

Southern New Hampshire University

Changing Norms in American Labor

AFL & IWW In American History

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## Abstract

The American Federation of Labor and the Industrial Workers of the World left a remarkable impact on the trajectory of the workplace in the United States. An understanding of the influence both these organizations had on the country can put future developments into perspective. There was a contribution by both radical leaning and more moderately oriented inclined parties whose efforts successfully culminated in a re-imagining of American labor. It has historically been the prerogative for many within the record of historiography to discount the radical leanings of the labor movement specifically, but the combination of the various involved groups played a part. This is reflected in the available source material pertaining to the activities of labor organizations. Additionally, the record mirrors that moderately inclined AFL and the more radical IWW were integral in American labor reform.

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## **I. Introduction**

As a result of significant and radical changes ushered in by the emergence of mass mechanized production with the Industrial Revolution and subsequent developments; the trajectory of the global landscape was greatly altered and placed on a different path. The various spheres of life that included cultural, social, and economic had been completely altered and refigured. These changes to a large extent were related to the complete re-imagining of labor, production and where the actual power rested. The factory floors replaced the agricultural fields, as both essential and luxury goods were able to be produced at a rate that had never been previously seen in human civilization. As a result of the implemented reforms, labor movement successfully filled their important aims to a large extent by, keeping labor issues relevant, recognizing the changing times, and overcoming suppression by the government.

The size of a country's gross domestic product became more correlated with their ability to mass manufacture product that had demand, rather than being more directly aligned with the population of those fit to engage in such labor. The traditional aristocracy and practices that had long been prominent societally were being replaced with a newer money whose power and influence stemmed from their interests in big business opposed to purely familial inheritance. In this new dynamic the power balance had been reshaped in a way that resulted in an unclear future that came increasingly apparent as tensions began to soar. A need for drastic alteration became massively apparent as these problems were progressively exacerbated. The dichotomy presented by both the more radically inclined and conservative wings of the labor movement contributed to these changes despite a combination of positive developments and shortcomings resulting from both respective positions.

Capitalism's legs were falling out under them as the newly created structures could not carry the weight that came with the massive exploitation of workers and the disparities that were increasingly on the rise. There were questions concerning the sustainable nature of these new ways of running the predominant systems of society going forward. The Industrial Revolution allowed a new upper class to emerge that greatly benefited from the goods and items created by mechanized industry. This shifted power away from the traditional aristocracy and nobility of the past that had dominated for centuries and had many shortcomings of their own that was revealed in issues such as the French and American Revolutions, amongst other Enlightenment Era movements that brought about a radical change. These ideas are considered in Greta Gray's "Changes in the Household resulting from the Industrial Revolution."<sup>1</sup> Although it was the possibilities brought forth by the emergence of a 'free market' and consumerism that really stood as a pull factor for significant changes. Nevertheless, most individuals remained in a state of object poverty and were continually exploited, albeit in a new form.

In response, new organizations and movements emerged to advocate for the everyday worker's interests. On the face was a revolt against the new status quo. Although, it was also something that was representative of a shift towards preserving a form of capitalism. This was additionally contributory towards the successful expansion of capital interests. expansion. In the midst of more extreme sentiments purveyed by individuals such as Karl Marx who advocated for Communism, the establishment of recognized organized labor introduced a more compromising solution that allowed for businesses to continue to grow and allow larger segments of the population having the opportunity to become integrated members of the new system's higher

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<sup>1</sup> Greta Gray, "Changes in the Household Resulting from the Industrial Revolution," *Social Forces* Vol. 11, No. 2 (1932), 242-248. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2569781>

echelon. This protected and safeguarded the capitalist institutions that had been in development and reformed them for the relevant demands at the time.

There were several competing interests vying for influence during this transitional period. In 1905, the Industrial Workers of the World was established in Chicago, Illinois. This organization was representative of the more radical elements of this era. Their more extreme and radical nature had an effect that turned many in the mainstream away from their cause. The dynamic was explored in works of scholarship signifying a century after the organization's founding in works such as "The Industrial Workers of the World at 100."<sup>2</sup> Albeit, this may have been an issue that was more conceptually perceived as a result of purveying narratives rather than the actual facts; this became idealistically a dominant way of thinking about the organization and other related groups. This had an effect that turned off people to a degree. Although, the emergence of alternatives that were more diplomatically oriented in nature such as the American Federation of Labor and other groups and organizations that came across as generally more reasonable. The adjustment made by those affiliated with the organized labor movement in the United States from a more radical and aggressively oriented approach to a more grounded based orientation directly contributed towards a façade that was perceived to be diplomatic and open to compromises. This preserved the capitalist systems and primed America to continue down a path in which the consumerist economy persisted to develop and form to reflect a country with a generally limited central control in comparison to countries that did not

