

The Relationship Between the Industrial Workers of the World and the Communist Party Shortly After World War I

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD
AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY SHORTLY AFTER WORLD WAR I

by

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ABSTRACT

Recognized as one of the most revolutionary labor unions in America during the early twentieth-century by the general public and the federal government, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) separated themselves from the rest of the labor unions because of their success in executing general strikes and their brash appeal. The group advocated tactics which, the organization believed, would strengthen the country's labor movement, which included "dual unionism" and a stance against politically affiliated groups. During a period of poor labor conditions and inadequate income with long working hours the United States experienced a swell of labor unions that looked to change the status quo. The IWW fought for industrial workers as opposed to craft workers, which meant the organization consisted of those who were rejected from craft union groups such as immigrant as well as ethnic workers. The creation of the IWW was a response to the monopoly the American Federation of Labor (AFL) held over the rest of the labor unions. As one of its primary qualities, the IWW separated itself from the AFL and other labor groups by enforcing its "dual unionist" stance, which prohibited any IWW member from infiltrating said labor unions.

Towards the end of World War I the Bolshevik Party inside Russia overthrew the Tsar and the provisional government during the Russian Revolution. The Bolsheviks then created a state in which the workers held control of the country. While the Communist ideology and the syndicalist beliefs of the IWW were not identical, leaders of the IWW saw the advantages of supporting Communism. However, the General Executive Board (GEB) of the IWW prohibited affiliation with the Communist Party, as the organization felt threatened by the party's attraction. Remaining firm in its stance as

a “dual unionist” organization the IWW disassociated itself from the Communist Party. The inability for the GEB to compromise on tactics that could have potentially amalgamate the two groups shrank the organization. Former IWW members, such as Bill Haywood, William Z. Foster, and James P. Cannon left the IWW and joined the Communist Party with hopes of furthering America’s labor movement.

To better understand what life was like for labor activists in the early twentieth-century one has to see the progressions workers took to achieve their goals. In this case, “history from above,” represented by the three former IWW members already mentioned, (Haywood, Foster, and Cannon) shows how change was accomplished by the transition from one organization to another. The IWW was a change from previous labor groups in the 1900s and 1910s, but became stagnate as the organization refused to alternate the tactics it implemented. In order to establish a successful labor movement, collaboration was paramount, which, in turn, rejected the concept of “dual unionism.”

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INTRODUCTION

During the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century American workers challenged their superiors by creating labor unions. The three priorities many unions held during this time period consisted of shorter hours, better working conditions and recognition of said union.¹ The American Federation of Labor (AFL) was established nearly two decades before the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). In 1886 the AFL was created by an alliance of craft unions. In response to the AFL the IWW enrolled unskilled workers.²

Beginning with its creation in 1905, the IWW was on a crusade to topple capitalism. Many labor unions attacked the capitalist model in order to replace it with an alternative system. Historians have used such terms as syndicalism, anarcoho-syndicalism, radicalism, revolutionary, and industrial unionist to describe the IWW. Historian John S. Gamsb claimed that members within the IWW disagreed on organizational ideals and “object[ed] to the word “syndicalism,” which had been used by economists in connection with the organization.”³ In his book *The I.W.W.: A Study of American Syndicalism*⁴ labor historian Paul F. Brissenden championed the idea that the IWW was a syndicalist group because other labor economists and the informed public

¹ Ralph Darlington, *Radical Unionism: The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008), 177.

² Walter Linder and Martin Stevens, “Dual Unionism: Outmoded Strategy or Useful Tactic?” *New England Free Press* 12, no. 1 (July-August 1967), 56.

³ John S. Gamsb, *The Decline of the I.W.W.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), 178.

⁴ Paul F. Brissenden, *The I.W.W.: A Study of American Syndicalism* (New York: Columbia University, 1919). 9.

identified the organization under that title.⁵ Melvyn Dubofsky, another labor historian, identified the IWW as radical, especially when compared with other labor historians.⁶

The concern is not on what label the IWW should receive but rather the analysis of the tactics the group used and did not use. The IWW used a strategy known as “dual unionism.” The American historian, David J. Saposs, identified “dual unionism” as the division of ideologies where groups of workers differentiate themselves by the different philosophies practiced by the organization. Saposs classified the IWW as a radical union based upon their revolutionary elements in comparison to that of the conservative practices of the AFL. Whereas both the AFL and the IWW wanted to replace the capitalist system with a structure where the workers had more control, the two groups could not agree on which tactic to implement.⁷

Walter Linder and Martin Stevens suggested, “dual unionism” was used by the IWW in order to strengthen industrial unionism. Linder and Stevens argued that the IWW thought industrial unionism, while under the syndicalist ideology, could free the working class from capitalism.⁸ In other words, the workers could hold dominion over the workforce only if the unskilled led the fight against the status quo. A former member of the IWW, James P. Cannon, interpreted “dual unionism” internally rather than Saposs and many other labor historians who understood “dual unionism” as an external conflict between different unions. For Cannon, “dual unionism” was used by the IWW as a way to unite all workers and at the same time function as a sectionalist revolutionary party

⁵ Gambs, *The Decline of the I.W.W.*, 15.

⁶ Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 5.

⁷ David, J. Saposs, *Left Wing Unionism: A Study of Radical Policies and Tactics* (New York: International Publishers, 1926), 29.

⁸ Linder and Stevens, “Dual Unionism,” 64.

bent on spreading propaganda.⁹ Cannon would later critique the duality within the IWW as one of the main reasons for the organization's downfall.

Another important term to keep in mind is called "boring from within." This term essentially means that one group infiltrates a second group in order to persuade the second group's opinions in favor of the first. The tactic of "boring from within" was rejected by the IWW for practical reasons. Organizations such as the AFL and the Communist Party were disregarded because they were thought to be corrupted by politicians.¹⁰ Rather than implementing to the tactic of "boring from within" the IWW remained firm with their "dual unionist" stance.

The IWW struggled to gather members during its first two decades for numerous reasons including the counter aggression by the federal government, public apathy towards labor unions, and controversies within the union itself. The friction within the IWW cannot be understood without the knowledge of the General Executive Board (GEB) and its resistance to compromise with other labor unions. William Z. Foster was a member of the GEB who left the IWW to join the Communist Party. In his article, "The Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement," Foster explained the weakness of running a "dual union," where the union essentially cuts off the ability to negotiate with other labor parties, or in Foster's case, the Communist Party.¹¹

Near the conclusion of World War I the Communist Party became more influential around the world as they sought to spread the proletarian revolution by attracting support from European and American workers. Syndicalism went against the

⁹ James P. Cannon, "The IWW" *Fourth International* (Summer, 1955), Under the section: The Duality of the IWW.

¹⁰ Linder and Stevens, "Dual Unionism," 58.

¹¹ William Z. Foster, "The Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement" *Trade Union Education League* no. 4 (October 1922), 17.

progress of the world revolution according to Grigory Zinoviev, the head of the Communist International and Vladimir Lenin, the head of the government of the Russian Soviet Federation Socialist Republic. Communists, they felt, should establish Communist groups in all trade unions, thereby bringing all trade unions under Communist control.¹² Historian Ralph Darlington argued, however, that Zinoviev bullied the organizations the Comintern looked to absorb, thereby creating more friction between the IWW and the Communist Party.¹³

The decision making and communications between other labor unions was led by the General Executive Board which represented the IWW as a whole. Evidence shows that many leaders of the IWW who left the organization argued for a better accord with the Communist Party. The GEB's favoritism towards "dual unionism" over "boring from within" hurt the organization's relationship with the Communist Party shortly after World War I.

This thesis will discuss the structure of the GEB. The men and women who made up the board and the General Secretary of Treasury (GST) were the decision makers for the IWW. The first section will deconstruct the type of labor union the IWW fell under. The ideology of the IWW depended on the tactics enforced by the GEB. The IWW was a "dual unionist" group that rejected the tactic of "boring from within." This thesis looks to explain why the IWW accepted "dual unionism" over "boring from within" and why the GEB felt it unnecessary to change their strategy.

The second section will explore the relationship the Communist Party had with the IWW, both domestically and abroad. The Comintern became influential within the

¹² Darlington, *Radical Unionism*, 207.

¹³ *Ibid*, 195.

American labor movement by aiding select labor unions. Shortly after World War I the United States went through a period known as the Red Scare, where the federal government aggressively attacked labor unions, which included the IWW and Communist organizations. The inability for the IWW to negotiate with arguably the most popular leftist organization after World War I reflected back on the foundation of the IWW itself.

The third and last section examines material written by former IWW members who joined the Communist Party. While the IWW and Communism held many ideological differences their similarities could not be ignored. Both fought for the working class under an industrialization model. Those who led the IWW saw stagnation within their organization. A decline in numbers and enthusiasm weakened the group, which all stemmed from the tactics that were being practiced. Members of the Industrial Workers of the World could not fulfill their revolutionary aspirations within this organization. Ex-IWW members felt that using the Communist model was their best chance at achieving real change for the American labor movement.

CHAPTER 1. GENERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD (GEB)

The juxtaposition between the American Federation of Labor compared to the Industrial Workers of the World revolved irrefutably around those who composed of each labor organization. While accepting only the small minority of America's skilled, domestic born male workers, the AFL sparked the need to form another union that would accept the workers that were being ignored. The IWW became the union that organized those who the AFL excluded. Those who fell under the umbrella of workers recognized by the IWW consisted of unskilled workers, foreign-born, women and African Americans.¹⁴ However, that did not mean there were no skilled workers within the IWW. As historian Melvyn Dubofsky explained, many IWW officials had experience within the AFL, but preferred the revolutionary appeal of the IWW over the business model of the AFL.¹⁵

The IWW looked at the unskilled workers to create their idea of One Big Union, where divisions within the IWW would eventually not exist. The idea of creating a union that accepted everyone was considered "radical" in comparison to the already existing labor unions within America and abroad. Looking to preserve past union models that did not exclude craft workers from participation within their union, the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) of France was considered an example of a radical union that used contemporary methods of recruiting. In the beginning of the IWW's organization, however, the exclusive industrial organization model was the center of what separated the IWW from the more "contemporary unions" within America and

¹⁴ Darlington, *Radical Unionism*, 54.

¹⁵ Melvyn Dubofsky, "The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism in the United States," *Revolutionary Syndicalism*, 213.

Western Europe. Due to this form of order the IWW was branded as an industrial union.¹⁶

The *Preamble and Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World* was a pamphlet written in 1916 which laid out the arrangement of the organization and became the foundation of the IWW.¹⁷ The Industrial Workers of the World was administrated by the General Executive Board and each of the industrial unions within the IWW were allowed to elect a member to sit on the board as their representative. Six unions made up the IWW, which meant each union would elect one person to fill the six seats that made up the GEB, not including the General Secretary of Treasury (GST). The six unions that made up the IWW were the Department of Agriculture, Land, Fisheries, and Water Products, the Department of Mining, the Department of Transportation and Communication, the Department of Manufacturing and General Production, the Department of Construction, and the Department of Public Service.¹⁸

The General Secretary of Treasury was the spokesperson of the IWW. However, the GST did not have a vote in the affairs involving the GEB. A new GST would replace the former every year and was allowed a maximum three terms in office. Because of their short time in office there were numerous GSTs between the end of the First World War and during the decline of the IWW.¹⁹ Some of the more notable GSTs, including George Hardy, Bill Haywood, and Thomas Whitehead expressed their opinions about the organization through their writing. Although these men were given the title of

¹⁶ Joseph Robert Conlin, *Bread and Roses Too: Studies of the Wobblies* (Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1969), 17.

¹⁷ "Preamble and Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World," (Chicago: I.W.W. Publishing Bureau, 1916), Article I, II, III.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Article I.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Article I.

representing the IWW's best interest they were not always in correlation with the GEB's instructions.

The syndicalist model was adopted by the Industrial Workers of the World as a response to the labor movement within America rather than a cause of a growing international labor distress. That being said, there were common influences between the ideologies that appeared within America and Europe. The IWW drew on the revolutionary vocabulary from European syndicalists, however, each syndicalist movement was rooted in its own national conditions. The IWW developed their own syndicalist movement in order to solve the "capitalist problem" and counter the American Federation of Labor. Prompted as an apolitical organization, the IWW felt that any affiliation with politicians corrupted the organization's fight against capitalism.²⁰ However, contradictory to their constitution, which banned any acknowledgement of political action, IWW members, including some of their leaders, continued to associate with political parties.²¹ This is a prime example of the contradiction within the IWW, where those who conducted the organization were the ones who challenged the group's constitution.

By the time America entered World War I the national newspapers were quick to attack those who did not support Woodrow Wilson. Although the IWW constitution neglected any affiliation of sabotage, violence or destruction, the organization was depicted as dangerous. These accusations were in response to the IWW's anti-capitalist mentality and at times were self-inflicted. As labor historian Brissenden explained, the

²⁰ Linder and Stevens, "Dual Unionism," 63.

²¹ Darlington, *Radical Unionism*, 27.

