marked the beginning of the fight in Spokane.

In towns where migratory laborers gathered, like Spokane, employment agents, or “job sharks” as they were known by the Wobblies, gathered as well. For a dollar or two, an agent would give the worker information about a job at a farm or lumber camp, often far enough away for it to be impossible for the worker to verify. When he arrived, he might find the job did not exist or had already been filled. If he was hired, he was often fired soon after. The Wobblies complained of the “perpetual motion” system employed by the job sharks where the agent would have one man on his way to the job, one at the job, and one who was fired and heading back to town to look for work.

The IWW fought long and hard against the job sharks, and one of the best ways of doing this was street speaking. It was the only way to reach the workers who hung around in the skid row areas of town where the agencies were located. They often shared street space with the Salvation Army or other religious speakers. Wobblies stood directly in front of employment agencies, urging workers not to “buy jobs.” The employment agencies organized against the IWW, forming the Associated Agencies of Spokane to urge the city council to adopt a resolution against street speaking. In order to combat the IWW presence, in 1908 the City of Spokane passed an ordinance prohibiting all types of street speaking. A group of Wobblies, led by John Walsh, were arrested and agreed amongst themselves to make Walsh a test case in return for the release of the rest of the men. The court found Walsh guilty but then the case was dropped. At the insistence of religious groups such as the Salvation Army, the original ordinance was

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20 Elizabeth Flynn, *The Rebel Girl: an Autobiography, My First Life (1906-1926)*, (New York: International Publishers, 1973): 104.

21 Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 105.

replaced by a new one in August 1909, which allowed for religious speakers with the consent of the mayor. The IWW saw this as a threat to their right of free speech.<sup>22</sup> While the free speech fight that ensued led the Wobblies to defy the ban outright, they initially sought to work with the city government. At the IWW Spokane Executive Committee meeting on 19 September 1909 a motion was carried to appoint a committee “to see the Mayor and try and get a permit to speak on the streets.” A week later, at the 26 September Executive Council meeting, a motion was carried to have Lawyer Fred Moore see the city council “and present our case in regard to street speaking.”<sup>23</sup> It is unclear what happened at those meetings, but later testimony from Douglass, the Acting Secretary of the IWW Spokane locals, reported that “the city officials promised the IWW committee that they would frame an ordinance satisfactory to us if we would stay off the street until Mr. Walsh had his trial in the Supreme Court.” He then noted that while they were waiting for that to happen, the Salvation Army spoke on the street, which is what prompted the Wobblies to take to the street to challenge the law, believing that both religious and labor organizations should have equal rights to the streets.<sup>24</sup>

While the free speech fight is commonly viewed as direct action in response to an unjust law, the Wobblies clearly did not move immediately towards outright defiance. They wanted to present the case that street speaking was necessary for the organization to reach its potential membership. Their first response was not to test the law by disobeying it, but to get permission from the Spokane city council.

They were unsuccessful in their efforts to work within the law, and on 25 October, Spokane authorities arrested IWW organizer James Thompson for speaking on the street. The *Industrial Worker* then sent out a call for all available Wobblies to flood the area, marked 2 November, the day of Thompson's court date, as “Free Speech Day” and asked “all lovers of free speech... to be in readiness to be in Spokane on that date.”<sup>25</sup> The Wobblies would hold a public meeting, whether or not Thompson was acquitted. Judge Mann declared the second ordinance unconstitutional, but left the first ordinance

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22 “Synopsis: Spokane Free Speech Fight,” *Industrial Worker* March 19, 26, 1910, as reprinted in John Duda, *Wanted: Men to Fill the Jails of Spokane: Fighting for Free Speech with the Hobo Agitators of the IWW* (Chicago: Charles H Kerr, 2009) 111-125; Glen Broyles, “The Spokane Free Speech Fight, 1909-1910,” *Labor History* 19, No. 2 (1978): 240.

23 IWW Executive Council Minutes. Spokane City Clerk, 1909, Washington State Archives, Eastern Region Branch.

24 IWW Statements-Douglass. Spokane City Clerk, 1909, Washington State Archives, Eastern Region Branch.

25 Joyce L Kornbluh, *Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964), 95.

in place, and the Wobblies took to the streets. Several were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct.<sup>26</sup>

Although the court declared the ordinance allowing for religious street speakers unconstitutional, the first ordinance banning all street speaking was left to stand. Once again, the respectability of the IWW membership was on trial. During the court case following the arrests, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn testified as to the organization's belief in free speech, and how she defined what was constitutional. Prosecutor Pugh, in language that illustrated his opinion on the intellectual abilities of the IWW, asked Flynn in court:

were you teaching them to look to the courts as the interpreters of the constitution of the United States, or were you teaching them that they themselves—rabble though they might be—had the right, if they could read English, to read the constitution and say what it meant, and then go out and assert their interpretation—and go out and back it up by force of numbers?

Flynn initially replied that she advised members to look at their own interpretation as well as that of the courts, but when further questioned, admitted that she believed the members of the IWW “should respect the courts’ decision in so far as it expressed the rights of the working class.” Mr. Pugh then asked again if Flynn believed that the working class “whether it could read and write, and whether it was washed or unwashed,” had the right to interpret the law how it saw fit. Flynn reiterated her belief that “when the courts will not regard their rights as the people...then in the last analysis they are to be the judges.”<sup>27</sup> Thus to Flynn, the IWW had the right to interpret the Constitution within the best interests of the working class, not as defined by the capitalist court system. The prosecution implied the “unwashed” and uneducated masses might not be respectable enough to be afforded that right.

The free speech fight continued, and on 3 November the organization's headquarters were raided and four men were arrested, including the editor of the *Industrial Worker*, James Wilson. In the 10 November issue of the *Industrial Worker*, Flynn recounted the situation in Spokane. So far over 100 men were in jail, some sentenced to thirty days, some to thirty days plus fines of \$100. James Wilson, James P. Thompson, E. J. Foote, C. L. Filigno, and A. E. Cousins were all charged with criminal conspiracy, which carried a potential sentence of five years, though only Filigno, along

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26 Elizabeth Gurly Flynn “The Free-Speech Fight at Spokane.” *International Socialist Review* December 1909, reprinted in John Duda, *Wanted*, 56.

27 Elizabeth Gurley Flynn file. Spokane City Clerk, 1909, Washington State Archives, Eastern Region Branch.

with Flynn, would be tried.<sup>28</sup>

By 10 November there were three IWW women in the Spokane county jail for street speaking: Edith Frenette, Agnes Thecla Fair, and a Mrs. McDaniels. The *Industrial Worker*, which often exhorted its readers to “be a man” and fight with the union, noted “it ought to make some of you great, husky, imitations of men ashamed of yourselves when women suffer that you may have your right.”<sup>29</sup> Historians are not except from using this kind of gendered rhetoric, and Melvyn Dubofsky continued this line of thought in *We Shall Be All*, referring to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn: “If repression could not break the spirit of a pregnant, slightly built, teenage girl, how could it crush the Wobblies’ free-speech fighters flooding into Spokane in an unending stream?”<sup>30</sup> Women were often released earlier than men, and Frenette was no different. She was released and arrested two more times by 24 November.<sup>31</sup> In cases like this, where sustained action on the street or on a picket line was needed, it was an asset to the organization to have women who were willing to go back on the street after being released from police custody.

It was not only speaking on the street that led to arrest. Edith Frenette was also arrested and tried for disorderly conduct after singing “The Red Flag” in front of the Franklin school where many of the arrested men were held. During her trial the chief of police, as well as six other officers, testified that Frenette “acted as if she were drunk, that she had carried on in a disorderly manner on the streets since this trouble started, and one said she acted like ‘a lewd woman.’” Frenette recited “The Red Flag” by request of the court, and did so “with such dramatic force that the Judge was horrified at its treasonable and unpatriotic sentiment.” Frenette was then sentenced to thirty days and a one-hundred dollar fine. She was held for the next two days in the city jail.<sup>32</sup> Her actions of speaking out in the street, and her association with the disreputable Wobblies, were cause for the officers to impugn her respectability by taking her actions outside of the context of social protest, and into a category that would put her on the same level with the drunks and prostitutes they picked up on a regular basis.

The arrests of Wobblies in Spokane were not limited to adults speaking on the street. Gurley Flynn also reported that on 1 December Spokane authorities raided the

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28 *Industrial Worker* November 10, 1909, also similar report in December 1909 issue of *International Socialist Review*, reprinted in Duda, *Wanted*, 55-59.

29 *Industrial Worker* November 10, 1909.

30 Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 182.

31 *Industrial Worker*, November 24, 1909.

32 Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, “The Shame of Spokane,” *International Socialist Review*, January 1910, reprinted in John Duda, *Wanted*, 62.

IWW hall again, and arrested eight newsboys, ranging in age from eight to sixteen. The police interrogated the children, who then spent the night in jail. As Elizabeth Gurley Flynn noted, though a simple case on the surface, “it is a subtle attempt to undermine the right of a parent to teach a child ideas different from the established order.”<sup>33</sup> A poster with a picture of the boys, which referred to them as “young Americans of the rebel type,” asked “How about you men? Are boys to go to jail for you?” The poster was found in the evidence file for the IWW trials and was most likely hung in the Wobbly hall and confiscated during a raid.<sup>34</sup> Most of the parents of the IWW newsboys promised to keep their children away from the IWW hall, or claimed ignorance of their activities, but one prominent Wobbly family fought for their son’s rights.

Florence Thompson aimed to disprove the judge’s opinion that the IWW hall itself was a disgraceful place, and by entering willingly a woman lost any claim to respectability. Joseph Thompson was the only one among the newsboys who refused to agree to no longer frequent the IWW hall.<sup>35</sup> His mother accompanied him to the hall and “was in full accord with the IWW,” to which Judge Hinkle remarked that “the IWW hall is no fit place for a woman, and no good woman frequents it.” The judge also noted that Joseph looked “dirty and uncared for.” He then accused Mrs. Thompson of being an unfit guardian for the boy. The next day Thompson’s father James was tried for his role in the fight. Mrs. Thompson and Joseph went to the courtroom to watch, but the probation officer saw them in attendance and ordered Joseph to go home. The following day during the continuation of Joseph’s trial the courtroom was filled with women who visited the IWW hall regularly, whom Flynn described as “not in a pleasant frame of mind.” Faced with these women he had offended, the judge “blustered around” and “tried to make amends” for his comment about Mrs. Thompson being an unfit mother. He then dismissed the juvenile cases.<sup>36</sup> The women in his courtroom saw themselves as part of the IWW community and stood together to show that their association with the union did not hinder their ability to care for their children or to be respectable and responsible mothers. Respectability was a double-edged sword. It was used against women associated with the IWW by policemen, judges, and officials who felt that association with the organization was a sign of moral shortcoming. The women themselves defiantly

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33 Flynn, “The Shame of Spokane” in Duda, *Wanted*, 64.

34 Evidence Folder, Spokane City Clerk, 1910, Washington State Archives, Eastern Region Branch.

35 It is likely that Joseph was the son of IWW organizer James Thompson, whose arrest had sparked the free speech fight.

36 Flynn, “The Shame of Spokane” as reprinted in Duda, *Wanted*, 64-65.

sought to disprove this mischaracterization and the middle-class morals that defined the realm of respectability.

Flynn was also the target for assumptions about respectability, but she refused to discuss her personal life in courtroom appearances. Women had taken an interest in all aspects of the free speech fight, and Flynn's trial was no different. The *Spokesman-Review* noted that the majority of people in the packed courtroom during Flynn's testimony were women. The newspaper described Flynn as the "little woman in red" and noted her defiant tone and lack of fear present in her testimony. Flynn responded to questions about her personal life by ignoring them; as the attorney asked Flynn questions about her husband and their relationship, "with a hint that the realm of personal affairs was being invaded [Flynn] began to take an interest in the surroundings of the courtroom" and the prosecutor moved on to another subject."<sup>37</sup>

At the end of the courtroom battle C. L. Filigno was found guilty of conspiracy, while Flynn was found innocent. As one of the jurors noted "of course sympathy for the little woman figured somewhat in the verdict," but what had moved the jury the most was a telegram sent by Filigno to Flynn asking her to come to Spokane, therefore making him the greater offender and ringleader in the conspiracy.<sup>38</sup> The telegram provided proof that he asked her to come, but the sight of nineteen-year-old, pregnant Flynn likely swayed the jurors just as much as the evidence. Although Wobbly women did not advocate preferential treatment in the court system, they were often given lesser sentences than their male comrades. Wobbly women attempted to fight side by side with men in the streets, but a court and jail system that saw women as the weaker sex treated them more gently than their male fellow workers. Women were less likely to be convicted, given lighter sentences, and were less likely to face barbaric conditions in jail.

Thus the treatment that Flynn, Frenette, and Fair received in jail, while inappropriate, was nothing compared to the inhumane treatment of the male prisoners. The majority of men arrested received a thirty-day sentence, and some also received a \$100 fine. According to Flynn's report in the *International Socialist Review*, twenty-eight to thirty men at a time were crowded into a 6X8 cell, with steam heat turning the cell into a "sweatbox." They were then removed and placed in a freezing cold cell with the windows open. The men were ordered to work on the rock pile, which they refused to do, and as punishment were fed a diet of bread and water. The "leaders" who received a full

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37 *Spokesman-Review* February 19, 1910.

38 *The Spokane Press* February 25, 1910 as accessed at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>

meal went on a hunger strike in solidarity. There were so many Wobblies arrested that they filled the jail and were sent to two overflow facilities, the old Franklin schoolhouse and Fort Wright. Those at the school were taken to the city jail once a week to bathe. After enduring the ice-cold water, they then had to march outside in freezing temperatures back to their unheated cells.<sup>39</sup>

Although not as overtly brutal as what the men faced, the treatment that Wobbly women received in jail was also subject to scrutiny. Reports on the conditions in the women's jail earned the Wobbly women support from the citizens of Spokane, as well as reminding male Wobblies that the police were harming "our women."<sup>40</sup> The *Industrial Worker* reported that "The women members of the organization have been insulted, clubbed, and all other manner of brutalities heaped upon them."<sup>41</sup> Edith Frenette was reportedly struck by a policeman on the way to jail.<sup>42</sup> Agnes Thecla Fair wrote a letter to the *Workingman's Paper* outlining what happened to her in jail. She reported during the interrogation, when she refused to answer any questions, one officer said "We'll make her talk," while another she quoted as threatening, "F—K her and she'll talk." Fair wrote "Just then one started to unbutton my waist, I went into spasms from which I never recovered until evening." Later that evening, a "man disguised as a woman" was brought into the cell with her. As she tried to sleep she "felt a large hand creeping over me. It's too horrible to put on paper. I jumped into an enclosure, screaming frantically and frothing at the mouth." After her release, to publicly present her fragile physical state, she had the fellow workers carry her on a stretcher to her room, "as it cost money to hire cabs and it would only keep from the public the brutality of the bulls."<sup>43</sup>

The Spokane *Spokesman-Review* was interested in these arrested women, more for entertainment or prurient interest than because of their radical ideas. It described Agnes Fair as a "slim girl in a black waist with a flaming red scarf"—symbolic of her support of the IWW—who advocated \$8 a day for four hours of work. Ann Arquet was also arrested at the IWW hall. The paper described her as "a tall, masculine woman who had been haranguing the crowd at the hall with much vehemence, and a younger girl

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39 Flynn, "The Free Speech Fight at Spokane," as reprinted in Duda, *Wanted*, 56-57; Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 179.

40 Elizabeth Gurley Flynn "Call to Action" *Industrial Worker* 10 November, 1909, as reprinted in Duda, *Wanted*, 47.

41 *Industrial Worker* November 10, 1909.

42 Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 108.

43 Agnes Thecla Fair "Miss Fair's Letter" *The Workingman's Paper*, November 20, 1909, as reprinted in Duda, *Wanted*, 85-86.

who was much excited.” Under the subheading “Pretty Woman Arrested” the *Spokesman-Review* detailed the case of Edith Frenette, described as “plump and pretty” and “by far the most attractive of the day's batch of guests at the station.” During her trial, after a few days in jail, Frenette “seemed as neatly groomed and pink-cheeked as though she had spend the time at home.”<sup>44</sup> While Arquet’s “masculine” look may have suggested deviant sexual behavior or a reason she would be attracted to the IWW’s radical ideology, the description of Frenette denotes surprise that a normal, “pretty,” respectable-looking woman would get involved with such a disreputable organization.

A month later, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn reported on her treatment during her arrest and imprisonment. Flynn described her fellow cell-mates and how they treated her:

I was placed in a cell with two other women, poor miserable specimens of the victims of society. One woman is being held on a charge that her husband put her in a disorderly house. The other is serving 90 days for robbing a man in a disorderly resort in Spokane. Never before had I come in contact with women of that type, and they were interesting....These miserable outcasts of society did everything in their power to make me comfortable.

This included giving her blankets, fruit, soap, and clean towels. They also accommodated Flynn by trying to “moderate their language, apologize for their profanity, and pathetically try to conform to some of the standards of decency when they see that you are 'different.' They have been so accustomed to being ill-used and browbeaten they rather expect it, yet become indignant when it is done to another.”<sup>45</sup> Flynn saw herself as a step above from these “fallen” women. “Content to sleep and eat, they seem to be as happy inside jail as out. They are unconscious of their degradation and solicit no sympathy. Perhaps they shouldn't be conscious, for society is to blame and not they.” Flynn also noted that the women were on terms of “disgusting familiarity” with the jailers, who took one of the women out of her cell several times during the night to visit a “sweetheart” in another cell. It seemed to Flynn that the woman was “practicing her profession inside of jail as well as out.”<sup>46</sup>

During this ordeal Flynn was very careful to maintain her own image of respectability. While she thought it silly that an old Wobbly felt it was improper of her to be speaking in public while she was pregnant, she still took pains to separate herself

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44 *Spokane Spokesman-Review*, November 3, 1909, copy found in Frederick W. Thompson Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University.

45 Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "Story of My Arrest and Imprisonment" *The Workingman's Paper*, December 11, 1909, as reprinted in Duda, *Wanted*, 50-53.

46 Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "Story of My Arrest and Imprisonment" *The Workingman's Paper*, December 11, 1909, as reprinted in Duda, *Wanted*, 50-53.

from the immoral women she was jailed with. "It is certainly a shame and disgrace to this city that a woman can be arrested because of union difficulties, bonds placed so high that immediate release is impossible, thrown into a county jail, where sights and sounds, horrible, immoral, and absolutely different from her ordinary, decent mode of life can be forced upon her."<sup>47</sup>

When Flynn publicized her jail experiences, Mayor Pratt of Spokane wrote an open letter denying Flynn's "wild and hysterical inferences" which was published in the *Spokesman-Review*. The IWW then asked the mayor to apologize or face a libel charge. The mayor refused and so the IWW sued him and two other officials for \$10,000 each. Flynn charged that her "reputation and efficacy" as a writer and speaker had been damaged by the charge that she was wild and hysterical, which could therefore make her potential audiences view her as unreliable or untrustworthy.<sup>48</sup> "Hysterical" is not often a word used to describe men, and when the mayor used that phrase to describe Flynn's account of events, he was not only calling her a liar, but insinuating that she was emotional and irrational. Flynn noted that though the IWW didn't intend to collect the \$30,000 as "spending money...we certainly intend to force these officials, who so commonly brand one as hysterical and libelous, to prove their assertions."<sup>49</sup> The result of the case is unknown.

After Flynn and Fair published their experiences, the middle-class women of the City Club of Spokane demanded that the city place a matron in the women's jail. This led to an investigation of the conditions in the city jail. The results were published in a report titled "In the Matter of the Investigation of the Police Department of the City of Spokane by A Committee Consisting of Dr. Thomas L. Catterson, and Others," commonly known as "The Sullivan Report" because it was directed to Police Chief John Sullivan. In this two-hundred plus page report, the committee interviewed guards at the jail, policemen, female nurses who saw the prisoners, as well as women who had been jailed about their experiences. The existence of the report is testimony to the impact that Wobbly claims about the conditions in the jails had on the city of Spokane, for it is unlikely that the investigation would have taken place without them.

The report and reactions to it reveal how Spokane authorities projected ideals of

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47 Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "Story of My Arrest and Imprisonment" *The Workingman's Paper*, December 11, 1909, as reprinted in Duda, *Wanted*, 50-53.

48 *The Spokane Press* January 15, 1910 as accessed at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88085947/1910-01-15/ed-1/seq-1/>

49 Flynn "Latest News From Spokane" *International Socialist Review*, March 1910, as reprinted in Duda, *Wanted*, 72. It is not clear what the results of the suit were. Most likely it was dropped.

appropriate and inappropriate female behavior on the prisoners, and decided which women were worthy of protection. The *Industrial Worker* reported that the mayor and the sheriff both agreed that a matron was a good idea, but the chief of police protested, saying that the women in jail were of a “low type” and did not need a matron.<sup>50</sup> In their report, the Committee did not find evidence of abuse by the jailers. While they interviewed several women who were jailed, many of the officials discounted what the women had to say. What the officials interviewed did not directly state, but is insinuated in several of the testimonies, is that they could not rely on these women’s testimonies because they were by nature unreliable, low women addicted to drugs and drink, and therefore not respectable and not to be trusted. What is not mentioned is that the women may have feared reprisal if they spoke out against their treatment in jail and ended up back there again. While Fair’s claims of abuse were never substantiated, the outcry in response to both Fair and Flynn’s reports of conditions in the jail was enough to warrant investigation, and ultimately, to gain support for the hiring of a full time matron for the jail. Mary Caroline Davidson Seymour was appointed and served as the matron from 1910 to 1932.<sup>51</sup>

The Sullivan Report also revealed tensions among the female Wobblies over tactics and publicity. While the report questioned several officials regarding Agnes Thecla Fair’s claims that she was abused by the police, the officials revealed that they did not believe Fair because fellow Wobbly Edith Frenette did not take her seriously. Dr. John O’Shea, surgeon at the Spokane emergency hospital who frequently visited the jail, believed Fair’s claims of ill-treatment to be “absolutely false.” O’Shea said that he saw Fair three or four times while she was in jail, but did not give any details about her condition. When pressed as to how he knew her claims were false, he said he depended on the word of one of Fair’s fellow prisoners. He admitted “you can’t depend entirely on that,” but still took her words at face value. O’Shea then named Edith Frenette as the woman who said Fair was lying.<sup>52</sup>

The Committee also interviewed Captain Bertha Smith, the matron of the Salvation Army Rescue Home. Smith reported that she had never heard a complaint from the women in the jail until Agnes Fair. She had searched Fair at the request of the

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50 *Industrial Worker* January 15, 1910.

51 <http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2012/may/10/monument-will-be-dedicated/>

52 Report, “In the Matter of the Investigation of the Police Department of the City of Spokane by A committee Consisting of Dr. Thomas L. Catterson, and Others” Spokane City Clerk, 1910, Washington State Archives, Eastern Region Branch, 17, 26.

police captain who claimed to believe Fair had letters from Moscow on her person. Smith said that Fair asked her to be gentle, and said that she had been feeling well until she was arrested, and since then “so unwell and miserable that now she was nearly fainting.” Smith said she was kind to Fair, dressed her, made her bed, and gave her something to drink. She also reported that Edith Frenette was in the room and was laughing at the whole scene. Smith said that Frenette was a “strong woman” and a “strong character” and everyone there thought that Fair “made a little put-on.” She described Fair as a woman “of not great physical strength and a hysterical woman.” She saw Fair on Saturday when she was arrested, and then not again until Monday. During the Monday visit Fair told her she would die if she had to stay in jail much longer. Smith helped Fair into the courtroom, and reported Fair made such a scene that Frenette was laughing at her, as were the men in the courtroom. Fair was told in the courtroom that she would be released if she promised to stay off the street, but she would not make such a promise. According to Smith, she was then taken to the Emergency Hospital, at which point the IWW brought her a stretcher and “made a parade with her through the streets.” Smith also reported that Fair said that one of the arresting officers had treated her very cruelly.<sup>53</sup> Though neither O’Shea nor Smith detail what kind of cruel treatment Fair complained about, Smith’s further testimony revealed that it was difficult to get the IWW women to work with her since she was from the Salvation Army, a group that the IWW frequently lampooned in songs and competed with for workers’ attention on the street. One jailer, Robert Wilson, described an interaction with Fair over prison food. She complained about the food and refused to eat it. Wilson said that, if he were not in such a hurry to get home, he would have “jammed it down her throat.” After she threw the food at him, he told her “you will be glad to lick where they lay someday.”<sup>54</sup>

This aggressive behavior could be emblematic of the treatment the women received from the other jailers, or it could be an isolated case. It was the only incident of negative behavior towards Fair in the committee’s report. None of the testimonies corroborated the story that Fair told in her letter to the *Industrial Worker*. This is not surprising, since those who testified worked in the jail and had an interest in its reputation.

A fourth prison representative, Detective Thomas Lister, also reported that Frenette spoke to him privately, said that Fair was lying, and proclaimed “that woman is

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53 “Investigation of Police Department” 44-47.

54 “Investigation of Police Department” 179-180.

crazy” and “as an organization we don’t recognize her.” Lister then asked why the crowd followed her down the street in the stretcher, and Frenette repeated that the organization did not recognize her.<sup>55</sup> Evidence of this nature is difficult to interpret. It was in the best interest of those connected with the jail to discredit both Frenette and Fair. But the number of officials who believed that Frenette was, at the very least, amused by Fair’s “performance,” suggests some truth to the matter. It is likely that Frenette believed that Fair’s dramatic behavior was detrimental to the cause, and made the IWW, and the women associated with it, look hysterical and irrational, not serious rebels testing their constitutional rights. Fair may have felt that by promoting her femininity, fragility, or need for special treatment the publicity that it garnered would be advantageous to the Wobbly cause. Regardless of whether or not Frenette privately felt that Fair was an embarrassment to the cause, the organization made no public statements other than those in support of Fair. It is not surprising that women within the IWW did not fully agree on which tactic was most appropriate.

Many women during the Progressive Era felt this tension between asserting equality for women and using notions of female difference when advocating reforms like restrictions on working hours. Middle-class progressive reformers often argued that men and women were fundamentally different in order to enact protective legislation. The City Club women of Spokane advocated for a matron at the city jail, and the Wobblies were supported during their fight by the efforts of middle-class and upper-class women in other ways. Flynn, along with other members of the IWW, had mixed feelings about this. The *Industrial Worker* reported that a physician's wife came from Seattle to sell the paper in the street, and she was not arrested—unlike all of the men who had attempted to do the same thing.<sup>56</sup> To some this seemed like preferential treatment of upper-class women over the working-class men. The January 1910 issue of *Solidarity* reported that two of the leading suffragists in Spokane refused to help put up bail for Elizabeth Gurley Flynn when she was jailed there. Flynn herself brought up the issue years later in article titled “The IWW Call to Women” in *Solidarity*. She wrote: “I have seen prosperous, polite, daintily-gowned ladies become indignant over police brutality in the Spokane free speech fight of 1909, and lose all interest—even refuse to put up bail for pregnant women—when they realized that the IWW intended to organize the lumber, mining and farming industries, whence the golden stream flowed to pay for their comfort and

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55 “Investigation of Police Department,” 211.

56 *Industrial Worker*, February 19, 1910.

leisure.”<sup>57</sup> IWW women defined themselves primarily by class. Although upper-class women could be allies on some issues, such as free speech or improving factory conditions, they would never support the full IWW program. In that same article Flynn wrote that the “sisterhood of women, like the brotherhood of man, is a hollow sham to labor. Behind all its smug hypocrisy and sickly sentimentality loom the sinister outlines of the class war.”

Wobbly women also denied cross-class connections by referring to social work as a “hobby” or “fad” for society women with duplicitous or selfish intentions. A satirical story in the *Industrial Worker* by Mary Patterson noted how the wealthy women of New York were collecting potato parings from restaurants to help feed the worthy poor. Patterson wryly noted that “none but the worthy need apply” and suggested gathering up other types of garbage to make soup. Patterson mocked the idea of “worthy” poor, versus other kinds of poverty.<sup>58</sup> Those not “worthy” of charity would often be those not found respectable enough, by virtue of a turn to prostitution, drugs, or alcohol, or possibly just aberrant behavior or association with radicalism. This is in opposition to the IWW ideal of One Big Union that would empower individuals of the working class, rather than judging them morally.

The Wobbly women who believed that gender did not transcend class barriers were proven correct in the issue of appointing a matron to the city jail. The upper-class women who supported the idea also publicly stated that they did not agree with the goals of the IWW. *The Spokane Press* printed a letter from Mrs. Philip Stalford to Mayor Pratt. Stalford was one of the leaders of the investigation into conditions in the prison, and Pratt had publicly stated that if Stalford was “a good citizen” than she should come forward with her proof of misconduct at the jail. She responded that the committee had affidavits from women in the jail, none of them connected with the IWW, and her work with the City Club proved her good citizenship. She also responded to allegations by Chief Sullivan that she was an IWW sympathizer: “No woman who attended the council meeting on the night of February 23 was an IWW, and to most of them no worse epithet could be hurled than IWW sympathizer.”<sup>59</sup> While the actions of the female Wobblies inspired the City Club women to demand an investigation into the conditions in the jails, for these upper-class women being labeled as an IWW sympathizer was an insult. This is the kind of response Flynn referred to in the aforementioned *Industrial Worker* article:

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57 *Solidarity*, July 31, 1915.

58 *Industrial Worker* August 17, 1918.

59 *The Spokane Press* March 5, 1910 <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>

even if upper-class women agreed with a tactic or supported the Wobblies in a strike or free speech battle, they did not, and would not, support the fundamental goals of the organization.

It is difficult to decipher how many Wobblies were arrested during the free speech fight. Philip Foner finds a total of 400-500 Wobblies in jail, with roughly 1200 arrests made by March 1909. In his article on the Spokane Free Speech fight, Glen Broyles disagrees with the numbers given by Foner, Dubofsky, and Tyler, as well as with their consensus that the IWW won the fight. His analysis of IWW reports, plus lists of those arrested in the *Spokane Spokesman-Review*, finds that there was a relatively low level of support for the fight, and that historians of the event have greatly exaggerated the Wobbly triumph. Broyles argues that the agreement between the city officials and the IWW—made, he asserts, because the IWW did not have the support to continue the fight—all end up benefiting the city.<sup>60</sup>

Victory can be defined in many different ways. In Broyles' estimation, victory should mean long-term change in the power structure between workers, employers, and job sharks in Spokane, an admirable yet difficult goal. I believe the free speech fight was a public relations victory, spreading information about the IWW throughout the country, and especially within the Pacific Northwest. The free speech fight as a tactic continued to be used by Wobblies in the West over the next several years. The fight was also a victory in several concrete ways: stopping the enforcement of the ban on street speaking, enacting harsher regulations on employment agencies, and the appointment of a matron in the city jail.

The free speech fight did have the desired effect of harsher regulations on employment agencies. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn noted that the licenses of 19 of the 31 agencies in the city had been revoked, the remaining being primarily larger firms. Flynn maintained that there had been legislation suggested to the city council that the employers should pay the fees to the agencies, but that was dropped after threat of a boycott by the Northern Pacific and Great Northern Railways.<sup>61</sup> Broyles again finds this a hollow victory, noting that by 1911 there were 34 employment agencies in Spokane. He also notes that the release of some of the most anti-radical police officers and the appointment of a matron to the city jail cannot really count as victories since they were

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60 Broyles, "The Spokane Free Speech Fight," 250.

61 Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "The Free Speech Fight at Spokane," reprinted in Duda, *Wanted*, 69.

not the stated goals of the free speech fight.<sup>62</sup> I think his view diminishes the importance of these changes, and is dismissive of the efforts of the Wobbly women to report on treatment in jail. As will happen again in Portland in 1913, Wobbly women who were jailed for street actions publicized their jail experiences and called attention to the issues of corruption, sanitation, and exploitation that the women in jail faced.

The Spokane free speech fight was a real test for the IWW. While historians have noted the fight was a defining moment for the IWW as a movement that fought for workers, the right to organize, and civil rights, it may also be read as an example of the role women played in the organization and how they were treated by authorities when questioning the law. They wanted to stand with their brothers in the organization to fight for their right to free speech, yet they decried any treatment by the authorities that put them on the level of other working women, who just happened to sell their bodies for a living. The Wobbly view of prostitution will be discussed in detail in a later chapter, but this early response to being jailed with prostitutes is intriguing. From this early point Wobbly women demanded that they be seen as respectable, both as mothers and activists, even though they were will willing to speak in public and be jailed—behaviors often categorized as male—in their fight for free speech.

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62 Broyles, 251.

## Chapter 2

### Repression of Radicalism Through Morality Laws: Becky Beck and IWW Involvement in the Seattle Tailors' Strike, 1912

By 1912 the IWW had grown in popularity in the Pacific Northwest as well as around the nation. That year saw strikes in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Grays Harbor, Washington. In May of that year there was also a much smaller and less widely known strike among tailors in Seattle. The strike barely received mention in IWW newspapers, much less in the national press.<sup>1</sup> It has been ignored or downplayed by historians. Robert Tyler, for example, describes the strike as having “typical” features of Wobbly strikes during these early years: “small in scope, the threat of violence, police intervention, and failure.”<sup>2</sup> When examining the strike in terms of IWW ideology or national success, it is easy to dismiss it as insignificant. But when examining the strike and ensuing legal battle through an analysis of gender and respectability, it is significant because of both the presence of women and the legal repression that targeted radicals due to alleged immoral behavior.