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<sup>2</sup> Jon Bekken, "The Industrial Workers of The World at 100." Perspectives on Work Vol. 10, No. 2 (2007), 39-41.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23272130>.



effectively execute these important measures of reform in the face of the significant challenging issues that were being presented.

It was of strategic importance for the continual rapid pace of technological and innovative development for a competitive marketplace of some form to be sustained. At the same time, the exploitative aspect of this presented serious ‘roadblocks’ for such an impressive pace to be maintained. To a degree, the IWW had a detrimental effect on such developments. But the rise of more diplomatic alternatives that were primed to compromise on key issues allowed for this progress to be maintained. The efforts of activism more aligned with the AFL that held more tenable positions that the reasonable American would support was key for the continuation of organized labor itself and other related groups and organizations that held likeminded sentiments to a degree. This went beyond merely ‘labor’ within itself, but principles of democracy more broadly that sought compromise and negotiation in an organized fashion that sought to balance society on a direction that was both equitable and highly productive to a large degree simultaneously.

The IWW is in no way an organization that found itself lost to history, as in 2022 the organization persists to have over 9,000 active members.<sup>3</sup> Although, this is representative of a steep decline in comparison to their peak in 1917 previous to the United States’ entrance into the First World War, the organization had amassed 150,000 members and stood as an important organization of note that received both national and even international recognition as an organization of unique noteworthiness.<sup>4</sup> The AFL currently has approximately 12.5 million members in 2022; albeit poor numbers in comparison to the degree of popularity and prominence

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<sup>3</sup> “Our History,” IWW.org, IWW, accessed November 11, 2022, <https://www.iww.org/history/>.

<sup>4</sup> “Our History.”

it held amongst the American populace at one point, is nevertheless reflective that over the course of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it had successfully had emerged as the dominant representative of organized labor. The dynamics at play move beyond simply the membership numbers of the respective groups that held dominance over the society. These are indicative of the important interest of the public to balance the vital issues at play as it related to facets pertaining to labor. The radical leaning elements of Labor Union interests failed to emerge as an option that was most conducive to the aims of the majority. At the same time, it was not completely negated as having an important role during the era. This result that was hybrid in nature to a large degree stands as a testament to the actual interests of the American society and their imploration to successfully arise to the occasion and meet the demands of their time in a way that essentially preserved capitalism in a fashion that was not ideally envisioned by those that were within the ideological persuasion of either the interests of business leadership or those aligned with the interests of the organized labor movement.

A notable aspect of the IWW, despite their notoriety for being considered aligned with extremist leanings; was more connected with the spirit of equity and freedom regardless of background in comparison to the AFL that played into many of the stereotypes and prejudices that were dominant at the time. This more neutrally and reserved approach as it related to social issues was evident in the AFL's activities during the 1948 U.S. Presidential and Congressional elections as explored by Morton Leeds in "The AFL in the 1948 Elections."<sup>5</sup> The more mainstream and widespread inclinations of sympathy for the AFL particularly, lay in their 'moderately' oriented nature that lacked an interest to really question the status quo and move to

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<sup>5</sup> Morton Leeds, "The AFL in the 1948 Elections," *Social Research* Vol. 17, No. 2 (1950), 207-218. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40969222>.

radically alter the social structures within the society. This was opposed to the IWW whose motivations were aligned with the spirit of a brand of liberalism and progressive sentiments that sought to achieve greater equality for individuals along a wide array of historically marginalized groups such as women and minorities. This calls into question the actual radicalism of the IWW' whether it was represented by reality or rather a created figment that was conjectured by people's fears, distrust, and concerns towards legitimate and radical changes. On the other hand, the AFL stood as an organization that held back and was willing to concede to a greater degree.