IWW agitators helped misrepresent their own organization and encouraged the disproportion of negative news that was being portrayed.²²

One of the articles, “Wails of the I.W.W.” depicted the Industrial Workers of the World in cahoots with the Soviet Union in Russia.²³ This article clung to the story of Big Bill Haywood’s exile to Soviet Russia. Haywood was a founding member of the Industrial Workers of the World and became one of its leaders early in its existence. He jumped bail and fled to Soviet Russia in 1921 after being convicted of violating the Espionage Act of 1917.²⁴ While the comparability between the Communist ideology and the IWW guidelines were similar they were not completely identical. Whereas the IWW looked to have a syndicalist society, in which the workers controlled their own workforce, Communists wanted the workers to control the entire country, which included the economy, culture, and the political spectrum of a nation.²⁵ “Wails of the I.W.W.” misled the general public by interconnecting the IWW to the Communist Party when the IWW attempted to distance themselves from such notions at the time this article was published. The comparisons the article made between the two groups hurt what the IWW fought to achieve, which was a bloodless syndicalist revolution. While officials started to leave the IWW in favor of the Communist model the GEB kept its position as an independent labor union.

²² Brissenden, *The I.W.W.: A Study of American Syndicalism*, 9.

²³ “Wails of the I.W.W.” *New York Times*, May 18, 1921. After World War I was over the next big threat to American society was the Soviet Russian model towards Communism. The closely related ties the IWW had with Socialist views caused newspapers to print stories relating the Industrial Workers of the World with Communist Russia.

²⁴ Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 460. Haywood wanted to bring the labor movement Europe experienced to America. After years of failed revolutionary attempts at meeting labor demands, Haywood left America to live in Soviet Russia.

²⁵ John S. Gams, *The Decline of the I.W.W.*, 205.

The article “Sabotage and Arson Plotted by the I.W.W.: Schemes to Burn Crops and Wreck Machinery Discovered by Federal Agents” accused the IWW of burning crops intended to supply American soldiers during World War I.²⁶ The article charged that the crimes were “all intended to hamper the successful prosecution of the war against Germany.”²⁷ The act of burning crops was directly related to an anti-war movement against the United States’ involvement against Germany during World War I. The newspaper blamed William D. Haywood as the instigator and according to the journalist, once Haywood visited a community “there was renewed activity and agitation on the part of agents of the I.W.W. leaders.”²⁸ The article blamed the IWW by linking the group’s resistance towards the war, the presence of Haywood, and the destruction that followed him. The ironic point about this article was Haywood’s connection with sabotaging America’s war effort in favor of the German war machine. Haywood was a staunch advocate for leftist labor unions, therefore, the probability that he would sabotage America’s crops to aid Germany was not likely. This article also neglected the fact that Haywood was a supporter of German’s enemy the Russians or more specifically the Bolsheviks.

At first the GEB was not against the Communists. Once the Bolsheviks overthrew their provisional government, labor unions around the world encouraged the success of the Russian Revolution. In 1919 the General Executive Board of the IWW received a unanimous vote favoring further relations with the Communists and stated,

²⁶ “Sabotage and Arson Plotted by the I.W.W.: Schemes to Burn Crops and Wreck Machinery Discovered by Federal Agents,” *New York Times*, September 6, 1917.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, The United States used propaganda to rally American citizens against foreign enemies as well as domestic threats.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Haywood became a prominent face within the labor movement in the early half of the twentieth century. The newspapers blamed social unrest on his presence and his affiliation with the Industrial Workers of the World.

Whereas, the Soviet Republic of Russia in its call for the organization of the Third International, included the I.W.W. as one of the bodies eligible to such new international and

Whereas, the I.W.W. is the only revolutionary organization in the United States whose program is absolutely scientific and uncompromising, and is the logical American unit of the Third International and

Whereas, The proletariat revolution is world-wide, and not national or local in its scope; Therefore, The time has come for the I.W.W. to assume its proper place as the American Unit of the Workers' Red International, and to establish closer relations with groups of the same or similar principles in every country, such as the Communist of Russia, Hungary, Bavaria, etc., Spartacans of Germany, the Syndicalists of France, Italy and Great Britain and other countries, and the Industrial Unionists of Canada and Australia; therefore be it Resolved, that the I.W.W. shall create a communittee (sic) on International Relations, which shall at once establish and maintain correspondence and fraternal relations with such aforesaid revolutionary groups throughout the world and shall provide for the Third International.²⁹

Later, in 1920, the General Executive Board further clarified their acceptance of Communism and the Third International.

The Board believes in so far as the Third International was the only workers' International that had ever come into existence throughout history that disagreed with the meek and mild parliamentarian programs, that we should show our approval of it as opposed to the opportunism of the Second International; and particularly so, because we were convinced that our Russian Fellow Workers in Russia are only maintaining the political character of the first Soviet Government to hold and gain power temporary during the transitional period Capitalism to Industrial Communism.³⁰

The Bolsheviks emphasized political action in order to capture state institutions. This, however, was not what the IWW looked to achieve, but they felt the success of the Russian Revolution was a start in the right direction for a world wide proletarian revolution. William Z. Foster, a former IWW member who later went on to join the Communist Party stated,

In 1920 the I.W.W. General Executive Board formally endorsed the Communist International. However, because most of the I.W.W. leaders were nevertheless opposed to communism, they finally succeeded in driving a wedge between the I.W.W. and the Communist Party.³¹

As tensions persisted between the GEB and the Communist Party the GEB admitted that it could not find any ground for agreement with the Red International of Labor

²⁹ *Bulletin* (Chicago, Industrial Workers of the World, October 1919).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ William Z. Foster, *History of the Communist Party of the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1952), 89.

Unions (RILU). The inability to compromise on either side led to the deterioration of the relationship between the IWW and the Communists. The GEB later passed motions that ratified their position.

1. That we endorse the Third International. [Motion lost upon vote by G.E.B.]
2. That we do not endorse the Third International officially, and that we notify the Third International that our position makes it impossible to endorse same as it is outlined in the Zinovieff appeal to the I.W.W. and that we are in favor of an Economic Industrial International. [Motion carried by G.E.B.]
3. That we endorse the Third International with reservations, as followed: that we take no part in parliamentary action whatsoever and that we reserve the right to develop our own tactics according to conditions prevailing. [Motion carried by G.E.B.]³²

The General Executive Board felt threatened over the influence of the Third International. The Board gave directions of precaution.

The Referendum on the Third International should be thoroughly and beware, as an attempt will be made to stampede the I.W.W. into parliamentary channels, also an attempt is likely to be made... to have us endorse all the wild theories put forth by persons seeking prominence by taking extremist position... BE CAREFUL.³³

Once the GEB felt threatened by the Communist Party they were quick to revert back to their position against political parties. It was clear that the relationship between the GEB and the Communist Party was fragmented.

Another article that went against the members of the IWW or Wobblies suggested drafting IWW members away to war.³⁴ This newspaper quoted another editorial entitled, "Why not ask the lumberjacks?" as a possible solution to the draft problem as well as the "anarchist" problem. Many labor strikes were appearing in forestry during the war, which threatened the building process of American aircrafts. The solution of entering the war was not a popular one by the American public, therefore, in a way to solve two problems at once the *New York Times* article attacked

³² *Solidarity*, no. 95. August 28, 1920. 2. The Zinovieff mentioned in this notice was referring to George Zinoviev, the head of the Third International.

³³ *Solidarity*, no. 100, October 2, 1920. 4.

³⁴ "Telling of I.W.W. Sabotage.: Documents in Chicago Trial Show Plot Against Air Program," *New York Times*, May 10, 1918.

union lumberjack workers as a whole by using them as scapegoats. The union's already unpopular appeal became even more so as national news papers labeled them as the enemy.

Brissenden summed up the simplistic published and public view of IWW members, which were portrayed as unskilled hoboes who had a one track mind of sabotage and violence to bring down capitalism.³⁵ Brissenden argued, "The papers have printed so much fiction about this organization and maintained such a nation-wide conspiracy of silence as its real philosophy, especially as to the construction items of this philosophy, that the popular conception of this labor group is a weird unreality."³⁶ For Brissenden, the media surrounding the IWW had not told the whole story, but instead focused on the group's antagonistic conduct.

The IWW was considered a national threat because of its similarities with Communism and its aggressive language against capitalism. The media reported what little it knew about the IWW. In the same argument, those who considered themselves part of a syndicalist group were not entirely cooperative over what that meant. Even though syndicalist groups, such as the IWW, attempted to organize and provide leadership to the working class, their doctrine left their followers confused with no definitive path to take.

The Italian Marxist theoretician and politician Antonio Gramsci attempted to signify the dilemma of syndicalism. While the syndicalists expected to overthrow capitalism and replace it with a system where the workers controlled the workforce there was never a final solution that prevented any counter action. It was as if all syndicalists

³⁵ Brissenden, *The I.W.W. A Study of American Syndicalism*, 8.

³⁶ Brissended, *The I.W.W. A Study of American Syndicalism*, 9.

were expecting a “permanent revolution” without admitting it as part of their plan.³⁷

Gramsci stated,

How could the workers at the same time be in the factory and on the streets to defend their conquest, if there is not a State organization to train a loyal and well-positioned armed-force, ready in all circumstances and for all eventualities?³⁸

If the IWW did accomplish their goal and overthrew the capitalist model, thereby taking over their industries, what was there to stop the capitalist model from taking back control? As Darlington explained, “Only if the general strike progressed to a level of an insurrection to seize state power, could it prevent an inevitable counterattack that would paralyze the unions.”³⁹

There was much confusion from those outside the IWW looking in, as well as the foundation of what the IWW claimed they represented. While officials disputed the Industrial Workers of the World as a syndicalist union their writings and speeches proved otherwise. While the IWW publicly avoided any associations with the syndicalist lexicon, their inability to set a practical durable goal hurt their capability of attracting members. That is not to say the IWW had no strategy. The method of “dual unionism” was enforced by the IWW since it was created in 1905. Why the Industrial Workers of the World used this approach and would not alter their policy will be explored in the next sub section of the first chapter.

³⁷ Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where is it Going?* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1937) “Permanent Revolution” was introduced by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, but was also discussed in detail by Russian revolutionist, Leon Trotsky in which the proletariat of all countries were to take control and lead their countries into progress, thus making the proletarian revolution permanent.

³⁸ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1977), 327.

³⁹ Ralph Darlington, *Radical Unionism*, 250.

Dual Unionism

“Dual unionism” is an equivocal term within the context of the Industrial Workers of the World. Historian Joseph Conlin defined “dual unionism” as a competitive unionism where two or more unions contest for the allegiances of a certain group of workers.⁴⁰ While the IWW claimed “dual unionism” against the American Federal of Labor, the two organizations rallied for different types of workers. Where the AFL mobilized skilled craft workers the IWW recruited unskilled workers and even though the IWW vowed to “organize the unorganized” they did not disregard AFL members away from their union. The little interest shown to recruit AFL members placed the IWW into the category of “supplementary union” rather than a “dual union,” argued Conlin.⁴¹ However, historian David Saposs argued against Conlin and felt the IWW represented a “radical” form of “dual unionism.” The IWW, Saposs argued, represented the alliance of radical industrial unionism in its opposition to the American Federation of Labor and desired to create a revolutionary labor movement.⁴² Outside unions of the AFL, no matter how small or who their intended audiences consisted of, was considered “dual unionists” and every “dual union” group separated themselves depending on what philosophy they believed.⁴³

The multitude of “dual unions” in the beginning of the twentieth century emerged because of the paradox within the labor movement, where the weakness of their prosperity was controlled by the strength of the AFL. Similar to the business monopolies of the nineteenth century, the AFL held dominion over the rest of the labor movement.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Conlin, *Bread and Roses Too*, 19.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴² Saposs, *Left Wing Unionism*, 29-30.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴⁴ Trusts, such as Standard Oil, led by John D. Rockefeller, were large corporation which held a sizable portion of power within the economic market. The AFL relates to this type of corporation because of its control over the rest of the labor movement.