Seattle was a quickly growing city in the early twentieth-century, and had a population of 237,194 in 1910, with 42% of them women.<sup>3</sup> Though there were not many large IWW-led strikes in Seattle, the organization was active and hosted speakers, socials, and other events in the city.<sup>4</sup> The 1912 tailors' strike was a small affair, involving perhaps a few dozen workers and lasting less than a month. Though small, it was complicated as both the Industrial Workers of the World and the AFL-affiliated Journeymen Tailors' Union organized tailors in Seattle during this period. Coordination and competition between the two organizations varied by shop and oftentimes by individual tailor.

The AFL-affiliated Journeymen Tailors' was at the forefront of organizing tailors in the Seattle area early in 1912. The *Seattle Union Record*, the city's labor newspaper, was fully supportive of the increase in organization amongst tailors in the city. The

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<sup>1</sup> The report of the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual IWW Convention in October of 1912, described the event: “Ten small strikes lasting from a few hours up to two months. All of the strikes successful—except one.” *Industrial Worker*, October 17, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods*, 56.

<sup>3</sup> 1910 United States Census.

<sup>4</sup> For example in 1910 the Seattle IWW local organized a Ferrer remembrance celebration along with the Workingmen's Circle, Russian Workingmen's Association, Radical Library Association, and Socialist Party (*Industrial Worker*, November 2, 1910). In February of 1912, the Seattle local held a large meeting in support of the Lawrence strikers (*Industrial Worker*, February 22, 1912).

*Union Record* reported eighty new tailors signed up for the JTU since 1 January of that year, and a total of eighteen shops running with the eight-hour day as of 27 April.<sup>5</sup> The AFL-affiliated Tailors Local no. 71 established the following rates for 1912, based on a week of work with nine-hour days for men and eight-hour days for women:

Tailors on Coats (men)	\$22.00 and up
Pants Makers (men)	\$20.00 and up
Vest Makers (girls)	\$18.00 and up
Skirt Makers (girls)	\$15.00 and up
Bushelmen (men)	\$22.00 and up
Helpers (girls)	\$12.00 and up
Helpers who put buttonholes on coats	\$15.00 and up <sup>6</sup>

Things began to go awry the next month when three employers fired and intimidated union employees. The *Union Record* reported that Budd & Nelson fired two workers for being members of the union, McGrath Bros. discharged three for union involvement, and a strike had begun at the P.O. Wold shop because it refused to pay workers the union rate.<sup>7</sup> At the same time relations between the IWW and JTU were strained as the two organizations pursued different tactics and strategies. The *Seattle Union Record* noted on 11 May that there was a “stumbling block” in the organization of tailors because of “an organization which attempted to call a strike on shops signed up without giving the employers an opportunity to be heard.” That stumbling block was the IWW, which, unlike the conservative AFL union, was not inclined to seek compromise and collaboration with employers. The employers then sought the advice of Organizer Biggs of the Journeymen Tailor’s Union. Biggs’s advice led to a “complete rout of the other organization and better and more friendly relations being established” between the Journeymen Tailors and the employers.<sup>8</sup>

The differences in ideology and tactics between the AFL and the IWW were exemplified in the Tailors’ strikes that occurred in April and May of 1912. While the JTU wanted to establish friendly relations with the employers, the IWW believed that the workers and employers had a fundamentally oppositional relationship. In April IWW organizer F. H. Allison reported that there had been successful strikes for the eight-hour

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<sup>5</sup> *Seattle Union Record*, April 27, 1912.

<sup>6</sup> *The Tailor* 9 (April 1912): 11, reprinted from the *Seattle Union Record*.

<sup>7</sup> *Seattle Union Record*, May 4, 1912.

<sup>8</sup> *Seattle Union Record* May 11, 1912.

day in four different shops, but that they had trouble with the AFL organized workers: “they tried to put the local out of biz this morning but the IWW picketed the bunch and told the scabby bunch that they could take out cards in the IWW by paying \$1.50 and they would then be considered union men and could work only 8 hours a day.” He noted that all but one joined, and the shop now runs eight hours a day with “a full crew of reds.”<sup>9</sup>

While the Journeymen Tailors may have wanted and felt they established “better and more friendly relations” with their employers, there were still unsatisfied workers, and the IWW did not feel that the JTU was fully representing those in the industry. In May of 1912, the IWW continued to strike at select shops, and ended up making front-page headlines with altercations on the picket line. According to the B & R Company the strike was the result of the discharge of a woman named Mrs. Shaw. Mrs. Shaw was fired for using “very insulting language to the managers” after being reprimanded for doing unsatisfactory work. At that point the other workers quit, although local newspapers reported that they had signified willingness to come back to work if they were reinstated.<sup>10</sup>

The legal aftermath of the strike brought two Seattle-area Wobblies, Jack Solomon and Rebecca Beck, to the forefront, and it is through their legal struggles that we learn how morality laws were used to target radicals, especially those who were recent immigrants to the United States. Solomon, age thirty-five at the time of the strike, was born in Kovna, Russia, where he lived until around the age of fourteen, at which time he moved to London. He remained in London until roughly 1905, and while he was there married a woman named Deborah Levine with whom he had four children, who were between the ages of six and fourteen in 1912. From London he went to Toronto for about six months, Cleveland for nine, and Chicago for two or three years before moving to Seattle. Solomon claimed to have supported his family until he moved to Alaska and lost track of them, which had been about a year prior to the strike.<sup>11</sup>

Rebecca “Becky” Beck was twenty-nine years old in 1912. She was born in 1883 in Vitebsk, Russia, to a poor Jewish family, and moved to London at a young age. Beck then moved with her family to Chicago around 1904. There she met Jane Addams at

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<sup>9</sup> *Oregonian*, April 3, 1912. The letter was seized in a raid in Raymond, Washington, and then printed in the *Oregonian*.

<sup>10</sup> *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, May 16, 1912.

<sup>11</sup> Examination of Jack Solomon, Seattle, Washington, May 25, 1912. *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service Series A: Subject Correspondence Files Part 6: Suppression of Aliens, 1906-1930.* Microfilm, Reel 2.

Hull House. Since Beck could speak both Yiddish and English, Addams sent her out to talk to immigrant workers about trade unions. She saw Emma Goldman and Voltairine De Cleyre speak in Chicago, and in a 1974 interview, Beck claimed this was when she became an anarchist. Beck moved to Seattle in 1910 with her brothers Abe and Morris, and got a job as a tailor. She worked with Louise Olivereau (see chapter 6) at the Labor Temple and became involved in the local labor movement.<sup>12</sup>

Becky Beck started working at the B & R Company in January of 1912. She had quit on her own accord, due to illness, around the beginning of May. At that time she went to Home, an anarchist colony in Washington, to rest, and returned to Seattle on 12 May.<sup>13</sup> In an interview later in her life, Beck said that the girls had decided to go on strike because they worked a forty-hour week, but the men in the shop had to stay two hours longer per day. She said that she attempted to get the “regular” union to help, but when they refused she went to the IWW.<sup>14</sup>

The strikers asked Beck to go to the shop and talk to some of the girls who were crossing the picket line.<sup>15</sup> Beck and fellow Wobbly Friede Clyde, along with thirty male members of the organization, then had a confrontation with women crossing the picket line at the B & R Company, where the two women allegedly scratched and slapped other women who attempted to enter the shop to work.<sup>16</sup> Beck’s involvement drew attention from the local newspapers and brought a gendered lens to the discussion of the strike. The front-page headline of the *Seattle Daily Times*, “IWW Amazons Beat Tailorshop Employees for Trying to Work,” portrayed the Wobbly women as unfeminine, asexual warriors. The *Times* also claimed that while many of the women who worked at the shop were members of the IWW, most only joined because of coercion or thought they were joining a different union altogether, which insinuates both that the female workers were unintelligent and that the IWW exploited that weakness.<sup>17</sup> Beck was arrested later that day, on a complaint brought by 58-year-old Thea Steen that Beck had slapped her in the

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Voices*, (Oakland: AK Press, 2005), 332.

<sup>13</sup> Examination of Becky Beck, Seattle, Washington, 5 June 1912. *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*.

<sup>14</sup> Avrich, *Anarchist Voices*, 332. This interview, done while Beck was 90, may have downplayed her relationship with the IWW. It is likely that she was already affiliated with the organization considering that both she and Solomon were organizers of strike activity.

<sup>15</sup> Examination of Becky Beck, Seattle, Washington, 5 June 1912. *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*.

<sup>16</sup> *Seattle Daily Times*, May 14, 1912.

<sup>17</sup> *Seattle Daily Times*, May 14, 1912.

face.<sup>18</sup> Beck in turn claimed that an unnamed female strikebreaker hit her in the head with her purse, leaving her in need of stitches.<sup>19</sup>

The next morning Friede Clyde and several male members of the IWW continued to picket. Jack Solomon, the chairman of the strike committee, issued these demands: "All employees now working in the shop, with the exception of one girl, to be discharged; all strikers to be taken back to former positions and paid the former wages; no employee to be discharged without two weeks notice; the B & R Company to pay the IWW \$30 which the union had expended in attorney fees, and all the wages of the reinstated strikers to start on 13 May."<sup>20</sup> Solomon and six other male members of the IWW were arrested later that day.<sup>21</sup> Over a hundred members of the organization were arrested for violating an injunction against picketing during the strike.

While the strike ended a few days after the altercation on the picket line, Jack Solomon and Becky Beck were arrested again on 24 May 1912, this time on charges of violating the 1903 Immigration Act. They were both released on bond, but Solomon was held at the Detention House in Seattle after defaulting on his. While local business owners had reason to want the two agitators deported, a local aid society initially gave the authorities a reason to arrest them. A Jewish aid society in England had contacted the Council of Jewish Women in New York in March of 1912 asking for aid in tracking down Solomon, because his wife and four children had been left destitute in England. They forwarded the request to Jewish societies around the country, and after Solomon's arrest for the altercation during the tailor strike, the aid society in Seattle alerted the Department of Commerce and Labor Immigration Services division. This initial report also accused Solomon not only of abandoning his family in England, but also of bringing Beck into the country for immoral purposes. The local authorities then requested warrants for their arrest, and proceeded to prosecute them for anarchist beliefs and immoral activities.<sup>22</sup>

Under the 1903 Immigration Act, also known as the Anarchist Exclusion Act, the United States Congress prohibited the following groups from admission to the country:

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<sup>18</sup> *Seattle Daily Times*, May 14, 1912. Beck was found Not Guilty on May 28. *Seattle Star*, May 18, 1912.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Rebecca Beck August, 1973.

<http://symposia.library.csulb.edu/iii/cpro/DigitalItemViewPage.external?lang=eng&sp=1001918&sp=T&sp=1&suite=def>

<sup>20</sup> *Seattle Daily Times*, May 15, 1912.

<sup>21</sup> *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, May 16, 1912.

<sup>22</sup> Ellis Butler to Commissioner General of Immigration, July 5, 1912; Selma Rosenthal to Mrs. Harris, 11 March 1912. *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*.

All idiots, insane persons, epileptics, and persons who have been insane within five years previous; persons who have had two or more attacks of insanity at any time previously; paupers; persons likely to become a public charge; professional beggars; persons afflicted with a loathsome or with a dangerous contagious disease—persons who have been convicted of a felony or other crime or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude; polygamists, anarchists, or persons who believe in or advocate the overthrow by force or violence of the Government of the United States or of all government or of all forms of law, or the assassination of public officials; prostitutes, and persons who procure or attempt to bring in prostitutes or women for the purpose of prostitution....<sup>23</sup>

According to historian Matthew Frye Jacobson, while the Anarchist Exclusion Act worked well as a threat to those entering the country, it had relatively little impact on the actual safety of American society by deporting such “dangerous” persons. Between 1903 and 1921 the US government only kept out thirty-eight people intending to immigrate due to their anarchist beliefs, and only fourteen alien anarchists were deported from 1911 until the red scare and mass deportations in 1919. These laws instead served to define what was ideal “American” behavior, and what kind of people should or should not be welcomed in American society. Jacobson notes that “together with the state’s expanded powers of deportation, these antiradical immigration and naturalization laws amount to a decision at the federal level, not only to disavow homegrown radicalism with a language of Americanism and anti-Americanism, but to export discontent through a machinery of repressive speech codes, unforgiving alien laws, and ever-vigilant government bureaucracies.”<sup>24</sup> These laws designated radicalism as anti-American behavior, and though many Wobblies were US citizens, those that were not could find themselves targets of exclusion laws.

The Anarchist Exclusion Act applied to persons trying to enter the country, as well as those who had made it through the initial screening but were found to belong to one of the listed categories within three years of their arrival. The initial accusation by the Seattle Jewish aid society accused Beck and Solomon of entering the country together in 1911, which would put them within that three-year timeframe.

In order to maintain their innocence, Beck and Solomon had to prove three things: that Beck was not a prostitute, they had not been involved in any immoral activity, and they were not anarchists. As the charges were both moral and political, they were questioned along both of those lines. Solomon and Beck both denied being anarchists, but admitted membership in the IWW. When asked if he believed in the government of

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<sup>23</sup> “An Act to Regulate the Immigration of Aliens into the United States.”

<sup>24</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917*, (New York: Hill and Wang Press, 2001) 93.

this country, Solomon replied “Not if I could get a better one.” And in answer to the question “Do you believe in the overthrow of these governments?” he replied, “Sure, I believe in the overthrow by votes.” He denied that he believed in the use of violence to overthrow the government.<sup>25</sup>

Beck similarly denied a belief in overthrow by violence. After she admitted that she studied philosophical anarchy, she was questioned about what exactly her beliefs were. She said that rather than overthrow by force, she believed in “intelligence and betterment of humanity through the mind.” When asked if this meant she wanted to use argument and persuasion to convince people to overthrow the government, she replied, “No, a person has to know their own mind. If a person own mind one knows [sic] he can do good for every living thing. I think it may be possible to do without laws gradually, the things should be eliminated gradually, but through intelligence.” When asked if she thought it was possible that people could become so intelligent that government would no longer be necessary, she replied, “It is a dream of mine, I don’t know whether it will ever come true, but it is a dream.”<sup>26</sup>

It was established early on in the hearings that Beck had entered the country prior to Solomon, and therefore he was not guilty of bringing her into the country for the purposes of prostitution. He could, however, still be guilty of violating the Mann Act, which was punishable by a fine not to exceed \$5000 and/or five years imprisonment.<sup>27</sup>

The Mann Act was passed in 1910 to curb what was termed “white slavery,” young girls forced into prostitution against their will. The Act, also known as the White Slave Traffic Act, aimed to convict those who took women across state lines to practice prostitution against their will. But the legal wording of the Act gave it much broader scope, and it was rare to find cases that actually involved coercion. Section 2 of the Act prohibited interstate transport of women for the purposes of “prostitution or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose.” “Immoral” is not a legally defined term, and left much power in the hands of local officials to decide which acts could be considered immoral. As David Langum points out, the immoral act does not even have to consummated for

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<sup>25</sup> Examination of Jack Solomon, Seattle, Washington, 25 May 1912. *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*.

<sup>26</sup> Examination of Becky Beck, *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*.

<sup>27</sup> David Langum, *Crossing over the Line: Legislating Morality and the Mann Act*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 46. Langum also covers the case of *Caminetti v. United States* in which the Supreme Court decided that the law was upheld even in cases where the immorality was noncommercial.

those charged to be convicted; prosecutors had only to prove the transport was made with immoral intentions.<sup>28</sup>

What officials typically deemed immoral was any kind of implied sexual activity outside of the bounds of marriage. Mann Act prosecutions often involved the transport of willing adults and whether or not sex actually took place was not usually the issue. In the case of Solomon and Beck, who were consenting adults, their immoral activity constituted living together as man and wife, when they were not legally defined as such.

The case against Solomon and Beck centered on a move the pair had made to Ketchikan, Alaska in 1911. Solomon denied that the two had ever lived together as man and wife. He reported that he had lived in the same house as Beck and her brother, but that was all. In order to violate the Mann Act, Solomon would have had to pay for her transport to Alaska. The evidence supplied to prove this was a money order made out Becky Solomon, in the amount of \$10, signed by Jack Solomon in Alaska in May of 1911. Solomon and Beck argued that the check was actually repayment of a loan made to Solomon by Beck. Solomon denied that they were ever known as Mr. and Mrs. Solomon in Alaska, and denied they had ever lived as man and wife.<sup>29</sup>

While questioning Solomon during the investigation, the immigration agents asserted that Beck had admitted that she and Solomon had lived as man and wife in her earlier interview.<sup>30</sup> Solomon maintained that she had given the wrong answer and that it was never true. In Beck's second examination she denied she lived with Solomon as his wife in Seattle, but said that they "were known as man and wife as it was necessary to do that in Alaska." They asked her about another man named Andrew Saunders who she had previously lived with. She claimed they had intended to marry, but the relationship ended because of an undisclosed disagreement. The officers also showed evidence of a letter received by Beck from a man at Home Colony named Pease, which implied that the two had intimate relations. Beck denied this and said they spent a "pleasant hour" together, but that nothing more had happened.<sup>31</sup> As we will see in cases involving Wobbly women, whether or not immorality was the actual charge, they were often interrogated about their personal relationships with men.

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<sup>28</sup> Langum, *Crossing Over the Line*, 46.

<sup>29</sup> Examination of Jack Solomon, Seattle, Washington, May 25, 1912. *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*.

<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, the transcripts for this interview are illegible.

<sup>31</sup> Examination of Becky Beck, *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*

The other evidence used against Beck was a set of photographs. A few of them were nude photos of her that she said had been taken around the time she came to the United States. She denied that she gave them to anyone, or that they were made for distribution for profit. When asked why she took them, she explained that she wanted to remember how she looked when she was older.<sup>32</sup>

In the findings of her examination by immigration officials on 14 June Beck was described as “of good physique” and “above the average intelligence.” But the agents still found her to be morally deficient as evidenced by “her relations with men, her false statements during the examination, and the fact of her having had nude photographs taken of herself.” This along with her admitted relationship with Saunders and the alleged relationship with Pease was enough evidence to convince the agent that she be placed “in a class of immoral women generally and commonly known as prostitutes.” Even though she had several character witnesses testify on her behalf, they “impressed [the agent] very unfavorably as they are all persons imbued with the same beliefs, ignorant and uneducated except along socialistic and anarchistic lines.”<sup>33</sup> Radical political and social beliefs were therefore enough to discount witness testimony, which again signifies how difficult it was for radicals to find justice in a system that deemed them deficient because of their beliefs.

In a letter dated 5 July 1912, the Commissioner of Immigration in Seattle, Ellis DeBruler, wrote to the Commissioner-General of Immigration in Washington, DC, to discuss the cases of Solomon and Beck. The Commissioner admitted that both had been in the country for more than three years, so deporting them because of anarchist views was not lawful. However, DeBruler believed that the two were “morally deficient, being believers and followers of the Free Love cult.” In his view “their presence in the country is a menace to law and order and a disgrace to the community and the nation and I believe that they should be removed from the country, if the law can possibly be construed to warrant such action.” DeBruler also noted that the case had been forwarded to the US Attorney for his district, but he advised that a White Slave Act violation was not warranted.<sup>34</sup> Clearly Beck and Solomon were seen as guilty and dangerous regardless of whether or not there was any legal basis to designate them as such.

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<sup>32</sup> Examination of Becky Beck, *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*

<sup>33</sup> Examination of Becky Beck, *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*.

<sup>34</sup> DeBruler to Cable, July 5, 1912, *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*.

DeBruler admitted in his letter that the charges with which he had hoped to deport the pair were unfounded, but still hoped that there might be a way to “construe” the law to deport them anyway. A letter to the Secretary of Commerce and Labor from the counsel for Beck and Solomon, Channing Coleman, demolished any chance of that happening. Coleman went through their case point by point and showed the immigration commission had no evidence of prostitution or anarchism. He argued that the case was instead directly related to their activity in the tailors’ strike and they were targeted because of their labor activities.

As evidence of the political nature of the case, Coleman noted that the inspector refused to give the name of his “local source” that had reported the pair as involved in anarchism and prostitution. Coleman believed the shop owners who had been struck were the anonymous informants. Since they knew that Beck and Solomon had recently entered the United States, they reported them to remove them from the center of agitation and strike activity. Furthermore, Beck had testified that the inspector initially asked her about the strike, which proved to Coleman that he had previously had communication with the business owners the tailors were on strike against.<sup>35</sup>

Coleman was not alone in his belief that the immigration service was being used to punish strike leaders. Shortly after their arrest a petition was filed on Beck and Solomon’s behalf which tied the arrest to their participation in the strike: “The undersigned citizens and residents of Seattle, being convinced that a great wrong is being done to Jack Soloman [sic] and Becky Beck by arresting and detaining them for deportation, and being convinced that the Immigration Officers are deceived by false information given by interested parties for the purpose of breaking the strike against the B & R Tailors, which strike they are leading, respectfully petition the Honorable Secretary, to order the immediate release of said Jack Soloman and Becky Beck from custody.” The petition carried over 700 signatures.<sup>36</sup>

The petition and Coleman’s letter worked, and 11 July 1912 Acting Secretary of Commerce and Labor Benjamin S. Cable informed DeBruler that, after careful review, Cable found that the facts did not justify deportation, though he “regrets that such is the case.” At that point Solomon was released and Beck’s bond was returned.<sup>37</sup> After the accusation by Coleman that the warrant was actually based on involvement in the strike,

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<sup>35</sup> Coleman to Cable, n.d. *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*.

<sup>36</sup> Petition to Release Solomon and Beck, n.d. *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*.

<sup>37</sup> Cable to DeBruler, July 11, 1912, *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*.

Cable wrote to Samuel Gompers, President of the AFL, to assure him that the arrest was not related to the strike, and that not enough evidence had been provided to warrant deportation.<sup>38</sup>

For many cases of women involved in trials like these it is difficult to track down their subsequent actions. Luckily, Beck lived a long life and continued to be an activist in the 1970s, during which time she was interviewed twice. In a 1973 interview, Beck referred to Solomon as her first husband, and mentioned that she had a child with him in 1912 that died shortly after it was born. When the interviewer asked Beck when she married Solomon, she replied that they had a common-law marriage recognized by the state of Washington. So it is likely from Beck's later admission that both Beck and Solomon lied about their relationship in order to avoid deportation based on issues of morality.<sup>39</sup>

Beck married Benjamin August in Seattle around 1916-1917. They left Seattle around a year later to go to New York, but returned to Seattle and helped organize the 1919 general strike. She then lived in the Bay Area and subsequently Los Angeles, left her husband in 1931, and moved to the Home Colony in Washington. In a 1974 interview she noted that she still belonged to the International League for Peace and Freedom, founded by Jane Addams. She ended the interview by proclaiming that her motto was "Down with hatred! Love to all mankind!"<sup>40</sup> Beck, at that time known as Rebecca August, passed away in 1978.

The cases of Becky Beck and Jack Solomon provide an example of the way that issues of morality were used to persecute radicals. Beck and Solomon were known for their labor activities and their membership in the Industrial Workers of the World. But since those actions were not in themselves illegal, morality laws, such as the Mann Act or Immigration Exclusions, were used against those labor activists who questioned traditional middle-class beliefs regarding gender, sex, and marriage. The frequent references to Solomon and Beck as members of the "free love cult" insinuate that not only did they want to transform industrial life and the relationship between the working class and the employing class, they also want to transform familial relationships. The vague wording of such morality laws provided a way for prosecutors to attempt to stifle radical, but not illegal, activity in the workplace, by attacking the private lives of those involved.

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<sup>38</sup> Cable to Gompers, July 16, 1912. *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*.

<sup>39</sup> Beck August, interview.

<sup>40</sup> Avrich, *Anarchist Voices*, 333.

The Seattle tailors' strike had limited effect on the IWW as a labor organization in that it did not lead to lasting or widespread unionization of the industry within the IWW. But the trials of Becky Beck and Jack Solomon make it clear that the legal troubles that followed their organizing efforts were based on the judgment of officials who believed that by virtue of their radical beliefs they did not belong in the United States. This exemplifies the legal risks that male and female Wobblies faced in their organizing efforts, but more importantly the liability of radical action for women. Women were questioned on a moral, rather than legal, basis, and had to account for any relationship with a man outside of marriage that could be deemed immoral. The courts put women's personal lives on trial for actions they took to protect their bodies and their rights in the workplace. Any hint of behavior outside of the bounds of traditional marriage and sexuality put them at risk. The legal system that was set up to persecute political radicalism also persecuted those who questioned middle-class moral values.

### Chapter 3

## The Oregon Packing Company Strike, Prostitution, and the Battle over Female Self-Determination, 1913

As during the tailors' strike in Seattle, women's sexual behaviors were a focal point during a strike of cannery workers in Portland in 1913. Examining the strike and its aftermath reveals how women within the IWW rejected or renegotiated normative views on the causes of prostitution and society's responses to it. During the strike, the women held signs declaring that "40¢ a day is what makes prostitutes," blaming low wages, rather than loose morals, for pushing women into selling their bodies for a living. The Industrial Workers of the World shared this view. Its support of the female strikers led to a showdown between radical and progressive forces in the city, each battling to define what was respectable and acceptable behavior for young females. As the strike ended, the battle took on a new turn, pitting the IWW against one of the nation's first policewomen, Lola Baldwin, in the case of Lilian Larkin, an 18-year-old with "immoral tendencies" accused of vagrancy.

The 1913 strike also typifies the tensions during this period between progressive reform and radicalism. The justice system, as we have seen in Chapters 1 and 2, was a tool for enforcing "respectable" behaviors as it judged women on their personal and political beliefs, regardless of the legality of those beliefs. The strike is also an example of the paternalistic nature of progressivism, since reformers effectively took the strike out of the strikers' hands and settled it in the way they thought most beneficial to the workers. While progressives enforced what they thought was best for young women, the IWW supported what the young women thought would be best for themselves. Progressives believed they were acting in the best interests of young women, protecting them from immorality or vice. The Wobblies and the young women they represented fought to have control over their labor and their bodies, and argued against morality being forced upon them.<sup>1</sup>

The 1913 strike at the Oregon Packing Company lasted less than two months

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<sup>1</sup> For the most thorough discussion of the strike and its implications regarding Progressive activists in Portland, see Jan Dilg "By Proceeding in an Orderly and Lawful Manner" (MA Thesis, Portland State University, 2005). For more background on Progressive-Era Portland, see Robert Johnson's *The Radical Middle-Class: Populist Democracy and the Question of Capitalism in Progressive Era Portland, Oregon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). Johnson argues that Portland, which was seen as conservative by many by the early twentieth century, actually possessed a "democratic populist, and even anticapitalist" spirit.

and only affected a few hundred workers, but it led to a dramatic showdown between radicals and progressives in the city of Portland, the largest city in Oregon with a population of 207,214 in 1910.<sup>2</sup> Recent studies of the strike by Greg Hall and Janice Dilg have examined how Progressive Era reformers commandeered the negotiations between the workers and the employers and settled the strike according to their standards of justice and fairness.<sup>3</sup> Rather than retelling that story of the 1913 strike, this chapter seeks to examine the strike and the ensuing Larkin controversy as it reflects the discordant views on prostitution and female sexuality espoused by middle-class reformers and working-class women, especially those associated with the Industrial Workers of the World.

Attention to vice and morality was reflected in the local newspapers accounting of the strike. The *Oregonian*, the *Portland Telegram*, and the *Oregon Daily Journal* all came down on the side of the employers and progressive reformers. The *Portland News* (previously known as the *Daily News*) an avowedly working-class paper, was on the side of the strikers and gave much more attention to the strike, often as front-page news. The mainstream newspapers shed light on how the “dangers” of young women’s association with the Wobblies were relayed to the public. The working-class paper, while providing a more dramatic reading of the strike, paid more attention to what the strikers had to say about the events and castigated police and local officials for their behavior towards the strikers.

In June of 1913, the cherry crop was ready to be canned at the Oregon Packing Company. The women had previously been canning strawberries and making about a dollar a day, but the cherries took longer and were of lower quality, so some women ended up making as little as forty cents a day.<sup>4</sup> Pauline Haller, one of the leaders of the strike, later testified that the workers had been complaining about conditions and wages and on 27 June decided they would ask for more money, and if it was not received, would go out on strike. They went to the supervisor, Mr. McPherson, and as Haller recounted, “he spoke to us first and then he kicked us out. He didn't give us our wraps or anything. He said 'if you don't like it here get out.' I told him we wanted more wages and I don't think \$1.50 is any too much for any girl to live on. Nobody agitated – we all walked

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<sup>2</sup> Women made up 43% of the population. 1910 United States Census.

<sup>3</sup> Greg Hall, “The Fruits of Her Labor’: Women, Children, and Progressive Era Reformers in the Pacific Northwest Canning Industry,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 109:2 (Summer 2008); Janice Dilg, “For Working Women in Oregon’: Caroline Gleason/Sister Miriam Theresa and Oregon’s Minimum Wage Law,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 110:1 (Spring 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Hall, “The Fruits of her Labor,” 239.

out together and the majority of the old women ran back and got to work.” The women who joined the strike later testified that they were told they would be making \$2.00 a day, but ended up only making 29 to 50 cents. They also complained of hand injuries and getting sick from the rotten fruit.<sup>5</sup>

The local branches of the IWW and the Socialist Party immediately supported the women who walked out on strike. A few days into the strike the women formed a strike committee to negotiate with the OPC, which initially refused who meet with the strikers. The committee requested a wage increase to \$1.50 per day, which was the strikers’ initial demand, but they did not stop there. They wanted double-time for overtime and Sunday work and an increase in pay for the forewoman to 25 cents an hour. The strikers had concerns beyond wages, and demanded that the company provide a lunchroom, sick room, lockers, a dressing room, three aprons per week, and sufficient towels. Low wages inspired the strike, but hygiene was clearly important to the strikers.<sup>6</sup>

Along with organizing the strikers’ demands, the strike committee also tried to keep order. Fearing that trouble from businessmen and onlookers would cause the police to break up street meetings, the Wobblies physically encouraged people such as local businessman M. C. Banfield to move along and not clog the sidewalk. Banfield later testified that Wobbly “self appointed police” put their hands on his shoulders and forcefully kept him moving so the congestion would not cause a street meeting to be broken up.<sup>7</sup> Along with security, the committee was also charged with feeding the strikers. On 4 July the strikers had an “all day picnic. Sympathizers sent over an abundance of ice-cream for the women, and a brass band is in attendance in front of strike headquarters.”<sup>8</sup> There was “speaking, singing, music, and dining” in front of the plant from 6am to 6pm daily, and after that time the strikers would head downtown for large rallies.<sup>9</sup>

The IWW and the local Socialist Party assisted the strikers by providing financial aid during this strike. There were newspaper reports that they were paying full room and board for the strikers, though that amount of funding was unlikely. OPC superintendent McPherson believed that the agitators were “conducting the strike merely for the

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<sup>5</sup> “Oregon Packing Plant Strike Narrative”, [1913], Albee Subject Files, Box 1, File 66, Portland Archives and Records Center (PARC).

<sup>6</sup> *The Portland News*, July 2, 1913.

<sup>7</sup> “Oregon Packing Plant Strike Narrative”

<sup>8</sup> *The Portland News*, July 4, 1913.

<sup>9</sup> Press Committee of Strikers, “On the Job in Oregon,” *International Socialist Review* (August 1913): 164.

pleasure of causing trouble. The girls find this an easy way of making a living.”<sup>10</sup> The strikers, however, saw it differently. During a hearing with Oregon Governor Oswald West, striker Mrs. Miller noted that “if it were not for the assistance given by the despised agitators I couldn’t eat. They paid my rent, kept my table going, and cared for my sick boy.”<sup>11</sup> While McPherson and the *Oregonian* thought that aid to the strikers meant paying troublemakers to not work, those who were assisting the strikers knew that it was a necessity if they were going to stay out long enough for the strike to be successful.

Local radicals weren’t the only ones interested in representing the strikers. The newly-formed Oregon Industrial Welfare Commission organized a committee to investigate conditions in the factory. Strikers were suspicious of the OIWC’s efforts. Tom Burns, the chairman of the strike committee, claimed the OIWC “butted into this affair” and was “composed primarily of parlor reformers.” He continued, “it seems to me that their principle function is to break a strike, and not assist in ameliorating the conditions of the helpless workers.”<sup>12</sup> An unnamed strike supporter told the committee that the OIWC asked the girls to leave the picket line, and promised they would settle the strike for them in 30 to 90 days. When they discussed wages with the commission, the strikers said they needed a minimum of \$1.50 a day, but the supporter reported that Father O’Hara “thought that was too much but said he would see what he could do.” The strikers refused to leave the picket line. Later they found out that the Commission brokered a settlement without their input or approval.<sup>13</sup>

The strikers’ suspicions of the OIWC proved correct: the Commission ignored many of the workers’ requests regarding safety and sanitation, and instead came to an agreement with the OPC that improved wages, but still fell below the amount requested by the strikers. The *Portland News* reported on the deal with the headline “They Weren’t Told About It.” The agreement dated 1 July listed the following conditions:

1. That a minimum flat time rate shall be a dollar a day on a basis of a 10-hour day.
2. Piece rate shall be determined on the basis of work of the average worker who shall be able to earn the above minimum at piece rate, in 10 hours.
3. Old or crippled workers shall be given permits by the Industrial Welfare Commission for time rate.
4. No worker who works under permit from Industrial Welfare Commission, or from

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<sup>10</sup> *Oregonian*, July 9, 1913.