At an essence, the two organizations that dominated attention amongst the organized labor movement, and their respective ideologies more broadly in the general sense had essentially the same goals and intentions. Although their approaches differed as a result of subtleties within their own thinking on the various issues, but also what they perceived would be best to actually accomplish and realize their aims. There are examples of acts of violence that were perpetuated by the IWW during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In retrospect, arguments are supported by evidence that these issues have largely been over exaggerated or not based in reputable sources whatsoever. Nevertheless, it is apparent that beyond many of the issues and events that gained prominence in headline domination particularly in the period following the First World War among the rising fear that Communism and other socialistic leaning philosophies had; there was a nobly progressively developmental underlying overtone for the IWW and other related groups and individuals oriented with this persuasion. In terms of practical application, the movement faced many hurdles and setbacks. This was a pushback of the predominant narratives in the pre-First World War era as considered by Philip S. Foner and

Michael R. Johnson in “The I.W.W. Prior to America's Entry into World War I.”<sup>6</sup> The administration of Franklin Roosevelt and other governmental institutions across the country had begun implementing important changes and reforms for the system. Although, it wasn't until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century that it became clear that a vacuum needed to be filled and individuals needed to take the initiation to create real and actualized changes.

In 1955, the AFL was officially established and asserted itself as an important facet of the organized labor movement. Contrary to the reaction, particularly those that simply wanted a continuance of the current status quo in society, were less threatened by them compared to their reaction towards the IWW. The issue of civil rights that was permeating as a very important issue for American society during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and the stance of the AFL was at the center of it. In balancing the interests and support of both those aligned on the more progressive side of the labor movement and the more conservative elements with a sense of resistance towards changes in areas such as the U.S. Southwest, the organization struggled to maintain a clear pathway forward. As a result, it had earned connotations that labelled it a protection of the current fixtures that were deeply rooted within American society and to a large extent were simply aimed at preserving the current systems rather than making significant and actualized changes that would alter the way big businesses conducted their policies. At the same time, to make an actualized difference, a great deal of level-headedness and willingness to make compromises was needed to enact short-term changes that would ultimately culminate with significant changes in the longer term.

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<sup>6</sup> Philip S. Foner and Michael R. Johnson, “The I.W.W. Prior to America's Entry into World War I,” *Science & Society* Vol. 29, No. 1 (1965), 91-95.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40401097>.

The foundation of the modern AFL was in 1955, when the organization merged with the Congress of Industrial Organizations, also referred to as the CIO.<sup>7</sup> Although, the story of the organization had started before then. In 1886, the original form of the American Federation of Labor was formulated as a group of craft unions that sought a relationship following years of dissatisfaction with the representation offered by other organizations and perspectives. In particular, many of the more conservatively oriented fragments of the working class were disillusioned by the public perception and presentation of those on the more radical leaning of the spectrum. There was a demand for a more traditionally based organization that would present a manner more aligned with a façade that included dressing well and putting forth arguments in the public sphere with a seemingly more controlled and reasonable manner. The AFL rose to the occasion and put forth a platform that argued for shorter workdays and weeks so that their respective members could enjoy more time with family and opportunities to explore alternative pursuits.<sup>8</sup>

The AFL through the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries sought to cultivate relationships with both the Republican and Democrat parties, and precluded their members from having ties with a socialist party.<sup>9</sup> In terms of their progress in effectively garnering actualized changes for their respective interests, there was a great degree of success in the gradual increase of rights in the workplace for both their own members, and those outside the organization within greater society more largely. This was not at the pace of change many corners of the labor movement wanted, but was nevertheless a rate of developments and changes that more radically aligned

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<sup>7</sup> “Our Labor History Timeline,” AFLCIO.org, AFL-CIO, Accessed September 6, 2022, <https://aflcio.org/about-us/history>

<sup>8</sup> “Our Labor History Timeline,” AFLCIO.org.

<sup>9</sup> “Our Labor History Timeline,” AFLCIO.org.

groups such as the IWW were seemingly falling short to accomplish, and in some cases turning people off from their cause altogether. There was reasoning for this sense of discontent that was rooted in issues that were deeper than simply perceptions the organization was falling short of actively ‘fighting’ against the systems that were limiting the rights of working people within the sphere of the workplace. There was a perception that the AFL was an organization interested in the rights of men with European ancestry, and a lacking interest to advocate and engage with women and minority groups within American society. In this period that was largely marked by increasing considerations relating to the need for Civil Rights reformations within American society; in this regards the AFL fell short in comparison to other options that were offered in the diverse array of organizations active within the labor movement.