Big Bill Haywood proclaimed that the AFL was purposely sabotaging the labor movement to maintain their position in power. He explained that because the AFL only accepted skilled workers within their union the labor movement could never have the universal support it needed to become successful. He stated,

In the packing plants, the Butchers' organization was one of the best in the country, reputed to be 50,000 strong. They were well disciplined, which is shown by the fact that when they were called to strike, they quit to a man. That is, the butchers quit. But did the engineers quit? Did the firemen quit? Did men who were running the ice plants quit? They were not in the union, not in that particular union. They had agreements with their employers which forbade them quitting. The result was that the butchers' union was practically totally disrupted, entirely wiped out.⁴⁵

As long as the AFL remained secluded at only helping craft workers, those who were labeled as unskilled would never have enough support for a successful labor movement. Because of the different occupations that went into running a business there needed to be, as Haywood argued, One Big Union that would push the labor movement. Only by uniting the entire working class could the syndicalist idea come to fruition, that is, the workers would control their own industries. Haywood gave another example of the inconsistencies between unions when he explained that,

The strike of the Denver smelter men was extending to the workers in other industries, and for a time it looked as though the city of Denver would be involved in a general strike, but the development was squelched by the typographical union, which, as a result of the disturbances, secured for themselves a seven-hour and twenty-minute day. They callously left the smelter men alone, to fight against eleven and twelve hours a day.⁴⁶

In 1905 the IWW held its first convention. Those who followed Haywood's opening speech gave examples that depicted the AFL as corrupt and inadequate, which included former AFL members who left the organization. One of the speakers was a former senator from Indiana named Eugene V. Debs. By the end of his life Debs was best known for his socialist policies, but during his early years as a labor activist he

⁴⁵ William D. Haywood, *The Autobiography of William D. Haywood*. (New York: International Publishers, 1929), 188.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

became involved in industrial unions, which led him to become one of the founders of the Industrial Workers of the World. At the convention he attacked the status quo of the AFL by stating,

The trade union movement is today under the control of the capitalist class. It is preaching capitalist economics, it is serving capitalists purposes. Proof of it, positive and overwhelming, appears on every hand. All of the important strikes during the last two or three years have been lost. There is certainly something wrong with that form of unionism which has its chief support in the press that represents capitalism; something wrong in that form of unionism that forms alliances with such capitalist combinations as the Civic Federation, whose sole purpose is to chloroform the working class while the capitalist class goes through their pockets.⁴⁷

As far as the IWW was concerned the AFL represented exactly what unions were fighting against. "Dual Unionism" propagated out of the industrial unionism struggle against two fronts which were the capitalist class and the leaders associated with the AFL.⁴⁸

Skilled workers were not denied access to the IWW as Haywood explained at the 1905 founding convention, "I do not care a snap of my fingers whether or not the skilled join this industrial movement at the present time. When we get the unorganized the skilled worker will of necessity come here for his own protection."⁴⁹ Haywood believed the IWW would draw enough recruits and eventually those formally within the AFL would have no other choice but to side with his organization. While skilled workers were not excluded from the IWW the organization fought to control their personnel. Opinions on how the group would strengthen their numbers while still maintaining the constitution's integrity became debatable. While the group stood by its position as a "dual union" syndicalist group outside of the AFL there were disputes on the limitation of this protocol. Internal discord increased as the debate on whether the IWW should

⁴⁷ Ibid., 183.

⁴⁸ Linder and Stevens, "Dual Unionism," 57.

⁴⁹ Haywood, *Bill Haywood's Book*, 187.

operate within other labor unions or maintain their separate status. This became known as the “boring from within” and “dual unionism” dilemma.

Boring From Within

“Boring from within” was a way to work inside other unions and convince their rank-and-file to switch sides in favor of the industrial union model.⁵⁰ This proposal, however, was rejected by the GEB of the IWW. GEB members, instead, looked to continue to organize the unorganized and to build strength amongst the unskilled outside of the AFL. As well, the IWW felt it was nearly impossible to infiltrate the AFL, reasons being, the initiation fees were expensive, and unskilled workers were excluded from membership.⁵¹ Not only that, but it was also felt by IWW members that the AFL was corrupt both politically and philosophically. The possibility of having their own members tainted by AFL’s vice withdrew the IWW from attempting the strategy of “boring from within.”

The incongruous approach the IWW took went against their entire philosophy. By committing to “dual unionism” the IWW shut out all potential relationships with other unions, which in turn rejected the very function of a revolutionary union. It was said by Haywood, as well as the GEB in general, that it was important to educate the working class and develop a common objective through both theory and struggle.⁵² The true devastation of what “dual unionism” brought to the IWW was abandoning the rest of the working class that was still within the AFL.

As World War I came to a close the IWW became less wary of the strength of the AFL and were more concerned of their own weakness. In his book, *The Decline of the*

⁵⁰ Linder and Stevens, “Dual Unionism,” 59.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 64.

I.W.W., historian John S. Gambs argued that the IWW deteriorated because of the counter offensive by federal officials. Gambs used the Chicago, Wichita, and Sacramento trials to emphasize his point.⁵³ The charges against IWW officers and members consisted of, conspiracy to obstruct the war by carrying out sabotage and speaking out against the draft. While all charges of sabotage were dropped, IWW members still served time due to the Espionage Act.⁵⁴ While the IWW hoped to use the federal counter offensive to strengthen their popularity the trials took a devastating toll on the number of members affiliated with the organization. Afraid of arrest or already imprisoned, the number of IWW members dropped swiftly at the end of World War I. Unlike the depth of members associated with their organization, such as the extent of the AFL, the IWW was big enough to call attention to themselves, but were too small to fight back against the government's aggression. "Dual unionism" limited IWW's influence with other labor groups and their stance against politicians left them unaided.

Another reason for IWW's decline, Gambs argued, was because of the friction within the organization. There was a dispute on whether the IWW should remain centralized or provide the rank and file more freedom to manage themselves. Divisions of labor within the IWW argued for local administration across the U.S. The GEB insisted upon the rule of the rank and file, but discouraged the decentralization of the executive board.⁵⁵ Sections of the organization were denied more autonomy, which in turn discouraged members to incorporate. As the GEB tightened their hold from allowing members to infiltrate other unions they also renounced the demand for adjustments.

⁵³ Gambs, *The Decline of the IWW*, 54. The Chicago trial convicted 100 IWW members for espionage in 1918. The Wichita and Sacramento accused 2000 class war prisoners in 1919.

⁵⁴ "The Truth about the I.W.W. Prisoners." *American Civil Liberties Union* New York (April, 1922). 3.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

Gamb's third reason for the IWW's decline was the rise of the Communist Party. Gamb classified the IWW as a revolutionary industrial unionism, which shared similarities with the Communist Party, but untimely splintered its members to choose one side over the other.⁵⁶ With no agenda of potentially expanding the IWW into the newly formed Communist party, the GEB secluded itself. However, the similarities, along with its popularity, attached IWW members to the Communist ideology. Because "dual unionism" was enforced, IWW members were left with an ultimatum to either remain with their group, which was in dramatic decline or leave.

The Industrial Workers of the World's myopic tactic of "dual unionism" restrained them from negotiating with the AFL. As World War I came to a close the Communist Party in Russia became recognized around the world. The IWW used their same tactic of "dual unionism" with the Communist Party and experienced similar setbacks with compromising as they did with the AFL, however, this time many IWW members left their organization in favor of the Communist model. The next section will analyze the Communist party and its relationship with the IWW.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 178.

CHAPTER 2. COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL (COMINTERN) STRUCTURE

The Communist International, abbreviated as the Comintern and also recognized as the Third International, was an international Communist organization that promoted world Communism. Developed in 1919 the Comintern was created in order to break away from the social-democratic politics of the Second International.⁵⁷ After Russia's provisional government was toppled the Bolsheviks sought to spread Communism across other countries. The Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) was the governing authority of the Comintern and headed by Grigory Zinoviev, who, in turn, was also the head of the Comintern. Soviet politician and Marxist theorist, Leon Trotsky, advocated the idea of a world revolution. He believed that a successful Communist revolution was only obtainable if other countries followed Russia by example.⁵⁸

At first, Bolshevik leaders believed, after the success of the Russian Revolution, that Communism would spread through Europe. For Lenin, it was self-evident that the revolution could not survive in “backward” Russia alone.⁵⁹ However, weakened by the Great War, the Polish-Soviet War and the Russian Civil War, the new Russian government could not pressure other countries into accepting their ideology by force. The Communist International established a medium for labor parties outside Russia to communicate with the Communist government. By the end of 1920, many countries had

⁵⁷ Jacob Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism, 1919-1929* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), 24. Those who made up the Third International took what they saw as the best elements of the international working-class movement. This included the exclusion of those who supported the war.

⁵⁸ Leon Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, 97.

⁵⁹ Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe, *International Communism and the Communist International 1919-1943* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 3.

formed a Communist party of their own and pledged to obey the decisions of the central Comintern apparatus.⁶⁰

The First World Congress, March 2 to 6, 1919, resulted with minimal appearances by delegates outside of Russia. However, the Second World Congress, held in Petrograd and Moscow from July 19 to August 7, 1920, drew 169 delegates from 41 parties, thereby gradually forming Communist parties at a steady rate. During this same World Congress the Twenty-One conditions for the entry into the Comintern was introduced.⁶¹ By the end of 1921, there were Communist parties in almost all of Europe, Asia and North America.⁶²

However, the Bolshevik's anticipation of a world-wide revolution began to stall as Western Europe's working-class turned lethargic. Again, in 1921, Lenin proposed a new section within the Comintern in order to attract the majority of the working-class, which remained in the trade unions. One feature of this new proposition was the creation of the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU) or Profintern. Under the leadership of veteran Bolshevik, Alexandr Lozovsky, the Profintern became the international center for the trade union movement.⁶³

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1.

⁶¹ Ibid., 1. The 1st Congress of the Comintern (First World Congress) was attended by 51 representatives from 25 countries making the Second World Congress an impressive improvement of attendees. The twenty-one conditions, most of which were suggested by Lenin, address certain rhetorics such as unconditional acceptance of the Communist party, identifying bourgeois tendencies as counter revolutionary and being proactive towards reacting out to trade unions and workers' councils.

⁶² Ibid., There were four countries in Europe that did not have any Communist parties including Norway, Greece, Ireland and Albania, but would form Communist parties later.

⁶³ Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism*, 86-87.

Red Scare

After the Great War ended the American government directed its attention to the domestic distress of the working class. American workers revolted in numbers never seen before as strikes were estimated at around 3,600 in 1919, which involved more than 4 million workers.⁶⁴ The year stood out as the high watermark in the number of strikes seen within the decade stretching from 1912 to 1922, of which the coal mines, steel industry and textiles were the more prominent business effected. More than 30,000 Seattle shipyard workers walked out in hopes of earning higher wages, many of who were represented by unions such as the IWW and the AFL.⁶⁵ Unions, such as the AFL, went on strike in order to gain recognition, higher wages, and better working conditions. This was also during the time of the introduction of the Communist Party within American society. Unlike the labor unions, however, the Communist parties in America denounced the idea of constructing a new society within the old. Instead, Communists wanted a general political strike that would break the power of capitalism and supply all power to the workers.⁶⁶

Between 1919 and 1920 there was a series of bombings that killed 35 people and injured more than 200.⁶⁷ While proof of the crimes connecting the culprits behind the bombings never surfaced the general public accused anarchists, syndicalist, Socialists, and Communist by lumping them into one group. The “Red Scare” that

⁶⁴ Julian F. Jaffe, *Crusade Against Radicalism: New York During the Red Scare, 1914-1924* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1972), 3.

⁶⁵ Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, *The American Communist Movement: Storming Heaven Itself* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 17.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

followed the war was an extension of the government's aggression towards those who were against America's involvement in the war.

Towards the end of 1919 U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer set in motion a series of raids to round up alien radicals.⁶⁸ The Department of Justice drafted 17 bills to increase the government's control over free speech during the United States' entry into the war and Congress passed several of these bills and turned them into acts such as the Espionage Act, the Trading with the Enemy Act, the Sedition Act, and the Alien Act.⁶⁹ Because the United States did not agree to the Versailles Treaty technically the U.S. remained at war into the 1920s and as a result many of these acts spilled into the time of the "Red Scare."

Officially, Congress amended the immigration law to allow the deportation of any alien who joined or was affiliated with any organization that wrote, circulated, or had in its possession any literature "advising, advocating, or teaching opposition to all organized government, or the overthrow by force or violence of the Government of the United States or all forms of law."⁷⁰ During the early 1920s, most of the anti-Communist legislation was enacted by states. Thirty-two states passed red flag laws which made it a felony to use or display a red flag in a public place, and thirty-four states passed either a sedition, criminal syndicalism, or criminal anarchy law.⁷¹ The majority of American citizens did not want unions to gain strength or for the Communist influence to increase

⁶⁸ Ibid., 27.

⁶⁹ Larry Ceplair, *Anti-Communism in Twentieth-Century America: A Critical History* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011), 12. Many of the acts passed as a result of the government's attempt to quell the domestic aggression at home while the United States was at war.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 23.

⁷¹ Ibid., 23.

within the United States and were willing to sacrifice the First Amendment in order to pacify a potential working-class uprising.

Unofficial, or nongovernmental, anti-communist groups, such as the AFL, also went against Communists. The American Federation of Labor teamed up with manufacturers as well as the New York City police department in order to suppress Communist actions.⁷² Due to the hostility towards these groups, the Communist parties debated on whether they should remain underground or create an aboveground apparatus.

The Comintern urged party members to further their mass appeal and create an aboveground party while still maintaining an underground apparatus. As antagonism continued against party members, underground Communist parties were sustained in order to defend the Communist movement and to promote secret political subversion against capitalism.⁷³ In 1923, William Z. Foster, by then a Communist member, expressed his caution over the transition from an underground party to a legal aboveground party. Foster explained that the “transition from an underground party to an open party must be proceeded with care, because there is a deep rooted conviction on the part of a large number of the comrades that a Communist Party must of necessity and at all times be a conspiratorial organization.”⁷⁴

Foster’s opinion was heeded but argued against by James P. Cannon, a former IWW member who joined the Communist Party in its early existence, and who defended the importance of obtaining a legal aboveground party. His concern was that American

⁷² Ibid., 39.

⁷³ Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 21.