<sup>11</sup> *Portland News*, July 12, 1913.

<sup>12</sup> Press Committee, “On the Job in Oregon”, 164.

<sup>13</sup> “Oregon Packing Plant Strike Narrative”

the Child Labor Commission, shall be considered in the computing of piece rate for the average worker.<sup>14</sup>

The *Portland News* reported that those still working at the plant knew nothing of the new agreement, and that the wage minimum had not yet been implemented. The dollar a day minimum wage fell far short of the \$9-10 a week that even the mayor of Portland agreed was necessary for the women to support themselves, let alone any family members that relied on them.

The OIWC declared the strike over after the agreement, but the majority of the women on strike refused to go back to work and continued to picket the OPC. They had played no part in the negotiations and the OIWC agreement did not meet the strikers' list of demands. On 8 July, eleven women who had continued to work in the factory were sent in cars to complain to Mayor Albee about the treatment they received from the strikers. They were followed by a march of one hundred strikers who wanted to tell their side of the story.<sup>15</sup> At this point the strike turned into a free speech fight. On 9 July, Mayor Albee issued an order to the Chief of Police to "permit no person, striker or other, to use abusive obscene, vulgar or threatening language. Permit no person to block the street or sidewalk. Permit no rowdyism, threats or violence of any kind. Arrest forthwith all violators of the penal ordinances of the City of Portland or violators of these orders."<sup>16</sup> The *Portland News* claimed that Albee only prohibited street speaking after an appeal by the Employers Association, which suggests that the prohibition was about the strike and protest, rather than about the language used.<sup>17</sup>

On the morning of 9 July the first arrests for street speaking were made. Mrs. Schoen and Rudolph and Mary Schwab were arrested. On 10 July Schwab was arrested again, along with Mrs. Rich, Mrs. O'Connor, and Mrs. Bella Goldish. On 11 July Governor Oswald West addressed the crowd picketing the OPC, and promised to help resolve the strike. On 12 July, the strikers, as well as supporters crowded city hall to testify about the conditions they faced at the plant to an audience of the Governor and the members of the OIWC. Mayor Albee did not attend. At the meeting twelve of the women spoke of low wages, unsanitary conditions, and the poor quality of fruit that they were forced to work with.<sup>18</sup> Tom Burns and Mary Schwab, representing the strikers, tore

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<sup>14</sup> *Portland News*, July 5, 1913.

<sup>15</sup> *Portland News*, July 8, 1913.

<sup>16</sup> *Oregonian*, July 9, 1913.

<sup>17</sup> *Portland News*, July 8, 1913.

<sup>18</sup> *Portland News*, July 9-12, 1913.

into the officials present, goading OIWC member Father O'Hara into admitting that he was the one who announced to the press that the strike was over before the strikers had been consulted. At one point during the meeting Governor West was so incensed that he stood on a mahogany table shouting at Burns, "Don't think because you wear a red flag I am afraid of you."<sup>19</sup> West's anger was a result of what he believed were insults to OIWC member Bertha Moore, a retired teacher and the state-appointed representative for the workers on the OIWC, who had taught West when he was a boy.<sup>20</sup>

Later that day the strike took a more violent turn when mounted police charged the female picketers, in an incident the press committee hyperbolically called "the most atrociously brutal act in the history of Oregon." Approximately seventy-five women linked arms on the picket line, and they reformed time and time again after the police charged and broke the line. Three women were injured: Mrs. C. H. Hart, Mrs. Mitchell, and Mrs. Kennedy.<sup>21</sup> Strike supporters Edith and Andy Kohler were arrested at the scene. Also arrested on Saturday was George Stevens, the night watchmen at the OPC, for kicking striker Eva Bale. The strikers vowed to continue to picket, and the injured women secured a lawyer and made plans to sue the policemen who gave the order to charge.<sup>22</sup>

Tension escalated over the next few days. On 15 July, the police arrested Tom Burns while he was speaking to raise donations for the strikers, and beat him so badly that he required an operation.<sup>23</sup> In one of the biggest street meetings, on 16 July 1913, the police arrested ten more. At this point Dr. Marie Equi became a focal point of the strike. Equi had been a supporter of progressive causes, and was radicalized by the OPC strike. The *Oregonian* seemed equally fascinated and repulsed by Equi, making her out to be insane and violent, and reporting that she punched the deputy and the night watchman at the jail. "She apparently courted arrest, applying picturesque epithets to the deputies and to the police." They then quoted Sheriff Word as warning "certain women that they went too far last night and that they cannot expect to be treated as women if they act like hooligans."<sup>24</sup>

It soon became clear that the women arrested were going to bear the consequences for stepping outside of the bounds of appropriate female behavior. On 17

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<sup>19</sup> Press Committee of Strikers, "On the Job in Oregon," *International Socialist Review* (August 1913): 166.

<sup>20</sup> *Portland Evening Telegram*, July 12, 1913.

<sup>21</sup> Press Committee, "On the Job in Oregon," 166.

<sup>22</sup> *Portland News*, July 14, 1913.

<sup>23</sup> Press Committee, "On the Job in Oregon," 166.

<sup>24</sup> *Oregonian*, July 16, 1913.

July, women went out again in defiance of the orders against street speaking. Approximately 3000 were present at the meeting, and violence escalated into hand-to-hand combat between Wobblies and police. In all ten women and six men were arrested. The women arrested were between the ages of 16 and 57, suggesting the significance of this issue to younger and older workers. Again, Equi was at the forefront, purportedly leading a group of seventeen girls, screaming “that she would kill anyone who tried to make her stop talking.”<sup>25</sup> Equi, Mary Schwab, Pauline Haller, Jean Bennett, and Belle Goldish were all charged with assembling “with intent and with means and preparation to do an unlawful act, to wit to resist the Chief of Police of the City of Portland and the Sheriff of Multnomah County in their efforts to preserve the peace and prevent the said officers from maintaining law and order, the said defendants being armed with weapons consisting of pieces of gas pipe and other weapons and were by speech and otherwise endeavoring to incite others to resist lawful authority at said time and place.”<sup>26</sup> Since Equi was a doctor, there was a special fear of her medical knowledge. The *Oregonian* reported that she claimed to have infected a hairpin with a deadly virus, and she would stab anyone who tried to come near her.

The following day the labor-friendly *Portland News* led with the headline “Crazed Cops Let Run Amok.” Their coverage of events filled the front page and featured stories recounted the numerous citizens who had nothing to do with the strike yet were clubbed and beaten by police. The *News* also reported that it had received threats of an organized group coming to ransack the plant and destroy the paper. To this the newspaper replied “Now, listen, you anarchists, you starvers of women, you protectors of white slavers, you pardoners of degenerates, you grafters in high office, you haters of labor...you come right up to 325 Fifth Street and try it on.”<sup>27</sup>

One example of onlooker involvement during the violent episode that the *News* reported was the case of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Kite. Mr. Kite had grabbed a police club while protecting his wife from the officers. He was then beaten badly enough to require stitches, and when his wife interfered in his defense, she was also arrested. The Kites, unlike the majority of the strikers who lived in Portland's working-class east side, lived in the upscale Portland Heights neighborhood, and were in the downtown area to see a show. Mr. Kite, a department store employee, said that they were wedged in the crowd

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<sup>25</sup> *Oregonian*, July 18, 1913.

<sup>26</sup> “Multnomah County Court Records #53974” (Portland, Oregon), Multnomah County Courthouse.

<sup>27</sup> *Portland News*, July 18, 1913.

and had nothing to do with the strike itself. The disorderly conduct charge against Mrs. Kite was dropped, though Mr. Kite was found guilty.<sup>28</sup>

In efforts to clamp down on the street speaking and avoid any further violent confrontation, Mayor Albee proposed a “flag ordinance” which would prohibit any speech or language that created “disturbance or disrespect for the governments of or in the United States,” which included the city government. Albee’s detractors attacked this as a way of prohibiting any attempt to criticize his policies or to accuse the government of graft. City Commissioner Brewster, a lawyer, blocked the passage of the law, saying that it was inadvisable considering the current temperament of the people. He likely believed it would only add fuel to the free speech fight and provoke more violence. By 29 July, the furor had passed, and it was noted that the flag ordinance would not be up for debate at the city council next meeting.<sup>29</sup>

By late July, attention had turned away from the strike, and was now focused on the free speech battle. As late as 22 July, the strikers had issued another appeal for funds, but little attention was paid to the fate of the strikers in the local papers after that point. A free speech league was formed, and held its first big meeting on 27 July, with an audience of five thousand. The speakers included a lawyer and a Spanish-American war veteran. No mention of the strike or strikers that had instigated the free speech battle was made in any of the reports of the event, signifying that the focus had transitioned from the strike to the issue of free speech.<sup>30</sup> By 1 August thirty free speech prisoners in the county jail had been released, and Mayor Albee had extended the “free speech zone” downtown. The free speech league and the indignant citizens, who had been beaten by police for merely walking by the street speakers, felt their fight had been won. But the fight was not yet completely over, for on 13 August ten people were arrested for speaking on the street, including Lucy Parsons, widow of Haymarket martyr Albert Parsons. That was, however, the last mention of any free speech arrests.<sup>31</sup> The strike wound down, and media attention dwindled.

While the 1913 cannery strike could be catalogued as one of many conflicts between labor and business during the Progressive Era, the class struggle was complicated by the atmosphere of anti-vice panic in Portland and throughout the nation. Progressive reformers were highly concerned about women’s working conditions and

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<sup>28</sup> *Portland News*, July 18, 1913.

<sup>29</sup> *Portland News*, July 24, 29, 1913.

<sup>30</sup> *Portland News*, July 28, 1913.

<sup>31</sup> *Oregonian*, August 14, 1913.

female sexuality, and feared that low wages made young women vulnerable to moral decay. In order to protect young women's moral virtue, numerous efforts were made to understand and alleviate the problems of low wages and vice in Progressive Era Portland.

First gaining popularity in the 1890s, regulations on hours and conditions of female work outside of the home had been a contentious issue. While most radical groups like the IWW did not advocate different workplace standards for men and women, throughout the Progressive Era many reformers focused on women's unique qualities, especially their role as mothers, to advocate shorter working hours and better conditions. While different states started to mandate a limit on the hours one could work during the day, in the case of *Lochner v New York* (1905), the United States Supreme Court invalidated these laws on the grounds of the doctrine of "freedom of contract" which had long been used against unions and reform groups. According to "freedom of contract," a worker had the "freedom" to make any agreement she wanted with her employer regarding hours, wages, or conditions, and the government had no right to interfere with that employer/employee relationship.

More and more often reformers pointed out the injustice inherent in "freedom of contract:" desperation led people to agree to low pay, long hours, and deplorable conditions. It was a fundamentally imbalanced relationship, where, as the Wobblies often pointed out, the interests of workers and employers were at odds. Just three years after the *Lochner* case, *Muller v Oregon* (1908) justified treating men and women differently under the law when it came to maximum hours. In 1903, Oregon had set a maximum of ten hours a day that women could work outside the home. Curt Muller, who owned a Portland laundry, had been convicted and fined \$10 for keeping his workers longer than the maximum hours. He took his case to the Supreme Court. In this landmark decision, the Court justified women's shorter working hours because of their biological differences. Women were protected by the state because of their ability to reproduce and the importance of healthy motherhood. This had less to do with the rights of workers, but with the state's responsibility of keeping women healthy enough to reproduce. This maternalist ideology also led to a divide within the feminist movement between those who focused on female equality and those who focused on female difference. The IWW generally rejected laws that treated men and women differently, and advocated for shorter hours for the entire working class. The IWW argued that laws enforcing maximum hours for women would hurt women in the long run because employers would

just fire them and hire men who could work longer hours.<sup>32</sup>

Along with laws regulating maximum working hours, progressives also investigated the issue of low wages. In 1912 the Consumer's League of Oregon undertook a study, headed by reformer Caroline Gleason, which would provide information in support of a minimum wage law for women that the group wanted to introduce to the state legislature the following year.<sup>33</sup> Gleason's study, the *Report of the Social Survey Committee of the Consumers' League of Oregon on the Wages, Hours, and Conditions of Work and Cost and Standard Living of Women Wage Earners in Oregon with Special Reference to Portland* was published in 1913, and utilized much of the same maternalist language used by future Supreme Court Judge Louis Brandeis, a lawyer for Oregon in the *Muller v Oregon* case. The minimum wage bill was passed in February 1913, and also included a provision to create the Industrial Welfare Commission. The Commission was made up of representatives of workers, employers, and the public, and was established to oversee and regulate hours and conditions of labor. Catholic Priest Edwin O'Hara was appointed as the representative of the public, pottery manufacturer Amedee Smith as the employers' representative, and Bertha Moors, listed as a retired teacher, to represent workers. Gleason was named Executive Secretary. The OIWC was established 3 June, less than a month before the OPC strike began. The role the Commission played in the strike was the first effort of this new regulating body, and the members approached it with zeal, no doubt eager to prove their worth.<sup>34</sup> While O'Hara and Gleason had reputations as progressive reformers, it should be noted that Smith was a member of the Portland Non-Partisan League, an organization formed during the strike that passed a resolution endorsing police action against the strikers. Smith signed the resolution, demonstrating that he was not impartial on the issue of the strike.<sup>35</sup> The Wobblies and Socialists opposed the OIWC and its

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<sup>32</sup> *Industrial Worker*, May 11, 1911.

<sup>33</sup> Janice Dilg suggests that the Consumer's League of Oregon was initially in favor of proposing a minimum wage bill that covered all workers, but for several reasons, most notably that most thought a gender-neutral bill could not pass in the current political climate, it was changed to only cover women and minors.

<sup>34</sup> Janice Dilg, "For Working Women in Oregon"

<sup>35</sup> "Harry Albee to Portland Non-Partisan League," July 31, 1913, Albee Subject Files, Box 3, File 27, City of Portland Archives and Records Center (PARC). The platform of the Portland Non-Partisan League explained that its central purpose was to "investigate records and standing of candidates for municipal, county and state offices" and "to do all things necessary and proper towards insuring to the city and state an honest, economical, and efficient administration of state, county and municipal affairs." While it was formed under the guise of non-partisanship, the very first resolution the group passed endorsed the actions of city officials "in their efforts to enforce the law against the order of Industrial Workers of the World and other disturbers of the peace,

mandate, and Father O'Hara was a particular subject of scorn. The Strike Press Committee referred to him as "His Oiliness," and accused him of telling the striking women in his parish that they would go to hell if they did not go back to work.<sup>36</sup>

The Oregon Packing Company strike coincided with a nationwide scare over the issue of prostitution, often termed "white slavery." Reaching its peak in the United States in years prior to World War I, white slavery combined the moralistic attitudes of progressive reformers with the Victorian fear of sexual impropriety. The fear was that young girls were being kidnapped and forced into a life of prostitution and drug addiction. Panic over prostitution during the Progressive Era had three distinct but related elements. The first was public panic that young girls were being kidnapped and sold into slavery. The second stemmed from the increased freedom of young girls working in factories and moving to cities where their families no longer could keep close watch on them. The third focused on vice in major cities and what local governments could do to stop it. The threat of kidnapping was largely imagined, and although young women breaking free from parental control threatened Victorian moral standards and traditional family life, little could be done to stem the tide of immigrant and American-born young women flocking to the cities for work. Vice in cities, however, drew the attention of Progressive reformers because it was a demonstrable problem and steps could be taken to fix it. These issues are worth exploring more carefully if we are to fully understand the context of the actions of both strikers and progressive reformers in Portland in 1913.

The panic over white slavery was reaching fever pitch by the time of the 1913 strike. The term itself was coined only a few years earlier by George Kibbe Turner in a 1907 article in *McClure's* on vice in Chicago. There were several sensationalized reports in newspapers and by politicians claiming that a widespread prostitution ring existed in the United States.<sup>37</sup> This ring allegedly preyed on native-born American girls, and was said to be run by foreigners: Russian Jews in the East, and Chinese in the West. Novels and movies such as *A Traffic in Souls* (1913) and *The Inside of the White Slave Traffic*

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and heartily approve of the action to prevent anarchistic abuse of the American flag and American Government under the guise of 'free speech.'" *Oregonian*, August 3, 1913.

<sup>36</sup> Press Committee of Strikers, "On the Job in Oregon," *International Socialist Review* (August 1913): 164.

<sup>37</sup> Here are a few choice headlines from the 354 results when searching for the term "white slavery" in the *Oregonian* from 1907 to 1913: "Victim of White Slavery: Seattle Woman tells Chicago Police of Agent's Methods," *Oregonian*, February 29, 1908; "Women Rally to Edna Gingles' Aid: Pretty Irish Girl Says White Slavers Tried to Lure Her to Their Dens," *Oregonian*, July 2, 1909; "Disgraced Tutor Indicted: Charge of White Slavery is Placed Against Joseph Hidalgo," *Oregonian*, June 25, 1910.

(1913) were popular and played into the hysteria. While it is difficult to tell with much accuracy how much forced prostitution actually existed, several studies have shown it to be roughly five to ten percent of all cases of prostitution.<sup>38</sup> The other causes of prostitution, often economic, were ignored as reformers focused on their own sense of threatened morality and fear of behavior they could not control.

The propaganda over the fear of kidnapping and drug addiction led to federal laws aimed at preventing traffic in women. The first attempt at federal legislation making it illegal to import alien prostitutes was ruled unconstitutional in 1909, when the Supreme Court decided “the provisions against importers and employers were an unconstitutional assumption of police powers reserved for the state.”<sup>39</sup> A more successful (and still in effect) federal law was passed in 1910, known as the Mann Act. Unlike the laws declared unconstitutional, the Mann Act focused on taking women across state lines for prostitution or other “immoral behavior.” This could include premarital or extramarital sex and was used against people, including radicals, who had unconventional relationships, as we saw in the previous chapter.<sup>40</sup>

The panic over white slavery reflected the changes brought on by mass immigration, industrialization, and urbanization. Young women had more freedom than ever before, and were able to interact with men in the workplace, and in new social spaces such as movie theaters or amusement parks. As Joanne Meyerowitz points out, these “women adrift” moved to cities for economic opportunities, to escape abuse, or to have more freedom.<sup>41</sup> Regardless of their reasons for joining the workforce, young women now spent more time in the outside world than in the private sphere of the home as previous generations had, which was cause for consternation. But employers used the prevailing notion that young female workers were only working for “pin money” and had other means of support to justify their low wages.

In response to these social changes, progressive reformers focused on restricting young women’s sexuality and punishing female delinquency. Historian Mary Odem points out that “reformers assumed the authority to define an appropriate code of morality for female youth, one that was based on middle-class ideals of female sexual

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38 David J. Langum, *Crossing over the Line: Legislating Morality and the Mann Act* (University of Chicago Press, 2007), 35.

39 Michael E. McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 90.

40 For a complete history of the Mann Act, see Langum, *Crossing over the Line*.

41 Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

restraint and modesty.”<sup>42</sup> While often purporting to “protect” young women, most of these new regulations focused on limiting their freedoms and subjecting them to detention if they did not conform. Odem notes that while middle-class reformers were often in charge of getting legislation affecting young women passed, working-class families often used those laws to try to control their own wayward teenage daughters.<sup>43</sup>

The fear of young women “adrift” in cities led to the creation of new institutions responsible for policing and reforming their behavior. The Oregon State Industrial School for Girls was a product of these newfound fears of female delinquency. It was opened in July 1913, during the cannery strike. The school was to hold delinquent young women between the ages of 12 and 25, “the purpose being to protect them, to protect society, and if possible to so train and educate them that they will become good and useful women.” There were six offenses for which one could be admitted: immorality, larceny, vagrancy, incorrigibility, evil associates, or delinquency.<sup>44</sup> A teacher visiting the school found that the students learned tasks such as cleaning, laundry, and cooking, which were “a very important part of every girl's education.” Each young woman spent the morning in some kind of manual labor, and the afternoon in school. As well as being graded on these activities, they were marked in the following categories: “effort, tidiness, truthfulness, obedience, promptness, honesty, good influence, and clean talk.” Most of those categories were subjective, so the occupants were at the mercy of those supervising and judging them. The young women also worked on the farm located on the grounds, and attended Bible study and church services on weekends. A three-year term was the standard for all females committed, though they could be paroled for good behavior. While on parole, they had to write a letter to the superintendent once a month to check in and send in one-fourth of their earnings. Once the women were fully released those earnings would be returned to them.<sup>45</sup> The reform institution attempted to enforce respectable behavior by imposing strict rules and regulations, and often left young women sentenced to the school with little choice but to obey.

The treatment of “immoral” young women by state authorities often conflated moral judgment with assessment of mental abilities. As Ruth Rosen points out in her pioneering study of prostitution *The Lost Sisterhood*, prostitutes were often accused of

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<sup>42</sup> Mary Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995) 4.

<sup>43</sup> Odem, *Delinquent Daughters*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Oregon State Board of Control et al., *Biennial Report*, (Salem, OR: State Printing Department, 1914), 210.

<sup>45</sup> Welles, Frank. "Our Oregon State Institutions." *Oregon Teachers' Monthly*, 1915, 270-272.

being feeble-minded. According to the Massachusetts white slave commission some common characteristics of feeble-mindedness were “the general moral insensibility, the boldness, egotism and vanity the love of notoriety, the lack of shame or remorse, the absence of even a pretense of affection or sympathy for their children or for their parents, the desire for immediate pleasure without regard for consequences, the lack of forethought or anxiety about the future.”<sup>46</sup> Rosen notes that “rather than indicating mental deficiency, the label feeble-minded instead referred to the prostitutes’ refusal or failure to conform to middle-class values and behavior patterns.”<sup>47</sup> “Refusal or failure to conform to middle-class values and behavior patterns” could also be used to describe the majority of IWW membership.

While historians have concluded that the focus on white slavery and female sexuality during the 1910s was largely an overreaction to changing social circumstances, it did coincide with the very real existence of prostitution in the nation’s cities. Vice districts known for drinking, gambling, and prostitution were found in all major cities, and were targeted in the progressive quest to control and reshape working class behaviors. These would often also be the areas where migrant workers came to spend their paychecks, and therefore where an IWW office could usually be found. According to Michael McGerr, part of the Progressive anti-vice crusade had to do with increased knowledge of the public health concerns of venereal disease. The disease found its way into middle-class homes, and prostitution was seen as the root cause. Divorce was also on the rise, and progressive reformers battled all of these vices—which symbolized “the loss of self-control and the celebration of selfishness”—in their “campaign to reshape adult behavior” into their own image of propriety.<sup>48</sup>

Portland too was swept up in this reform movement. In 1912, the Portland Vice Commission presented a report to the mayor “on immorality in places of public resort and accommodation, namely, hotels, apartment houses, rooming and lodging houses which by advertisement solicit the patronage of the public.”<sup>49</sup> The Commission investigated 547 establishments. Of these, only 98 were found to be moral, while 18 more were listed as “doubtful” in terms of morality. The other 431 were listed as immoral,

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<sup>46</sup> Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 22.

<sup>47</sup> Rosen, *Sisterhood*, 23. As Mary Odem points out in *Delinquent Daughters*, feeble-mindedness was also a target for eugenicists, who believed it was passed on genetically.

<sup>48</sup> McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent*, 85.

<sup>49</sup> *First Report of the Portland Vice Commission to the Mayor and City Council, January 1912* (Portland, OR: 1912), 3.

and separated into three degrees of immorality. 113 were “wholly given up to prostitution or assignation,” 124 were listed as “immoral tenants desired or preferred,” and the final 194 were listed as “immorality countenanced or ignored.”<sup>50</sup> The commission report also pointed out that many of these establishments were in buildings owned by prominent businessmen in the city, suggesting that city leaders were profiting of these immoral activities. One of the solutions they recommended, which was adopted in 1913, was the so-called “tin-plate law.” It required “owners of hotel, rooming and lodging houses and saloons to maintain a conspicuous plate or sign with the owner's name and address,” with a penalty of fines of up to \$100 a day for those who did not obey.<sup>51</sup> This was meant to shame the well-known businessmen who owned these buildings into making sure their tenants were moral.

The local and national obsession with prostitution and changing freedoms for young women cannot be separated from the strike. It is essential to understand this background in order to interpret the actions of strikers and reformers. The strikers were clearly aware of the panic over prostitution and teenage sexuality when they explicitly blamed low wages in the workplace for turning young women to prostitution. The reformers feared that the young female strikers mingling with the “dangerous” male Wobblies were being taken advantage of and would be turned into prostitutes. Reformers believed that state and local government should intervene in the workplace to promote their standards of fairness, morality, and respectability. This strike gave them a chance to apply their belief in the positive nature of governmental intrusion to a real world situation.

The Oregon Packing Company strike happened at a time when the city of Portland—and the nation as a whole—had been paying very close attention to the issue of female sexuality, whether by force or by choice, for money or for marriage, and the language used when describing the strike reflected this preoccupation. While the Wobblies offered an economic explanation for why women became prostitutes, they also defended women’s right to have control over their own sexuality, and fought back against the power of Progressive Reformers to make choices for the “good” of young women, just as the OIWC had done during the strike.

Wobbly Jean Bennett and the working-class women on strike at the OPC, like the progressive reformers, were concerned with prostitution. But unlike those reformers they

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<sup>50</sup> *First Report of the Portland Vice Commission*, 7.

<sup>51</sup> E. Kimbark MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power: The Portland Establishment, 1843-1913* (Portland, Or: Georgian Press, 1988), 438.

did not blame mysterious “white slavers” or the moral failings of troubled young women. Instead they focused on the economic imperative. The signs they carried on the picket line stating “40¢ Makes Prostitutes” linked economic and physical exploitation. Thus the strikers not only stepped beyond the bounds of proper female behavior by standing up for themselves and publicly going on strike, they also flirted with vulgarity, and connected selling one’s labor for wages to selling one’s body for wages. Both were economic transactions, and one could lead to the other if workers were not properly paid. During the strike a letter printed in the *Portland News* by “One Lonely Woman Worker” explained the dilemma that working women faced. After describing herself as a widow with children, making \$35 per month she asked:

will some wise newspaper, man or woman, tell me the best way to spend said thirty-five to the best advantage—pay rent, buy clothing, feed, shoes, fuel, pay for lights and water, carfare and dentists' bills? As hard as I manage, I simply cannot do it. I'll not mention how I make ends meet for fear of creating a “moral wave,” for while I assure there is not always a market for labor there is always a traffic in souls and bodies.<sup>52</sup>

The IWW also viewed prostitution as a decidedly economic, rather than moral, concern. Low wages turned women into prostitutes, and low-waged seasonal labor made it difficult for men to support a family, so they therefore turned to prostitutes for companionship. IWW newspapers were full of stories about prostitutes. Wobblies did follow the progressives in connecting prostitution to official corruption. Stories appeared in IWW newspapers about small towns that needed a new sidewalks built. In order to raise funds, the police would make a sweep of the local red light district and the women's fines would fill the city's coffers.<sup>53</sup>

Wobbly newspapers linked women selling their bodies for a living to men who sold their labor for a living. This line of reasoning made the most sense in areas like the Northwest where migrant labor was common. Men living in the lumber camps did not often interact with women other than prostitutes. It was difficult to maintain a stable family life for those moving from camp to camp. Melvyn Dubofsky infamously characterized the Western Wobbly solidarity, noting that timber workers were perfect recruits for the IWW: “Mostly native Americans or northern Europeans, they spoke English, lived together, drank together, slept together, whored together, and fought together.”<sup>54</sup> Philip Foner even noted a case of solidarity among male Wobblies and

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<sup>52</sup> *Portland News*, July 30, 1913.

<sup>53</sup> *Industrial Worker*, July 29, 1909.

<sup>54</sup> Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, (Quadrangle Books: Chicago, 1969), 129.

prostitutes in Louisiana. During a lumber strike the women refused to offer their services to strikebreakers, and in return, when the women of the brothel went on strike themselves, the Wobblies stood in solidarity.<sup>55</sup> This solidarity is hinted at in a cartoon appearing in the *Industrial Worker*, published in Spokane, Washington, comparing the conditions of lumber workers and prostitutes. It showed a picture of timber beast and a prostitute, with the caption "He can't afford to have a home. She never had a chance. That's why they are both selling themselves to the highest bidder."<sup>56</sup> The IWW's economic argument against white slavery hinged on the belief that low wages led to prostitution. This was explicitly stated in the signs carried by women picketing the Oregon Packing Company that read "40¢ a day is what makes prostitutes."

Contemporary beliefs regarding prostitution often blamed high levels of sexual desire or wanting to get rich as reasons why women entered prostitution. While some women undoubtedly hoped to get rich by living the life, many more simply hoped to get by. This logic is exemplified in Joe Hill's 1913 song "The White Slave." Hill had been a member of the Portland IWW local, and was familiar with labor conditions in the Northwest. His lyrics are as follows:

One little girl, fair as a pearl,  
Worked every day in a laundry;  
All that she made for food she paid,  
So she slept on a park bench so soundly;  
An old procuress spied her there,  
And whispered softly in her ear:

CHORUS:

Come with me now, my girly,  
Don't sleep out in the cold;  
Your face and tresses curly  
Will bring you fame and gold,  
Automobiles to ride in, diamonds and silks to wear,  
You'll be a star bright, down in the red light,  
You'll make your fortune there.

Same little girl, no more a pearl,  
Walks all alone 'long the river,  
Five years have flown, her health is gone,  
She would look at the water and shiver,  
Whene'er she'd stop to rest and sleep,  
She'd hear a voice call from the deep:

Girls in this way, fall every day,

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<sup>55</sup> Philip Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement* (New York: Free Press, 1979).

<sup>56</sup> *Industrial Worker*, January 26, 1911.

And have been falling for ages,  
Who is to blame? you know his name,  
It's the boss that pays starvation wages.  
A homeless girl can always hear  
Temptations calling everywhere.<sup>57</sup>

While the Wobblies can be credited for sympathizing with the plight of women who turned to prostitution for economic reasons, their economic determinism ignored the specificity of sexual exploitation, its emotional aspects, and how it differed from economic exploitation.

The question of whether prostitution should be viewed strictly as a form of labor or as sexual exploitation was not only a complicated issue for Wobblies; it has been the subject of late-twentieth century feminist debate as well. Gayle Rubin's 1975 article "The Traffic in Women" attempted to use Marxism to explain sexual oppression and found it failed "to fully express or conceptualize sex oppression."<sup>58</sup> In a 1992 article philosopher Christine Overall used Rubin's line of questioning to examine the debate between feminists who argued that prostitution was morally wrong and something women should be "saved" from, and prostitutes who saw their work as a form of labor. Essentially, what makes prostitution worse than other forms of labor? The absence of consent and the possibility of danger are not limited to sex work as a form of labor. She also points out that if non-monogamous sex or sex without love is what is wrong with prostitution, then that judgment could apply to many other types of sexual relationships. But Overall argues that prostitution is fundamentally different than other types of women's paid labor in its commoditization: "What is essential to prostitution is not the sexual activity itself but the buying of sexual activity."<sup>59</sup> This commoditization is also a product of gender roles, and under a system of capitalist patriarchy, even if all prostitution was bereft of danger or social stigma, it is still women who would be the majority of prostitutes, selling themselves for the benefit of men. Overall defines sex work as inherently unequal and "defined by the intersection of capitalism and patriarchy."<sup>60</sup> Noah Zatz is critical of this position, finding that what radical feminists like Overall see as a result of capitalist

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<sup>57</sup> Industrial Workers of the World, *Little Red Songbook*, (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Press, 2003).

<sup>58</sup> Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," In *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter, 157–210. New York: Monthly Review, 1975. See also Brook Meredith Beloso, "Sex, Work, and the Feminist Erasure of Class," *Signs* Vol. 38, No. 1 (2012) for a critique of Rubin's erasure of class and of feminists theorizing sex work through the lens of gender and sexuality rather than class.

<sup>59</sup> Christine Overall, "What's Wrong with Prostitution? Evaluating Sex Work," *Signs* Vol. 17, No. 4 (1992): 717.

<sup>60</sup> Overall, "What's Wrong with Prostitution?" 724.

patriarchy is more so a result of the criminalization of prostitution, and that they also ignore that many prostitutes themselves find their work “empowering or at least no worse than a regular job.”<sup>61</sup> Zatz claims that Marxists can’t look beyond work to see sex when examining prostitution, while radical feminists can’t look past sex to see work. Zatz argues that prostitution has so many variables of culture and context that it can’t be defined without looking at the circumstances of the individuals involved in the act.<sup>62</sup> While there is evidence that the Wobblies saw prostitution as a result of the capitalist system, and as a form of labor, they did not extensively discuss the issue in Wobbly newspapers or songs. As with the subjects of marriage and free love, the Wobblies were against any system that forced women to behave in a certain way, and generally left the details vague. In the Wobbly worldview, once capitalist exploitation was history and the One Big Union had arrived, it was assumed that problems of sexual exploitation would also disappear.