⁷⁴ William Z. Foster to Zinoviev, 17 February 1923, Comintern Archives, 515:1:201.

workers would not fight for an organization that did not fight for its own legal right to assemble publicly. He explained that,

the illegality of our party is a tremendous handicap. The working class in America have democratic illusions... and do not understand why we are underground as a party. Our underground party, instead of having the sympathy and attraction of the workers is regarded by the masses as a good deal of a joke. They think it is illegal because we want to be illegal, and I must say that is true of a large majority of the illegal party.⁷⁵

Despite the attacks on Communism by the U.S. government the “Red Scare” aggression did not stop Communist parties from forming. The Comintern’s B.C. (budget committee) notified the American Communist Party in 1923 that “the sum of 75,000 dols (sic) had been allocated to you, of which two thirds is to be spent on the legal work of the C.P.”⁷⁶ The other 25,000 would have been sent to support illegal operations. While party members fought for acceptance from the masses they were cautious in leaving themselves vulnerable to anti-Communist belligerence. Illegal underground parties remained as a necessity along with legal aboveground parties.

As the Palmer raids continued, by 1924 Communism within America had reduced to a mere shadow of its former self. That is not to say it disappeared entirely from America as the Great Depression would bring in another wave of leftist enthusiasm and the heyday of Communism within United States.

The Communist parties that were set up across the globe shortly after the war were formed or detached from previously existing socialist groups.⁷⁷ From the beginning, the Comintern and Communist parties in sum, were willing to cooperate with other organizations. Lenin encouraged flexibility and cooperation within the different

⁷⁵ James P. Cannon to the American Commission, 27 November 1922, Comintern Archives, 495:37:1.

⁷⁶ “To the Communist Party of America,” 22 February 1923, 495-19-608, in Klehr, Haynes, and Firsov, *Secret World of American Communism*, 26. The primary source who wrote on behalf of the Comintern’s budget committee is unknown. Sources indicate the representative’s name began with an “M.”

⁷⁷ Klehr and Haynes and Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism*, 6.

Communist parties.⁷⁸ However, for the United States, bitter rivals damaged any real progress for a successful unified Communist Party.

Communism in the United States

Before the Great War, there was social unrest between the workers and their employers. Hourly wages and working conditions remained a concern as the working-classes of the world fought to change the status quo. After the war was over there became an even greater want towards altering the way countries treated their working-class. The imperialistic nature of the countries that caused and continued the Great War subsequently fueled the Communist ideology. After the success of the Russian Revolution, Communist parties rapidly started appearing in countries all over the world. Amongst the many Communist affiliations were the Italian Socialist Party, the Communist Party of Germany, the Norwegian Labor Party, the Left Social Democratic Party of Sweden, and the Tesnyaki of Bulgaria.⁷⁹ As early as September 1919 Gregory Zinoviev, president of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, estimated that as many as one million members belonged to communist parties outside of Russia.⁸⁰

As for the American Communist parties, Trotsky found that they showed “more steadfastness in this period than Russia, and many European countries as well.”⁸¹ However, despite the popularity of the Communist ideology within the United States, disunity plagued American Communist parties. Ralph Chaplin, an American writer and labor activist, argued that, “Thanks to the Communist maneuvering, the rival groups

⁷⁸ Rees and Thorpe, *International Communism and the Communist International 1919-1943*, 3.

⁷⁹ John Riddell, *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite!: Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress, 1920* (New York: Pathfinder, 1991), 20.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 20,21.

⁸¹ Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism 1919-1929* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), 33.

now hated each other more thoroughly than they had ever hated their employers.”⁸²

Fractions ensued within America’s labor unions as groups claimed to represent the “correct” method at aiding the working class. The origins of Communism in America were influenced by three organizations, including the oldest and smallest group, the Social Labor Party of America (SLP), as well as the Socialist Party (SP) also known as the Socialist Party of America (SPA), and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

The SLP represented the left-wing urban immigrants and was led by Daniel De Leon until his death in 1914 where Arnold Peterson took over.⁸³ Partnered solely with industrial unions, the SLP remained smaller in numbers compared to the Socialist Party. Although the Russian Revolution was revered by the SLP it was only because it was a step closer towards socialism in other countries. While it continued to advocate the Soviet government, the SLP believed that its own agenda must be directed by the events within the United States. In order to accomplish a successful labor movement inside America the SLP, along with many other labor groups, maintained the disposition that foreign influence remained as a distant supporter, but not as the director of the American workers’ revolution. Arguments continued as divisions within the party declined members.⁸⁴

The Communist Party of America (CPA) was established by former SP socialists Louis C. Fraina, Charles E. Ruthenberg and Bertram Wolfe. In response to the growing attention given to Communism and the additional animosity by their rival socialists, the Communist Labor Party (CLP) that was created by Benjamin Gitlow and John Reed,

⁸² Ralph Chaplin, *Wobbly: The Rough-and-Tumble Story of an American Radical* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 390.

⁸³ Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism*, 25.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

both former members of the SP.⁸⁵ With no outstanding political differences, the division between the CPA and the CLP remained personal. One of the most prominent leaders of the SLP to leave for the Comintern was the Russian immigrant, Boris Reinstein who received a letter from a SLP leader, Henry Kuhn, which stated “the SP split wide open at a Special Convention that opened in Chicago on August 30th, 1919. The result was three parties: the old SP, a Communist Labor Party, and a Communist Party minus any qualifying adjective. The two latter formations came about largely because of rival leadership; there is little else to divide them.”⁸⁶ Factionalism hurt the Communist movement in America, but it was not because of the disputes over ideology, rather it was due to the fact that leaders of the opposing parties held idiosyncratic obligations against rival members.

Divisions continued to form as neither group could compromise with each other. Editors for Communist newspapers expressed their dissatisfaction over the disunity of their party. *The Ohio Socialist* argued, “the rank and file of the membership are demanding that every obstruction to a unity of the two Left Wing parties shall be immediately removed to make way for one great party of Communism in the country.”⁸⁷ The programs of both parties, the letter continued, “are based upon the program of the Third International formed at Moscow.”⁸⁸ Those who made up the two Communist parties argued for an understanding between the leaders whose bitter quarrels deprived the Russian model from happening in America. As well, a group in Michigan split from the CPA in late 1919 to form the Proletarian Party because of the inability of the CPA

⁸⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁶ Henry Kuhn, “Letter from Henry Kuhn in New York to Boris Reinstein in Moscow,” December 9, 1919, Comintern Archives, 515:1:4.

⁸⁷ “Communists, Unite!,” *The Ohio Socialist*, October 29th, 1919.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 1.

and CLP to get along with each other.⁸⁹ Differences were created through inner party anatomy, which led to a fallout of other backers of Communism who distanced themselves from the stagnation of disunity.

The divisions between the CPA and the CLP crippled any chance of a successful Communist influence within America. As historian Zumoff stated, “the Bolshevik leadership was crucial in cohering a unified party, first by supplying the ideology basis for a Communist Party and then by forcing its supporters into one organization.”⁹⁰ The CLP and CPA accepted the Communist ideology, but could not agree on the chosen few to lead the struggle of the working class. Due to the Palmer raids, the push for a Communist Party in America was already an uphill battle, as many members were forced to work underground, but it was also the turmoil within the party that paralyzed the movement.

In an attempt to mend the friction of the Communist Party in America, Comintern’s Gregory Zinoviev wrote a letter in 1920 to both the CPA and the CLP which stated, “The split has rendered a heavy blow to the Communist movement in America. It leads to the dispersion of revolutionary force, to a harmful parallelism, an absurd partition of practical work, and senseless discussions and an unjustifiable loss of energy in inter factional quarrels... The split has not been caused by any profound differences of opinion as regards programme (sic).”⁹¹ Zinoviev demanded immediate unification of the two parties as separation would only hinder any progress. Instead, the two groups continued to squabble.

⁸⁹ Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism 1919-1929*, 42.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁹¹ Gregory Zinoviev, “To the Central Committees of the American Communist Party and the American Communist Labour Party,” January 12, 1920, Comintern Archives, 515:1:17.

The aid that was distributed to the American Communist movement by the Soviets was done so in secrete until 1933, at which time the United States officially recognized the USSR.⁹² Records show that between the years 1919 and 1920 John Reed, along with three other Communist members, received financial assistance towards a successful Communist influence in America.⁹³ The large sums of aid thus proved that the Comintern was committed towards achieving a prominent position within America. However, the distribution of financial support did not solve the inner turmoil between rival leaders, thus resulting in an ineffective Communist influence within America.

Comintern's Relationship with the IWW

Amongst the confusion and uncertainty over the cooperation with the American Communist parties, the Comintern turned its attention to the envelopment of the Industrial Workers of the World. Because its members never shied away from confrontation against its opponents, the IWW never worked underground as an organization. Working aboveground, the IWW encouraged animosity from its capitalist aggressors as well as the mass media. While the attention they created might have assisted the government's repression against the organization, IWW members felt their troubled image acted as a beacon for the rest of the oppressed industrial working-class. Consequently, when the Comintern showed signs of camaraderie towards the IWW there was no secrete of their anticipation of a possible unification of the labor group.

⁹² Klehr and Haynes and Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism*, 21.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 22. John Reed received 1,008,000 rubles on the 22nd of January, 1920. The three other Communist affiliates were Kotliarov who received 209,000 rubles on the 16th of July, 1919, Khavkin who received 500,000 rubles on September 30th, 1919 and Anderson who received 1,011,000 rubles on January 31st, 1920. Anderson was said to have represented the CLP along with Reed. The specifics of the other two Communist members are unknown.

Louis C. Fraina, of the Communist Party of America, announced to the Comintern that foreigners accounted for sixty percent of the American industrial workers.⁹⁴ Similar to the Communist Party of America, the IWW surrounded itself with mostly foreign born members.⁹⁵ Generally speaking, the IWW and Communist Party consisted of the same demographic. However, while the two groups were built around the same types of workers, their tactical structures varied.

The differences between the IWW and what the Comintern wanted from the organization revolved around the contrast in tactics. Both the Comintern and the IWW wanted to wipe out the AFL, but the Comintern felt “boring from within” was the best approach, whereas the IWW believed “dual unionism” would wither away their opponent.

Addressing IWW’s renunciation of any potential acquittal towards their tactic of “dual unionism,” Profintern leader Solomon Lozovsky stated, “the more the IWW is isolated from the masses, the more aloof their organizations will be, the longer and slower the development of class consciousness among the American proletariat... Thus the coordination and unity of action within the AFL locals affiliated to the Profintern was obligatory for the IWW.”⁹⁶ Lenin also wanted the IWW within the Communist movement, but understood the possibility of a successful amalgamation meant the disposal of inept tactics. He argued that the best place to defeat opponents was inside their unions, because these adversary groups held large number of potential party members.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Robert Cochran, *Labor and Communism: The Conflict that Shaped American Unions* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), 7.

⁹⁵ Saposs, *Left Wing Unionism*, 165.

⁹⁶ Alexandr Lozovsky, *Resolutions et Decisions: Du I-er Congrès International des Syndicats Révolutionnaires* (Moscow: Feltrinelli, 1921), 24-25.

⁹⁷ Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism*, 83.

According to the Russian Soviet Federation Socialist Republic “dual unionism” held the IWW back from increasing their numbers and spreading their influence.

In January 1921 the ECCI addressed the IWW on the issue of the AFL by urging the IWW to displace their stand against political action in order to subdue Gompers and the rest of the AFL.⁹⁸ The Comintern, along with the Profintern, attempted to persuade the IWW in joining the Communist Party, but IWW members were strictly against any form of political action. The head of the Communist International, Grigory Zinoviev, laid out all of the differences between Communism and the IWW in an attempt to show how similar the two organizations were despite their political differences.

Zinoviev's Letter to the IWW

In 1920, Zinoviev announced what he expected the IWW's position to be within the context of the Comintern in a letter entitled “To the I.W.W.: A Special Message from the Communist International.” The letter addressed the disagreements the Comintern held against the IWW as well as solutions to overcome the two groups' differences. Previous literature written by the IWW came into question as Zinoviev dissected the flaws behind the IWW's approach towards achieving their goals. One of the pieces of literature Zinoviev brought up was the *The Preamble to the IWW Constitution*, which stated “By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.”⁹⁹ Zinoviev retorted to this proposal by arguing that “Now is no time to talk of ‘building the new society within the shell of the old.’ The old society is cracking its shell. The workers must establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, which alone can

⁹⁸ ECCI letter to “Comrades and Fellow Workers,” 25 January 1921, Comintern Archives, 515:1:38.

⁹⁹ Preamble to the Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World (Chicago: Publishing Bureau, 1916).

build the new society.”¹⁰⁰ The Comintern represented a revolutionary party that discouraged reformation and instead rallied to a complete overhaul of capitalist nations. The IWW, on the other hand, was a syndicalist organization that fought for workers’ control of their own industry. While some identified the IWW as a revolutionary union, the organization’s doctrine did not extend to the complete control of state by the working class.

In his letter, Zinoviev quickly retorted against a statement made in one of IWW’s articles “The One Big Union Monthly,” which suggested the Russian Revolution’s only accomplishment was giving Russian people the vote. In his defense, Zinoviev argued that the revolution did not stop at getting Russian people the right to vote, but also took the “factories, mills, mines, land and financial institutions out of the hands of the capitalist and transferred them to the whole working class.”¹⁰¹ In an attempt to show a potential commonality, Zinoviev highlighted the control Russian workers gained over their industries due to the revolution. He assured the IWW could bask in the same victory as Russia if they followed the same ideology.

Further down the letter, Zinoviev called attention to the problem of the “state.” For IWW members, the “state” must be overthrown and in its place the Industrial Commonwealth must immediately ensue.¹⁰² The Communists also believed in the abolition of the state, but achieved this by first gaining control of the state. Instead of an instant reversal of state power the Communist fought to take over the state, thereby

¹⁰⁰ Grigory Zinoviev, “To the I.W.W.: A Special Message from the Communist International” (Melbourne: Proletarian Publishing Association, January 1920). Under the section “The Communist International to the I.W.W.: An Appeal of the Executive Committee of the Third International at Moscow.”

¹⁰¹ Ibid., Under the section “The Communist International to the I.W.W.: An Appeal of the Executive Committee of the Third International at Moscow.”

¹⁰² Ibid., Under the section “The Dictatorship of the Proletariat.”

holding power against the counteroffensive. Zinoviev argued, just because the workers took control did not mean the capitalist state was destroyed. He went on to contend that,

To break down the capitalist State, to crush capitalist resistance and disarm the capitalist class, to confiscate capitalist property and turn it over to the whole working class in common - for all these tasks a Government is necessary - a State, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, in which the workers, through their Soviets, can uproot the capitalist system with an iron hand.¹⁰³

While the IWW wanted to abolish the state immediately by means of a syndicalist uprising, Zinoviev insisted that this way of thinking was unrealistic. In order to control the state the worker first had to take over the state. He assured his critics that state ownership was only temporary and that the dictatorship of the proletariat, then control of the state, will automatically disappear and make way for an industrial administration which would resemble something similar to that of the General Executive Board.¹⁰⁴ For Zinoviev, the IWW had set up everything they needed in order to successfully take control in America, but they needed to alter their execution. The syndicalist model of the IWW acted as a stepping stone to the bigger realistic push of Communism.

Continuing his debate between the IWW's dissatisfaction, Zinoviev articulated the meaning of politics by establishing the ignorance of the word. He blamed "anti-political" workers who opposed Communism for the sole reason that Communism was considered a "political party."¹⁰⁵ Zinoviev argued that there was no other way to achieve the goals that both the IWW and Communists wanted without using politics to their advantage. During a time when politicians were not trusted the IWW denounced any affiliation amongst any elected official. However, Zinoviev explained the contradictions

¹⁰³ Ibid., Under the section "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., Under the section "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., Under the section "Politics."

within IWW texts that counter their anti-political stance. Using a quote from Karl Marx's pamphlet, *The Communist Manifesto*, Zinoviev connected one of the principles upon which the IWW was founded on with their contradictory stance on politics, which was "every class struggle is a political struggle."¹⁰⁶ The mistake of the IWW and syndicalist groups in general was their misconception between political struggles and bureaucratic struggles. Every action taken against the capitalist state or the bourgeoisie class was in essence a political struggle. However, by rejecting the political struggle entirely the IWW missed its opportunity to gain a more united front amongst the proletariats.¹⁰⁷ Zinoviev hoped to convince the IWW that accepting a political stance against the capitalist state did not pigeonhole the organization into accepting a permanent political position.

Another IWW term Zinoviev redefined to fit his proposal was "direct action." He agreed the capitalist state must be attacked by means of direct action, but contended that the correct phrase should be "political action," for its final aim of seizing state power remained political.¹⁰⁸ The IWW aspired to achieve control of the state by means of a general strike. Zinoviev claimed Communists went a step further and added that those who wished to overtake state power must turn to armed insurrection. Because the capitalist state held arms, the rebellion needed to prevent a counterattack from occurring.¹⁰⁹ As a militant group, the IWW did not have a problem with resorting to violence, even if their General Executive Board denounced such accusations. The problem on obtaining the IWW's acceptance, as Zinoviev expressed, was their

¹⁰⁶ Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (Oxford: University Press, 1992), 12. Zinoviev, "To the I.W.W.: A Special Message from the Communist International," Under the section "Politics."

¹⁰⁷ Nikolai Bukharin, *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology* (Moscow: International Publishers, 1925) 299.

¹⁰⁸ Zinoviev, "To the I.W.W.: A Special Message from the Communist International." Under the section "Political."

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Under the section "Politics."

constraint over the difference in terminology. As far as he was concerned, the IWW and Communists held matching ambitions and only disputed with misconceptions.

Zinoviev ended his letter by explaining a practical reason for using politics. By placing oneself within the political field one has the opportunity to spread propaganda. Political campaigns offered revolutionists to speak to the working class about how they should feel towards the state and their own class interests as workers.¹¹⁰ Contrary to what the IWW had claimed, the organization had made use of legislatures and other government instruments. Zinoviev recalled the Lawrence Strike of 1912, where the IWW made use of every socialist congressman that could advertise the strike. As well, IWW leaders, such as William D. Haywood and Vincent St. John used the method of speaking on the floor of the House of Representatives as a means of propaganda for their organization.¹¹¹ Historian David Saposs went even further by claiming the IWW did not organize the unorganized but merely supplied propaganda through their leadership where spontaneous strikes occurred.¹¹² However, this rudimentary explanation negated the extensive work the IWW accomplished outside of its presence around major strikes, such as its conglomeration of multiple industrial industries. Zinoviev admitted that no weapon should be completely condemned. He ended this section by accepting both the revolutionary union and the political party that advocated Communism.

Zinoviev's letter may not have had a large impact on the rank and file of the IWW, but the call for immediate action was answered by the leaders who left to join the Communist Party. This, however, was not what the Comintern wanted. As expressed during the second congress of the Communist International, "All voluntary withdrawals

¹¹⁰ Ibid., Under the section "Revolutionary Parliamentarism."

¹¹¹ Ibid., Under the section "Revolutionary Parliamentarism."

¹¹² Saposs, *Left Wing Unionism*, 142.

[from the existing unions], every artificial attempt to organize special unions... represent a grave danger to the Communist movement. It threatens to hand over the most advanced, the most conscious workers to the opportunistic leaders, playing in to the hands of the bourgeoisie.”¹¹³ As an end result, the Comintern looked to gain workers, which included engulfing the IWW. However, by first attracting those who held leadership positions away from the organization the Comintern jeopardized losing the rest of the members to opportunist or self-serving leaders. IWW leaders saw their organization decline and opted to join the Communist Party that looked promising in comparison to their former union.

Relationships quickly turned between Zinoviev and any syndicalist group after a lack of cooperation ensued. Zinoviev declared that the Comintern would have to “put an end to all syndicalist prejudices,” and that the Communist Party will have to “separate the Communist wheat from the Syndicalist weeds.”¹¹⁴ The additional IWW leaders who joined the Communist Party did not end Zinoviev’s frustration, as these leaders failed to recruit the rank and file to follow their lead. The failure of the United States, and Europe to foment the workers’ revolution as quickly as the Bolsheviks hoped for put pressure on the Russian state. Unlike the camaraderie shown by Lenin towards syndicalist groups, Zinoviev turned against the unions that he felt were the “bearers of bourgeois ideology.”¹¹⁵ Lenin attempted to point out what the IWW had in common with the Comintern, much like Zinoviev had done before he turned against the syndicalists.

Lenin stated, “in the present instance, particularly as regards the Industrial Workers of

¹¹³ R. A. Archer, *Second Congress of the Communist International: Minutes of the Proceedings*, Vol. 2 (London: New Park Publications, 1977), 69.

¹¹⁴ Darlington, *Radical Unionism*, 195. Also see *Communist International*, no. 11-12, June-July 1920, 2133-2134.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 196.

the World in the U.S.A. ... we are dealing with a profoundly proletarian and mass movement, which in all essentials actually stands by the basic principles of the Communist International.”¹¹⁶

The Communist International continued to show signs of acceptance towards the IWW. Nevertheless, the GEB of the IWW wanted nothing to do with the Communist Party and completely disconnected their organization from communications. As many IWW leaders favored the tactics used by the Communists and because the GEB was unwilling to cooperate, IWW members began to leave their organization. The next section analyzes those who left the IWW for the Communist Party and why they chose that direction.

¹¹⁶ V. I. Lenin, “Theses on the Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International,” *Progress Publishers*, vol. 31. (July, 2015), 200.

CHAPTER 3. INTRODUCTION OF EX-IWW MEMBERS

While every member of the IWW who left for the Communist Party cannot be accounted for there were a few who held higher positions that wrote about their change in administration. Throughout this final section three ex-IWW members are examined to better understand the reasons why IWW members chose to support Communism. One of the main questions surrounding Communism in the United States is whether the movement was solely influenced by factors abroad or domestically inspired. These three specimens provide a better comprehension of the two organizations as well as a better interpretation of the progress labor activists endured in America.

Through the writings of Bill Haywood, William Z. Foster, and James P. Cannon one gains a stronger evaluation of the average industrial worker during the first half of the twentieth century in America and some understanding of the shift within the IWW organization. That is not to say these are the only IWW members who spoke out on the topic of Communism and labor activism. Others who held the position of General Secretary of Treasury, such as George Hardy and Thomas Whitehead, voiced their advocacy of Communism in America, but their writings on the topic were limited.¹¹⁷

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, who played a leading role inside the IWW joined the Communist Party USA, but not until the late 1930s, as she spent her energy in the 1920s mainly

¹¹⁷ New York Legislative Documents: One hundred and Forty-Fourth Session, 1921 (Albany, 1921), 1932. In a response to the Philadelphia longshoremen who attacked Russian workers by means of explosives, Thomas Whitehead apologizes for their act and asks to remain in the Communists' good graces. Whitehead, along with a handful of GEB members, signed the document just after the incident and asked the Communist party to overlook the disastrous misconception of how the IWW viewed its Communist counterpart.

George Hardy, "Shop Organization the Base of the I.W.W.," *The One Big Union Monthly* (June 1920). Hardy voiced his idea on how to organize the IWW in a hybrid structure similar to the present time IWW and the Communist Russian apparatus where the job branches are sectioned off by industrial districts, which all lead to the Central Branch Councils. During the time of this publication rank and file members of the IWW disputed amongst itself over the possibility of becoming a more decentralized organization. Through Hardy's writings he made clear he was not in favor of a decentralized organization, but rather he fought for a strong centralized power similar to the Communist model already achieved by the Russians.

fighting for women's rights.¹¹⁸ Haywood, Foster and Cannon worked under the organizational tactics the IWW enforced, but later found the Communist model more suitable towards achieving their end goals for a workers' state.

Big Bill Haywood

William Dudley Haywood, also known as "Big" Bill Haywood, was recognized as one of the prominent radical leaders of the early twentieth century. Born in Salt Lake City, Haywood worked as a miner and later in life became affiliated with the Western Labor Union, which in turn met frequently with the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) where he was given a position on the executive board. Working as a miner during the latter half of the nineteenth century was dramatically different in comparison to the previous generation of miners, as new technology changed the process of mining all together. The Pacific Railroad was completed just three months before Haywood was born in 1869 and with the ability to transport raw material, work supplies and workers themselves, mining changed from a local profession into large-scale industry dominated by capital.¹¹⁹

This transformation revolutionized how men mined. Instead of using a pickaxe and pan to excavate raw materials to sell regionally, men worked for wages anywhere they could find work. While Haywood never experienced the life of a prospector he highlighted the juxtaposition between the old way of working as compared to the revolutionized burden of mining in his day and age. He argued that "The conditions that confront the miner today are entirely different than the conditions of a quarter of a

¹¹⁸ Lara Vapnek, *Elizabeth Gurley Flynn: Modern American Revolutionary* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2015), 106.

¹¹⁹ Joseph R. Conlin, *Big Bill Haywood and the Radical Union Movement* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 1, 12, 21.

century ago, when the mines of the West were owned largely by individuals who were not too proud or arrogant to live in the same community with their employees.”¹²⁰ As a unionist at the start of his career Haywood discriminated against the relationship between the employer and their employees. Feeling as if the average worker was robbed of his individualistic right to work under his own conditions, Haywood fought for a romanticized American past he had only heard about through stories. As an American Westerner, Haywood went against the federal government and big business in hopes of claiming solidarity for himself and workers in similar fields. In an attempt to build himself up into a reputable individual Haywood became involved in labor unions. He felt the only way American workers could free themselves from what industry had turned them into was by using the same industry to regain their individualistic rights and maintain a life worth living.

As Secretary Treasurer of the WFM, Haywood organized the union’s books, edited one of the magazines, *Miner’s Magazine*, and was responsible for creating new branches to extend the labor group.¹²¹ However, following the 1905 Steuenberg trial, which was the hearing of the assassination of the fourth Governor of Idaho where members of the WFM were accused, Haywood was recognized nationally and internationally and was asked to join additional unions. The trial, along with his unique “American” background, placed Haywood as a candidate to join the Socialist Party of America (SPA).¹²² Just after his release from a prison cell in Idaho Haywood held a

¹²⁰ William Haywood, “History of Nevada: 1881,” *Miners Magazine* vol. 7 (February, 1900), 447.