The discourse surrounding prostitution was present in the way that strikers, reformers, and city officials discussed the strike and the female strikers. The issue of vulgar language, often referring to pimps and prostitutes, by strikers, strike supporters, employers, and police was discussed nearly as much as the working conditions at the OPC. Both sides in strike emphasized the importance of decent and respectable language, and accusations of impropriety flew fast and furious. Elmer Buse, Secretary of the Socialist Party of Portland, wrote a letter to Congressman A. W. Lafferty complaining of police brutality and improper language during the free speech fight. “Old women and girls, peaceful, law abiding, and defenseless, have been trampled on by mounted police of this city. Many were hurt, three being severely injured in an unnecessary, damnable, and atrociously brutal charge of the mounted police.” Buse went on to call Sheriff Word “one of the most brutally ignorant and putridly foul mouthed characters in Portland.” He accused Word and his deputies of “using the most atrociously filthy, obscene, profane, and indecent language, to men, women and children” during the strike.<sup>63</sup>

Buse's complaint apparently caught the attention of the Congressman, for a month later, Mayor Albee wrote a letter to United States District Attorney Clarence Reames, and agreed to investigate the charges. Albee went on to give his side of the

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<sup>61</sup> Noah Zatz, “Sex Work/Sex Act: Law, Labor, and Desire in Constructions of Prostitution,” *Signs* Vol. 22, No. 2 (1997): 291.

<sup>62</sup> Zatz, “Sex Work/Sex Act,” 295.

<sup>63</sup> “Letter from Elmer Buse to Congressman Lafferty,” August 19, 1913, Albee Subject Files, Box 1, File 25, PARC.

story, and declared that there was nothing truthful in Buse's letter. Albee claimed that interference by the IWW, whom he referred to as “outsiders” and “notorious trouble-breeders,” “made of a trivial matter a more or less serious one.” Albee claimed that he had offered to help the women and would back their claims for higher wages, but because of “hired agitators” and a newspaper “of the muck-raking variety,” the strikers “refused to be guided by sane counsel.” He went on to complain that just as he was about to settle things with the strikers, Governor West came in and interfered, speaking to the strikers in the street, and holding meetings in the City Council Chamber without Albee present. On the subject of the free speech fight, he claimed “profane, abusive and very vulgar language finally became so bad that I deemed it my solemn duty to suppress all public speaking, temporarily.” Albee claimed to be a firm believer in free speech, though he would not “suffer the flag to be insulted” or “tolerate profane, obscene, or abusive language.”<sup>64</sup> City officials and businessmen once again insinuated that the Wobblies were outsiders and not respectable citizens. Albee’s comments also ignored the agency of the striking women, and instead implied that they would have been complacent and happy to work with the city council if it were not for the outside agitators and newspapers riling up emotions. During testimony to the city council one local businessman, A. E. Holton, said that he heard the strikers yelling things “not fit to repeat” at the strikebreakers. When prodded by the Mayor, he said “damn scab,” “dirty scab,” and “pimp” were words used frequently. When Mr. McPherson testified, he said that he heard a man on a soapbox call the manager of the company a “syphilitic degenerate” as well as a pimp.<sup>65</sup> This language not only signified the “roughness” of the Wobblies and the strikers, but also mirrored the discussion of low wages leading to prostitution by referring to the company manager as a pimp.

Along with “profane” language, much attention was paid during the strike to the danger of close contact between male Wobblies and younger female strikers. The *Oregonian* believed it a sinister scheme. They reported “indications” that white slavers—claiming to be Wobblies—had established a “recruiting station” in a home across the street from the OPC. “IWW agitators, many of them rough men from the North End sections, mingle freely with these girls, talk with them...and in general affect some intimacy.” There were also reports of a “flashily dressed woman” mingling among the

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<sup>64</sup> “Letter from Mayor Albee to Clarence Reames,” September 19, 1913, Albee Subject Files, Box 3, File 60, PARC.

<sup>65</sup> “Oregon Packing Plant Strike Narrative.”

strikers.<sup>66</sup> Anna Spaniol, the woman whose home was in question, sued the *Oregonian* for \$20,000 for the libelous accusation that she was running a prostitution ring.<sup>67</sup> It was later noted by strikers that the “flashily dressed woman” was a striker wearing a black velvet dress that she had owned for several years and had taken good care of.

Prostitution and female sexuality were central to the discourse surrounding the strike. The strikers feared being forced into prostitution due to low wages. They referred to employers as pimps. The newspapers feared the strike was cover for a white slavery operation. A woman could be accused of running a prostitution ring just for wearing a fancy dress. Rough, male Wobblies working with young female strikers made progressives uncomfortable. And an 18-year-old young woman could be sentenced to three years in the Industrial School for suspicion of prostitution.

When the female strikers were arrested during the free speech fight during the strike, they continued spreading their beliefs in the county jail, as Wobblies are wont to do. It was in the county jail where striker and Wobbly Jean Bennett, 18 years old, met Lilian Larkin, also 18. Though the strike was effectively over, the Larkin case continued the IWW battle against progressive forces in the city.

Lilian Larkin’s case history was outlined in a letter from Lola Baldwin, Superintendent of the Municipal Bureau for the Protection of Women in Portland, to Mayor Albee in November of 1913.<sup>68</sup> Lilian was first brought to the attention of the Boys and Girls Aid Society in May 1911, at the age of 15. Her mother was “a fast woman,” and her father was reported dead. Lilian was described as out of control, “bold, with immoral tendencies, showed an inclination to be dishonest.” The Aid Society placed her with a family in Portland at that time.

In July of 1913, Lilian turned 18, and started “consorting” with soldiers at the Vancouver Barracks, across the state line in Washington. She was involved in a Mann Act case with one of the soldiers there, which involved taking Larkin across state lines for immoral purposes. Between April and October, she served time in the Vancouver jail. After she was discharged, the police chief sent her to Portland. A few weeks later she spent the night in a hotel with another soldier from the Vancouver Barracks, Claude

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<sup>66</sup> *Oregonian*, July 18, 1913.

<sup>67</sup> *The Portland News*, August 8, 1913.

<sup>68</sup> Baldwin was hired by the Portland Police Bureau in 1908, expressly for to look out for young women and girls. Baldwin’s biographer notes that Baldwin and others like her “targeted the female ‘sexual delinquent’ as the antithesis of their ideal of a standardized social morality ethic.” For more on Baldwin’s life, see Gloria E. Myers, *A Municipal Mother: Portland’s Lola Greene Baldwin, America’s First Policewoman*, (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1995) p.3.

Laughlin, after which Mrs. Franzin, whose house Larkin was staying in, brought her to Baldwin. Baldwin sent Larkin to a doctor, because she believed Larkin to have a venereal disease, which was then treated. Baldwin suspected Larkin could not be relied upon to tell the truth and filed a vagrancy charge against her. Larkin was accused of being a “common prostitute” and a vagrant on 25 October 1913.<sup>69</sup> On 29 December 1913, she was sentenced to three years in the recently opened State Industrial School for Girls.<sup>70</sup>

What prompted Baldwin's letter to Albee recounting Larkin's troubled history was the commotion caused by the female Wobblies: “Since the IWW women have been in our jails it has been simply awful to try to do anything with the women with whom they have come in contact. They have promulgated their doctrines and put ideas into the heads of the other women which they had never thought of before. These ideas have made our girls unwilling to take our advice and counsel and have turned them against authority of every kind.” Baldwin wrote that Wobbly striker Jean Bennett had visited her office repeatedly and interviewed people there and asked Albee for advice on how to deal with Bennett. Bennett and the IWW also hired a lawyer, Mr. Isaac Swett.<sup>71</sup> Why was Bennett so interested in the case? She believed Larkin had been “railroaded” and had not done enough to warrant three years in the industrial school.

Jean Bennett also spearheaded an unsuccessful effort to remove policewoman Lola Baldwin, whom she blamed for incarcerating Larkin. Bennett circulated a petition with the following claims:

1. [Baldwin] is utterly heartless and coldblooded and not a fit person to judge of human flesh and blood.
2. She makes no attempt whatever to secure work for these unfortunate girls but railroads them to some institution as the easiest way out of it.
3. She has never been known to make one kind remark, but instead every word she utters makes these girls despise her.
4. We feel that a motherly person would have a tendency to make the girls better instead of worse.<sup>72</sup>

If Baldwin epitomized the spirit of Progressive Era Portland, with her focus on moral

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<sup>69</sup> “Lola Baldwin to Albee” November 11, 1913, Albee Subject Files, Box 3, File 8, City of Portland Archives and Records Center.

<sup>70</sup> “Multnomah County Court Records #54696” (Portland, Oregon), Multnomah County Courthouse.

<sup>71</sup> Baldwin included a hand-written post-script to the Mayor: “As Mr. Swett is asking of you some favors can you not persuade him to let my cases alone.”

<sup>72</sup> “Petition to Remove Lola Baldwin,” December 15, 1913, Albee Subject Files, Box 3, File 6, City of Portland Archives and Records Center.

uplift, suffrage, and decent wages and conditions, she also epitomized the conflict between radicals and progressives, especially on the subject of female sexuality. Bennett's judgment of Baldwin mirrored the Wobblies' judgment of the Oregon Industrial Welfare Commission. Both were progressive in nature, claiming to protect the interests of young women. But instead of protecting them, they silenced these young women's voices, and instilled a solution that they deemed the most appropriate without consulting those whom it affected the most.

The Wobblies petitioned for Larkin's release, but were refused. They wrote a letter to Larkin, urging her to "cheer up" but it was not delivered to her. On 7 November, Larkin was moved to the State Industrial School for Girls. On 21 November, three Wobblies—Bennett, F. E. Hals, and I. D. Ransley—went to Salem and requested an interview with Larkin. The committee then visited Governor Oswald West, and, according to the *Oregonian*, "intimated that unless the Board of Control liberated the girl, she would be liberated anyway." The governor "gathered from their conversation that a large number of the order might be brought to the Capital City for the purpose of freeing Miss Larkin."<sup>73</sup>

Bennett also requested that Larkin's mother be able to visit, which was approved. On 22 November, Mrs. Emma Thompson visited her daughter for the first time in four years. Bennett requested to accompany her, but the authorities refused, and Mrs. Thompson entered with Baldwin. On 24 November, the IWW filed an appeal to Larkin's case, claiming that she was unaware she was on trial, didn't have a fair trial, and that when she went to Baldwin for help, instead of aid, was charged with vagrancy.<sup>74</sup> The *Portland News* reported that Larkin would be giving a public speech telling her story while she was in town for the appeal.<sup>75</sup>

Since Lilian Larkin's appeal was denied, it is unclear what happened to her after entering the Industrial School. The *First Biennial Report of the State Industrial School for Girls* listed 36 girls admitted between July 1913 and September 1914. Of that number, 16 were paroled, 2 transferred to other institutions, 1 escaped, and 1 was returned from parole.<sup>76</sup> We will never know for certain whether Larkin was a prostitute or a rebellious teenager having fun. Her former employer described her as "romantically inclined" and "fond of stories of army life." He warned her not to read any more of the "sensational

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<sup>73</sup> *Oregonian*, November 22, 1913.

<sup>74</sup> *Oregonian*, November 23, 25, 1913.

<sup>75</sup> *The Portland News*, November 25, 1913.

<sup>76</sup> Oregon. Board of Control et al., *Biennial report*, 1914, 210.

books she purchased” but she continued to do so in spite of this.<sup>77</sup> It is possible that Larkin was engaged in a practice called “treating.” Treating was fairly common among single young women in the 1910s. Historians Kathy Peiss and Joanne Meyerowitz have described treating as a practice in which working class men and women exchanged sexual favors for dinner, drinks, movies, clothing, etc.<sup>78</sup> Elizabeth Alice Clement points out that this practice was part of a continuum of sexuality between courting with the intention of marriage and exchanging sex for money. Premarital sex among working class women was increasing in the first three decades of the twentieth century, reaching 26 percent for women who reached courting age between 1910 and 1920.<sup>79</sup> Larkin's mother was reported to be a “fast” woman, but whether she was a prostitute or someone who became pregnant out of wedlock is difficult to ascertain. That the Board of the Industrial School allowed her to visit Larkin for the first time in four years in 1913, meant that she had at least improved her ways so as not be seen as a danger to the girl's future, unlike the Wobblies who were too dangerous to be admitted. I would also suggest that if Lilian Larkin were engaged in direct cash-for-services prostitution, she would have left the home she was staying in, where she was listed as a domestic, and entered a brothel where she would have had steadier access to clients and likely the protection of a madam.

Why would the IWW choose to support Lilian Larkin? To put it bluntly, why did the local Wobblies care? She was not involved in the strike, and as far as we can tell, did not know any of the Wobblies before her arrest. That Jean Bennett, herself an 18-year-old Wobbly, was able to rally the support of the local is itself remarkable. She may have bonded with Larkin, who was her age, over a shared jail experience. Bennett understood that Larkin's arrest, trial, and sentence were unfair, likely already distrusted Policewoman Baldwin, and saw this as a perfect excuse to mount a campaign against her. Bennett was able to convince the local that Larkin was worth fighting for. The Wobblies felt that the cause was worthy of support, and stood behind Larkin and Bennett in their campaign.

The IWW's involvement in the strike and in Larkin's case served two purposes for the organization. It helped to make membership more attractive to women, something

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<sup>77</sup> *Oregonian*, November 23, 1913.

<sup>78</sup> Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift*; Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

<sup>79</sup> Elizabeth Alice Clement, *Love for Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 17.

IWW newspapers and annual meetings continuously stressed the need for. The publicity of helping with a strike involving mostly women and standing up for a female victim of the criminal justice system signaled to young working class women that the organization had their interests in mind.<sup>80</sup> It also served as another battleground for the continuous Wobbly war with progressive values of morality and respectability. The organization advocated an autonomous working-class culture that saw prostitution as the result of the capitalist system, and sexuality between consenting persons as a matter of personal choice.

The young female strikers' affiliation with the IWW gave them agency, unlike the progressive reformers who wanted to act for them. Poor working conditions, long hours, and low pay, were causes popular with reformers in Portland and around the country, and the OPC strike was a perfect avenue for reform groups like the OIWC to flex their muscle. Beyond the question of who could represent young female workers in wage disputes, the strike is also an example of female sexuality as contested territory during the Progressive Era. All of the blame placed on the IWW by city officials and local business leaders sought to discredit the women who chose to go on strike by themselves, and insinuated that without the IWW they would have been happy to take whatever was offered them and go back to work. The strikers tied fears over prostitution to their claims that they deserved better working conditions. At the same time, the Larkin case shows that an organization normally thought of as unwelcoming to women would stick up for an 18-year-old girl who had gotten herself in trouble and had nowhere else to turn. The IWW support of the strike and of Larkin stemmed from the organization's belief in direct democracy and individual freedom. In both cases the IWW rejected progressive reformers' attempts impose solutions predicated on what the reformers perceived to be respectable behaviors for young women. In the case of the strike their solution involved a minor pay increase, but ignored many of the workers' demands for sanitary issues and more control over the workplace. In the Larkin case, their solution was detention in the State Industrial School for Girls, which ignored both Larkin's plea of innocence and her freedom to engage in sexual activity if she chose to do so. Rather than telling the women what should happen to them, the IWW supported these women's voices, and their ability

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<sup>80</sup> There is evidence that at least one smaller strike inspired by the OPC strike. The Secretary of the Portland IWW local sent a letter to JM Matchek Candy Co. telling them that their workplace had been deemed unfair and that if the employer did not agree to the girls request for higher wages a strike would follow. The result of that strike is unknown. "Albee Reply to Fred Vollemen" July 15, 1913, Albee Subject Files, Box 4, File 45, City of Portland Archives and Records Center.

to make their own decisions about what was in their best interest.

## Chapter 4

### Gender, Marriage, and Wobbly Respectability on Trial in Everett, 1916

“Many of those who had gone on the witness stand for the defense afterwards took out membership cards in the IWW. The women of Everett—considerably more inclined toward revolutionary ideas than the men there, by the way—were among the first to ask for a ‘red card.’” Walker Smith in *The Everett Massacre*<sup>1</sup>

On 5 November 1915, 250 Wobblies boarded the *Verona* in Seattle and headed to nearby Everett, Washington to join a free speech fight that had been building over the last few months. Everett Sheriff Don McRae, along with several newly deputized inhabitants of the city, gathered along the dock in an attempt to stop the boat from landing. In an event that has come to be known as the Everett massacre, a shootout occurred between the Wobblies and the deputies, ending with at least five Wobblies and two deputies dead, and many more wounded. Hundreds of Wobblies were arrested after the shootout, and the ensuing trial of Thomas Tracy, the first out of seventy-six to be tried, roused support for the Wobblies throughout the nation.

While the Everett massacre is one of the most infamous events in the history of the IWW, little investigation has been made into the role women played in the events leading up to the massacre and during the trial. Examples of their participation are evident in Wobbly Walker Smith’s history of the event, as well as contemporary newspaper accounts. There were eighteen female pallbearers during the funeral procession in Seattle for three of the martyred Wobblies. Edith Frenette, who was also involved in the Spokane and Missoula free speech fights, was active in Everett in the months leading up to the Massacre. Frenette’s role in Everett has been ignored or downplayed by historians. The best-known accounts of the Everett massacre—Melvin Dubofsky’s *We Shall be All*, Norman Clark’s *A Social History of Everett*, and Robert Tyler’s *Rebels of the Woods*—do not mention her. Philip Foner’s volume on the IWW in his *History of the Labor Movement* mentions Frenette’s arrest in the initial free speech fight, but does not follow up. This dismissal of women is in sharp contrast to the contemporary activists and writers who found it important to note the involvement of

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<sup>1</sup> Walker C Smith, *The Everett Massacre: A History of the Class Struggle In the Lumber Industry* (Chicago: IWW Publishing Bureau, 1918), 291. I will be relying heavily on Smith’s book for the narrative of events in Everett. I was unable to locate transcripts of the trial, so Smith’s book and newspaper articles form the basis of my research for this chapter.

Frenette and the women of Everett, and serves to once again focus only on the male hobo element of the IWW.

That all of those on the *Verona* and the majority of those arrested after the shooting were men makes it easy to view the Everett massacre as part of the story of rough and tumble young radical men in the West. Focusing on women and gender gives us a new perspective. The many examples of women's involvement, whether it be Frenette taking a leading role in organizing free speech fights, women carrying the coffins of the men killed in Everett, testifying for the defense, or serving meals to men in jail, all point to the radical community that the IWW was part of in the Northwest. Furthermore, lawyers, newspapers, politicians, and businessmen often portrayed Wobblies as outsiders who had no stake in the local community.



Figure 2 Funeral of Felix Baran, November 18, 1916 (University of Washington Libraries,

While it is important to investigate the role that women played in Everett, a gendered analysis also sheds light on how notions of appropriate male and female behavior permeated the trial that followed the massacre, in which female Wobblies were interrogated about their personal lives in order to question their status as respectable women. The respectability of the organization and its members was on trial, at times taking more precedence than the issue of the guilt or innocence of Thomas Tracy. Respectability itself was gendered—tied to stability, home ownership, and family status. Examining the events in Everett through this lens gives us a more complete picture of how the Wobblies functioned within communities like Everett, and the important role that women played in connecting the townspeople to the organization.

The Everett free speech fight occurred during a shingle-weavers strike that began in May 1916. Everett was a town of about 35,000 people with lumber, shingles, and shipping dominating industry.<sup>3</sup> This meant that nearly everyone in town had a stake in the strike in some way. The shingle weavers of Everett belonged to the International Shingle Weavers Union, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. “Shingle weaver” was a generic term that applied to “sawyers, filers, and packers who worked as a crew in the mills that produced these shingles.”<sup>4</sup> Shingle-weavers were considered more skilled than workers in lumber mills and therefore commanded higher wages. As new machinery increased production in shingle mills, it also increased the chance for injury. Shingle-weavers were notorious for missing fingers and sometimes even limbs. A good shingle-weaver could trim 30,000 shingles in a ten-hour shift. That meant 30,000 chances that a slip of the hand meant injury.<sup>5</sup>

The shingle-weavers in Everett were organized in 1901. Walker Smith recalled that in 1911 the shingle-weavers union had about 2,000 members, many in sympathy with the IWW, but a vote to affiliate with the union was lost. Smith hints that this was due to shady dealings by conservative union officials. Many of the radicals left the Shingle

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<sup>2</sup> <http://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/pnwlabor/id/24/rec/101>.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 24.

<sup>4</sup> Norman H. Clark, *Mill Town: A Social History of Everett, Washington, from Its Earliest Beginnings on the Shores of Puget Sound to the Tragic and Infamous Event Known as the Everett Massacre* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1970), 91.

<sup>5</sup> Clark, *Mill Town*, 92.

Weavers Union, and the depression of 1914-1915 also decreased membership.<sup>6</sup> In the spring of 1915, with shingle prices dropping, the mill owners announced a wage reduction. The workers went on strike to protest, but lost the strike. Part of their return to work was due to a “gentlemen’s agreement” that wages would be raised when prices rose. By the spring of 1916 prices had risen significantly and workers demanded a return to the old wage scale beginning on 1 May. On that day union stewards made their demands, the mill owners refused, and the men walked out. The mill owners imported strikebreakers from out of town, and hired men to protect the mills. On 19 May the pickets were checked for weapons by the police, and marched away from the mills where a group of strikebreakers, led by the owner of one of the mills, attacked them while the police looked on. That night the pickets returned with 150 Everett citizens and union members to get revenge, and attacked the strikebreakers. Ten days later another Everett mill owner marched his strikebreakers through town to the Everett Theater, “in appreciation of their efficiency.” A “near-riot” broke out between the strikebreakers and strikers when they left the theater. This was clearly a community divided.<sup>7</sup> Increased tensions in the city were also due to a Pacific Coast-wide AFL longshoremen’s strike going on at the same time. The strike wore on and picketing dwindled to 10-18 men by August. All of this had taken place without IWW involvement. While it was easy for contemporary observers to blame the “outsiders” of the IWW for the troubles that followed, they were entering a town where nerves were frayed and the threat of violence was ever-present.

It is unclear when the IWW first established a local in Everett, but it was announced in the 22 February 1912 issue of the *Industrial Worker* that the local was closing down temporarily. In the summer of 1916 the northwest branches of the IWW were planning an organizing drive of the lumber workers in the area, and sent James Rowan to Everett to find out what support the IWW had. According to Walker Smith, Rowan had no idea the shingle-weavers strike was in progress. On 31 July Rowan was arrested for speaking on the corner of Wetmore and Hewitt Avenues, which would become the center of street speaking during the free speech fight.<sup>8</sup> Given the choice of thirty days in jail or leaving town, he left, and on 4 August Levi Remick was sent in as an

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6 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 29.

7 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 30-31; Clark, *Mill Town: A Social History of Everett, Washington, from Its Earliest Beginnings on the Shores of Puget Sound to the Tragic and Infamous Event Known as the Everett Massacre*, 179-180.

8 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 34.

organizer. He opened up a Wobbly hall at 1219 ½ Hewitt Ave on 9 August and started selling Wobbly literature. Remick arranged for James P. Thompson to come to town and speak on 22 August. No hall in town would rent to the IWW, so they decided he would speak on the street. Sheriff Don McRae announced he would not allow it, and threatened to throw out of town any Wobbly he could find.<sup>9</sup> Thompson and twenty or so Wobblies went to Everett from Seattle and Thompson commenced speaking on the street, primarily summarizing a recent report by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations, which contained sections outlining the difficult conditions for lumber workers in the Pacific Northwest. That lasted about twenty minutes before the police came to break up the meeting. After Thompson and his wife Florence were arrested, James Rowan, Edith Frenette, Lorna Mahler, and several others all attempted to speak, but were arrested.<sup>10</sup>

In one of the most publicized moments of this initial free speech fight, Everett citizen Letelsia Fye—in her mid-thirties and mother of two—stepped up to the soapbox and began to recite the Declaration of Independence. According to her testimony during the subsequent trial, all of the Wobblies present had been arrested, and the crowd was yelling for someone else to speak. Someone suggested Fye, and so she started to recite the Declaration, adding commentary on the current situation in Everett. Then “the officer started toward me, and I jumped off the box and ducked into the crowd, for I’m a mother of two children, and I didn’t want to spend the night in jail.”<sup>11</sup> As she stepped off the platform she asked, “Is there a red-blooded man in the audience who will take the stand?” Jake Michel, secretary of the Building Trades Council, answered her call, and was arrested after commenting on free speech.<sup>12</sup>

The next morning James and Florence Thompson, Herbert and Lorna Mahler, and Edith Frenette were all deported back to Seattle. Frenette, Lorna Mahler, and James Thompson spoke at a meeting in Seattle that night, raising \$50 for the cause.<sup>13</sup> By 7 September, the Wobblies were back at it in Everett; Edith Frenette, H. Shebeck, Bob Adams, J. Johnson, J. Fred, and Dan Emmett were all arrested for street speaking. The *Everett Tribune* noted that Sheriff Luke “encountered considerable trouble in placing

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9 Smith, 36.

10 Smith, 36-38; *Industrial Worker* (Seattle) August 26, 1916.

11 Anna Louise Strong, “Week 5 Report,” Anna Louise Strong Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.

12 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 38.

13 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 40-41.

Mrs. Frenette under arrest when she displayed indignant resistance.”<sup>14</sup> The men were all sentenced to thirty days, though Frenette was released the next morning. Again, as in Spokane, Frenette was released before the male Wobblies. This can either be attributed to gendered views of women as less dangerous than men, or the Everett officials could have had knowledge of the investigation in the city jail that followed the detention of Frenette and other female Wobblies in Spokane, and did not want the same critical eye trained on their female facility. That night two more Wobblies were arrested, and a “crowd of Everett citizens, in company with the few IWW members present” marched to the jail to demand the release of the prisoners. The *Everett Tribune* described the crowd as consisting of “an element of youths and general loiterers, curious pedestrians and a large representation of women.”<sup>15</sup> While they were there the crowd knocked over a fence, which led to Frenette being arrested and charged with inciting to riot. She was later released on \$1000 bail, a significant amount for a labor activist in this period.<sup>16</sup> The *Tribune* warned its readers that these street meetings were no place for place for children, and that women and girls “who lately have been in the thick of the excitement,” should also stay away.<sup>17</sup>

Everett officials were checking incoming trains for Wobblies, so on 9 September a few of them—including Edith Frenette—took the train to the nearby town of Mukilteo, and boarded the *Wanderer*, a boat which Frenette had arranged to take them to Everett. They were met on their way to Everett by another boat carrying Sheriff McRae and sixty deputies. They fired six shots at the *Wanderer*, and then McRae boarded the boat and arrested everyone on board, including the captain. While in jail, McRae and the other deputies beat the men repeatedly. On 11 September, Rowan returned to Everett and was arrested as soon as he stepped off the train. That night McRae took Rowan from the jail and dropped him off outside of town on the road leading back to Seattle. After walking a little way down the road, Rowan was met by a group of a dozen or so men with guns. They threw a cloth over his head, and beat him with guns and clubs before they tore his clothes off, leaned him over a stump, and whipped him fifty or more times. Rowan returned to Seattle after the beating and had photographs taken of his wounds,

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14 *Everett Tribune*, September 8, 1916.

15 *Everett Tribune*, September 9, 1916.

16 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 49; *Industrial Worker*, September 30, 1916.

17 *Everett Tribune*, September 9, 1916.

and these photos were circulated around Seattle, encouraging, rather than deterring, more people to join the free speech fight.<sup>18</sup>

Frenette went to Police Chief Kelley and told him that vigilantes were beating Wobblies in the town. She told Kelley:

It seems that there is an ordinance here against street speaking and we feel that it is unjust. We feel that we have a right to speak here. We are not blocking traffic, and we propose to make a test of the ordinance. Will you have one of your men arrest me or any other speaker who chooses to take the box, personally, and take me to jail and put a charge against me, and protect me from the vigilantes who are beating the men on the street?

Similarly to the Spokane Free Speech Fight, the IWW attempted to employ the protection of law enforcement while at the same time breaking a law they felt unjust. Kelley's response was noncommittal; he would do what he could, but he claimed Sheriff McRae was really in control of the situation.<sup>19</sup>

The IWW did not seek to break the law simply to cause chaos and waste the city's money, but to prove a point about their constitutional right to free speech. In Spokane the organization initially attempted to get permits to speak in the street, and as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn demonstrated in her court testimony, the organization felt it had the Constitution—as interpreted in the best interest of the working class—on its side. In Everett the IWW tested the constitutionality of the street speaking ban, and felt they had the right to do so without risking vigilante repression. But in a town like Everett that had already seen tensions between the working class and the business interests, the threat of violence was near. The commercial interests had a stake in stopping the Wobblies from speaking, and the police and sheriff's deputies did not feel that they needed to protect the rights to free speech of these “outsiders.”

Events calmed down in Everett for most of October, but there was one last gory episode before the infamous events of 5 November. On 30 October forty-one Wobblies went to Everett by boat to attempt to speak on the street. Deputies met the boat at the dock. According to Smith, the deputies outnumbered the Wobblies five to one, putting their number at around two hundred. The Wobblies were loaded into cars and taken to Beverly Park, on the road to Seattle. When they arrived at Beverly Park, the deputies formed two lines, and the Wobblies were forced to run the gauntlet as they were beaten with clubs, guns, and axe handles. Ruby and Roy Ketchum, who lived near the park,

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<sup>18</sup> Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 50-56.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 61.

heard the sounds of the men screaming. Roy and his brother Lew went to see what was going on, and reported

The deputies were formed in two lines ending in six men, three on each side of the cattle guard. A man would be taken out of the car and two deputies would join his arms up behind him meanwhile hammering his unprotected face from both sides as hard as they could with their fists. Then the man was started down the line, one deputy following to club him on the back to make him hurry, and the other deputies striking with clubs and other weapons and kicking the prisoner as he progressed. Just before reaching the cattle guard he was made to run, and, in crossing the blades the three men on the east side of the track would swing their clubs upon his back while the men on the west clubbed him across the face and stomach.<sup>20</sup>

This was not the first time Wobblies had been the victims of this kind of vigilante justice, but Everett had a very organized—and deputized—group of anti-radical citizens.

Who were the men doing the beating? Many were members of the Commercial Club, which was made up of business owners, including officials from the local lumber mills. The Commercial Club was founded in 1912 when the Businessmen's Association and the Chamber of Commerce merged. While it was initially formed as a broad coalition of industrialists, union representatives, clergy, physicians, school officials, and others important to the Everett community who sought to promote growth and cooperative industrial relations, by the time of the strike and the events of 1916, it was firmly anti-union and anti-IWW.<sup>21</sup> By September 1916, Sheriff McRae had deputized several hundred members, and it was those men who took part in the Beverly Park beating. Not all members approved of the vigilante violence, and when the volunteer deputies started practicing nightly drills at the Commercial Club, many ministers, attorneys, and businessmen resigned from the Club in protest.<sup>22</sup> While the vigilantes intended to run the Wobblies out of town, their tactics had the opposite effect. The Beverly Park beating stoked the fire of Wobbly resistance, and they planned a huge street meeting for 5 November.

The citizens of Everett woke the morning of 5 November to a town divided. The front page of the *Everett Tribune* screamed the headline "IWW ENTITLED TO NO SYMPATHY." The article went on to say:

Sympathy? Sympathy for what? Sympathy for a bunch of men who loathe toil, who despise law and who only are happy when they can turn a town into a bear[sic] garden

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20 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 74.

21 Clark, *Mill Town: A Social History of Everett, Washington, from Its Earliest Beginnings on the Shores of Puget Sound to the Tragic and Infamous Event Known as the Everett Massacre*, 125

22 Clark, *Mill Town*, 185.

and then swoop down on another for the same purpose? The kind of men who are wining [sic] about getting walloped in Everett are the kind who deserved all they got and they're not entitled to any pity. Everett doesn't want a man who comes here to sow discontent. Everett wants law and order with peace and a contented community. There can be no honest sympathy for such a man no matter how roughly he is handled, there can be no regrets for punching a man who regards it a privilege to be sent to jail.<sup>23</sup>

This hostile atmosphere advocated by the Everett newspaper is another example of how the Wobblies were portrayed as “outsiders.” This outsider status, tied to the lack of home and family—signifiers of respectability—meant they were not entitled to the basic protections of the law. Citizens of Everett who chose to support these outsiders forfeited their respectability as well. After excoriating the IWW, the *Tribune* then turned on the Everett citizens who supported the Wobblies, writing that they “have no pride in their home town and no care for the quality of its citizenship.”<sup>24</sup>

The events of 5 November have been recounted many times, so what follows is a brief account of Smith's version of the events of “Bloody Sunday.” From Seattle the band of free speech fighters boarded the *Verona*. When the maximum capacity of 250 was reached, including a few non-Wobblies aboard whose fares were paid by the group, the rest (approximately 38) boarded the *Calista*. Smith reported that all aboard were jovial, singing union songs on the way to Everett. He also noted that a stool pigeon was among the group, who informed the Commercial Club that the Wobblies were on their way—though this should have come as no surprise since the event was well publicized. Thousands of Everett citizens were also awaiting the Wobblies, many to attend the mass meeting, but surely many out of curiosity. As the boat came close to the dock, McRae shouted, “Who is your leader?” to which the men responded, “We are all leaders!” McRae then replied “You can't land here!” and the Wobblies yelled “The hell we can't!”<sup>25</sup> After this exchange a shot was fired, leading to a shootout in which two deputies, including Jefferson Beard, and several Wobblies were killed.

The *Verona* turned around amidst the shooting and headed back to Seattle, where the police were waiting for them. Four of the deceased Wobblies—Hugo Gerlot, Gustav Johnson, John Looney, and Abraham Rabinowitz—were sent to the morgue, and the thirty-one wounded to the hospital. Smith notes that Wobbly sympathizer Dr. Marie Equi later examined the body of Felix Baran, who died in the hospital, and pronounced that “with surgical attention there would have been more than an even chance of

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<sup>23</sup> *Everett Tribune*, November 5, 1916.