¹²¹ Melvyn Dubofsky, *‘Big Bill’ Haywood* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 24.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 53. The Socialist Party of America leaders mainly consisted of foreign-born workers who retained an accent. Haywood, on the other hand, was the “native” nominee who was the descendant of a pony-express father, a child of the American frontier, and a wage worker who was taken advantage of by the capitalist system. Haywood used his background to gain followers.

position in SPA's National Executive Committee (NEC). His disconnect from the WFM and acceptance into the SPA shows that Haywood was willing to change his course of action depending on where he felt he could do the most for the labor movement. The SPA gained support from many unions including trade unions, populist farmers as well as political appeal thanks to its spokesman Eugene V. Debs. As though he was still figuring out what kind of labor activist he was, Haywood tried the socialist model for a brief portion of his life.

While he was with the SPA Haywood traveled outside of the United States for the first time in his life, where he absorbed the syndicalist nature of the French workers and the Welsh miners. During his time back in the United States, Haywood questioned his position within the SPA, the main reason being, the SPA was a political party. This was also during the time when the IWW was beginning to attract attention. In 1910, only five years into the group's existence, the IWW was not a strong group. It suffered from low membership, lack of funds, and inadequate leadership. This, however, did not discourage Haywood. As one of its founders, Haywood believed in what the IWW represented and, after his return home from his eye-opening experience in Europe, Haywood traveled the U.S. speaking for socialism while at the same time drawing large audiences towards the IWW.¹²³ In comparison, the best strategy towards attacking the capitalist model for the IWW was through direct action, where as the SPA argued for political action.

Early on in his socialist career, Haywood went against any form of a political framework in favor of direct action. Haywood stated, "I believe in direct action," and that,

¹²³ Ibid., 57.

“You are certain of it and it isn’t nearly so expensive (as politics).”¹²⁴ He went on to propose that nothing “will bring as much satisfaction to you and as much anguish to the boss as a little sabotage in the right place at the proper time.”¹²⁵ Frustrated by the newly appointed member, Debs criticized Haywood and the rest of the IWW by stating, “It is vain to talk about the I.W.W. The Chicago faction, it now seems plain, stands for anarchy. So be it. Let all who oppose political action and favor sabotage and the program of anarchism join the faction.”¹²⁶ Haywood’s untrustworthy attitude towards politicians and political parties stemmed from his antagonistic past with the AFL. Although the AFL declined any affiliation with political parties the organization was said to be corrupted by those they denounced.¹²⁷ The main reason the IWW was created was to counter the AFL. After his trip to Europe, Haywood asserted the best way to respond to political powers and the unions they controlled was through a union that took action instead of relying on votes.

Now that the SPA petitioned to amend its constitution to require members to vow to oppose sabotage, violence and any form of illegal action, the group distanced itself from the IWW and created an ultimatum for people like Haywood to choose one group over the other.¹²⁸ When Haywood left the SPA for the IWW he purposely joined a smaller, less influential labor group because he believed in the organization’s tactics.

Haywood joined the labor movement because he wanted to help the working class overcome the struggles that were created by capitalism. The best way to

¹²⁴ *International Socialist Review*, 12 February, 1912, 467.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 246.

¹²⁶ William Haywood, *The Autobiography of William D. Haywood* (New York: International Publishers, 1929), 279.

¹²⁷ Linder and Stevens, “Dual Unionism,” 58.

¹²⁸ Dubofsky, *‘Big Bill’ Haywood*, 59.

accomplish capitalism's defeat was through industrial syndicalism, which meant those working in an industrial environment would hold ownership of their job, thereby liquidating the grip of the employer and in turn the whole system of government. Before World War I, Haywood's best solution for the working class troubles was through a general strike where multiple unions would collaborate and simultaneously stall the capitalist machine by halting productivity for major industries. This process did not include any aid from politicians or any compromising with unwanted unions, such as the AFL. However, as adamant as Haywood was about what the IWW stood for all of his loyalty in his beliefs would be tested by the introduction of the Communist model.

In an interview with the American writer, Max Eastman, Bill Haywood explained his change in heart over his position within the IWW. In the beginning of his unionist career Haywood fought to give workers more control over their jobs but after the success of the Russian Revolution he promoted the idea of a working class state.

Haywood told Eastman that,

It is simply because they have done wonderful things over there that we have been dreaming about doing over here. It is the fact, the example, that has caused any change in me that may seem contradictory. And even now I would hesitate to confirm such a movement if everything that emanated from Moscow did not show that they want to put the workers in control, and eventually eliminate the state.¹²⁹

Haywood had been fighting for the working class all of his adult life. Neither he nor any other American labor activist knew much about what was going on in Russia until the Bolsheviks took power in late 1917. For this reason, the American labor movement was something separate from the Communist model that resulted from the Russian Revolution. What occurred in America after The Great War was a mixture of America's past labor movement mixed with the presentation of Communism. Influenced

¹²⁹ Max Eastman, "Bill Haywood, Communist," *The Liberator* (April, 1921).

by both its past history in labor activism and its relationship with the introduction of Communism in America, the American labor movement became a hybrid of ideologies that meshed syndicalism with Communism. While groups such as the IWW and the Communist Party were similar, Haywood represented the difference. The two organization's position on political parties clashed as well as their tactical approach with opposing unions. However, Haywood represented how someone with opposing views of the specifics of Communism could change their attitude towards the party.

By using the labor movement in Europe for contextualization Eastman asked Haywood why the American labor movement was trailing. Haywood answered, "The principal reason is the A.F. of L." When asked if it was possible to capture the AFL Haywood responded by saying, "Some parts of it, only I would not say capture them, I would say educate them."¹³⁰ Contradictory to Haywood's proposal at the creation of the IWW, he was willing to drop his "dual unionist" stance and instead, encourage members to consider "boring from within" the AFL. By the end of the interview with Max Eastman, Haywood conflicted with two previously prominent positions held while he was a member of the IWW. Instead of remaining firm in his stance against politics and IWW tactics, Haywood now endorsed a political party and argued to attract AFL members by means of education.

Because of the changes in Haywood's labor activist career he also represented the progressive nature of the labor movement in America. As a means to help the working class in any way possible the strategy of remaining "loyal" to a particular group did not suit Haywood. Tactically as well as practically speaking, Haywood went to where he felt he could invest the most good for the movement. Because of the Espionage Act,

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Haywood was sentenced to imprisonment. However, he skipped bail while out on appeal and fled America to work for the Communist party in Russia in 1921. Haywood claimed he heard President Harding declare that all imprisoned members of the IWW would be pardoned except for himself. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn recounted a different story as she claimed Haywood felt that if he was eliminated from confrontation other IWW members would be more likely to be pardoned.¹³¹ In either case, Haywood's exile was an attempt to continue his work for the labor movement.

It was no secret that Haywood was an advocate of the Communist Party while he was still in America with the IWW. After reading Zinoviev's letter, Haywood excitedly proclaimed "Here is what we have been dreaming about; here is the I.W.W. all feathered out!"¹³² Zinoviev, as well as Lenin, corroborated with the IWW's primary objective of giving workers more control of their work environment, but contradicted the organization's stance on numerous points. One of the main disagreements between the IWW and the Communist party was over the tactic of "dual unionism" and "boring from within." While the Communist party encouraged the IWW to influence unions outside their own, the IWW took the stand against "boring from within" and remained as a "dual unionist" group. Haywood was not a supporter of "boring from within" especially within the context of the AFL. It was not until he was influenced by the Communist Party that Haywood changed his tactical approach towards handling oppositional organizations. As he had done his whole life, Haywood evolved as a labor activist.

William Z. Foster

¹³¹ Conlin, *Big Bill Haywood*, 197.

¹³² Haywood, *The Autobiography of William D. Haywood*, 360.

Similar to Bill Haywood, William Z. Foster did not start his labor activist career with the IWW. Foster joined the Socialist Party of America at its creation in 1901. In 1905, at the time of the IWW's formation, Foster remained with the Socialist Party. However, much like Haywood, the syndicalist appeal of the IWW caught Foster's attention and he later joined the organization in 1909.¹³³ Unsatisfied with the tactics of the IWW, Foster would leave the organization and join a handful of other unions including the Syndicalist League of North America (SLNA), the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, and his final occupation with the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) subsidized by the Communist Party USA.¹³⁴

In his book written in 1912 entitled, *Syndicalism*, Foster explained his conception of how the post-revolutionary society would function. According to Foster's theory, after a violent general strike the state would cease to exist. Whereas traditional syndicalist theories proposed that the unions would take control of their industries, Foster, instead, argued for a government based system which he called "shop organization." While the system would be made up of the workers on the floor, they would be governed by experts who would introduce new technologies based on the supply and demand of the market.¹³⁵ Foster's idea would later be reimagined by George Hardy's pamphlet, "Shop Organization the Base of the IWW." Both abstractions held parallels from the Soviet government, even given the fact that *Syndicalism* was written years before the Russian Revolution. The difference between Foster's new society and the Soviet government

¹³³ Arthur Zipser, *Working Class Giant: The Life of William Z. Foster* (New York: International Publishers, 1981), 25. 27.

¹³⁴ Victor G. Devinatz, "Labor Philosophy of William Z. Foster From the IWW to the TUEL" *International Social Science Review*, vol. 71, 1/2 (1996), 3.

¹³⁵ Edward P. Johanningsmeier, *Forging American Communism: The Life of William Z. Foster* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 60-61. See also, William Z. Foster and Earl C. Ford, *Syndicalism* (Chicago: William Z. Foster, 1912), 5-8.

was Foster imagined that the entire economic organization of capitalist society would be taken into the new society where as the Soviet government looked to “rebuild” the previous apparatus through the “creation of new technical personnel.”¹³⁶ Determined not to abandon his life’s work, Foster held onto his concept of a syndicalist society for years.

Determined to persuade IWW members to recognize the importance of his syndicalist way of thinking, Foster helped establish a section within the IWW called the “Syndicalist Militant Minority League” in 1912, which rivaled the Syndicalist League of North America (SLNA), and used the “boring from within” tactic. Different from the SLNA, which was an independent organization, Foster’s group made an effort to work inside the IWW. However, this “boring from within” tactic was cut down by the success of the Lawrence textile strike as IWW locals regained faith in the IWW as a whole and rejected Foster’s strategy.¹³⁷ Even though Foster and the IWW fought for a syndicalist nation at the time of the Lawrence strike, the two could not agree on which tactic to implement.

In an article written later in his life and many years with the Communist Party, Foster recollected his previous position as a syndicalist sympathizer. Foster stated,

In its basic aspects, Syndicalism, or more properly, Anarcho-Syndicalism, may be defined very briefly as that in the labor movement to confine the revolutionary class struggle of the workers to the economic field, to practically ignore the state, and to reduce the whole fight of the working class to simply a question of trade union action. Its fighting organization is the trade union; its basic method of class warfare is the strike, with the general strike as the revolutionary weapon; and its revolutionary goal is the setting up of a trade union “state” to conduct industry and all other social activities.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Johanningsmeier, *Forging American Communism*, 63.

¹³⁷ Devinatz, “The Labor Philosophy of William Z. Foster,” 5.

¹³⁸ William Z. Foster, “Syndicalism in the United States.” *The Communist* (November, 1935), 1044-57.

Foster attested his disapproval of the simplistic solution syndicalism promised with an apology written in his book, *From Bryan to Stalin*, where he stated, "I did my share to help increase the syndicalist confusion."¹³⁹

Foster's reminiscence exemplified the fine line labor activists were going through in the early years of the twentieth century. Not wanting to sound like a belligerent fanatic whose sole purpose was to produce chaos, Foster worked to construct a system where dramatic change could be accomplished with what sounded like a coherent plan of action. However, the limitations of syndicalism became apparent as the Soviet government illustrated a system that went beyond what the American labor movement had to offer. The success of the Russian Revolution challenged all who fought for the working class to reevaluate their own personal contribution. Much like Bill Haywood, Foster believed Communism was the next step towards achieving everything the workers had toiled over to build. What was left was to analyze the tactics that held the American working class back.

Foster wrote a piece in 1922 entitled, *Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement*, which discussed why the labor movement in America was incompetent. He began his piece by debunking the two most thought of reasons behind the movement's inadequacy, which centered on the number of immigrants who made up the country's populous and the idea that a "prosperous" nation, such as the United States, could not fulfill the revolutionary spirit to have a successful labor movement.¹⁴⁰

Foster challenged critics who felt that because the United States was made up of mostly immigrants the labor movement lacked communication and understanding

¹³⁹ William Z. Foster, *From Bryan to Stalin* (New York: International Publishers, 1937), 46.

¹⁴⁰ William Z. Foster, "Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement." *Trade Union Education League*, no.4, 1922).

between those who could potentially make up a union. Foster explained the idea of the “unorganizability” (sic) of foreign born workers was an excuse generated by union leaders to cover up their own insufficiency to organize. Immigrant workers were in fact, as Foster explained, more suitable than native Americans to organize because the majority of Americans were foreign born. In his defense, Foster stated major events where the main body of personnel were foreign, such as the Lawrence strike of 1912 and the packing house movement of 1917-1921 where Slavs made up the majority of strikers.¹⁴¹

Specific unions, such as the IWW, benefited especially from foreigners. As historian Saposs explained, “Those immigrants who came here with little or no knowledge of social philosophies quite often came under the influence of socialist and of I.W.W. propaganda... Consequently immigrant workers in many industrial centres (sic) manifested a distinct partiality for radical doctrines.”¹⁴²

What Foster and Saposs argued, then, was that the inability for the labor movement to become more effective was not caused by foreigners and their diverse linguistics. In a failing labor movement, Foster argued that foreigners were the exception. The working class masses within the United States were willing to fight for change and as Foster and Saposs argued the same masses were primarily made up of foreign born immigrants. Further down in his writing, Foster argued that prosperity was not a deterrent for America’s lack of revolutionary spirit. Quite the contrary, Foster held the idea that a prosperous nation was a stimulus to labor organizations and radicalism altogether.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., Under the section: Foreigners as Militants.