<sup>24</sup> *Everett Tribune*, November 5, 1916.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 84-88.

recovery.”<sup>26</sup> In the final tally there were six men unaccounted for; it was assumed that they had been shot and drowned, as witnesses recounted seeing deputies shooting at men in the water trying to swim to safety.<sup>27</sup>

Wobbly sympathizers portrayed Everett citizens as having gendered reactions to the massacre:

So wanton was the slaughter of the helpless men and boys that strong men who witnessed the scene turned away vomiting. From the hillside the women—those whom the deputies were pretending to protect from the “incoming hoarde” [sic]—casting aside all womanly fears, raced to the dock in a vain endeavor to stop the commission of further crime, crying out in their frenzy, “The curs! The curs! The dirty curs! They’re nothing but murderers!” They, as well as the men who tried to launch boats to rescue the men in the water, were halted by the same citizen deputies whose names head the list of Red Cross donors.<sup>28</sup>

The injustice of it all shamed and sickened the men, while it angered and emboldened the women, almost reversing the “natural” gender order. It turned “respectable” non-violent citizens into angry mobs castigating the vigilantes. The leaders of Everett, those influential citizens who would often support charity efforts, saw the Wobblies as such a threat that they would not allow the injured to be rescued. The female citizens of Everett, those who were assumed to need protection, ran to the scene to attempt to stem the violence. A second description similarly describes how shooting upended the social norms:

Your correspondent was on the street at the time of the battle and at the dock ten minutes afterword. He mingled with the street crowds for hours afterword. The temper of the people is dangerous. Nothing but curses and execrations for the Commercial Club was heard. Men and women who are ordinarily law abiding, who in normal times mind their own business pretty well, pay their taxes, send their children to church and school, in every way comport themselves as normal citizens, were heard using the most vitriolic language concerning the Commercial Club, loudly sympathizing with the IWWs. And therein lies the great harm that was done, more menacing to the city than the presence of any number of IWWs, viz., the transformation of decent, honest, citizens into beings mad for vengeance and praying for something dire to happen. I heard gray-haired women, mothers and wives, gentle, kindly, I know, in their home circles, openly hoping that the IWWs would come back and “clean up.”<sup>29</sup>

The conclusion in both of these articles is that the injustice done to the Wobblies during the massacre was enough to subvert the normative gendered balance of society, the

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26 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 88.

27 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 89, 114.

28 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 92.

29 *Seattle Union Record*, November 11, 1916.

wrongs committed so intense that mild-mannered women and respectable male citizens were turned into angry radicals clamoring for justice.

During the commotion immediately after the shooting, all of the Wobblies from the *Verona* were arrested. They were put through a screening process to determine which ones would be charged with the deaths of two deputies. The person peering at the Wobblies from a darkened room, pointing fingers at those responsible, was George Reese, a member of the IWW and the ILA. Charles Smith, a Pinkerton who had also been on the *Verona*, joined Reese. Seventy-four men in total were charged with the death of Jefferson Beard. Of the seventy-four, only fifteen were born outside of the United States. The ages of the accused ranged from 17 to 56, with most of the men in their late twenties. Only two were from Washington, and none from Oregon.<sup>30</sup> Demographically, this would be representative of Wobbly membership in lumber camps of the Pacific Northwest. The other 128 men who had been arrested were released on 13 November. A few days after the arrests, the Wobblies held a funeral for those killed during the Massacre. The funeral for three of the Wobblies killed—Felix Baran, Hugo Gerlot, and John Looney—took place in Seattle on 18 November. Over fifteen hundred men and women marched behind the hearses to Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, where the coffins were born by eighteen female pallbearers.<sup>31</sup> I have not been able to find the names of the women or their relationship to the deceased, but their presence in such a visible role does bear testament to the important role that women played in this struggle. A memorial at the cemetery took place on 1 May 1917. A photograph of the event shows several rows of women and children present.

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<sup>30</sup> Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 106-108.

<sup>31</sup> *Industrial Worker*, November 19, 1916.



Figure 3 Memorial Celebration, 1 May, 1917, (Reuther Library, Wayne State University, 393).<sup>32</sup>

During the entirety of the free speech fight and the ensuing Tracy trial, jailed Wobblies received a tremendous amount of financial and material support from the local community and from sympathetic people around the country. Women played an important role in the support of these prisoners by bringing them meals and making them gifts. For Thanksgiving of 1916, only weeks after the massacre, some of the citizens of Everett, helped out by the Cooks' and Waiters' Union, prepared a meal for those in jail. They had received permission from jail officials, but when they arrived Sheriff McRae denied them entrance and would not let the meal be served.<sup>33</sup> A few months later a committee of women from Everett brought the men another meal in jail, though they had to serve it through the bars. On 22 April 1917 women in Seattle successfully held a

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.reuther.wayne.edu/node/11366>

<sup>33</sup> Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 123.

banquet for the men in the county jail. It lasted two and a half hours, during which Elizabeth Gurley Flynn updated them on news from the outside while they had their dessert of ice cream and cake. The meal was finished with a cigar and “boutonniere of fragrant flowers furnished by a gray-haired old lady” for each prisoner.<sup>34</sup> Women also provided moral support, and Smith’s *Everett Massacre* includes a photograph of a large group of men and women singing to the prisoners from outside of the King County Jail.<sup>35</sup>

After the arrests, the Wobblies assembled a team of lawyers, including Fred Moore as chief counsel, George Vanderveer, E. C. Dailey, Caroline Lowe, Harry Sigmond, and J. L. Finch. Vanderveer, Moore, and Lowe all went on to defend the Wobblies in Chicago during World War I. The Everett trial itself did not begin until 5 March 1917. It took place in Seattle after a change of venue request due to prejudice in Everett was granted. Since women were granted the right to vote in Washington State in 1910, there were several women on the jury. The jurors were listed by occupation, or in the case of the women, their husbands’ occupation. The jurors were questioned about their familiarity with the IWW, their union affiliation, and political beliefs. The male jurors agreed upon by the defense and prosecution consisted of a rancher, a bricklayer, a farmer, an awning maker, a contractor, and a machinist’s helper. The women on the jury were identified as the wives of a steamfitter, a master mariner, a harnessmaker, a druggist, a lineman, and one woman listed as “widow, working-class family.”<sup>36</sup> That the jury was evenly split between men and women is important to note when looking at the arguments made by the defense and prosecution.

The primary argument of the prosecution was a familiar one for IWW cases: the men on trial were outside agitators. The prosecution called a few members of the Commercial Club to the stand to testify to shooting coming from the *Verona*. The prosecution then read a series of IWW articles and pamphlets, including “Sabotage” by Walker Smith. The prosecution also tried—unsuccessfully—to tie the IWW to a number of fires around Everett in 1916.<sup>37</sup> One police officer testified that several IWW men left a street meeting with sections of gas pipe, to be used as weapons, in their hands. It was later proven that the men were holding legs to the podium they had set up for the

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34 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 138.

35 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 277.

36 *Seattle Union Record*, March 10, 1917.

37 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 151-153.

meeting.<sup>38</sup> They were unable to prove anything more than that the Wobblies were not from Everett.

Legal strategies on both sides built on conceptions of gender. The prosecution witnesses were primarily men: business owners, law officials and members of the Commercial Club. The defense relied on the testimony of women to prove both that respectable citizens had suffered at the hands of McRae and the vigilantes, and that their association and support of the IWW made the organization more respectable. The defense used witnesses to testify that meetings were conducted in an orderly fashion and obeyed rules regarding keeping the streets clear of people. The defense called several female Everett citizens to testify that they had been at meetings and seen violence perpetrated by the deputies, not the IWW. Ina Salter, Elizabeth Maloney, Letelsia Fye, Dollie Gustaffson, Avis Mathison, Mrs. Peter Aiken, Annie Pomeroy, Rebecca Wade, and Hannah Crosby all testified on 4 and 5 April 1917. Walker Smith believed that “the fact that these citizens, and a number of other women who were mentioned in the testimony, attended the IWW meetings quite regularly, impressed the jury favorably. Some of these women witnesses had been roughly handled by the deputies.”<sup>39</sup> Most of the women were wives of Everett workingmen, but a few—Fye, Wade, and Crosby—were widows, which shows that the IWW had an appeal to women beyond just those whose husbands worked in the sawmills.

Edith Frenette was also called to testify. Though Frenette had played a large role in the events leading up to the massacre, she was not on the *Verona* on 5 November and therefore was not one of the Wobblies on trial for the murder of Jefferson Beard. Frenette had spent the night of the fourth in Everett.<sup>40</sup> This was proven during the trial after one of the witnesses for the prosecution claimed to have seen her in Seattle the morning of the fifth discussing bringing red pepper to Everett to use against the vigilantes.<sup>41</sup> The defense disproved this by submitting as evidence the ledger from the hotel in Everett where Frenette stayed the night before the massacre.<sup>42</sup> Immediately after the shootout in Everett, Frenette, along with Lorna Mahler and Joyce Peters, had returned to Seattle, where they were arrested. All three were in their thirties at the time, and were described as housewives. It was initially reported that all three were arrested

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38 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 156.

39 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 185.

40 Since Frenette was not on the *Verona* on November 5, her arrest and trial were separate from those who were.

41 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 155.

42 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 194.

for attempting throw cayenne pepper in the face of Sheriff McRae as he was being transported to the hospital. Edith Frenette was eventually charged with first-degree assault after witnesses declared she had pointed a gun at McRae after the shooting.<sup>43</sup> She was jailed for three weeks and released on \$2,500 bail.<sup>44</sup> The charges were later dropped.

During the trial, Frenette was portrayed as one of the main organizers of the Everett free speech fights. When Everett Mayor Dennis Merrill testified regarding confrontation between Wobblies and city officials preceding the massacre, he claimed that the Wobblies, specifically Frenette, tried to intimidate him.<sup>45</sup> In his report for the *Seattle Union Record* in the days proceedings in the Tracy trial, Albert Brilliant referred to Frenette as “the terror of the prosecution...who during the entire trial has been pointed to by the state as the center of a conspiracy which had for its object the invasion of the city of Everett, the assassination of city authorities, and the destruction of the city by fire.”<sup>46</sup> Although she was not one of the defendants in the trial, she was still viewed by authorities as the mastermind behind the Wobblies’ presence in Everett.

As we have seen with other radical women, Frenette’s morality was on trial. When she was brought up to testify for the defense, after asking her about the events of 5 November, defense attorney Vanderveer—probably in anticipation of what the prosecution would ask during the cross-examination—asked her if she had lived in the same room as Earl Osborne, another IWW member, while she lived in a rooming house in Seattle during the time of the massacre. The cross-examination did indeed press the point, asking Frenette questions about her personal life, trying to get information about her relationship with her husband and where exactly she called her home. The prosecution asked where Mr. Frenette’s home was, to which she answered Vancouver Island. They asked her when she last lived there, to which she answered a year ago. They asked if she had been “home” since. She said “not to that home. Any place one stops is a home. A hotel is a home.”<sup>47</sup> They continued to press her on whether or not she had ever lived in the same place as Osborn, and she replied that she had never made it her home. By debating the meaning of home, she managed to evade questions that implied that by leaving her husband she was less than respectable. Where she had lived

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43 *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, November 6,9, 1916.

44 *Industrial Worker*, December 2, 1916. Mahler and Peters were released on November 14.

45 *Seattle Union Record*, November 11, 1916.

46 *Seattle Union Record*, April 14, 1917.

47 *The Everett Tribune*, April 13, 1917.

and with whom had nothing to do with her actions in Everett, yet as was the case with many Wobbly women, these questions were asked to demonstrate her character, and to insinuate that the Wobblies did not only believe in changing economic relations, but in social relations as well. A woman that left her husband and lived with another could be seen as morally suspect and easier for a jury to view as an outsider and thus not trust her testimony nor believe she was entitled to the same protections as respectable Everett citizens.

When Joyce Peters took the stand for the defense, she also was subjected to questions regarding her marital status. While she had been referred to as Mrs. Peters in the IWW and mainstream press since the events in Everett began, and throughout the trial, the prosecution interrogated her regarding her marital status. Attorney Cooley asked Peters if she had a husband at the time of the events in Everett. She replied that she considered Mr. Peters her husband. Cooley then pointed out that the two were only married the day before, right before her testimony. Peters admitted to this, and at that time the counsel for the defense objected, and the judge sustained.<sup>48</sup> It is unclear why they decided to marry directly before the trial. While the Peters could have just decided to marry on a whim, it is more likely that they decided, or were urged by the counsel for the defense, to legalize their union because it would make them more legitimate and respectable as witnesses in the eyes of the court. As the prosecution had tried to point to Frenette's personal relationships as a testament of her character, they also tried to argue that the Peters only married because of the trial. Again, the insinuation is that Wobblies had radical beliefs regarding marriage that were threatening to the social order. They were immoral and therefore not to be trusted. Marital status was contested ground, and both the defense and the prosecution tried to use it to their advantage.<sup>49</sup>

During the closing arguments, the same themes were repeated. The prosecution focused on the outsider status of the Wobblies, and their lack of stable homes and reliable jobs. Prosecuting Attorney Lloyd Black referred to the witnesses for the defense as "wanderers on the face of the earth," and questioned their veracity.<sup>50</sup> Defense Attorney Fred Moore instructed the jury to ignore Black's argument about the outsider status of the Wobblies: "in order to measure absolute and complete justice between the

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48 *The Everett Daily Herald*, April 29, 1917.

49 This same tactic was used during the testimony of James P. Thompson during the Chicago trial of Wobblies arrested during World War I. Thompson was asked about Wobbly beliefs regarding love and marriage. "US v. Haywood, et al., 1918," 1918, IWW Collection, Reuther Library.

50 *The Everett Daily Herald*, May 3, 1917.

warring elements of modern life, you must not allow yourselves to be swerved by the difference in the witness' social positions."<sup>51</sup> The prosecution hoped to convince the jury that respectability—and therefore trustworthiness—were established by a stable home and community ties. The defense argued that this was not the case, but also hedged its bets by focusing on the testimony of reliable and trustworthy Everett citizens and proving that the Wobblies did have respectability on their side. This tactic seemed to have worked, for Tracy was acquitted the next day. The rest of the defendants were released, as the prosecution had no more direct evidence for any of their involvement than it did for Tracy.<sup>52</sup>

For all of the defense team's insistence on respectability, as defined by the prosecution, the IWW's position was more complicated. The organization rejected the validity of basing respectability on family status and stability while at the same time utilizing mainstream notions of respectability in their favor when it suited them. During the trial the prosecution tried to argue that Wobblies were out-of-towners, unrespectable men with no family or ties to the community. The Wobblies countered that if wives and families made them respectable, plenty of wives and mothers attended IWW meetings.

As we have seen, the marital status of men and women associated with the IWW was often questioned during legal proceedings, with prosecutors aiming to connect Wobblies with radical ideas regarding "free love." Individual Wobblies held a variety of beliefs regarding marriage and free love, though the organization itself did not hold any official position on the topic. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's statement in the IWW's eastern journal *Solidarity* comes closest to a full explanation of Wobbly beliefs regarding women and the home:

the IWW is at war with the ruthless invasion of family life by capitalism....We are determined that industry shall be so organized that all adults, men and women, may work and receive in return a sufficiency to make child labor a relic of barbarism. This does not imply that mothers must work, or that women must stay at home, if they prefer otherwise. Either extreme is equally absurd....The free choice of work is the IWW ideal—which does not mean to put women forcibly back into the home, but certainly does mean to end capitalism's forcibly taking her out of the home.<sup>53</sup>

Statements in IWW newspapers tended to be rather vague, usually pointing out that most problems women faced would become obsolete after the coming of the One Big

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51 *The Everett Daily Herald*, May 4, 1917.

52 Smith, *The Everett Massacre*, 289.

53 *Solidarity*, July 15, 1915.

Union, but almost always noting that women should be able to choose whether or not they want to work, get married, or have children.

The IWW believed Industrial Unionism was the key to women's emancipation. But what would this emancipation entail? Individual Wobblies held a variety of beliefs. One was that the goal of One Big Union was a "family wage" that would enable men to make enough money so their wives would not have to work and they could remain in the domestic sphere of the home. Another view was that women needed to work and make as much money as men, so they could be independent and marry for love, rather than for financial support. These two views are expressed in an exchange of letters in the June 1910 issue of *Solidarity*. The first letter, signed "A Man Toiler," espoused the common Wobbly belief that the vote would not do anything for women, and industrial organization was the only key to emancipation. He finished his letter with: "what we want, girls, is less work and more pay and we want you to keep out of the factory and mill and give us a chance to earn enough money to marry some of you and give you a decent home." The response came a few weeks later from "A Woman Toiler." She believed that by moving into the workplace, women could avoid being forced into marriage in order to survive. She wrote that:

The best thing that ever happened to woman was when she was compelled to leave the narrow limits of the home and enter into the industrial life of the world. This is the only road to our freedom, and to BE FREE there is not anything to be desired more than that....In the home she is more apt to become more limited in reasoning power, more bound by religious superstitions, more a slave to social conventions, more petty and gossipy and meddlesome....So we will stay in the factory, mill, or store and organize with you in the IWW for the ownership of the industries, so we can provide ourselves with decent homes, then if we marry you it will be because we love you so well we can't get along without you....We are slaves in revolt against the employing class. We will have none of their religion, their politics, their marriage system. They all work to keep the worker in subjection.<sup>54</sup>

What "Woman Toiler" wanted was to be on an equal playing field with men, making the same wages and organized in the same union. But instead of attacking the male toiler for his views, she puts the blame on the exploitative capitalist system. While this "woman toiler" holds a slightly patronizing view of women's work within the home, she sees industrial unionism as the only avenue toward female equality.<sup>55</sup>

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54 "The Brain Boilers Academy." *Solidarity*, June 1, 1910. "From a Woman Toiler" *Solidarity*, June 25, 1910.

55 *Solidarity*, June 1, 1910; *Solidarity*, June 25, 1910.

Wobbly views on marriage, not surprisingly, tended to focus on economic arguments. Many radicals of the time followed the line of reasoning that marriage constituted legalized prostitution, a woman giving away her body for a home, money, and protection in return. Others put it more simply, such as an article in the *Industrial Worker* in 1913, call “On Free Love and the Home,” which boiled it down to the phrase “one room is cheaper than two.” The author, Ernest Griffeath, pointed out that many members of the working class had no homes of their own, and he knew many couples that lived together out of economic necessity, with no intention of marriage. He concluded “whether the monogamous form of marriage would be desirable under a free system is hard to determine.”<sup>56</sup>

So while the organization itself held no firm beliefs on the subject of marriage and women's place inside or outside of the home, individual Wobblies held views on all parts of the spectrum. Undoubtedly there were many men in the organization who wanted to earn a “family wage” so that they could marry and support a wife and children. There were also many others who held much more radical beliefs, including free love and the abolition of the institution of marriage. The prosecution played on this fear to make their case during the Tracy trial. In return, the defense argued that Wobbly views on marriage were irrelevant to the case at hand, while at the same time minimizing the damage of the prosecution’s efforts by downplaying those unconventional beliefs.

The danger of the Wobblies as “outsiders,” people with no connection to Everett, was a common theme of the prosecution during the Everett trial. Historians of the IWW, and some Wobblies, have traced the radicalism of migratory workers—like those in the lumber camps—to their lack of family ties.<sup>57</sup> Early histories of the IWW such as those by Dubofsky and Tyler connected the “footloose” nature of the single, male, migrant Wobblies to their belief in industrial unionism and willingness to engage in potentially dangerous activities such as free speech fights. Whether the ideal Wobbly was a migratory worker or someone with a stable home and a family was also debated within the organization. Some praised the flexibility of the migratory workers, while others believed that those workers without community ties could easily run away when the going got tough. The latter group argued that workers with families actually sacrificed more and were more radical because they had no other choice. In the IWW paper

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<sup>56</sup> *Industrial Worker*, June 5, 1913.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Richard Rajala's article “A Dandy Bunch of Wobblies: Pacific Northwest Loggers and the Industrial Workers of the World, 1900-1930.” *Labor History* 37 (Spring 1996).

*Solidarity*, a Wobbly wrote a response to an article praising the radicalism of the footloose western worker:

It was at Lawrence and elsewhere in the East that the workers who were oppressed the most fought the hardest and stood the brunt of the battle (the women, encumbered with babes and husbands). I doubt if there ever would have been a strike in Lawrence if the workers in the mills had been “wifeless, babeless, vagabond adventurers” whose “mobility is amazing,” and had not been “afraid of losing their jobs.” They would have QUIT without disputing the control of the mill and departed for another job.<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, in her study of two mining strikes in Cripple Creek, Colorado, Elizabeth Jameson found that rather than home ownership and a family making workers more conservative, those who were the most active were those who had the most to lose, those with homes, wives, and children.<sup>59</sup> The popular myth that the radicalism of the Wobblies can be tied to their lack of stable homes is false. As is the case in Spokane, Portland, and Everett, many Wobblies with families were active in the union’s struggles.

The aftermath of the Everett Massacre constituted the highest point of IWW support nationally. The trial concluded 5 May 1917, just a month after the United States entered World War I, and before the wartime repression of the IWW began in earnest. The violence against Wobblies, the obvious disregard for First Amendment rights by Everett authorities, and the fact that the Wobblies, not the vigilantes, stood trial for murder, aroused popular support nationally. The Wobblies mounted a huge publicity tour to raise money for the defense of the Everett prisoners, and were able to raise a total of \$37,825.<sup>60</sup> There are a handful of women listed among the individual donors, but the majority of funds were raised in speeches, street meetings, and smokers. Of the almost \$38,000 raised for the Everett defense between November 1916 and May 1917, \$2270.21 was raised by meetings at which Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was the speaker.<sup>61</sup>

The popular association of the Wobbly as a single, male, transient was utilized by local newspapers, business owners, politicians, and church leaders to insinuate that Wobblies were not “respectable” citizens—that they did not possess the social respectability that came along with having a family. This definition of respectability was often afforded the middle class but it was used against the IWW, and family status was a

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58 “Some weaknesses of the Western Wobbly.” *Solidarity*, January 16, 1915.

59 Elizabeth Jameson, *All That Glitters: Class, Conflict, and Community in Cripple Creek* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 238.

60 “Financial Statement of Everett Prisoners Defense Committee,” Pamphlet (Seattle, Washington, June 1917), 1, Industrial Workers of the World Collection, University of Washington Special Collections.

61 “Financial Statement of Everett Prisoners Defense Committee.”

key part of that. The importance of family status was contested ground. The IWW in some instances played up that its members had wives and children or were mothers themselves, but it also rejected that those with families should be treated differently than those without. The men and women of the IWW, an organization usually stereotyped as the emblem of rough and rowdy working men, understood when this image could be used to their advantage—such as appealing to male workers in logging camps, mines, and mills—and when it needed to be challenged, as it was during the trial following the Everett Massacre.

## Chapter 5

### **Anarchism, Antiwar Activism, and the Case of Louise Olivereau, Seattle 1917**

The spring of 1917 was an optimistic time for the IWW following its success in the Everett trial. Support for the organization had poured in from around the country, and the trial gained the organization nationwide publicity. Organizers hoped that this publicity would spur organizing drives around the country and lead to the growth of the union. Instead, it coincided with a marked increase in patriotism, anti-radical sentiment, and government repression during World War I. The challenges the organization as a whole faced during this period will be discussed in Chapter 7. This Chapter and Chapter 6 focus on two women associated with the Wobblies and involved in radical circles in the Northwest, Louise Olivereau and Marie Equi, and explore the ways in which their gender and radical beliefs affected the amount of support they received from their fellow workers and the general public. Their two cases also underscore the tension within the radical community of the Pacific Northwest during a time of severe repression.

On 30 November 1917, Louise Olivereau was convicted of sedition and sentenced to ten years in prison for mailing circulars encouraging young men to resist the draft by becoming conscientious objectors. Olivereau was a stenographer for the IWW and a member of the union. She differed from many Wobblies, however, in openly declaring herself to be an anarchist. Olivereau was not very well known and had little public support outside of her best friend Minnie Parkhurst, who worked tirelessly on her behalf. Her case was not widely discussed in IWW newspapers, which were focused more on the Chicago trial and on those who were arrested solely because of their IWW membership. She ended up serving twenty-eight months in Canyon City Jail in Colorado, and retired from activism after her release.

Olivereau's solitary act of defiance and her explanation of anarchist beliefs during her trial separated her from male members of the organization who were on trial during this period. Her trial and ensuing appeal sheds light on some of the internal struggles of the organization during the war years, and on the limits of solidarity during a time of immense legal and political pressure. While she received little support from the IWW, her association with the organization still loomed large at her trial, and with it brought scrutiny of her personal life and beliefs that women at earlier IWW trials faced. Olivereau acted alone, never claiming that her actions were officially sanctioned by the IWW, but because of her work with the organization and because her letters were

confiscated in a raid of an IWW hall, her case must be examined in light of the repression that the organization faced during World War I.

Louise Olivereau was born in the United States in 1884 to parents who had emigrated from France. Except for her trial, most of her life was spent out of the public spotlight. She attended college in Illinois and worked as a stenographer. She lived in Portland for a few years, and was involved in the Modern School Movement there before moving to Seattle and converting to anarchism.<sup>1</sup> Olivereau's early activism is most evident in a series of letters to the *Oregonian* newspaper starting in 1913. The first letter advocated teaching sex hygiene in public schools, while later letters denounced the indoctrination of children at the Seventh Annual Purity Congress in Minneapolis, put on by the World's Purity Federation. The Federation was founded in 1905 with the goal of combating vice and prostitution, as well as "the promotion of a high and single standard of morals for men and women."<sup>2</sup> Olivereau claimed that at the Purity Congress the schoolchildren of that city were "inoculated with Comstockitis," which she defined as "the most deadly and filthy of moral disorders, to-wit, a morbid pruriency and propensity to meddle in the private affairs of others." "Comstockitis" referred to Anthony Comstock, a postal inspector obsessed with policing vice and immorality who had laws passed and implemented censoring materials he found objectionable. Olivereau continued her letter castigating so-called "morality crusaders" who scared children by warning them of the dangers of "nude art, comfortable bathing garments, healthy frankness regarding sex, and finally, against that stupendous fabrication of the moralist's imagination, the white slave trade."<sup>3</sup> While in Portland, Olivereau was also involved in birth control activism, speaking on Havelock Ellis at a meeting of the Birth Control League in 1915.<sup>4</sup> She was elected secretary when the Portland branch of the league was formed.<sup>5</sup> Olivereau's support of frank discussions of sex and sexuality, as well as access to birth control, were radical for the period, and placed her outside of the bounds of respectability. But she was not a well-known activist, and there is no evidence of her giving public speeches or playing an active role in protests. Olivereau made mention of her lack of notoriety during her trial, stating: "I have never been a public propagandist in Seattle, and to a very limited extent only in any other place." She also noted that her sedition trial was her first

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens: Women and Subversion During World War I*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 71.

<sup>2</sup> *Meriden Morning Record* (Meriden, Conn.) November 8, 1918.

<sup>3</sup> *Oregonian*, November 18, 1913.

<sup>4</sup> *Oregonian*, December 15, 1915.

<sup>5</sup> *Oregonian*, April 30 1915.

time as a defendant in court.<sup>6</sup> So while Olivereau was a Wobbly, she focused more on peace, birth control, and sex education than on labor-specific causes. It was her actions combating the draft during World War I that led to her arrest.

Olivereau's arrest and imprisonment took place during a time of intense repression of radicalism and antiwar sentiment in the United States. When the war began in Europe in 1914, public opinion was divided on whether the United States should intervene, but that quickly changed. Though Woodrow Wilson was re-elected in 1916 under the popular slogan "he kept us out of war," preparedness parades had become popular in many cities around the country. The preparedness movement had started as early as 1914, advocated most famously by former president Theodore Roosevelt. The idea behind preparedness was the belief that the United States would eventually have to join the European conflict, so the government should build up the military to be ready when that time came. Preparedness gained traction after the sinking of the *Lusitania* by the Germans in 1915 and increased again after the raid on New Mexico by Mexican General Pancho Villa in 1916. By 1916 there were preparedness parades all over the country.

Antiwar radicals would often protest preparedness parades or organize competing peace marches. In July of 1916, a bomb went off during a preparedness parade in San Francisco, killing ten people, and labor leaders Tom Mooney and Warren Billings were arrested and charged and convicted of setting off the explosive. The Mooney-Billings case became a popular cause for radicals, and money was often raised for them in conjunction with other defense cases during and after the war. But the Mooney-Billings case publicly associated labor and antiwar activism with violence, even though the case against the two labor leaders was weak. It fueled resentment towards antiwar activists and led public officials to more actively persecute them.

Patriotism and pro-war feelings surged once the US entered the war, which led to ostracism and periodic legal action against those who did not support it. Once the United States had officially declared war, Congress passed laws severely limiting freedom of speech and dissent. The first was the Espionage Act, passed in June 1917 and amended in May 1918. While the original Act pertained more to actual spying and giving information to enemy countries, the amended Act, known as the Sedition Act, stated that anyone who during wartime willfully incited "insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal

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<sup>6</sup> "The Case of Louise Olivereau" pamphlet, 1918, Minnie Parkhurst Papers. University of Washington Special Collections, 20.

of duty, in the military,” obstructed enlistment in the military or who was proved to “utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government of the United States, or the Constitution of the United States, or the military or naval forces of the United States, or the flag . . . or the uniform of the Army or Navy of the United States, or any language intended to bring the form of government . . . or the Constitution . . . or the military or naval forces . . . or the flag . . . of the United States into contempt, scorn, contumely, or disrepute” or who was known to willfully “urge, incite, or advocate any curtailment of production in this country of any thing or things . . . necessary or essential to the prosecution of the war “or advocated or suggested others do any of those things should be punished by “a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than twenty years, or both....”<sup>7</sup> In sum, radicals could not say or write anything negative about the government, flag, military, or the draft without risking prosecution.

Thus the wartime government of the United States finally had the legal justification for persecuting radicalism that had been lacking in the prewar years. The IWW as an organization never took an official stand for or against the war or the draft, but IWW strike activity in the vital lumber industry during wartime made it an obvious target of government repression. Many states also passed criminal syndicalism laws during the war specifically aimed at the IWW. Subsequent raids on IWW offices and arrests of members drastically curtailed the efficacy of the union in cities during this time, though it did have success in the lumber camps. This increased scrutiny put immense pressure on the radical community that the IWW was a part of, and difficult decisions needed to be made about where to focus financial and legal support. Nationally, the organization focused on defense and support of 115 Wobblies on trial in Chicago. Defense work in the Northwest centered on those picked up during raids on Wobbly halls or in lumber camps rather than people who acted individually like Olivereau.

In her book on the gendered dimensions of repression of dissent during World War I, Kathleen Kennedy points out that women constituted a very small portion of those convicted of sedition or espionage, roughly twenty of 800 cases.<sup>8</sup> Kennedy argues that the majority of these women fell outside the bounds of what the upper and middle class deemed appropriate female behavior, either by holding occupations normally held by men such as doctors or political leaders or by their status as unmarried women or

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<sup>7</sup> [http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The\\_U.S.\\_Sedition\\_Act](http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_U.S._Sedition_Act)

<sup>8</sup> Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens*, xv.

women without children.<sup>9</sup> Women convicted of espionage or sedition during this period “subverted the political order through gender transgressions that were often understood as appropriations of a male gender role and/or as a misuse of women's sexual/reproductive roles.”<sup>10</sup> During this time of fluctuating gender roles, Kennedy argues that “state authorities and defendants negotiated women's roles and responsibilities in the twentieth-century state” and that these “encounters revealed and helped clarify the shifting relationships between the citizenship of women and their responsibility for social reproduction and state formation.”<sup>11</sup> Thus women like Olivereau were tried as “disorderly women” who “corrupt[ed] women's roles as social mothers...in particular women's ability to and responsibility for producing loyal citizens.”<sup>12</sup>

While Kennedy analyzes these women in relation to appropriate societal roles as mothers, as I have argued in previous chapters, they can also be analyzed under the broader scope of respectability. While respectability was associated with family status, it was more than just motherhood. It included having a legal spouse and a home. Many of the women arrested for acting out against the war were not only childless, but unmarried and frequently moving or traveling around the country. Subjecting these types of women to interrogation was not new. Prior to the war, prosecutors tried to construe morality laws in a way that would apply to radicals, such as the case of Becky Beck in Seattle. But during the War the government had a very broad legal right to suppress dissent, and nontraditional views on love, sex, or marriage could be questioned in relation to seditious activities.

Olivereau's activities during the war fell under the broad scope of the new sedition laws. Antiwar radicalism took a variety of forms, from protesting preparedness parades to giving speeches and writing articles. Olivereau's particular form of activism was to encourage young men to register as conscientious objectors. The Selective Service Act of 1917 allowed for conscientious objectors to avoid combat duty, though they were still required to play some kind of non-combatant role in the military. Initially those who could register as an objector to the war were limited to members of a number of religious sects. Conscientious objectors not claiming religious beliefs as their reason for objecting, and instead citing political, social, or moral beliefs, had a much more

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<sup>9</sup> Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers*, xv.

<sup>10</sup> Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers*, xvi.

<sup>11</sup> Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers*, xviii.