¹⁴² Saposs, *Left Wing Unionism*, 114.

Foster argued that workers see the most progress for labor movements in two dissimilar circumstances, which include periods of depression and during times of prosperity.¹⁴³ In such incidences when the masses are stripped of luxury and into privation they are likely to lash out, as well, when the pressure of an authoritative presence becomes eased one becomes more likely to expand voluntarily. Foster used Germany and Australia as examples of well-off countries whose labor movement surpassed the rest of the world. Australia was said to have a lack of labor making unemployment virtually nonexistent. As Foster stated, “It is exactly since opportunity is plentiful and labor scarce, which means that the employers are to some degree deprived of their powerful ally unemployment that the worker’s fight is easier and they are encourage to make greater and greater demands upon their exploiters.”¹⁴⁴ The other well to do country, Germany, before the war, was one of the most prosperous nations and still held the best organized and most intellectual radical working class. Arguing against the limitations of prosperity, Foster suggested that a thriving nation pushed the working class further towards a successful movement.

Lumping the United States into the same category, Foster explained the similarities between America’s prosperity and that of Germany’s and Australia’s. During the war and the boom that followed, America was a prosperous nation, according to Foster, but instead of stagnation among unions there was a surge in labor activist activity.¹⁴⁵ If anything, Foster argued that the rise in good fortune for the United States encouraged unions to increase their presence. Foreigners made up the largest portion

¹⁴³ Foster, *Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement*, Under the section: Prosperity Not A Deterrent.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., Foster described the strikes that occurred in 1919 where the United States saw the largest numbers of strikes in its history.

of the labor movement and the prosperity Americans saw shortly after the war also came with an increase in labor activity. After examining the two most criticized reasons for America's lackluster labor movement Foster contested that the real blame fell on the tactic of dual unionism.

Dual unionism, as Foster understood it, crippled America's labor movement. In a dual setback, the policy of dual unionism led thousands of the very best militant workers to desert the mass labor organization and led them to waste their efforts to construct idealistic and impractical unions. Foster stated in the opening paragraph on his section on dual unionism that "Dual unionism has poisoned the very springs of progress in the American labor movement and is primarily responsible for its present sorry plight."¹⁴⁶ Whereas Foster understood the misconceptions people held about a union's connection with foreigners and how prosperity worked for a union's advantage he completely denounced any favorable outcome dual unionism gave towards the labor movement. Rooted as the movement's biggest obstacle, Foster attempted to persuade "dual unionist" groups to reconsider their tactic. At the 1911 convention of the IWW Foster urged members of the organization to disassemble and instead act as a militant minority boring from inside the already more powerful labor movement instead of building a dual industrial union outside the AFL.¹⁴⁷

The question of dual unionism over boring from within was not a tactic Foster and Haywood agreed upon for many years. It was not until he was influenced by the Soviet government that Haywood accepted the idea and rejected the process of dual unionism. Foster, on the other hand, acted quickly in his activist career and did what he could to

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., *Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement*, Under the section: Real Cause, Dual Unionism.

¹⁴⁷ Dubofsky, *'Big Bill' Haywood*, 61.

coax members into his way of thinking by forming his own militant minority within the IWW. Foster wrote, "I am satisfied that the only way for the IWW to have the workers adopt and practice the principles of revolutionary unionism is to give up its attempt to create a new labor movement and by building up better fighting machines within the old unions... revolutionize those unions."¹⁴⁸ Foster attempted to show the progress European unions were having with this tactic as he used the CGT and British syndicalists for his examples. His opinion had no effect on his opponents, who saw his tactic of boring from within the AFL or any craft union as a waste of time and resources. While Haywood and the majority of the IWW felt the tactic of dual unionism was the path towards achieving a successful labor movement, Foster understood the same tactic as the most detrimental apparatus towards building a strong revolutionary presence.

Foster believed the standing militant minority was the best chance of maintaining and spreading any radicalized organization. The difference between the IWW and the AFL was a difference between a radical organization and one that was considered conservative. In order for the IWW to gain any type of success, as Foster argued, they needed to develop their militancy within existing unions, thereby incorporating their best organizers into conservative unions they hoped to radicalize. Dual unionism, as Foster saw it, was the most destructive tactic towards the militant minority. In his writings, Foster explained how significant a militant minority was to the labor movement by stating,

Every experienced labor man knows that the vital activities of the labor movement are carried on by a small minority of live individuals, so few in number as to be almost insignificant in comparison to the organization as a whole. The great mass of the membership are slogging (sic) and unprogressive. In an average local union of 1,000 members, for example, not more than 100, or 10% of the whole will display enough interest and intelligence even to attend the regular meetings. And of this 100 usually not

¹⁴⁸ William Z. Foster, "As to My Candidacy," *Industrial Worker*, (November 2, 1911), 3.

more than half a dozen will take an active part in the process. In other words, the actual carrying on of the real work of the labor movement depends upon a minority, which in the present state of things does not exceed 1% of the mass.¹⁴⁹

Enforcing the dual unionist tactic meant leveling the militant minority to an even smaller percentage, thereby reducing the primary source for an effective labor movement. In an effort to equalize their interest Foster implored the IWW to understand the advantage the AFL would receive if the trade union militants were removed through dual unionism. If the IWW continued down this tactical path, Foster warned that, it would allow Samuel Gompers of the AFL to maintain his already firm control of craft unions and eventually kill any chance of a revolutionary union from developing.¹⁵⁰

Foster's quote also demonstrated the difference between those in higher level positions or as he categorized them as the militant minority and the rank and file of the IWW. Foster established a "militant minority" union, he petitioned for the IWW to support a militant minority, and he eventually left the IWW in favor of the more "revolutionary" tactics of the International Trade Union Educational League (ITUEL). He put all of his effort into constructing a militant minority whose sole purpose was to extend their revolutionary appeal to conservative unions. As the militant minority succeeded in their task they would then guide the rest of the rank and file down the same path. Understanding his position as a leader, Foster knew that without his effort in persuading the IWW away from its crippling tactic the labor organization was doomed to fail. However, his vision never came to fruition and therefore his relationship with the IWW ceased and his patience with syndicalism drew thin.

¹⁴⁹ Foster, *Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement*, Under the section: Real Cause, Dual Unionism.

¹⁵⁰ Devinatz, "The Labor Philosophy of William Z. Foster," 4.

It was not until he was invited by the American Communist Party to attend the Profintern's (Red International of Trade Unions) Congress in July 1921 that Foster found his lasting career. The success of the Russian Revolution impressed Foster, but only after years into its existence. He saw great promise after analyzing the Bolshevik's ability to run the factories, army and the government.¹⁵¹ What impressed Foster more than the ideology of Communism was the tactics used by the Communists. As he stated in one of his writings years later with the Communist Party,

[M]y whole experience of many years in the revolutionary movement had prepared me to readily become a Communist. An especially powerful factor in predisposing me to accept the Communist position was the highly intelligent way in which Lenin and the other Comintern leaders had handled the boring-from-within question... But more decisive still for me was the effect of the reality of the Russian revolution itself.¹⁵²

As for the question on whether the Communist movement in America was directed solely by foreign influence, Foster made the answer clear that American labor activists held their own agenda separate from that of the Soviet model before Communism existed in Russia. While Foster was considered a member of the minority, he represented the working class revolutionaries who believed in the tactics of boring from within other labor groups. Even if the American Communist Party did not exist until after the Soviet model was formed, similar tactics were used by the America labor movement, which Foster championed. He fused his militant minority concept with the success of Lenin's vanguard party. Foster stated,

The militant minority... works out the fighting programs and takes the lead in putting them into execution... The militant minority, made famous by the Russian Revolution as the "advance guard of the Proletariate," is the heart and brain and nerves of the labor movement all over the world.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁵² Foster, *From Bryan to Stalin*, 156-157.

¹⁵³ William Z. Foster, *American Trade Unionism: Principles and Organization Strategy and Tactics* (New York: International Publishers, 1947), 66-67.

The Bolsheviks used the tactic of boring from within by means of their militant minority or vanguard, as opposed to standing as a dual unionist organization. For Foster, the Communist Party was the pinnacle of everything he fought for during his years as an American labor activist. While Foster attempted to pull the IWW in his direction of interests the organization would not cooperate. Instead, Foster left the group behind in favor of the Communist model and what he saw as a party that would provide the American labor movement's best chance at success.

James P. Cannon

Similar to both Haywood and Foster, James P. Cannon's involvement within the American labor movement was extensive, stretching from his early years with the Socialist Party of America, to his commitment within the IWW and finally his involvement with divisions within the Communist Party, including the CLP, the CPA, and the Workers Party of the United States, which acted as the first aboveground legal Communist Party in the United States.¹⁵⁴ Born in the working class hamlet of Rosedale, Kansas, Cannon joined a local SP group but found the organization limited. Wanting to do more for the labor movement, Cannon left his small town party to joined the IWW in 1911. As a member of the General Executive Board, Cannon invested his time organizing workers throughout the Midwest with desires of creating "one big union," in hopes of putting an end "to this whole damn capitalist claptrap," which was necessary to "make a society run by the workers and fit to live in."¹⁵⁵ He held no prejudices against the SP and only left the party for the IWW because he felt the IWW promised a more revolutionary

¹⁵⁴ Bryan D. Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 16-17.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

appeal.¹⁵⁶ Whereas the SP conducted itself to change the capitalist structure through voting and elections, the IWW's "radical" model attacking capitalism through the hands-on approach of direct action. With a desire for immediate transformation Cannon sided with the IWW model.

However, the same revolutionary appeal that drew Cannon to the IWW lacked the stability to have a long lasting impact against capitalist America. Cannon stated that as "a revolutionary organization proclaiming an all-out fight against the capitalist system the IWW led many strikes which swelled the membership momentarily. But after the strikes were over, whether won or lost, stable union organization was not maintained."¹⁵⁷ The negligence of the IWW to engage sufficiently with political parties and their isolated method of encountering the public by means of street confrontations became criticized by Cannon who found himself once again as a member of an organization that lacked effectiveness.

Cannon was one of the many IWW members who left the organization in favor of the Communist Party. However, this did not mean Cannon abandoned his previous group. On the contrary, Cannon appealed to the IWW to reconsider their position on issues including their anti-Communist stance. As Cannon expressed in one of his writings while he was a Communist Party member, the IWW "are separated from the party mainly by doubt, hesitation, and pessimism. And they lack confidence in the party. All of these difficulties can be overcome by systematic work and a friendly, sympathetic attitude towards them."¹⁵⁸ Cannon believed the IWW could still be salvaged despite their

¹⁵⁶ Les Evans, *James P. Cannon As We Knew Him: By Thirty-three Comrades, Friends and Relatives* (New York: Pathfinder, 1976), 234.

¹⁵⁷ James P. Cannon, "The IWW," *Fourth International* vol. 16 (Summer, 1955), 75.

¹⁵⁸ James P. Cannon, "What Kind of a Party?," *The Worker* vol.6 (March 3, 1923), 1-2.

preconditions. As well, Cannon was against exclusionists and felt the Communist Party should strive for additions to their ranks. Cannon's position contradicted his previous organization's approach towards gaining members. While Cannon cried out, "Broaden the Party!" as what he believed should stand as the Communist slogan, the IWW distanced themselves from other labor unions and also with the Communist Party.

In one of his writings, Cannon addressed the IWW's phobia towards political parties and attempted to clarify the differences between parties. Cannon stated, "The IWW has not yet come to the point where it makes a distinction between capitalist politics which are aimed against the working class and Communist politics which are aimed against the capitalists."¹⁵⁹ All of the differences the IWW held against politics took a toll on Cannon who confessed that he was "shaken up on my anti-political wobblyism."¹⁶⁰ It was not until the Bolshevik Revolution that Cannon found his true calling as an American labor activist. In his pamphlet titled, "The IWW: The Great Anticipation," Cannon addressed his views on politics by stating,

It took the First World War and the Russian Revolution to reveal in full scope the incompleteness of the governing thought of the IWW... The turning point came with the entrance of the United States into the First World War in the spring of 1917, and the Russian Revolution in the same year. Then "politics," which the IWW had disavowed and cast out, came back and broke down the door. From one side, this was shown when the Federal Government of the United States intervened directly to break up the concentration points of the IWW by wholesale arrests of its activists... From the other side, the same determining role of political action was demonstrated positively by the Russian Revolution. The Russian workers took the state power into their own hands and used that power to expropriate the capitalist and suppress all attempts at counter-revolution.¹⁶¹

The question was not, how can the radical labor movement progress against the power of politics, but instead, how can the movement use politics to its advantage. By using

¹⁵⁹ Prometheus Research Library, *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism: Select Writings and Speeches, 1920-1928* (New York: Spartacist Publishing Company, 1992), Under the section: The IWW Convention.

¹⁶⁰ Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left*, 90.

¹⁶¹ James P. Cannon, *The First Ten Years of American Communism* (New York: Pathfinder, 1962), 292.

politics to their benefit Cannon felt America's working class had a chance at making a difference for the labor movement. The juxtaposition between America's use of politics and the Bolshevik's control over politics led Cannon to reexamine his position with the IWW as well as the IWW's position within the American labor movement.

Finding irony in the ordeal, Cannon accused the IWW of situating itself as an intensely political organization. Cannon explained that the IWW was an organization "dominated by ideas and conceptions and not simply by immediate economic interests like an ordinary union," and "the fact that it decries politics and has nothing to do with elections does not alter the fact."¹⁶² In an attempt similar to that of Zinoviev's, Cannon fought the IWW's predicament on politics by attacking the group's hypocrisy. In order for the IWW to join the Communist movement it first needed to understand what kind of organization it fell under, which, as Cannon, Zinoviev, Haywood and Foster argued, contradicted itself. While the IWW preached against politics it could not ignore its participation in political decisions, which not only confused members within the organization on how the group functioned it also limited its effectiveness towards the labor movement. Because the organization said one thing and acted in another its duplicity impaired its members to take action. Cannon fought for the GEB to address the confusion created by high level members.

Politics aside, Cannon made an effort to dissect the IWW's dissimilar opinion towards Communism by analyzing the tactical differences of boring from within and dual unionism that separated the two. Cannon argued that there was "a conflict of theory between the IWW and the Communists as to how the revolution will be made in the

¹⁶² Prometheus Research Library, *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism*, Under the section: The IWW Convention.

future, and a conflict of ideas about immediate work as to whether it is better to work within the established conservative unions in order to revolutionize them or to undertake at once to build new unions of the IWW.”¹⁶³ Similar to Foster and Haywood, Cannon went against the IWW’s tactical stance as a “dual unionist” organization. After his experience within the IWW, and his contact with AFL unionists, Cannon fought for a middle ground between the two sides. As a way to relieve workers of their limited bureaucracies, Cannon proposed “a double” or new organizational breakthrough for workers who were abandoned by craft unions paired with “boring from within” already established unions, which would encourage a more revolutionary perspective.¹⁶⁴ Cannon did not disown “dual unionism” all together, but felt the tactic, by itself, was limited and needed additional strategies for it to be affective.

The IWW, as Cannon understood, was neither a union nor a party, but something of both with missing parts that only the Bolshevik Party could fulfill.¹⁶⁵ Between the two organizations, Cannon asserted that the only differences lay in the IWW’s lack of a complete theorized notion, as well as a difference in the projected revolutionary unions in the future.

One of the biggest misunderstandings the IWW had against the Communist Party was the idea that the Red International of the Communist Party wanted to dissolve the IWW. The IWW, as an organization, took a personal oppositional stand against what they saw as Communist aggression. As Lenin and Zinoviev had stated, the Communist Party was in favor of the unification of all working class unions. They supported large divisions in both the AFL, like the United Mine Workers and divisions in the IWW, such

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Palmer, *James P. Cannon*, 119.

¹⁶⁵ Cannon, “The IWW,” Under the section: The Duality of the IWW.

as the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. The support was not intended to discriminate against one union over the other. However, because the IWW used the tactic of “dual unionism” they felt the Communist Party antagonized their organization by demanding a unification of all unions. Cannon attested that “there is no truth to this story.”¹⁶⁶ The Communist approach was practical not theoretical, but because the IWW cloistered itself from outside unions their organization remained skeptical towards the Communist Party.

The extent to which the IWW was willing to go to avoid any affiliation with the Communist Party reached its pinnacle when the General Executive Board of the IWW charged their General Secretary of Treasury, George Harrison, of dishonesty and insubordination. Harrison was a Communist sympathizer who expressed his disapproval of censorship the IWW was enforcing. Cannon applauded Harrison’s resistance who, during his trial, turned his defense into an offense by attacking the policy of censorship and heresy-hunting within the IWW. After expressing his due diligence for the IWW the charges of dishonesty and insubordination were dismissed and Harrison was completely vindicated.¹⁶⁷

The trial showed, however, the sensitivity of the IWW over their relation with the Communist Party. After the Russian Revolution, every union became aware of the Communist model. As the party only became stronger the IWW panicked in fear that their organization would be swallowed up in the process. Shortly after his trial, Harrison wrote his pro-Soviet pamphlet entitled, *Red Dawn*, which called for a positive alliance of

¹⁶⁶ Prometheus Research Library, *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism*, Under the section: The Red International of Labor Unions

¹⁶⁷ Prometheus Research Library, *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism*, Under the section: The IWW Convention.

the IWW and the newly formed Communist Party. In reference to the distress over politics, Harrison called the momentous historical transformation of the Russian Revolution as something of a new political day.¹⁶⁸ The change in the IWW's correlation with the Communist Party was swift as the two groups held great promises at the start of their relationship but quickly deteriorated due to the IWW's trepidation of outside organizations.

The collapse of the two groups' relationship was quick because the IWW was not prepared to handle the introduction of Communism in America. Americans in general were unaware of the events happening in Russia. As Cannon stated,

Maybe there was a little more international consciousness on the East Coast, in New York, but in the West we never heard of Lenin, Trotsky, or anybody else. The Russian Revolution awakened and reeducated the Left. You see, the revelation that this had been led by a party was a great blow to a simplistic Wobbly. They thought you didn't need any party. They thought all you needed was direct action. But [the Bolsheviks] had direct action plus an organized party plus theory... I had enough sense to realise (sic) that this was something different from ours and I had better study it a little bit.¹⁶⁹

This quote from Cannon exemplified two important facts. Because the events over in Russia were unknown, the American labor movement had progressed from the late nineteenth century up until the establishment of Soviet Russia under its own domestic conditions. While pieces of the syndicalist model were adopted from different European countries by American labor activists, such as Foster and Haywood, the American labor movement perpetuated itself with minor foreign influence. This quote also epitomized the fact that those who left the IWW for the Communist Party did so as a means to expand the labor movement in America. As Cannon explained, those who were amongst the Communist and Trotskyist movement were referred to as "Wobblies who

¹⁶⁸ George Harrison, *Red Dawn: The Bolsheviks and the I.W.W.* (Chicago: I.W.W. Publication Bureau, 1918), 18.

¹⁶⁹ Palmer, *James P. Cannon*, 91.

had learned something.”¹⁷⁰ Communism became the last milestone Cannon followed during America’s labor movement.

Haywood, Foster, and Cannon

Bill Haywood, William Z. Foster and James P. Cannon did not always agree on issues concerning the labor movement. Haywood and Foster disagreed on the appropriate tactic the IWW should implement at the 1911 IWW convention. While Haywood sided with the GEB to remain as a “dual unionist” organization, Foster’s strategy was to depart from the IWW and permeate the AFL.¹⁷¹ Out of the three, Foster championed for the tactic of “boring from within” the longest, which was the reason why his provisional time with the IWW was the shortest.

In 1921, Haywood traveled to Moscow for the Third Comintern congress. While Russians favored the IWW in the United States during this time, Lenin attacked the organization’s tactics by describing them as that of “infantile” labor politics. Haywood defended himself by attacking Foster’s position, without mentioning him by name. Haywood stated, “There are some fellows around here who say that there are 159,000 good reds in the AFL. Anybody who says that is a damned fool.”¹⁷² Haywood’s antagonistic position against the AFL remained even after his interview with Max Eastman, where he admitted that some AFL members should be educated by members of his group. At the time of the Comintern congress, Haywood was pushed into a corner and justified his tactic by attacking what he felt was the real childish method and pointed the finger at Foster who fought for the opposing method longer than anyone else.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 86.

¹⁷¹ Dubofsky, ‘*Big Bill*’ Haywood, 61.

¹⁷² Vladimir Lenin, “Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder,” *Collected Works*, vol. 31 (April-May, 1920), 38; William Haywood, *Truth*, (Sept. 16, 1921), 2. Taken from, Edward P. Johanningsmeier, *Forging American Communism: The Life of William Z. Foster* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 1994.

Foster did not side with Cannon from the start of the Communist movement either. When Cannon and illustrator-poet Ralph Chaplin paid a visit to Foster in 1920 in hopes of building members for the newly found underground Communist movement in America, Foster declined. He deprecated the Soviet Union as consisting of the first proletarian state.¹⁷³ It was not until a few years later that Foster would accept a position within the Trade Union Education League, that was later made affiliate with the Profintern in 1923 and, in turn, a contributor of the Communist Party.

While the three did not concur on the same tactics or party affiliation at the same time they all shared a common approach towards furthering not only themselves, but the labor movement in general by adjusting their interests to the most progressive revolutionary organization. In other words, each sized up their current organization and its successor in two ways, which included its popularity and its revolutionary appeal. All three started out in a different union before entering the IWW and all three ended up joining Communism. Through these three examples one can see the temporary appeal the IWW had on its members in higher level positions. While the revolutionary appeal brought all three men to the organization the stagnation of its popularity drove them away. This also speaks volumes for the American labor movement as American workers went through dramatic change during the first half of the twentieth century with the introduction of new technologies as well as the establishment of new ideas, including Communism. Because the early years of the twentieth century saw considerable change for labor groups it was not uncommon for members of unions to pass from one organization to another. This is especially true for higher level members

¹⁷³ Palmer, *James P. Cannon*, 86.

such as Haywood, Foster and Cannon who looked for the best opportunity to have a successful labor movement.

CONCLUSION

The Industrial Workers of the World has been described as an anarcho-syndicalist, radical, revolutionary industrialized union. While historians cannot agree on one specific label for the IWW, the group holds a general acceptance as an organization that fought capitalism by separating itself from corrupt politicians. IWW members were expected to gain influence by means of self promotion and were prohibited from infiltrating other organizations for fear that its own members would become corrupt. This is better known as the “dual unionist” and “boring from within” dilemma. Publicized as a “dual unionist” group the IWW increased its membership as workers looked for a union that differentiated itself from the American Federation of Labor and other unions that were questioned as “too political.” Because politics were connected with capitalism, the IWW pushed against any affiliation with political groups. The IWW’s main goal was to topple capitalism in favor of the industrial workers’ fortune. However, the limitations of the IWW were questioned with the introduction of the Communist Party.

The Industrial Workers of the World’s relationship with the Communist Party held great promise towards achieving success within the progressive American labor movement shortly after World War I. The General Executive Board of the IWW was excited to see the success of a proletarian state after the triumph of the Russian Revolution, which vindicated what members saw as hope for their own prosperity. However, once the details of the party were revealed the IWW held reservations. The differences that stood out between the two groups revolved around politics and the tactics that were used to gain members. The IWW’s inability to alter its position politically or tactically hindered the organization into almost total collapse. Divisions

within the organization developed as IWW leaders became frustrated with the groups' lack of improvement due to these crippling restraints. A large push of ex-IWW members leaving their organization to join the Communist Party would follow.

The tactics of "dual unionism" and "boring from within" were at odds for the IWW, which consistently chose to seclude itself from other unions by using the "dual unionist" method in hopes that America's working class would automatically join their revolutionary organization. While the group had a surge in membership in the early 1910s after a handful of successful strikes, the organization was not designed for longevity. As a "dual unionist" group, the IWW limited itself from tapping into the political pipeline or infiltrating craft unions, such as the AFL. The group's inability to alter its position was argued against by members who felt the IWW constitution limited the organization's potential. While men who held higher level positions within the IWW challenged the GEB to reevaluate the union's tactical and political stance, their opinion went unheeded and eventually led them to choose alternative labor groups.

The Communist parties in America followed a similar path to that of the IWW's as bitter rivals restrained the multitude of Communist parties from uniting. As well, both the IWW and the Communist parties were attacked by the federal government during the "Red Scare," making recruiting difficult. Nevertheless, the Comintern lent out support to the groups mentioned by means of financial aid and recognition of their organization. The IWW, however, was skeptical of the influence the Communist Party perpetuated and saw the party as a threat rather than a ally. The head of the Comintern, Zinoviev, attempted to ease the hostility the IWW felt towards the Communist Party with his letter

that highlighted the differences between the two groups. During which time, however, the IWW remained firm in its distance away from Communism.

Haywood, Foster and Cannon would play crucial roles for both the IWW and the Communist Party in each groups' effects towards the labor movement. All three eventually understood the significance of utilizing the method of "boring from within" other unions, even if Haywood realized only after he joined the Communist Party. These three men symbolized the inadequacy with the IWW's tactics and the solution of abandoning the organization in order to further the labor movement. While each of these men had a part in creating the IWW they did not disconnect themselves from the rest of the labor movement by remaining chained to the organization. In other words, they used the IWW to benefit their needs in furthering the movement and were not used by the IWW for the sole purpose of aiding the organization. Because the IWW was not willing to change its methods it was left behind by the more successful unions and party organizations. During a time of uncertainty and dramatic change the last maneuvers an organization wanted to enforce was stagnation and separation.

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