<sup>12</sup> Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers*, xix.

difficult time achieving CO status.<sup>13</sup> Almost 65,000 people filed as COs. Of that number, almost 57,000 were recognized as sincere.<sup>14</sup> Nonreligious objectors were initially less likely to be seen as sincere, but by December 1918 they were officially recognized by Secretary of War Newton Baker.<sup>15</sup>

While many radicals felt that conscientious objection was the only morally acceptable reaction to conscription, they may not have realized the consequences facing registered conscientious objectors. If a potential CO cleared the hurdle of acceptance by the local draft board, he was not completely free of military obligation. Although COs could avoid combat duty, they were still under the control of the military. They had the legal right to object, but the culture of the military was not forgiving to men who chose not to serve. Once COs went to camp, most were persuaded to accept combat roles through peer pressure, jeering, beatings, or solitary confinement. An estimated four-fifths of those who registered as COs ended up accepting some kind of military duty, an astonishingly high number considering the length they had to go to in order to be declared COs in the first place. They were also more likely to be court-martialed for “violation of the articles of war.” Of 540 COs court-martialed there were “17 death sentences, 142 life terms, and 345 cases with average sentences of 16 ½ years.” Most of those sentences were reversed, but they do serve as an example of what COs faced once in the military.<sup>16</sup>

Louise Olivereau was likely ignorant of the harsh conditions that faced the young potential draftees if they were to heed her advice and register as COs. But she spoke out strongly against the war and criticized President Wilson’s speeches concerning conscription. In his Proclamation on Conscription on 18 May 1917, Wilson maintained that “it is in no sense a conscription of the unwilling. It is, rather, selection from a nation which has volunteered in mass.”<sup>17</sup> Olivereau rejected Wilson’s assertion that the nation had volunteered to fight:

Now the Conscientious Objector is decidedly unwilling to render military service; therefore, by the terms of the President's explanation of the act, he should be exempt from military service without further discussion of the matter.... Now this nation has not

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<sup>13</sup> Anne Cipriano Venzon, *The United States in the First World War*, (Routledge, 1999) 169.

<sup>14</sup> Fite, Gilbert, and H. Peterson, *Opponents of War, 1917-1918*, (Greenwood Press, 1986) 123.

<sup>15</sup> Fite and Peterson, *Opponents of War*, 124.

<sup>16</sup> Peterson, *Opponents*, 125-131.

<sup>17</sup> “Woodrow Wilson: Proclamation 1370 - Conscription.”

volunteered in mass. This nation has not volunteered at all. If the nation had volunteered, it would never have been necessary to pass a conscription act.<sup>18</sup>

Olivereau then wrote two letters, addressed to "Fellow-Conscript" and sent them to men who were drafted. Olivereau assumed that these young men would be more amenable to her argument since they had not volunteered to serve in the armed forces. The first letter discussed the meaning of patriotism. In it Olivereau argued that "the present war is clearly a war for financial profit and power, unmistakably forced upon the nation by a small minority....The great mass of men of men in this nation believe the war to be wrong. Shall we then allow ourselves to be used, not only to our destruction, but to the unspeakable degradation of the nation as a whole?" Olivereau used "we" repeatedly in the letter, and signed it "Conscientious Objectors," giving the impression that there was more than one author and that they were male.<sup>19</sup>

The next section of the circular focused on alternative service and advocated that men resist serving even in a non-combat position. Olivereau argued that "it is as wrong to help in the destruction of life as it is to destroy life."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, she argued it was more ethical for a CO to risk his life in combat than to hide from hazardous duty by accepting something more removed from the violence of war. But the only irreproachable option was to resist the draft openly, refuse alternate service, and face prison. Thus while Olivereau initially advised the men to become COs, she switched tactics and ultimately advised they resist the draft altogether.

The second circular argued that government existed only to protect property: Government means nothing to the workers (I assume you are of this class) except a method of oppression by which he is made to work for the benefit of another class, from which he receives nothing, not even protection and an adequate living. It is this thing which you are asked to protect with your life, for which you are ordered to go into the worst hell imaginable.

This circular did not discuss becoming a conscientious objector, but instead more directly advocated that draftees "RESIST: REFUSE TO GO: STAY AWAY."<sup>21</sup>

Olivereau mailed the circulars on 28 or 29 August 1917. On 5 September the police raided the IWW hall in Seattle, seizing records and pamphlets, including copies

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<sup>18</sup> "The Case of Louise Olivereau: Trial and Speech to the Jury in Federal Court of Seattle, Wash., November 1917," Minnie Parkhurst Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, 24-25.

<sup>19</sup> "The Case of Louise Olivereau," 48.

<sup>20</sup> "The Case of Louise Olivereau," 49.

<sup>21</sup> "The Case of Louise Olivereau," 54.

Olivereau's letters. She went to the police station two days later to request that pamphlets that were her personal property be returned. It was then that she was questioned about the letters. She stated that she produced and financed them herself, and that they had no connection to the IWW, even though at that time she was employed by the organization as a stenographer. She had been at that job for seven or eight weeks, earning \$18 per week.<sup>22</sup> She admitted to preparing and mailing out roughly 2,000 circulars, and claimed her only hope was to make a few people rethink their position in the war. After questioning by the police she was held for arrest. Later it was revealed that local agents had been watching her house as early as 24 August. Olivereau surmised that the delay in her arrest was so that the raids on the Wobbly halls could be finished, and some evidence would be found connecting the organization to her circulars. No such evidence was found.<sup>23</sup>

Since Olivereau worked alone to write, print, and distribute the fliers, she went to trial alone. Olivereau faced the decision that confronted other antiwar radicals: whether to hire legal counsel to present a legalistic defense of the charges. Anarchist Emma Goldman tackled the same issue after her arrest for sedition and came to the conclusion that her "trial would have meaning only if we could turn the court-room into a forum for the presentation of the ideas we had been fighting for throughout all of our conscious years."<sup>24</sup> This was the model Olivereau followed. She opted to not have counsel and to use her trial to explain her anarchist beliefs and antiwar position.

During her trial Olivereau explained the reasoning behind her decision. At the outset of her trial she declared herself a "direct actionist," stating that she believed "in keeping the relations between individuals and groups on a simple fundamental human basis whenever it is possible to do so."<sup>25</sup> She then questioned potential jurors whether they held any prejudice against self-identified anarchists. Olivereau planned to explain her beliefs as motivation for her actions, and therefore allowing prejudiced jurors would make it difficult for her to make her case. When one of the potential jurors answered in the affirmative, Olivereau moved to have him dismissed. The judge then notified Olivereau that whether she was an avowed anarchist had nothing to do with the case,

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<sup>22</sup> *United States v Louise Olivereau*. US District Courts, Western District of Washington, Northern Division, Seattle, Admiralty, Civil and Criminal, 1912-1928. NARA-Pacific Alaska Region.

<sup>23</sup> "The Case of Louise Olivereau," 15.

<sup>24</sup> Goldman, *Living My Life*, 614.

<sup>25</sup> "The Case of Louise Olivereau," 12.

and therefore the juror would be allowed.<sup>26</sup> The mainstream press, however, felt that Olivereau's political beliefs were central to the case, with headlines that read "Girl Says 'I am an Anarchist.'" The accompanying article also referred to Olivereau as an "anarchist leader."<sup>27</sup> The paper noted that Olivereau was well known in Portland for being active in birth control activism and "radical social reform work" in the city.<sup>28</sup>

Aware of the stereotype of the bomb-throwing, immigrant anarchists popularized in the press, Olivereau took pains to explain the jurors what she believed anarchism to be and how it inspired her actions. She delivered this eloquent definition of anarchism: Anarchism is the working philosophy of those who desire to bring about a condition of society in which force and violence will have no place. As a social student, I am convinced that violence breeds violence, war breeds hatreds and fears and revengeful desires which lead to other wars; suppression within a nation or a community results in rebellion, insurrection, revolution. A thoughtful survey of the evolution of life, whether from the point of physical or social development, leads inevitably to the conclusion that mutual aid, the communal sense, the social sense, recognition of common interest among individuals, is the greatest factor in the world's progress, and always has been.<sup>29</sup>

She then insisted that in order for society to progress, freedom of speech, opinion, and assembly must be maintained. While pointing out that these were the ideals that the United States was founded upon, she noted that they had always been constrained to "freedom within the law,' which is not freedom at all," for the law sought to limit those freedoms when it finds necessary, often during wartime.<sup>30</sup> Olivereau saw her case as a directly tied to the First Amendment, and maintained that those rights must be protected, especially during times of war:

The real issue in this case is, have citizens of these United States the right to confer together on the subject of war, and upon other closely related subjects? Have citizens who have been drafted, or may be drafted, the right to think of their relation to the war and to the government, and of the relation of this government to other governments of the world, in any terms except those of complete acceptance of orders which may be issued to them by the Government? Are the laws of this country at the present time such as to demand for their obedience that citizens resign rights that we have been accustomed to consider fundamental in a democracy—namely, the rights of free speech, free press, and free assemblage?<sup>31</sup>

Olivereau reasoned that her right to free speech was outlined in the Constitution, as had

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<sup>26</sup> "The Case of Louise Olivereau," 7-10.

<sup>27</sup> *Oregonian*, November 29, 1917.

<sup>28</sup> *Oregonian*, September 9, 1917.

<sup>29</sup> "The Case of Louise Olivereau," 23.

<sup>30</sup> "The Case of Louise Olivereau," 24.

<sup>31</sup> "The Case of Louise Olivereau," 25.

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn during the Spokane Free Speech Fight. And similarly to Flynn, she believed that she had the right to interpret the Constitution and disobey those laws that she believed violated those rights.

Pacifists of many different political and religious backgrounds advocated that draftees register as Conscientious Objectors. Olivereau came to her trial espousing objection to the war as a tenet of her anarchist beliefs, that she believed she was, under the Constitution, entitled to hold. While the mainstream press and political conservatives often used “anarchist,” “IWW,” “Wobbly,” or “Bolshevik” interchangeably, among the radicals themselves these labels had precise meanings and took on a much larger importance. The IWW often felt the need to proclaim that it was not an anarchist organization.<sup>32</sup> While the focus on direct action and disavowal of political means of revolution are often associated with anarchist beliefs, the union itself is often characterized as anarcho-syndicalist. Many anarchists were Wobblies, but the organization itself never espoused such a label, and articles in IWW newspapers often declared emphatically that they were not anarchists. Anarchism, as a philosophy, appealed to some upper-class or wealthy individuals, but the IWW constitution proclaimed that the working class and the employing class had nothing in common, and the organization did not officially welcome cross-class allies. From the anarchist perspective, Emma Goldman felt that the IWW did not give her the credit she deserved for helping out in free speech fights. She noted in her autobiography that “not one of the IWW papers had protested against our arrest and conviction” during the war.<sup>33</sup> Olivereau was clear to make sure that people knew she was an anarchist, and that the ideals she spoke of in her trial were anarchist in nature. At one point after her trial, Olivereau found out that socialist-leaning *Seattle Daily Call* newspaper published parts of her opening speech.<sup>34</sup> While Olivereau was appreciative of their support, she emphasized that “the speech is not socialistic propaganda, but most decidedly anarchistic.”<sup>35</sup>

Her anarchism distanced Olivereau from the IWW, despite being a member and

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<sup>32</sup> The current IWW website has two questions about anarchism in their “Myths about the IWW” section. Salvatore Salerno has the biggest discussion of the influence of anarchism in the organization in his book *Red November, Black November: Culture and Community in the Industrial Workers of the World*. (University of New York Press, 1989).

<sup>33</sup> Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), 642.

<sup>34</sup> Olivereau simply refers to the “the *Call*,” she is most likely referencing the *Seattle Daily Call*.

<sup>35</sup> The speech, as well as an introduction and court records were finally published by Parkhurst as a pamphlet titled “The Louise Olivereau Case.” Olivereau referred to the pamphlet as her “child” during their correspondence. Letter, Olivereau to Parkhurst. December 19, 1917. Minnie Parkhurst Papers.

an employee. When the *Industrial Worker* reported on her arrest and trial in December 1917, the editors kept a measured tone and were sure to detach the IWW from her efforts. The article praised the “considerable force and logic” of her opening speech before going on to write:

Louise Olivereau is an anarchist. She is also a member of the IWW. Recently she was a stenographer in one branch of the union in Seattle. From her wages, after paying for her own support, she paid for the anti-draft literature which she publicly and proudly admits having circulated after her work day had ended. While her activities in this direction have no more connection with the IWW than have the affairs of the Birth Control League and similar organizations whose membership rolls include, among others, the names of IWW members, we can, without either condemning or commending her anti-conscription work, yield an ungrudging admiration for the brave stand she has made in defense of the principles which she holds dear.<sup>36</sup>

While this article showed some support for Olivereau, the tone and the relative lack of attention signified that the union wanted to separate itself from this case.

Although the IWW distanced itself from Olivereau’s anarchist beliefs, it was not as dismissive as historians have previously claimed. In *Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens*, Kathleen Kennedy maintains that while the *Industrial Worker* expressed support for Olivereau, “as time went on members of the IWW distanced themselves from [her], apparently angry that the government used its case against her to attack their organization.”<sup>37</sup> As evidence of this, Kennedy quotes Robert Friedheim’s *The Seattle General Strike*. Friedheim wrote that the IWW “were indignant that anyone would think they would trust an emotional, irresponsible girl” to do something as important as anti-conscription flyers.<sup>38</sup> Friedham cites an article in the October 1919 issue of *One Big Union Monthly* by Anne Gallagher, titled “The Case of Louise Olivereau.” While the article is in support of Olivereau, Gallagher takes pains to point out that Olivereau’s anarchist politics were not in agreement with hers. “Her position, viewed from the standpoint of the Class Conscious Mass Actionist, is not without it [sic] illogicality, for after all, it is the extreme individualism of capital society that is responsible for so much of its injustice...the real conflict, then, is between classes, not individuals, so an appeal to the individual conscience to right social wrongs, is based on a misconception of society.” While dismissing Olivereau’s beliefs, the article did say that she took a heroic stand and that “her able defense of her principles and ideals, have won her the admiration of all who are familiar with the case.” The article ended by proclaiming

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<sup>36</sup> *Industrial Worker* 8 December 1917.

<sup>37</sup> Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers*, 79.

<sup>38</sup> Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, 10 as quoted in Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers*, 141n52.

Olivereau one of “our” class war prisoners.<sup>39</sup> I do not find Friedheim’s conclusion that the IWW thought of Olivereau as emotional and irresponsible supported by this evidence. The IWW’s minimal support during Olivereau’s trial and appeal was less the result of her gender than of her anarchist belief system.

The lack of support that Olivereau received from her fellow workers is demonstrated most directly in the correspondence between then-jailed Olivereau and her steadfast ally Minnie Parkhurst.<sup>40</sup> The two had become friends while living in Portland. They then moved to Seattle, where Olivereau became an anarchist.<sup>41</sup> Parkhurst and Olivereau wrote back and forth, working through two critical issues. The first controversial decision was whether to appeal her case, which led to the second and more vital issue: how to fund the appeals process once it began. This is where Olivereau would need the most help from her fellow radicals and Wobblies, which was not forthcoming. Olivereau and Parkhurst refer often to Fellow Workers Hays and Harvey (full names unknown), who were against the appeal, wanting to focus efforts on the Wobblies on trial in Chicago. Olivereau wrote that she wished she could speak to “the boys,” believing if she did they would surely change their minds. Walker Smith was also critical of the appeal, but Olivereau did not want his help in the case, stating: “As for Walker Smith and the other critics, I want nothing from them except that they should attend strictly to the IWW cases. I thought I had made that plain before I left.”<sup>42</sup> Olivereau wrote again two weeks later: “As for my boys, who don’t approve of the appeal—they are young and have no experience. Were our positions reversed, I fancy their views would change.”<sup>43</sup> She seemed hurt by the lack of support from Hays and Harvey most of all, and surprised by their lack of encouragement.

Anna Louise Strong was another Seattle friend whose support wavered after Olivereau’s trial. Strong was a progressive journalist and supporter of the local labor movement. She had previously reported on the Tracy trial after the Everett Massacre for the *New York Evening Post*. She then became involved in anti-war activities and started writing for the *Seattle Daily Call*. Strong testified on behalf of Hulet Wells, former president of the Seattle Labor Council and chairman of the Socialist Party of Washington, during his sedition trial in 1918. She testified that the anti-conscription

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<sup>39</sup> *One Big Union Monthly*, October 1919.

<sup>40</sup> Parkhurst is sometimes referred to under her married name, Minnie Rimer.

<sup>41</sup> Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers*, 71.

<sup>42</sup> Letter, Olivereau to Parkhurst, January 24, 1918. Minnie Parkhurst Papers. I have been unable to find evidence of Smith’s criticism of Olivereau.

<sup>43</sup> Letter, Olivereau to Parkhurst, February 2, 1918. Minnie Parkhurst Papers.

leaflet that the men were arrested for was funded with help from such well-known and respected reformers as Jane Addams and Lillian Wald.

Strong's testimony on behalf of Wells led to a campaign to recall her from her position on the Seattle School Board, though it did not achieve much popularity at first. Strong later noted in her autobiography that because she "'befriended' an anarchist, Louise Olivereau" the recall effort was revived and was ultimately successful.<sup>44</sup> Association with a well-known anarchist was enough to undermine Strong's status as a respected member of the community. She could no longer be trusted with the welfare of Seattle's schoolchildren. This exemplifies the stress that members of the radical community in the region faced during this period. They had to make careful decisions about how vocal they could be in support of those arrested for antiwar beliefs.

Strong attended Olivereau's trial, at the request of the defendant. She described Olivereau's response to war as emotional: "She was one of those poetic souls to whom war never became a statistical movement of forces, but always vividly remained torn flesh, scattered brains and blood. She heard in her soul the shrieks of each murdered victim and hated war with emotion."<sup>45</sup> Strong judged Olivereau's actions to be based on emotion, not reason, and later wrote of their futility. "The mimeographing was so badly done [on the anti-conscription letter] that one could hardly read it; there was nothing to prove that a single drafted soldier had been influenced from his allegiance."<sup>46</sup>

Strong also questioned Olivereau's decision to not have an attorney. "She rushed on jail as a moth to a flame. Nothing that we of the *Call* could say could dissuade her from this demonstration."<sup>47</sup> Strong was apparently not alone in this opinion, and Olivereau herself was aware that others felt this way. In a letter to Parkhurst, Olivereau wrote "I'm sorry Anna thinks and has been saying that I was anxious to come to prison. The Paas boys thought I wanted to be a martyr too I believe. Such misconceptions can't be helped, when people can't distinguish between duty and desire."<sup>48</sup> Olivereau felt that she never really had a choice in her actions if she wanted to stay true to her beliefs. This is a huge dividing point that came during the war between Progressives and radicals, and among radicals themselves. The "you could do much better work on the outside" argument swayed some, but others felt it would be hypocritical to do so.

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<sup>44</sup> Anna Louise Strong, *I Change Worlds*, (Seal Press, 1980) 63.

<sup>45</sup> Strong, *I Change Worlds*, 63.

<sup>46</sup> Strong, *I Change Worlds*, 64.

<sup>47</sup> Strong, *I Change Worlds*, 64.

<sup>48</sup> Letter, Olivereau to Parkhurst, August 23, 1919. Minnie Parkhurst Papers.

While Olivereau adjusted to prison life, on the outside Minnie Parkhurst continued to try to raise funds for an appeal, despite the lack of support from the radical community. In a letter to Ed Nolan she wrote:

the radicals here have been most contemptible about her case. It was the old story, "thou shalt have no Gods beside me." In other words all gods must be the Old recognized gods—with such titles as Socialist, IWW, etc. after their names and never such a rash name as Anarchist. Only three or four understood and was sensible about her case. I could not get support for her appeal and so had to drop it....However, the atmosphere is changing some here now in regard to her case. And I now and then hear such remarks as this which I heard in the Longshoremen's hall the other day. "I have more respect for that woman than the whole dam bunch Kate Sadler included."

Even though they were not initially supportive, Parkhurst would not let the Seattle radicals forget about Olivereau:

Some of the radicals are getting ashamed apparently of their attitude I have rubbed it in so much and so strong. I believe it is having some effect at last, and they hate me most of them yes, because they know I am right about some things they will confess it when I am alone with them but they wouldn't give me that much satisfaction in the presence of half a dozen people. And then most of them are cowards after all. I am sorry to have to say it but I do believe it yes, I know it.<sup>49</sup>

This letter points to the difficulty historians have understanding how a radical community like this one functioned during times of extreme duress. We have hints from Parkhurst that people privately supported Olivereau, but would not publicly comment on her actions. The IWW was not publicly critical either, but Olivereau certainly never received much attention or support from the organization. What becomes clear from both public Wobbly pronouncements and private conversations reported by Parkhurst is that Olivereau's anarchist belief system caused other radicals to shy away from supporting her.

Regardless of their lack of support, Olivereau found solace in the idea that her comrades were also imprisoned. When she found out that many of the "Chicago boys" were going to Leavenworth she wrote: "I feel my isolation pretty keenly at times; but it's only a bodily isolation after all: the spiritual solidarity cannot be broken, tho each of us were put into a separate prison. Perhaps the Fellow Workers wouldn't like the term 'spiritual'; they can substitute any other they like; the fact remains the same—we are One."<sup>50</sup> She still felt a strong connection with her Fellow Workers in the IWW, even though they may not have agreed with her actions or supported her appeal.

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<sup>49</sup> Letter, Parkhurst to Olivereau, February 27, 1919. Minnie Parkhurst Papers.

<sup>50</sup> Letter, Olivereau to Parkhurst, June 13, 1918. Minnie Parkhurst Papers.

The letters between Olivereau and Parkhurst do mention support from various friends in Seattle and around the country. She still maintained correspondence with Fellow Worker Harvey, who ended up enlisting in the army, and Hays, and wrote that she “loves them almost to death.” She also received gifts from comrades: Brown bought her a dress, the “Tacoma boys” sent a box of candy, and Vilma Walden in Seattle sent \$7. She even made a favorable comment about Walker C. Smith: “Am much interested in all this publicity my child [her pamphlet *The Louise Olivereau Case*] is receiving. Hooray for Walker C.! He will be a good fellow yet, by the time he grows up if he keeps on improving at this rate.”<sup>51</sup>

Former Wobbly Harvey O'Connor's memoir, *Revolution in Seattle*, includes an appendix by his wife Jessie Lloyd O'Connor on Louise Olivereau. Lloyd and O'Connor both describe Olivereau as a maternal figure. Lloyd notes that Olivereau had “long taken a motherly interest in the high school youngsters who sought out the Wobbly hall for adventure in the great task of improving conditions.”<sup>52</sup> O'Connor referred to Olivereau as a “motherly kind of woman.”<sup>53</sup> Kennedy sees this as demeaning, stating that O'Connor and Lloyd “sentimentalized her actions, deflecting attention from her political critiques of the draft and of American nationalism.”<sup>54</sup> I do not believe that references Olivereau's maternal feelings towards “her boys” are necessarily problematic and do not in themselves demean Olivereau. While Olivereau was emotional about her cause, she also provided intellectual grounds for her actions in her trial testimony. Parkhurst took pains to advertise this in publishing the trial transcripts in her pamphlet. This seemed to fall on deaf ears, for when reading what other radicals had to say about Olivereau, her political beliefs are rarely mentioned. While she was close to the Wobblies, as both an employee and member of the organization, her political beliefs strayed from what even the most anti-centralization Wobblies espoused.

Olivereau's Wobbly comrades had sympathy for her case, but felt in the long run, it was not important enough to expend the time, money, and manpower that the other cases warranted. This is not to say that her fellow Wobblies should be blamed for this. She took actions which she knew could lead to her arrest, and she did it willingly, out of what she felt was her duty. The Wobblies who were being rounded up merely for carrying a red card took priority, because their arrests meant that merely being a

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<sup>51</sup> Letter, Olivereau to Parkhurst, September 4, 1919. Minnie Parkhurst Papers.

<sup>52</sup> Harvey O'Connor, *Revolution in Seattle: A Memoir* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009), 248.

<sup>53</sup> O'Connor, *Revolution in Seattle*, 99.

<sup>54</sup> Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers*, 78.

member in the organization was an illegal act. To tie the IWW to anarchism and sex radicalism at this point would have made fighting these arrests that much more difficult.

The radical community of the Northwest, especially the IWW, was torn apart during the war. The Northwest Defense committee chose to focus on those in big trials, arrested under criminal syndicalism laws, or threatened with deportation. How much money and effort to put into other cases, especially for those who had willfully broken the law, was a subject of debate. Olivereau demanded neither help nor funds from anyone, though privately she was obviously upset about the lack of support from her Fellow Workers. Olivereau's sentence was commuted in June 1919, and after her release she returned to Portland, where she spoke to members of the Prison Reform League about prison conditions, the most pressing of which was the lack of preparation for a productive life once released.<sup>55</sup> Once again, as we found in the Spokane and Portland cases, women connected with the IWW who spent time in prisons had an avenue to speak publicly about their experiences and advocated prison reform. After this point though, Olivereau faded from the spotlight. In the 1960s Jessie Lloyd O'Connor reported that a friend remembered seeing Olivereau in California in the early 1920s, where she was married to a conservative, and had cut all ties to her radical friends. Another friend noted "what hurt Louise the most after she came out of prison...was the bitter divisions she found among men and women who had been so united in working for a better world for labor when she was taken away in 1917."<sup>56</sup> While the unity of the past is often idealized, by 1920 new parties arose, old alliances were broken, and the radical community looked very different. Olivereau, who faced difficulty getting full support from her community in prison, left prison and entered a very different world.

Olivereau retired from radical politics soon after her release from prison. The conservative climate of the 1920s, getting older, the splintered movement all played a part of the decision, but one cannot help but wonder if she felt that sacrificing her freedom was not appreciated by her fellow radicals, and that it did nothing to stop the war in the long run. While there are many reasons why working-class women wanted to associate with the IWW, the organization was not free from gender-bias. Despite reasoned articulation of her political beliefs, Olivereau's actions were described as emotional by many of her comrades. Her case sheds light on internal conflicts that rarely make their way into the official records, and demonstrates the messiness that occurred

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<sup>55</sup> *Oregonian*, May 5, 1920.

<sup>56</sup> O'Connor, *Revolution in Seattle*, 261.

in response to legal and tactical disputes.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Birth Control, Antiwar Activism, and the Case of Portland Radical Marie Equi, 1917-1920**

Louise Olivereau was not the only female in the Northwest arrested for antiwar activities during this difficult time. One year after Olivereau's sentencing in November of 1918, Marie Equi was also convicted of sedition and sentenced to three years in prison, serving ten months. Equi was a self-employed physician, and as such, was ineligible for membership in the IWW. Despite this, she was a vocal supporter of the union from the 1913 Oregon Packing Company Strike through her time in jail. As a doctor and notable public personality, Equi was widely known in Portland, and had a much broader base of support than Olivereau. This included such diverse parties as the former Governor of Oregon and the Oregon State Federation of Labor. She also had much more public support from the IWW itself, and hired IWW lawyer George Vanderveer to represent her. While Equi and Olivereau differed in their personalities and belief systems, they both acted independently in their antiwar actions, and therefore were not arrested solely for membership in the IWW.

While Equi and Olivereau both served time in jail, their cases, trials, and appeals were very different. As explained in the previous chapter, Olivereau was an anarchist, and although she was a Wobbly, she explained her antiwar actions as a result of her anarchist beliefs. Equi's arrest came from a speech that she gave at the IWW hall. She was publicly associated with the organization, and did not stray far from popular Wobbly talking points about the necessity of the One Big Union. Equi was a firebrand, but she was also a respected physician, and had both working-class supporters and middle- and upper-class allies. Unlike Olivereau's philosophical statements about the nature of war and government, Equi brought something more concrete to the working men and women of Portland: knowledge of birth control and abortion. She was also enjoyed the spotlight and was notorious for her outspoken behavior. She was a local celebrity, appreciated by the working class and often feared by city leaders, and that notoriety translated into a broad base of support in her trial.

Far more historical research has been done on Marie Equi's life than that of Olivereau. Equi was an anomaly of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as a female physician and an open lesbian. She was born on 7 April 1872, and was raised in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Her mother had immigrated to the United States from Ireland, and her

father from Italy. Equi started working in the textile mills at the age of 8, and continued until a bout of tuberculosis at the age of 13. At 14 she went to Italy to live with relatives, returning to the US in at the age of 17. She first attracted public attention in 1893, when at the age of 21 she threatened to horsewhip a man accused of owing money to Bess Holcomb, whom she lived with at the time.<sup>1</sup> After living in The Dalles, then San Francisco, Equi went to medical school. She graduated from the University of Oregon in 1903, and moved to Portland where she focused on women's reproductive medicine. Equi's most notorious actions prior to her sedition trial were during the strike at the Oregon Packing Company.<sup>2</sup>

Equi's political leanings prior to the 1913 strike could best be described as Progressive. She had previously organized local physicians to travel to San Francisco to help out after the 1906 earthquake. She was also active in the women's suffrage movement in Oregon, which earned women the right to vote in 1912. She was interested in women's issues, and as a physician worked primarily with working-class women. She was radicalized during the 1913 Oregon Packing Company strike and remained devoted to the IWW after it ended.<sup>3</sup> She often spoke at IWW halls and raised money for the Everett Defense Fund in 1916. Equi was also the Oregon delegate chosen to distribute a portion of Joe Hill's ashes after his execution in November 1915, which shows how well she was regarded by the organization despite her status as a self-employed professional.<sup>4</sup> Equi worked in a medical office with Alys Griff and provided abortions to the women of Portland. She was never arrested for this work, as the authorities in Portland tended to turn a blind eye to the procedure during this period.<sup>5</sup>

As a radical and a physician, Equi took a leading role in the movement in Portland to provide access to information about birth control to working-class women. Radicals, including the IWW, dominated the push for wider access to information about birth control during the early stages of the movement. They specifically tied birth control to economic issues, and advocated its necessity if the working class was ever to be

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Cook, "Radical Politics, Radical Love: The Life of Dr. Marie Equi," *Northwest Gay and Lesbian Historian* 1:3 (Summer/Fall 1996) and 1:4 (June 1997). Accessed through <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/tom-cook-radical-politics-radical-love>.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 3 for more information on Equi and the Oregon Packing Company Strike.

<sup>3</sup> Equi may have been involved in the IWW Patterson strike in 1915. A 1 December 1915 article in the *New York Times* mentions Equi present for the trial of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.

<sup>4</sup> Nancy Krieger, *Queen of the Bolsheviks: The Hidden History of Dr. Marie Equi*, (Montreal: Kersplebedeb, 2009), 17.

<sup>5</sup> Rickie Solinger, *The Abortionist: A Woman Against the Law*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 26-28.

emancipated. Historian Linda Gordon has argued that early advocates believed “that birth control could alleviate much human misery and fundamentally alter social and political power relations, thereby creating greater sexual and class equality.”<sup>6</sup> Equi, Emma Goldman, and Margaret Sanger are all examples of women who advanced this argument. Sanger organized for the IWW in the Patterson strike of 1913 and Wobblies helped distribute *Family Limitation*, her first pamphlet to give explicit information on birth control methods.<sup>7</sup>

Equi’s birth control advocacy was inseparable from her support of the IWW. The IWW, like Equi, advocated birth control as a class issue. Well-planned families would reduce the number of people in the working population, lead to healthier and more well-cared for children, and free women from the burden of a large family.<sup>8</sup> An article in the *Industrial Worker* in 1911 argued “Many women are ‘stuffed’ with the ‘dope’ that it is God’s will to have all the children possible. If God wants them he should have sense enough to tell them where to find employment and where to decently live.” The author then linked the issue to economics: “Large families are good things for the boss as they give him a surplus of starving slaves to draw on in case of strikes besides furnishing the army with targets to be shot at....”<sup>9</sup> Restricting access to birth control information was, in this view, a tool of the employing class to keep the working class down.

While more male voices can be heard proclaiming the economic benefits of birth control in IWW newspapers, female agitators were more interested in women’s emancipation. Margaret Sanger, Caroline Nelson, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn all promoted birth control education in speeches in Wobbly halls all over the country. Margaret Sanger’s earliest publication advocating birth control, *The Woman Rebel*, printed the preamble to the IWW constitution in every issue. According to Linda Gordon *The Woman Rebel* was an attempt by Sanger “to combine her IWW-influenced commitment to direct action with her deepened feminism and sense of the radical potential of birth control.” After the journal was suppressed in 1915, Sanger wrote *Family Limitation*, which, unlike *The Woman Rebel*, gave specific information on how to

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<sup>6</sup> Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body Woman's Right: a Social History* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1976), 207.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right*, 222.

<sup>8</sup> Louis Ducheze. “Suffering in Silence.” *Solidarity*, January 8, 1910. “Phyllis and Her Babies.” *Industrial Union Bulletin*, January 4, 1908. *The New Solidarity*, February 1, 1919. *Industrial Worker*, May 8, 1913. *Industrial Worker*, April 25, 1912. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. “The I.W.W. Call to Women.” *Solidarity*, July 15, 1915.

<sup>9</sup> “Large Families.” *Industrial Worker* June 1, 1911.

prevent pregnancy instead of just advocating that the information should be available. *Family Limitation* did not as explicitly tie birth control with economic emancipation in the way that the earlier journal had, but by providing detailed information about preventing contraception it was much more useful to working-class women. IWW member Bill Shatoff printed 100,000 copies to be distributed by IWW locals across the country.<sup>10</sup>

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn wrote frequently about birth control in IWW journals. As she lectured throughout the country, one of her most popular topics was “Small Families—A Working Class Necessity.” In an article on the case of Margaret Sanger, Flynn praised her work for birth control education, and asked for contributions to her defense fund. Flynn advocated and explained Sanger’s view:

[Sanger] urges the women of the working class to decide the conditions of their maternity and to refuse to bring more children into the world than can be properly fed, clothed, housed and educated. She advises the workers to cease hampering themselves in strikes and class battles, with a large number of helpless, hungry children and to refuse to furnish an overproduction of slaves—food for mine and loom, prostitution, prison and cannon.<sup>11</sup>

Wobbly women’s support for birth control was in evidence during the Patterson strike in 1913. Carlo Tresca was addressing the crowd and made a comment about shorter hours and husbands and wives being able to spend more time together, and jokingly said “More babies.” The crowd was not amused and Bill Haywood stepped in and said “No, Carlo, we believe in birth control—a few babies, well cared for!” To that the crowd responded with cheers.<sup>12</sup>

Marie Equi met Margaret Sanger when she came to visit Portland, a city that historian Linda Gordon described as “a strong IWW city that was a veritable hotbed of birth-control fervor.” Equi was at the center of this agitation.<sup>13</sup> When Sanger visited in June 1916, Equi used her medical knowledge to revise Sanger’s *Family Limitation* pamphlet for accuracy.<sup>14</sup> Despite Portland’s reputation as a center of birth control activism, distributing “obscene” material was still illegal. While Sanger was visiting, three men were arrested for selling *Family Limitation* in Portland: Carl Rave, CL Jenkins, and Ralph Chervin. A rally took place in their defense, and at this time Equi, Sanger, and several other Portland women were arrested. The arrests for distributing birth control

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<sup>10</sup> Gordon, *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Right*, 276-277.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, “The Case of Margaret Sanger,” *Solidarity*, January 22, 1916.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 166.

<sup>13</sup> Gordon, *Woman’s Body*, 227.

<sup>14</sup> Krieger, *Queen of the Bolsheviks*, 15.

information caused nationwide controversy. Angry letters poured in from around the country vilifying Portland Mayor H. Russell Albee for the arrests. Albee's reply noted that he had nothing against birth control itself, but that the pamphlet being passed out in Portland contained "paragraphs presenting matters concerning sex relations in a manner which makes said relations appear to the young as not only necessary, but beautifying to a young woman" and that it gave "entire pages to explanation of the joy and pleasure of cohabitation, its beautifying effect and pleasant result on women, explanation as to how to increase the pleasure and enjoyment of same, etc."<sup>15</sup> The ruling of the City of Portland echoed Albee's viewpoint:

Personally I am not opposed to the so-called family limitation or birth control.... But because pages 5, 11, and 13 of the pamphlet sold and distributed by the defendants, contain matter wholly foreign to the question of birth control, but deal with the act of copulation in such a manner as to be offensive to the chastity and modesty of the average man or woman, and this pamphlet containing the objectionable matter just above referred to, if falling into the hands of the young of either sex, or even into the hands of persons of more advanced years, produces thoughts of impure and libidinous character, and would have the tendency to deprave and corrupt those minds that would be open to immoral influences, and might easily be calculated to excite impure desires.<sup>16</sup>

Thus according to Albee and the Court, the problem was not birth control, but that the pamphlet encouraged women to take control of their own sex lives. Authorities were aware of the popularity of birth control and that denying access to information was a losing battle. They could still, however, defer to public morality where matters of sex education were concerned. The defendants were all found guilty, but only the men were fined, and that fine was waived.

The radical push for birth control peaked in 1916, for during the war years many radicals, such as Equi, focused on antiwar activities instead. Equi continued to provide access to abortion and birth control for the next decade, though her ability to do so was restricted by her legal troubles stemming from her political and antiwar beliefs.

Equi was a member of the American Union Against Militarism, and caused a small riot during a Preparedness Day Parade on 3 June 1916, when she held up a banner that read "Prepare to Die, Workingmen, J.P. Morgan & Co. Want Preparedness for Profit, 'Thou Shalt Not Kill.'" She was arrested and released later that day. She was involved in many other antiwar actions, including protesting a group of wealthy

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<sup>15</sup> "Albee Reply to Elbert Hubbard," July 6, 1916, Albee Subject Files, Box 13, File 40, PARC.

<sup>16</sup> "City of Portland Ruling," [1916] Albee Subject Files, Box 4, File 3. PARC.

Republican women who were campaigning around the country for Charles Evans Hughes, on the basis of his pro-suffrage beliefs. Hughes was also pro-war, which Equi felt made Wilson the lesser of two evils.<sup>17</sup>

What led to her next arrest, however, was a speech she made at the Portland IWW hall on 27 June 1918. Officials alleged that during her speech Equi argued “it was against the IWW platform...to injure or kill another fellow worker but if it was necessary to do this, to gain their rights that she for one and every man or woman packing a red card...would be willing to sacrifice all they had, their life if need be, for the cause of industrial freedom.” Equi continued that “the Irish Revolutionists now had a chance to throw off their master...while he was weak and unable to stop them, and that the Irish were taking advantage of this condition and were asserting their rights, and that the IWWs...should do likewise.”<sup>18</sup> Employees of the Military Intelligence Bureau testified that they heard Equi speak these words, and accused her of calling members of the military “scum,” which she denied.<sup>19</sup>

After Equi's arrest on 30 June 1918, her \$10,000 bail was furnished by local friends. Equi had much wealthier supporters than Olivereau, and this sum was not difficult to come by. She did not even spend a night in jail before her release.<sup>20</sup> She then began a long road of a trial and ensuing appeals and requests for commutations of her sentence. From the day of her arrest it was over two years and three months before Equi began serving her sentence. During that time the war ended and the hysteria of the Red Scare had begun to die down.

Equi's personal life has always been fodder for speculation by both her allies and detractors, and this continued during her trial. She was rumored to be linked romantically to many different women she was friends with in her lifetime, but it is impossible to say for certain which relationships were platonic and which were romantic. Equi's longest-lasting and most well-documented relationship was with Harriet Speckart. In 1915 Equi and Speckart adopted a girl, whom they named Mary, though it was primarily Harriet who raised her. Mary was actually the biological daughter of Wesley Everest, the IWW organizer who was lynched in Centralia in 1919, which is evidence of

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<sup>17</sup> Krieger, *Queen of the Bolsheviks*, 14-16.

<sup>18</sup> *United States v Marie Equi*. US District Courts, District of Oregon, Portland, Civ. Crim. And Admir. Case File 1911-1922. NARA-Pacific Alaska Region.

<sup>19</sup> Krieger, *Queen of the Bolsheviks*, 19.

<sup>20</sup> *Oregonian*, July 1, 1918.

the intimate and connected nature of the Wobbly community in the Northwest.<sup>21</sup> Harriet moved to Seaside, Oregon by the late teens and was raising Mary there, although she still made appearances during Equi's trial. Speckart and Equi continued their relationship for 20 years, despite the other women in Equi's life, until 1927, when Speckart died of tuberculosis.

Besides her long-term relationship with Speckart, Equi was also rumored to have been intimate with Margaret Sanger, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Kathleen O'Brennan, who ended up playing an important role during Equi's trial and subsequent appeals.<sup>22</sup> O'Brennan was an Irish nationalist and well-known speaker for the cause. O'Brennan, born in Ireland in 1886, had come to the United States in October of 1914. She arrived in Portland in July 1918, where Federal Agent William Bryon put her on watch at the request of the Seattle Bureau, where she had previously been living. Bryon believed that O'Brennan's "alleged interest in the freedom of Ireland [was] merely a subterfuge to permit her to go about the country, living off the misguided contributions of others."<sup>23</sup> While O'Brennan was well-known for supporting the Irish cause, a spy, later revealed to be Margaret Paul, a friend of O'Brennan and Equi, reported that Equi radicalized O'Brennan, and as their relationship developed O'Brennan started focusing more and more on the labor question.<sup>24</sup> Equi and O'Brennan spent a significant amount of time together during Equi's trial, and O'Brennan organized much of her support and publicity.

Whereas Louise Olivereau defended herself, Marie Equi had IWW attorney George Vanderveer presenting her case. Vanderveer had defended the Wobblies on trial in Chicago and so had considerable experience in cases of this nature.<sup>25</sup> Equi's

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<sup>21</sup> Letter to Nancy Clay from Julia Ruutila Nov 17, 1971, "Marie Equi," Vertical File, Oregon Historical Society Research Library. Ruutila was an activist in Portland in the 1930s and 1940s whose parents were friends with Equi. Changes of Name and Adoptions records list Mary Equi's birth name as Mary Everest. *Oregon, Adoptions and Name Changes, 1876-1918* [database online]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Sanger described Equi thusly: "a rebellious soul, generous kind, brave, but so radical in her thinking that she was almost an outcast. Upon arrival she captured every well-known woman who comes to Portland. Her reputation is Lesbian, but to me she was like a crushed falcon which had braved the storm and winds of time and needed tenderness and love. I liked Marie always." Cited in Ellen Chesler, *Women of Valor: Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control Movement in America*, (New York: Simon Schuster, 1992) 526n20.

<sup>23</sup> Adam Hodges, "At War Over the Espionage Act in Portland: Dueling Perspectives from Agent William Bryon and Kathleen O'Brennan." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 108 (Fall 2007): 483.

<sup>24</sup> Hodges, "At War Over the Espionage Act," 476.

<sup>25</sup> According to a government informant, Equi said after a meeting with Vanderveer that she was not happy with him as her lawyer "because then she would be identified solely with IWW propaganda, whereas her case rested upon an entirely different issue." Report of Informant #53

defense argued that she had not used the words ascribed to her and that her speech had not intended to cause harm. Vanderveer instructed the jury to ignore whether she had spoken at IWW halls or spoken to audiences that consisted primarily of Wobblies, because such an act was not illegal and so was irrelevant to her case. The defense also argued that Equi's actions at the preparedness parade occurred before the United States went to war, and therefore were not illegal.<sup>26</sup> The prosecution argued that Equi's statements were made with the intent "to interfere with the operation and success of the military and naval forces of the United States."<sup>27</sup> The prosecution would therefore have to prove that those eligible for the draft or already drafted had been present at her speech. While Olivereau's trial focused on philosophical issues and freedom of speech, Equi's defense team wanted to prove that she had not said anything seditious.

Department of Justice Special Agent William Bryon was in charge of building the prosecution's case against Equi, and he did not take pains to hide his contempt for her. In his reports he accused Equi of being possessed "with a criminal paranoia for martyrdom" and in other instances referred to her as a vampire sucking money away from the AFL and IWW.<sup>28</sup> In one of his reports Bryon observed that Equi's plea for executive clemency held signatures of several physicians whose loyalty to the government had never been questioned. He could not comprehend that they might support Equi's case on its own merit, and reasoned that blackmail could be the only explanation. He concluded "these signatures are attached through no reason in the world only fear of knowledge in the possession of this woman, direct or indirect, of violations of law or ethics in the medical profession. There can to the mind of this agent be no other solution or explanation."<sup>29</sup> The bad blood between Bryon and Equi was so deep that it led to a physical altercation after her initial sentencing in December 1918. Equi claimed that Bryon struck her with his fist, and witnesses reported "Bryon pushed Dr. Equi out of his way when she attempted to intercept him and that he threw his hand back and as vigorously shoved Mrs. Speckart to the floor when she tried to pull him from Equi." Bryon made no apologies for his actions, and said that Equi had previously threatened him so he was justified in believing she meant to do him harm. After the shove Equi "heaped her vituperation on Bryon in torrents" and allegedly threatened that

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Oct 25, 1918. Department of Justice Files on Marie Equi. Lewis and Clark College Special Collections.

<sup>26</sup> *United States v Marie Equi*

<sup>27</sup> *United States v Marie Equi*.

<sup>28</sup> Department of Justice Files on Marie Equi.

<sup>29</sup> Report of Agent Bryon, 27 April 1920, Department of Justice Files.

her brother would be in town soon and he would kill Bryon.<sup>30</sup> During Equi's subsequent appeal for clemency Bryon reported that if she did not go to prison "the result would sow one of the worst seeds, if not the very worst seed of anarchy that has ever been sown on the Pacific Coast."<sup>31</sup>

The federal authorities were determined to convict Equi, and her Department of Justice files are filled with reports after her arrest and before her imprisonment. One set of reports was made by Margaret Lowell Paul, who posed as a friend of Equi, whom she met through Kathleen O'Brennan. Paul, listed as "Informant #53" in her reports, seemed to be close to the two women. She was often in Equi's hotel room or taking meals with the two of them, mostly around October of 1918. According to Agent Bryon, Paul was a supporter of Irish freedom, and was introduced to O'Brennan by fellow Irish nationalist Thomas Mannix, an attorney in Portland. Paul and O'Brennan discussed the Irish situation for a few days, and O'Brennan eventually introduced her to Equi.<sup>32</sup>

By December of 1918, Equi and O'Brennan were aware that Paul was employed by the government. O'Brennan announced that Equi suspected all along that Paul was with the Secret Service, but O'Brennan had not believed her. She asserted that when Paul became ill and was nursed back to health by Equi, she "was so affected by Dr. Equi's kind treatment that she broke down and cried, and confessed that she was in the employ of the Department of Justice; that Dr. Equi had no chance of a fair trial and that she was bound to be convicted." Paul then told Equi that if she gave her \$2000, Paul would take it to Haney [the District Attorney] and the charges would be dropped.<sup>33</sup> According to Paul's reports, Vanderveer called her out as an agent on 18 November, though she suspected they had known for a few days prior. Paul sat through the whole trial, and reported that Equi and Vanderveer were both friendly. Equi boasted that she knew all along she knew Paul an agent, but "of course from the evidence she gave to me against herself, there seems little likelihood of the truth of this statement."<sup>34</sup> Even if Equi had known all along, it was not apparent to everyone in Equi's circle that Paul was a spy, an example of how well government agents could blend into radical circles.

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<sup>30</sup> *The Portland Telegram*, December 31, 1918.

<sup>31</sup> Report of Agent Bryon, April 27, 30, 1918. Department of Justice Files.

<sup>32</sup> Hodges, "At War Over the Espionage Act in Portland Dueling Perspectives from Kathleen O'Brennan and Agent William Bryon," 482.

<sup>33</sup> Report made by Agent W.E. Hudson, December 6, 1918. Department of Justice Files.

<sup>34</sup> Report of Informant #53, November 21, 1918. Department of Justice Files. By December Agent Bryon was requesting Paul transferred to New York or Washington, DC, because she was facing harassment in Portland. Letter, Byron to A. Bruce Bielaski, December 14, 1918. Department of Justice Files.

While O'Brennan is the friend who brought the spy into Equi's inner circle, she was also Equi's biggest public proponent. While facing deportation for her radical activities she still came to Equi's aid, and in 1919 distributed a pamphlet titled "Workers Unite" which outlined Equi's case. The pamphlet was released in the summer of 1919 to gain support for the appeals in her case. In the pamphlet O'Brennan denounced Paul as a "second rate actress" who was "lazy and luxurious of the truly parasitical type." O'Brennan stated that after the defendant became aware Paul was a spy, Paul "broke down, confessed, and begged for mercy."<sup>35</sup> The pamphlet accused the government of using additional underhanded methods to get evidence of sedition by Equi. O'Brennan alleged that the two men who gave evidence of Equi's seditious statements at the Wobbly hall, Sitton Linville and James P. Brady, were "employees of the Military Intelligence Bureau at Portland, Oregon and evidently tools of the lumber interests." She charged that they were ordered to "get" Equi, and find, or make up, evidence against her. The two men dressed as workingmen and "carried cards in a working class organization."<sup>36</sup>

Equi's supporters and the authorities told conflicting tales of a young woman who tried to discredit Linville and Brady's testimony against Equi. According to O'Brennan, Linville told a young Portland woman that he and Brady had orders to "get the doctor" and if it was not for her speech at the hall, they would get her on something else. "Outraged at this method of hunting and downing 'selected' victims, this young woman voluntarily went on the stand and testified to the statements of Linville." After her testimony against the two police agents, the woman was arrested and held for sixty-five days. After release "she was practically hounded out of Portland by secret service agents."<sup>37</sup>

Agent Bryon told a very different version of these events. He claimed a 22 or 23 year-old woman named Llewellen, "a reform school girl and natural outlaw," waited outside of his office and "made it her business to be friendly with this agent." He was suspicious of the woman's intentions and asked Brady and Linville if they had any association with her. When Brady took the witness stand the prosecution asked if he was "clear of any entanglement," romantic or personal, to which he replied in the affirmative, but then under cross-examination by George Vanderveer "admitted the

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<sup>35</sup> Hodges, "At War," 478-482.

<sup>36</sup> Hodges, "At War Over the Espionage Act in Portland Dueling Perspectives from Kathleen O'Brennan and Agent William Bryon."

<sup>37</sup> Hodges, "At War," 479-480.

contrary when confronted by the Llewellen woman.” Bryon reported that Llewellen also went by the name Beryl Grayson, and he accused O’Brennan of paying Grayson to discredit the witnesses in Equi’s case and that the payment was authorized during a recent IWW meeting.<sup>38</sup> Bryon and the federal government clearly went to great lengths to discredit Equi and anyone around her. Evidently something was fishy about Agent Bryon for he was asked to resign in August of 1921. The official report listed lack of funds for his position, but the *Oregonian* surmised that it was due to the unpopularity of decisions in several high profile Espionage Act cases during the war.<sup>39</sup>

Against the power of the state and overzealous agents like Bryon, Equi had the support of the IWW and O’Brennan. In addition, she drew on a much broader base than many other Wobblies during this period. Former Oregon Governor Oswald West even testified on her behalf. Federal Agent #18 reported in July of 1918 that “from present indications, the AFL Unions will come to the assistance of Dr. Equi (IWW) as she had given a great deal of her time to collecting funds for the Mooney defense and Pres. Hartwig of the State Federation of Labor has promised to get the different organizations to assist her.”<sup>40</sup> In October of that year that the Equi Defense Committee, authorized by the State Federation of Labor and the Central Labor Council, visited various AFL locals to give details on her case and try to raise funds.<sup>41</sup> During her trial Vanderveer noted that most of her expenses were paid by the AFL, and only partly by the IWW.<sup>42</sup> The Oregon State Federation of Labor passed a resolution condemning Special Agent William Bryon and calling for an investigation into Equi’s case. The resolution pointed to the altercation between Equi and Byron after her sentencing as evidence of his prejudice in the case.<sup>43</sup> Not long after its convention the Pacific Coast Metal Trades Association also condemned Byron’s actions.<sup>44</sup> While Olivereau had trouble even securing local Wobbly support, Equi received funds and publicity from the IWW and AFL-affiliated unions.

While Equi’s trial was not a rallying point for the IWW nationally, locally the organization did help her cause. According to Charles Reams, an informant who was a member of the organization, handbills advertising meetings in support of Equi were funded and organized by the IWW, even though they were published under the name of

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<sup>38</sup> Hodges, “At War,” 484.

<sup>39</sup> *Oregonian*, August 31, 1921.

<sup>40</sup> Report of Agent #18, July 20, 1918. NARA-Pacific Alaska Region.

<sup>41</sup> Report of Agent #18, July 26, 1918. NARA-Pacific Alaska Region.

<sup>42</sup> Report of Agent Bryon, November 29, 1918. Department of Justice Files.

<sup>43</sup> *Oregonian*, January 9, 1919.

<sup>44</sup> *Oregonian*, February 26, 1919.

the Socialist Party.<sup>45</sup> Joe Thornton, a Wobbly, was the chairman of the Dr. Equi Defense Committee.<sup>46</sup>

As Minnie Parkhurst did for Olivereau, O'Brennan organized a publicity campaign in support of Equi. Unlike Olivereau, O'Brennan and Equi had much more powerful connections and O'Brennan able to gather Equi's middle- and upper-class allies in support of the case. Equi's status in Portland meant that her backers had more access to funds and publicity. In 1918 while advertising mass meetings to raise funds for her defense, they were able to take out large ads in the *Oregonian*, *Portland Evening Journal*, and the *Portland Daily News*.<sup>47</sup> Paul reported that she and O'Brennan purchased the ad in the *Oregonian* for \$42.00—which is highly likely much more than Parkhurst had to spend on advertising meetings in support of Olivereau.<sup>48</sup> Equi told Paul contradictory stories about who paid for the *Journal* and *News* advertisements, once stating that it was the State Federation of Labor, and another time saying it was the IWW.<sup>49</sup> While the IWW was supportive of Equi, it is likely that the AFL had much more funding available to help pay for things like publicity expenses.

The mass meeting that they were advertising took place on 5 December 1918 at Arion Hall. The speakers were Dr. C. H. Chapman, Kathleen O'Brennan, H. M. Wicks, and James Robinson. Secret Service Agent W.E. Hudson described the attendees with disgust as “men with ill-smelling breaths; foreigners, cripples and degenerates.”<sup>50</sup> This was the same meeting where O'Brennan outed Paul as an informant. It is quite possible that Equi helped many of these men's wives or girlfriends at some point, which could explain their loyalty to “Doc,” as many of them called her.

After a lengthy wait, Equi's appeal was heard in San Francisco circuit appeals court in June of 1919. C.E.S. Wood, who served as her attorney for the appeal, argued that the sedition laws were unconstitutional. Equi was out on bond at the time of her appeal, and was “accompanied by six women said to be prominent in IWW activities in the Pacific Northwest.”<sup>51</sup> Her sentence of three years and a \$500 fine was upheld on 27 October.<sup>52</sup> The Supreme Court of the United States upheld the lower court's decision on

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<sup>45</sup> Report of Agent Bryon, December 4, 1918. Department of Justice Files.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Agent Bryon letter to Lewis Baley, October 22, 1920. Department of Justice Files.

<sup>47</sup> For example see *Oregonian* December 5, 1918.

<sup>48</sup> Report of Informant #53, October 30, 1918. Department of Justice Files.

<sup>49</sup> Report of Informant #53, October 25, 1918. Department of Justice Files.

<sup>50</sup> Report of W.E. Hudson, December 6, 1918. Department of Justice Files.

<sup>51</sup> *Oregonian*, June 7, 1919.

<sup>52</sup> *Oregonian*, October 28, 1919.

26 January 1920. At that point, Senator James D. Phelan of California delivered a petition to President Wilson asking for a presidential pardon for Equi. Wilson granted her two stays of execution of her sentence; both were protested by the American Legion in Oregon.<sup>53</sup> Wilson finally commuted her sentence 13 October 1920, reducing it from three years to one year and one day. She was originally ordered to serve her sentence on McNeil's Island in Washington, but due to the lack of accommodations there for women, she was sent to San Quentin in northern California instead. She surrendered herself to the court in Portland on 15 October 1920, amid several friends and photographers, to await transportation to California.<sup>54</sup> A mass meeting was held at the Machinist's Hall on 17 October to discuss her case, and a resolution protesting her conviction was sent to President Wilson.<sup>55</sup>

Equi entered San Quentin on 19 October 1920, more than two years after her original arrest, and was released on 9 August 1921. She continued to reside in San Francisco for a few weeks after her sentence ended in order to take care of some of the prisoners at San Quentin with whom she had become acquainted during her stay. As did Olivereau, Equi spoke on prison reform and continued to support her fellow San Quentin prisoners shortly after her release, and moved back to Portland.<sup>56</sup>

Unlike Olivereau, Equi did maintain some ties with the radical community after her release. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn moved in with Equi in Portland in 1926 to recuperate after a mental and physical breakdown. She stayed for ten years. Flynn had several relationships with men throughout her life, but during this period, according to Flynn's biographer, Rosalynn Baxandall, Flynn's family thought Flynn and Equi were lovers and tried to separate the two. In order to keep her from leaving, Equi warned Flynn that she would die if not under her medical care. Flynn finally left in the 1930s, and the two did not keep in touch after that point. Baxandall writes that Flynn found the Portland years with Equi some of the most difficult of her life.<sup>57</sup> This was not made public, as Flynn's first autobiography, which was written in the 1950s but only covered her life until the early 1920s, did not mention her tumultuous relationship with Equi. She had only kind words to say about Equi and how she helped her and other radicals who came to Portland. She wrote that Equi "was among the most feared and hated women in the Northwest

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<sup>53</sup> *Oregonian*, June 11, 1920, June 23, 1920, June 22, 1920.

<sup>54</sup> *Oregonian*, October 14, 1920, October 16, 1920.

<sup>55</sup> *Oregonian*, October 18, 1920.

<sup>56</sup> *Oregonian*, August 14, 1921.

<sup>57</sup> Rosalynn Baxandall, *Words on Fire: The Life and Writing of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn* (Rutgers University Press, 1987).

because of her outspoken criticisms of politicians, industrialists, so-called civic leaders and all who oppressed the poor. She was loved and cherished by masses of plain people.”<sup>58</sup> Equi’s forceful personality was well-documented, so it is likely that there was some difficulty during their time together, although Flynn would not have wanted to make that public.

Despite living with one of the most famous female agitators of the 1910s, Equi’s public life was fairly quiet over the next decade. Nancy Krieger attributes Equi’s lack of political activity after her release to her age, health, and the conservative climate of the 1920s.<sup>59</sup> Similar to Olivereau, Equi reentered a world where the friendships and camaraderie she had known within the radical community of the Pacific Northwest had largely vanished. Equi suffered a heart attack in 1930, which severely limited her mobility, though she did make a few public appearances in the 1930s to support the striking waterfront workers. She died in Portland on July 12, 1952 at the age of eighty.

Marie Equi denied until the end of her life that she had called men serving in the military “scum,” but she did not deny her role denouncing the war in the preparedness parade and the later meeting at the Wobbly hall. Equi was confrontational and controversial. Accustomed to and fortified by the public spotlight, she had many loyal followers, and many friends in high places. Her trial, rather than focusing on her philosophy or issues of free speech, instead became as dramatic as Equi herself, denouncing people as spies and accusing government agents of framing her.

Equi had many progressive allies, and she received more help from the Wobblies than Olivereau. Equi, as a physician, was useful to the IWW. She examined the bodies of the Everett victims, provided information about birth control, and provided care to working-class patients. From working-class men, to the Oregon State Federation of Labor, to wealthy Portlanders, Equi had a cross-class appeal that Olivereau did not. Despite her transgressive sexuality and radical politics, the practical nature of her support for working-class men and women by providing medical care endeared her both to Wobblies and members of the AFL, who supported her throughout her trial. Middle- and upper-class women also likely utilized Equi’s services, and knew the value of a physician willing to break the law to serve her patients. Though not a Wobbly herself, Marie Equi symbolized the organization for many people in Portland, and she was one its most steadfast allies. That she also retired from activism shortly after her

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<sup>58</sup> Flynn, *The Rebel Girl*, 198.

<sup>59</sup> Krieger, *Queen of the Bolsheviks: The Hidden History of Dr. Marie Equi*, 23.

imprisonment is testament to the difficulties the radical community faced during and after the war as it lost many of its loudest voices to prison.

## Chapter 7

### Repression, Arrests, and Defense Work of Female Wobblies During World War I and its Aftermath, 1917-1920

Louise Olivereau and Marie Equi acted individually to protest what they felt was an unjust war. Their public actions, whether in speech or writing, made them targets of prosecution under wartime acts aimed at curbing antiwar activity. They were not, however, the only Wobbly women arrested during this period. Female Wobblies were at risk of arrest for simply membership in the organization during the repressive years of the Red Scare. While the male leadership was rounded up in raids across the country, women were arrested for supporting the organization behind the scenes by editing and distributing the *Industrial Worker*, providing support for men in jail, and working with defense organizations to raise money for trial expenses and to support the families of those in jail. While women's work in jail support and defense is important, it was typical for women to be supportive behind-the-scenes, rather than as frontline agitators. The authorities, however, recognized this support, and therefore women were targets of federal surveillance as much as any of the well-known male Wobblies of the period. This chapter will examine how the massive arrests affected Wobbly communities and how women worked to support those in jail and risked arrest themselves.

The previous two chapters have outlined how city, state, and federal agencies gained greater legal backing for antiradical repression during the war. IWW leadership of a massive lumber strike during the war led to increased paranoia regarding German influence in the union, and the government stepped up surveillance and coordinated nationally to strike at the heart of the organization.<sup>1</sup> On 5 September 1917 a coordinated series of federal raids hit Wobbly halls across the nation, arresting members and confiscating property.<sup>2</sup> The police extended their raids into the homes of union members.

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<sup>1</sup> Rumors swirled that the Wobblies were German spies, that the strike was financed by Germany, and that members sabotaged the war effort by setting fires to munitions factories. Arizona Senator Henry Ashurst announced to the Senate that IWW stood for "Imperial Wilhelm's Warriors." *Oregonian* August 18, 1917. Newspapers also ramped up anti-Wobby hysteria. See, for example, "State Unit Forms to Check IWW: Activities in Eastern Oregon Menace" *Oregonian*, July 13, 1917; "Overthrow of All Power IWW Aim: Murder Not to be Avoided" *Oregonian*, October 3, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> Property confiscated included membership and subscription lists, as well as innocuous items, such as a framed map of Washington taken from the Seattle local. Letter from C.H. Libby to George Vanderveer. September 5, 1917. IWW Collection. Reuther Library.

In Portland the police raided the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Lloyd, and confiscated Mrs. Lloyd's luggage and the pictures of family and friends from their walls.<sup>3</sup> These raids disrupted the Wobbly community in the Northwest in two ways. Raids on halls and the ensuing arrests of everyone inside meant that Wobbly halls could no longer function as safe spaces for workers to gather with their children for dances, plays, concerts and other community events as they had for the last decade. Raids on homes put privacy and property at risk for anyone associated with the IWW.

The risk of association with the IWW increased for women who were not US citizens.<sup>4</sup> During this period of anti-Wobbly fervor, membership in the organization was enough reason for authorities to start deportation proceedings for alien immigrants. A group of immigrant Wobblies were rounded up and held for deportation in Seattle, some for more than a year, before being sent to Ellis Island on 7 February 1919. But some noncitizens won their cases, and not all were deported. Of the total of 150 Wobblies arrested and headed for deportation during 1918 and 1919, only 27 were actually sent back to Europe.<sup>5</sup> In 1919 the House Committee on Immigration questioned Byron Uhl, Acting Commissioner of Immigration, about the deportation of alien radicals. They wondered why only 60 out of the 691 people arrested for preaching the overthrow of government between 7 February 1917 and 1 November 1919 had been deported. Congressman Johnson, Chairman of the House Committee, referred to the "Red Special" of radical aliens from Seattle as "the most conspicuous instance of the failure of the deportation process." He even went so far as to say the Wobblies used the train as a free ride to New York, claiming they were aliens in Seattle but then showing proof of citizenship once they arrived.<sup>6</sup>

Among those from the northwest who were actually deported were a husband and wife, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Williamson Merta, also known as Melta, and a pair of sisters, Margaret and Janet Roy. Peter Merta was secretary of the IWW local in

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<sup>3</sup> *Industrial Worker*, September 19, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> The federal government attempted to destroy the organization by targeting immigrants, but the very premise that deporting aliens would curtail Wobbly activities was a flawed one. While there were some cases of deportation (a few which will be outlined here), a great majority of Wobbly leadership and the rank and file in the Pacific Northwest were citizens. When possible I have examined census records for those involved in Wobbly activities in the Northwest. The majority were born in the United States, and of those who were foreign-born, the majority came from Canada.

<sup>5</sup> William Preston, *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Repression of Radicals, 1903-1933*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 206.

<sup>6</sup> *New York Times*, November 23, 1919.

Raymond, Washington, and was arrested in April 1918 for his membership and active role in the organization, and scheduled for deportation to Finland. For unknown reasons, the Mertas were initially released, but Peter was arrested again in Duluth, Minnesota for his work as editor of a Finnish language Wobbly paper. Else Merta may have come to Ellis Island on her own free will to be deported with her husband, but the Commissioner of Immigration denied this was the case, and noted that the Acting Secretary of Labor had ordered her to be deported because of her membership in the IWW.<sup>7</sup>

The story of two young women exemplifies the risk associated with IWW membership during this period. Margaret and Janet Roy were sisters who were arrested in Seattle in June 1918.<sup>8</sup> Margaret was about 26 years old, and Janet was around 23 at the time of their arrest.<sup>9</sup> Hulet Wells, the chairman of the Socialist Party of Washington who was convicted of sedition in 1918, described the case of the Roy sisters. They were from Scotland and had become interested in the IWW while in Chicago, before they traveled to Seattle in 1918. Wells noted that they were “quiet, demure, refined little Scotch girls...so modest and unassuming that it is hard to imagine them being connected with a revolutionary movement.”<sup>10</sup> Upon arrival in Seattle, they looked up Walker Smith, well-known Wobbly and editor of the *Industrial Worker* for advice on finding a room.<sup>11</sup> That the Roy sisters knew to contact Smith when they arrived in Seattle is an example of how the informal radical community functioned. The police must have followed the Roy sisters, because Smith’s house was raided while they were visiting him and his family, and the officers greeted the Roy sisters by name. As was the case in other raids on homes of Wobblies, the officers produced a liquor warrant as a reason to enter the home. Washington State had prohibited the manufacture and sale of liquor as early as 1914, and searching for bootlegging operations was often an excuse for searching homes. The officers arrested Smith and the Roy sisters.<sup>12</sup> When the women's trunks were searched, the police found their IWW red cards, and a letter of introduction from

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<sup>7</sup> United States Congress House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *IWW Deportation Cases*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1920) 23-26.

<sup>8</sup> *IWW Deportation Cases*, 64.

<sup>9</sup> Ship Manifest, October 27, 1917, Ellis Island Records, <https://www.ellisland.org/>.

<sup>10</sup> Hulet M. Wells, *Wilson and the Issues of To-Day: A Socialist Revision of George Creel's Famous Book* (Seattle, WA: The Socialist Party, 1918), 68.

<sup>11</sup> A photograph of Smith and his family, taken in 1925, is available at <http://www.nw.epls.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/EvrtMassacre/id/234/rec/192>.

<sup>12</sup> Wells, 68-69.

Chicago headquarters. The women were also described as “well supplied with money.”<sup>13</sup> While Smith was released after ten days, the sisters were held in Seattle for over two months.<sup>14</sup> The Roy sisters, by virtue of association with Wobbly leadership and their membership in the organization, were targeted for deportation, and charged with “advocating or teaching the unlawful destruction of property.” It is unclear on what evidence these charges were based, but it could have been possession of pamphlets such as Smith’s *Sabotage: Its History, Philosophy and Function*. The Roy sisters eventually gave up on their appeals and were deported to Scotland on 22 July 1919.<sup>15</sup>

After the raids on Wobbly halls and meetings across the country resulted in the arrests of several prominent Wobblies, the nation watched as 113 members of the IWW went on trial in Chicago in the case of *United States vs. William D. Haywood, et al.* The men were tried together and defended by George Vanderveer, who had spearheaded the defense in the Everett Case, arguably the Wobblies’ most successful court appearance. Each Wobbly was charged with 100 different crimes. The prosecution immediately realized the difficulty of proving the guilt of each individual defendant. Instead, it painted the organization itself as seditious. The government used pre-war pamphlets, such as *Sabotage*, songs, and articles to argue that the IWW was a seditious organization, and therefore proof of membership in the organization was all that was needed to convict. The trial lasted five months, from 1 April 1918 to 30 August. The jury deliberated for only an hour before convicting all of the men for all of the counts for which they were charged. The men were found guilty and received sentences ranging from one year to twenty, with 88 of the defendants sentenced to at least five years. The convicted men were sent to Leavenworth Prison, many leaving wives and children behind.<sup>16</sup>

Along with the men arrested in Chicago, many lesser-known women were arrested for supporting the IWW during this time. One woman, Nora Fuller of Spokane, was arrested and fined \$10 for asking a jailer to deliver a basket of fruit along with a note to inmates Donald Sheridan, James Rowan, and W. Moran. She was held

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<sup>13</sup> June 22, 1918. Governor Ernest Lister, State Secret Service Reports. Washington State Archive.

<sup>14</sup> Frances H Early, *A World Without War: How U.S. Feminists and Pacifists Resisted World War I*, (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 169. Early notes that the sisters first came to the US in 1911 and were involved in the 1912 Bread and Roses Strike in Spokane. The only arrival record I could find was in 1916.

<sup>15</sup> *IWW Deportation Cases*, 64.

<sup>16</sup> Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 436-437.

incommunicado for thirteen days, and then released on \$100 bail. Fuller was fined, refused to pay, and instead took jail time. The *Industrial Worker* sarcastically observed “Mrs. Fuller’s son, who voluntarily enlisted in the army, will be pleased to learn that his mother is now lying in Spokane’s filthy jail.”<sup>17</sup>

One of the most upsetting arrests for the northwest Wobblies was that of Kate B. MacDonald, or “Mrs. Mac,” as she was known to the locals. Mrs. MacDonald was the wife of J. A. MacDonald, editor of the *Industrial Worker* until he was indicted and sent to Chicago for the Haywood trial. Mrs. MacDonald had been the bookkeeper at the paper for a year, and had taken over all of the business responsibilities since her husband’s arrest two months prior to hers. Her arrest shocked her Fellow Workers:

Every one who has had business at the *Worker* office, has always been met by Mrs. Mac (the diminutive denoting friendliness, not presumptive or coarse familiarity) with gentle courteousness, refinement and womanliness, coupled with a reserved and firm control that won and retained friendship, yet repelled and held in check any who might overstep the bounds of decency. She is thoughtful and, at times, a little too serious, which however, is compensated for by a keen appreciation of humor, which manifests itself through merry twinkling eyes and a hearty, wholesome laugh.

The description of this “pure, wholesome, womanly woman,” as she was described in the paper, was then contrasted with the horrors she faced in jail.

She had to come in contact with all sorts of unfortunate and degraded women—the prostitute; the hopeless, helpless dope fiend; the drunkard, screeching vile and filthy language—all wrecks of women who once were fair and pure, mayhap had loved and suckled child at breast, had noble aspirations and high ambition; but now—all is lost, they are submerged, their habitat the slum. Reeking odors and no conveniences. None of the privacy that the refined woman desires even when among her own sex.

But as a true Rebel Girl, she is happy to share in this burden:

Yet the women fellow workers take their stand by the men in the glorious battle for freedom, and when the heavy hand of capitalistic laworder grasps and forcibly immures them in filthy jails, our sisters in the struggle make no complaint, but take their medicine with a fortitude worthy of the noble cause in which they fight!

The article ends with the loaded question “What are you doing on the outside?” Mrs. McDonald, charged with disorderly conduct, was released on a \$1000 bail, and the charges were eventually dismissed.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Industrial Worker*, November 24, 1917.

<sup>18</sup> *Industrial Worker*, January 5, 12, 1918.

Women also supported the organization by helping to sell the *Industrial Worker* in the streets of Seattle. Two women, Mrs. Dessie Hubbard and Mrs. Clara Alderton, went out on 16 January 1918 to sell copies of the paper. They lasted about 15 minutes before they were arrested. In response, two more women and “about fifty lumberjacks” grabbed papers to sell in a free press version of the previous free speech fights, an attempt to overwhelm the police and test their commitment to arresting anyone who distributed the paper. Mrs. Blair Cairns and Mrs. Edith Osborne were also arrested. When Mr. Alderton and Mr. Hubbard went to the station to bail out their wives, they were arrested as well. The Aldertons were then held by immigration authorities for possible deportation to England. According to one of the female prisoners, as they were put in the city jail the matron announced “Some more IWW girls. I suppose we will get another snotty write-up when they are released, the same as that one Kate MacDonald gave us. I wish I had her here now so I could break a chair over her head.”<sup>19</sup> Women in the IWW prided themselves on their exposure in the *Industrial Worker* and *Daily Call* of the filthy conditions in the women's jails, and took credit for bringing about remarkable improvements.

Mrs. Blair Cairns was arrested again a few months later in a raid on the Spokane IWW hall, along with Mrs. Dorcas Lloyd, wife of Harry Lloyd who was on trial in Chicago, and Mrs. Daughs, the secretary of the Socialist Party of Spokane. Daughs was working as a stenographer for the LWIU. She was immediately released after her arrest. Lloyd, who was working as a copy clerk for the organization, and Mrs. Cairns were each given 30 days and fined \$100.<sup>20</sup> In Tacoma, military police accompanied by a mob, ransacked an IWW hall, destroyed decorations, and burned literature and records in the street. Among the arrests that day were two more Wobbly couples, Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Tucker, and Mr. and Mrs. S. Jones.<sup>21</sup> At this point the *Industrial Worker* ceased to function until July of 1919, when it was published in Everett. Therefore there was no officially Wobbly paper in the Northwest to distribute news about arrests and defense efforts.

The arrests of women and their rough treatment in jails in the Pacific Northwest was part of a larger pattern. In California, for example, the arrest of 38-year-old Theodora Pollok in Sacramento provides another detailed example of the way even upper-class females were treated by authorities. Pollok was arrested when she went to the jail to arrange bail for some of the Wobblies who had previously been rounded up in

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<sup>19</sup> *Industrial Worker*, January 26, 1918.

<sup>20</sup> *Industrial Worker*, April 27, 1918.

<sup>21</sup> *Industrial Worker*, May 4, 1918.

raids of Wobbly halls. She was a well-educated woman who had many respectable supporters petitioning on her behalf after her arrest. She was born in Baltimore, educated in New York and Washington, DC, and was described by one of her supporters, J. H. Byrd as “an exceedingly brilliant girl.” Byrd also described Pollock as “blessed or cursed with a courageous big heart,” who became involved with the IWW “without realizing, in the slightest, what she was being drawn into.”<sup>22</sup> Another friend of Pollock’s, lawyer Henry Twombly, described her as “a refined, cultured lady of integrity and magnanimous spirit.”<sup>23</sup> Similar to the case of Louise Olivereau, her supporters appealed for her release discussing her maternal nature, and emotional need to help others that led her to association with the IWW.

The authorities, on the other hand, saw Pollock as a threat. After her arrest Pollock was subjected to “a medical examination intended for prostitutes.” Such treatment of a “respectable” woman was considered so outrageous that even President Wilson questioned the need for such an examination. United States Attorney John Preston ignorantly replied that “Wobblies, like prostitutes, were notoriously promiscuous sexually, only in their case love was not for sale.”<sup>24</sup>

According to authorities, Pollock’s alleged sexual promiscuity was matched by her supposed influence in the organization. San Francisco District Attorney Charles Fickert called Pollock “the head of the IWW” on the West Coast. Fickert was the prosecutor for the Mooney-Billings Preparedness parade bombing case, and was extremely anti-radical. Pollock was active in the Mooney-Billings Defense Committee, and therefore likely familiar to him prior to her arrest. Fickert believed that Pollock’s middle-class background was beneficial to the Wobblies, and allowed her to serve as a liaison between the “direct action anarchists and the ‘parlor bolsheviki.’” Fickert also felt that there was a cabal of socialists in DC that were secretly working for her release.<sup>25</sup>

Pollock did have some allies in Washington. Congresswoman Jeanette Rankin wrote to the President regarding Pollock’s case, and Wilson then wrote to Attorney General Thomas Gregory requesting that California District Attorney Preston dismiss the

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<sup>22</sup> Letter to Thomas Gregory from J.H. Byrd, August 22, 1918. Department of Justice Investigative files. Byrd described himself as a friend of Pollock’s brother.

<sup>23</sup> Letter to Assistant Attorney General O’Brien from Henry Twombly, January 1919. Department of Justice Investigative Files.

<sup>24</sup> Dubofsky, 439.

<sup>25</sup> Letter to Francis Welsh from Charles Fickert, October 26, 1918. Department of Justice Investigative files.

case.<sup>26</sup> Preston wrote to Gregory laying out the details of the case and Pollock's involvement with the IWW at a member, as part of the Ford and Suhr defense committee, and as a part of the General Defense Committee. He also noted that although Pollock had not specifically spoken out against the war, she did not publicly support it by writing patriotic articles, or buying Liberty Bonds.<sup>27</sup>

Unlike the cases of other IWW women arrested on flimsy evidence, Pollock's case was not dropped. The reasons the prosecution did not dismiss her case were fairly simple: they had more evidence on her than on the rest of the less-respectable Wobblies they had arrested.<sup>28</sup> If they dismissed her case for lack of evidence, then what reason would they have for keeping the male Wobblies? Therefore, authorities tried to build a public relations case to justify continuing her prosecution despite weak evidence. Assistant United States Attorney Patrick Johnson called her "one of the most dangerous members of the IWW in California." Local newspapers described her as "a college graduate, and art connoisseur, and secretary of the IWW Defense League."<sup>29</sup> Pollock complained about her treatment, saying that she was "vilified and abused" when she testified in front of the grand jury.<sup>30</sup>

The majority of the 46 Wobblies tried in Sacramento opted for the "silent defense," not hiring lawyers or putting up a defense with the belief that they would never see true justice in the capitalist courts. Only Pollock and two other defendants who were part of the International Workers Defense League hired lawyers. The defendants were held in jail for anywhere from six months to a year before the trial begun, with only four having been released on bail in that time, while five died of influenza. On 19 January 1919, the jury deliberated for an hour before returning a verdict of guilty on all counts for all defendants.<sup>31</sup> After several appeals, Pollock secured a letter from a physician stating that jail time would kill her (she had recently been diagnosed with tuberculosis) and her sentence was reduced to a \$100 fine.<sup>32</sup> The Pollock case signifies the zeal by which local authorities manufactured cases against anyone with a Wobbly connection, even at the risk of alienating federal officials in Washington. Local officials continued this trend in the

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<sup>26</sup> Letter to Gregory from Woodrow Wilson, August 4, 1918. Department of Justice Investigative Files.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Preston to Gregory, April 29, 1919. Department of Justice Investigative Files.

<sup>28</sup> Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 440.

<sup>29</sup> *Oakland Tribune*, January 14, 1918. (via ancestry.com).

<sup>30</sup> *Oakland Tribune*, February 3, 1913. (via ancestry.com)

<sup>31</sup> *The Nation*, January 25, 1919. (via thenation.com)

<sup>32</sup> Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 441.

Pacific Northwest by spying on and arresting women based on evidence no stronger than in Pollock's case.

Washington State Secret Service agents kept very close watch on several different women who were connected to the IWW in the Northwest. The Secret Service suspected that women passed along messages, hid suspects, or helped prisoners escape. If Wobbly women were involved in any of these activities, they would, by necessity, be secretive, so evidence other than spy reports is hard to come by. Nevertheless, these cases do help showcase some of the women who were, at the very least, supportive of the organization during this period of repression.

One federal agent was particularly suspicious of a Mrs. Brown of Everett, Washington, and first reported on her in October of 1917, describing her as a Wobbly. The agent read over letters sent to her from imprisoned Wobblies Red Doran and Walter Smith. In those letters, Smith said how much he loved her pumpkin pie, and was hoping she could send some to him in jail. The agent was suspicious of this "pie" and thought that it held some larger significance and was another reason to be suspicious of Wobbly women bearing gifts and food for prisoners. The men addressed Brown as "mother" in the letters, and she referred to them as "her boys." The woman as maternal figure, a motif we saw earlier in the case of Louise Olivereau, was repeated in Mrs. Brown's case. These types of women were more likely to provide food and shelter to Wobblies passing through than to engage in agitation in the streets.<sup>33</sup>

The agents were watching another "mother figure" at that same time in Everett, Mrs. Grant. Grant ran a restaurant in Everett, which the agent referred to as headquarters for all news regarding the arrested men. There was also a hotel upstairs that was frequented by Wobblies—at least by "the better ones." Mrs. Doran came to stay with Grant, and Grant said she would put her up rent-free for the duration of her husband's jail time as a reward for the sacrifice he had made for his fellow workers. Mrs. Grant fed the Wobblies whether or not they could pay, and organized most of their local functions., even though her husband did not support the organization. She even "roughed it" and camped out with the boys. The agent noted that she was "indiscreet," but he had "never heard her moral character assailed." She would have taken out a red card but for the fact that she owned the restaurant and therefore was barred from membership. The agent traveled to Everett from Seattle in May 1918 to investigate the

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<sup>33</sup> October 6, 1917. Governor Ernest Lister, State Secret Service Reports. Washington State Archives.

purchase of a large boat by Mrs. Grant. Mrs. Grant had stated that she wanted the boat to fish near Alaska, but the agent was convinced that the actual purpose was to ferry Wobblies under indictment to Siberia. For unknown reasons, by June Grant had sold her boat and ceased her involvement with the IWW.<sup>34</sup> The surveillance by federal agents and risk of arrest may have been too much for her relationship and her business to bear.

In response to the waves of arrests, the efforts of Wobbly women who had not been arrested, or had been released, focused on the defense committees, both local and national. The work of the defense committees had several objectives. The main task was to raise money and publicity for trial expenses. They also financially supported the men who were in jail and their dependents. For example, in 1918 the Seattle Defense Committee paid relief to the following:

- Mrs J.T. Doran, Seattle, \$10/week
- Mrs. J.P. Thompson, Seattle, \$10/week
- Mrs. John M. Foss, \$10/week
- Mrs. Geo. Hardy, Seattle, \$10/week, 3 children
- Mrs. E.F. Doree, Rex, OR, \$10/week, 1 child<sup>35</sup>

While the list is rather small, it again reminds us that the men who were jailed were not all “footloose hoboos” with nothing to lose, but men with families, and the organization recognized that.

As arrests continued, the need for a national general defense organization grew stronger. On 14 February 1918, the General Executive board created one.<sup>36</sup> The committee solicited funds to help with defense and also aid those affected by the arrests. In June 1921 they decreed that relief was to be given first to wives of prisoners who had dependent children, then to prisoners in need of adequate food and clothing, then to others who are in need.<sup>37</sup> An example of these disbursements are as follows:

#### Disbursements of General Defense Committee July 1921

Mrs. Lucy L. Embree, Relief collected by Butte 50.00  
Mrs. John Avila, Relief, two weeks 16.00  
Mrs. Etta Reeder, Relief, two weeks 30.00  
Mrs. John Avila, Relief, two weeks 16.00  
Mrs. Jas. P. Thompson, Relief 2 weeks, 20.00  
Mrs. Etta Reeder, Relief, 2 weeks, 30.00  
Mrs. E.F. Doree, Relief, 2 wks, 24.00  
Mrs. Lucy L. Embree, Relief, 2 wks, 30.00

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<sup>34</sup> Governor Ernest Lister, State Secret Service Reports. Washington State Archives.

<sup>35</sup> Prison Relief, 1918. IWW Collection. Reuther Library.

<sup>36</sup> General Office Bulletin, February 14, 1918. IWW Collection. Reuther Library.

<sup>37</sup> General Office Bulletin, June 1918. IWW Collection. Reuther Library.

Mrs. John M. Foss, relief, 2 wks, 20.00  
Mrs. Mary Graber, relief, 2 wks, 20.00  
Mrs. J.T. Doran, relief, 2 wks, 20.00<sup>38</sup>

Thus the relief given out by the Seattle Defense Committee was part of a larger national effort to support the families of imprisoned Wobblies.

While women who supported the organization contributed financially to the defense funds, they also donated food and clothing to the imprisoned men. A letter of thanks was sent to the *Industrial Worker* in November 1920 by the men in the Montesano country jail for the “large assortment of home-canned fruits, jellies, preserves, honey and smoked salmon” they were recently sent.<sup>39</sup> While not surprising or controversial that women contributed food to prisoners, it is important to remember that many of these women, such as the cases of Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Grant, or Mrs. Fuller, faced tracking by government agents or even the possibility of their own arrest by supporting jailed Wobblies.

These examples give us a glimpse into the surveillance that Northwest radicals faced during World War One and its immediate aftermath. Women risked arrest stepping in for their jailed male counterparts in tasks such as editing and selling the *Industrial Worker*. They risked arrest working on defense committees. They risked arrest for visiting men in jail. They risked arrest by simply being present at an IWW hall. In spite of this many women continued to support the IWW. When selling a newspaper or visiting a friend in jail could lead to arrest, women had to make difficult choices about how to support the organization. As persecution persisted and jail sentences wore on, the organization, as it had existed prior to World War I, deteriorated.

The persecution of the organization, its members, officials, halls, mail, and newspapers during the war made it extremely difficult for supporters of the IWW to function as a community. While individuals took action to support those in jail, they could no longer freely associate, and the days of movie showings and Wobbly concerts were gone. This is not to say that the organization itself did not continue to function, but the Wobbly Hall as family-friendly center of the radical community had ceased to exist.

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<sup>38</sup> General Office Bulletin, July 1921. IWW Collection. Reuther Library.

<sup>39</sup> *Industrial Worker*, November 13, 1920.

## Conclusion

### The Decline of the Family-Friendly Wobbly Community in the Pacific Northwest, 1920-1924

I have argued in this dissertation that male and female Wobblies in the cities and towns of the Pacific Northwest were part of a more family-friendly radical community that is often ignored when focusing on the single, male, migratory workers of the lumber camps and harvest fields. This division between the “hobo” Wobblies and the “family” Wobblies comes into stark relief when examining how each group fared during the difficult war years. While the Wobblies gained one of their biggest successes in the lumber strike during the war, and were successful in organizing agricultural workers in the early 1920s, the Wobblies working in cities and small towns lost Wobbly halls that had previously functioned as community centers. Those Wobblies with families, both male and female, faced a much bigger risk in breaking the law, and some found that the Wobbly leadership did not prioritize supporting the families of those who went to jail.

Early historiography of the IWW pointed to the postwar period as the demise of the organization. More recently Greg Hall has successfully argued that the post-war years did not destroy the IWW entirely, but led to increases in membership of agricultural workers.<sup>1</sup> The real decline happened in 1924, due to conflicts within the organization around three major debates: centralization versus decentralization, the relationship with the Communist Party and the Third International, and the issue of executive clemency.

The three issues were actually intertwined, as demonstrated by Patrick Renshaw's 1967 *The Wobblies*, which ends with a chapter titled “The Death of the IWW.” He marks this shift primarily because the centralist Wobblies tended to be those that were jailed during the War, and the leadership that was left during their trials and jail time was of the decentralist variety. While the former group was friendlier to the Third International, the latter group wanted nothing to do with them, and so the question of the relationship with Russia, and with the newfound Communist Party in the US is what led to a split in the organization. The anti-Bolshevik group was headed by C. E. Payne, and

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<sup>1</sup> The older works include Patrick Renshaw, *The Wobblies: The Story of Syndicalism in the United States*, (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1967), Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, and Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods*. Newer work includes Greg Hall, *Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Laborers in the American West, 1905-1930*, 1st ed. (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2001), and Peter Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive-Era Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

headquartered in Everett. Renshaw seem sympathetic to the centralist faction.<sup>2</sup> Personal antagonisms deepened the antipathy on both sides, and resulted in the 1924 split.

Renshaw paints the Northwest-based Emergency Program Wobblies as failures, the centralist factions as having a few successes before sinking to irrelevance in the 1930s.

Robert Tyler and others have argued that the Wobbly decline after WWI was also a result of changing social status of workers. Workers in lumber and agriculture became more stable, more “home guard” than “hobo,” and thus the Wobbly life did not appeal to them.<sup>3</sup> Greg Hall's *Harvest Wobblies* blames the decline of the IWW as less a result of that disillusionment after the split than of the Wobblies' inability to recognize and adapt to the changing migrant workforce. Hall argues that the harvest Wobblies “could not or would not break free of their own worklife culture to articulate a meaningful message” to the newer groups of workers which, in California especially, included Hispanics and families.<sup>4</sup> In the Northwest more and more agricultural workers were single women and families working for summer to supplement their income. The Wobbly organizer who focused on hobo jungles and riding the rails to draw single male workers into the union to begin with had no resonance with these new workers. More and more workers traveled to job sites in cars, and therefore did not need a red card to ride the rails. According to Hall, the union's inability to adapt to this changing workforce, combined with continued repression and changing agricultural technology led to the decline of the IWW in the 1920s.

I am not convinced that this is the case. As I have shown in previous chapters, the IWW did appeal to many “home guard” family men and women before the war and so we must look at other explanations. Foremost among these must be the repression during wartime that made attending meetings or social gatherings a dangerous activity. The Wobbly hall ceased to function as a family-friendly center that built solidarity in the cities and towns of the Northwest. The repression may have also led to a sense of disillusionment as male and female Wobblies who were subject to arrest and long-term imprisonment during the war often felt as if their actions had little effect in changing the outcome of the war, and some felt betrayed by IWW leadership that did not appreciate their sacrifice. Therefore the lessons of family-friendly prewar organization were lost.

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<sup>2</sup> Patrick Renshaw, *The Wobblies: The Story of Syndicalism in the United States*, (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1967), 257.

<sup>3</sup> Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods*, 186.

<sup>4</sup> Greg Hall, *Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Laborers in the American West, 1905-1930*, 1st ed. (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2001), 214.

Although the organization continued to survive, the “family-friendly” aspect of the IWW community suffered a marked decline during this period.

The case of Pacific Northwest Wobbly organizer E.F. Doree provides one example of how his frustration with IWW leadership mounted during his long imprisonment, due to what he perceived was the lack of concern over the well-being of his wife and child. Doree’s disillusionment hinged on the issue of commutation. Each individual Wobbly in jail or out faced tough decisions during the years following the raids and repression of 1917. While official reports, newspaper articles, and spy reports can give us part of the story, we are left guessing what many individuals and their families felt about these circumstances. Fortunately, Ellen Doree Rosen, Doree’s daughter, compiled and published the letters her father wrote to her mother, Ida, during his stay in Leavenworth Penitentiary in Kansas. The letters paints a picture of a very committed and equal partnership between husband and wife, and also divulge some of the internal struggles of the organization during this period.

Edwin F. Doree was born in Philadelphia in 1889, though his family moved to the Northwest not long after. At the age of 16 he lost two fingers on his left hand in an industrial accident working on the railroad, and was promptly fired from his job. His daughter later surmised that this event radicalized him, and he joined the IWW in 1906 in Spokane, just a year after the accident. He left the organization after a few months, dreaming of a career as a professional baseball player. After another injury forced him to abandon that idea, he joined the IWW again in 1910, and became an organizer shortly after. He met his wife Ida in 1914 while organizing textile workers, of which she was one, in New York. They had their first child, Frederick, referred to by Doree as “Bucky Boy,” in Philadelphia in 1916.<sup>5</sup>

The letters between Ed and Ida amplify what is hinted at when reading newspaper reports of Wobbly husband and wife teams organizing, street speaking, and getting arrested together: that they were in a committed, loving, and respectful relationship. Barring a few stray remarks warning Ida to watch her weight, Ed constantly wrote about how much he loved and missed his wife and son during their years apart, and told her to do what she thought was right in regards to publicity for his case. He undertook an informal study of his fellow prisoners and found that Rebel Wives were more loyal than average:

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<sup>5</sup> Ellen Doree Rosen, *A Wobbly Life: IWW Organizer E. F. Doree*, (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2004).

I was informed by those who are in a position to know that 81 percent of the prisoners who come here with sentence of three years or more, lost their wives by divorce or desertion. These figures struck me as a poor average for love. Then I set to gather the data on so-called 'reds' and find that of the 64 married ones located, who had three years' sentence or more (and most of whom had been in confinement more than three years already) that only four had their wives desert them, or, that is less than 6 ½ percent of their wives had proved lacking in that love that lives.

He then turned his study towards a critique of those who feared Wobbly morality was a threat to "American values":

And I must say again that we have wonderful little women, the best on earth. And, they say that we would break up their homes, and they are afraid. They have tried their darndest to break up ours, and can't. They say we would break up the family and we have builded [sic] unbreakable families. Separate the average couple today and in three years time, nearly all love has flown, but separate the "despised red" couples and they move heaven and earth to come together, contemplating a greater love.<sup>6</sup>

For all of the attention paid to unconventional Wobbly views on love and marriage in trials from Spokane onward, to Doree and his fellow inmates, their commitment to the free choice of association did not lead to desertion or to weaker families, but instead strengthened the bond of committed Wobbly partnerships.

Doree was one of the imprisoned Wobblies hoping for his sentence to be commuted on an individual basis, as opposed to those who felt that no one should be released until they were all set free. From his letters, it is evident that by this point he was more concerned about taking care of his family than solidarity with the other jailed Wobblies. By June of 1921, Doree discussed the split between prisoners over which course of action to take. The "resolutionist" group favored a proposal that resolved that no Wobbly should accept commutation unless all were free. Doree also referred to this group as "die-hards," "irreconcilables," or the "hard-liners." The rest of the jailed Wobblies, referred to by the resolutionists as "clemency hounds," wanted to work on a case by case basis, believing that each successful commutation paved way for the next. Doree told his wife the "resolution adopted here was...a lie on the face of it...That is why I did not sign it. It is a negative resolution in that it suggests no line of action, it merely condemns a particular method....None of those who refused to sign would ever ask for their personal freedom at the cost of others. To infer that, as the resolution does, is really rotten."<sup>7</sup> The conflict continued to brew for those still in jail, and some of those

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<sup>6</sup> Letter, E.F. Doree to Ida Doree, September 8, 1921, in Rosen, *A Wobbly Life*, 138.

<sup>7</sup> Letter, Ed Doree to Ida Doree, August 18, 1921, in Rosen, 132.

released at the end of their five-year sentences campaigned against the “clemency hounds” from the outside. Doree referred to “bitter attacks” of the resolutionists against Roger Baldwin, founder of the American Civil Liberties Union, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and other supporters of the clemency cause in Philadelphia. He also noted that the General Membership Board threatened to expel all those asking for clemency and tried to break up defense groups working for the release of individuals.<sup>8</sup>

This controversy turned Ed bitterly against the IWW General Membership Board. Beyond tarnishing the names and reputations of those in jail waiting for clemency, the Board also either refused support for their wives or made that financial support difficult. He warned Ida to think twice before writing to Chicago for financial aid, for “what they give in cash they collect from one’s soul and spirits.”<sup>9</sup> The General Defense Committee and Prisoner Comfort Committees throughout the country supplied money to the resolutionists in prison, and outfitted them with \$50 and a new suit upon release. This support was denied those who applied for clemency.<sup>10</sup> The month before his release Ed made his feelings clear to Ida:

You may rest assured that I am done with the IWW. After their treatment of you and me, do you think I would so much as walk across the street to do them a favor? So far as I am concerned, they can go to hell.... Any movement that becomes dead to human emotions, is dead as it can ever become.

While Ed made his contempt open to Ida, he kept it between the two of them. He did not want any public statements denouncing the IWW while he was still imprisoned for fear that he would look like a coward who was only renouncing the organization for a better chance at a pardon.<sup>11</sup>

Doree was, in a sense, vindicated in his view by the 1924 IWW convention, when, after all the sentences had been commuted, hard feelings still erupted. James P. Cannon, who reported on the proceedings, noted that 15 of the 26 Wobblies still imprisoned in Leavenworth in 1923 accepted the clemency. At that point the eleven who

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<sup>8</sup> Letter E.F. Doree to Rebecca Evans, June 1, 1922 and E.F. Doree to Ida Doree, June 2, 1922, in Rosen, 200–201.

<sup>9</sup> Letter, E.F. Doree to Ida Doree, April 20, 1922, in Rosen, 188.

<sup>10</sup> Letter, E.F. Doree to Ida Doree, August 13, 1922, in Rosen, 214.

<sup>11</sup> Letter, E.F. Doree to Ida Doree, August, 20, 1922, in Rosen, 216. It is impossible to judge from these personal letters how many of his fellow Wobblies who supported clemency agreed with Doree. I have tried to ascertain if married men were more or less likely to support clemency, but I have been unable to obtain records on enough of the members to prove whether or not this was the case. It is possible that those who were against individual clemency were less likely to have a family waiting for them on the outside, and more interested in maintaining solidarity amongst the “family” of Wobblies in prison.

did not accept clemency demanded that none of those who did be allowed to do any work on behalf of class war prisoners. Ralph Chaplin was the particular target of this group. According to Cannon,

The excellent standing and long-proven revolutionary integrity of the men involved made their case of concern to the entire radical labor movement. Any official action to discredit them and to exclude them from activity would have been a decidedly reactionary step and would have produced a most unfavorable impression.

The rest of the convention agreed. Those who accepted commutation were exonerated, and those who attacked them were condemned.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, the harm was done, and neither Doree nor his wife returned to the IWW.

As my research has shown, women were crucial to the existence and success of the IWW in the Northwest. The triumphs and failures of the IWW cannot continue to be judged by the experience only of men. Women actively participated in Wobbly issues that reflected the radical ideals of the organization, such as free speech fights and birth control agitation. Women interacted with the IWW as a social organization in the cities, rather than in the lumber camps or agricultural fields where the migratory male workers were often introduced to the organization. Wobbly halls that had previously functioned as community centers became targets of government officials during the war years. Despite this loss, women continued to support jailed Wobblies and risk arrest themselves. But the continual arrests and repression took its toll. Some members, such as the Doree family, felt that their sacrifices were not appreciated by the national leadership, or even by their friends and fellow workers. While there were pockets of the Northwest where the Wobbly community continued to exist, in cities such as Portland, Everett, Seattle, and Spokane, the camaraderie and community that existed prior to the war had disappeared.

This is not to say that it disappeared forever. While the 1920s were a conservative decade in the United States, the 1930s proved that radicalism was alive and well. The industrial unionism favored by the IWW was popularized with the formation of the CIO. The work that women, including Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, did with the Communist Party and individual unions in the 1930s was tremendously important in the tide of unionization sweeping the country. The IWW as an organization did not play a prominent role in the 1930s, but many former Wobblies were involved in different organizations during that time. The existence of the Junior Wobblies, a group of working-

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<sup>12</sup> Cannon, "The IWW Convention."  
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/cannon/works/1924/iwwconv.htm>.

class children, complete with their own paper, *The New Recruit*, shows that Wobbly family life was alive and well in some circles during this time period. The Junior Wobblies Union was an organization of children of the working class “learning the rudiments of unionism and disciplining themselves for the final struggle with capitalism.” But they also “know how to have good times” while learning to grow up to be good union men and women.<sup>13</sup> Having a good time while waging a war against capitalism was undoubtedly what drew many people to join the IWW. But the solidarity, the sense of community, and the place for women to play active roles in the organization kept them there, until repression and long jail sentences strained those community ties to a breaking point. The spirit of that movement did not die, but hibernated to emerge in a new form in the 1930s, and the contribution of women, begun and exemplified by women in the IWW, was essential to its success.

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<sup>13</sup> *The New Recruit* (Chicago) June 1, 1930.

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