For those more openly aligned with the philosophy of Karl Marx, and an interest to purvey socialistic sentiments more openly in public discourse. As well as those interested in making the society more equitable for those of various genders and ethnic makeups; the Industrial Workers of the World, also known as the IWW was the preferable option for many of these people. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the AFL lobbied the US congress to re-establish the Chinese Exclusion act and other anti-immigrant policies, the IWW offered an alternative for those in the labor movement that were interested an openness to further develop and celebrate diversity within the society and the workplace. The racial component has been explored in works such as Cliff Brown’s “Racial Conflict and Split labor Markets: The AFL Campaign to organize Steel Workers, 1918-1919.”<sup>10</sup> In opposition to extrapolating on the promotion of xenophobic fear of new migrants from elsewhere in the world coming into the job market, the IWW saw this as a

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<sup>10</sup> Cliff Brown, “Racial Conflict and Split Labor Markets: The AFL Campaign to organize Steel Workers, 1918-1919.” *Social Science History* Vol. 22, No. 3, Special Issue: Migration and the Labor Markets (1998), 319-347. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1171528>.

positive that would further develop and advance the interest of laborers. This would additionally bring about a larger workforce that was modernized and prepared for the changes ahead in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The organization of the IWW along with similarly held sentiments may have been viewed as radical by many, but with time their viewpoints were normalized by the ‘mainstream’ and continuously considered to be an expectation rather than ideas that should be conceptually feared.

The leadership that rose to prominence in the early days of the IWW organization was deeply ideologically influenced by people such as William Trautman who thought efforts with a large public relations effort would be the most effective way forward.<sup>11</sup> This included demonstrations on the streets of American cities such as strikes and the display of artwork and means of media advocating for the labor movement. It propelled the movement directly into the spotlight and purview of the greater American society. As their popularity grew, regardless of whether it was in the positive or negative sense; inspired people to think about the issues at play and put them into perspective. There were scenarios in which the government’s reaction was aggressive. This included the usage of law enforcement and even the military to squash some of these attempts that were being engaged with by the IWW. At the same time, actualized changes were being implemented as it related to the treatment of laborers in workplaces across the country. It could be argued that these changes were at least partly the results of activism coming from other sections of the ideological framework related to the labor movement. Although, there was a corollary effect between the actions taken by the IWW and the subsequent adjustments

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<sup>11</sup> “Documents by William E. Trautmann, IWW.org, IWW, accessed November 11, 2022, <https://archive.iww.org/history/library/Trautmann/>

largely being made possible by actions of governmental institutions implementing changes with regards to the actions that businesses were engaging in.

Through the adversity that was presented along with the public impression of the IWW, the organization went through periods of success even following the First World War and into the years in which concerns of the 'Communist threat' were becoming an increasing issue for many across the country. A fundamental difference between the radical and more moderate ends of the labor movement was that the IWW and other likeminded groups were more engaged to take strong stances on the various social issues that included the participation of the United States in World War One, despite the unpopular connotations that were held by mainstream society for such as position. In addition, there was other issues of particular significance that included participation and an imploration to advocate for historically marginalized people; these aims were divisive for the American populace contemporary to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, many pockets within the populace were inspired by these sentiments and needed inspiration of this more forward and progressive thinking. The actual overall contribution in comparison to the other viewpoints as it related to pushing the labor movement into the direction activists and everyday people envisioned for the country is debatable, but it played a part.

Labor and how it should be regulated and controlled, and the balance of interests of the everyday worker and business executives has always been a challenging and complex balance in which many strong opinions exist. Additionally, the modern political interests contemporary to any practitioner of history's own respective era will have a weight on how they view some of the issues and dynamics that were at play decades or even a century earlier. These conceptually may appear on the surface to have some degree of similarity. But, a deeper consideration will reveal that there are actually deep differences as a result of the extremely varying systems and



perspectives that had been dominant for the people of the past. There is a need for additional contributions within the body of scholarship to consider the issues pertaining to the labor movement more wholistically in terms of considering how the dynamics set forth by the more radically inclined vestiges of society as well as the more moderately inclined contributed simultaneously in terms of pushing changes forward. The perspectives and vantagepoints a historian bring with themselves when engaging an analysis must deal with the complexity of balancing the various issues that in some cases influence their own respective time, while simultaneously being conscious of the interests and challenges that were prevalent for the people of the past. The efforts of the more radical leaning IWW, and their more moderately conservative counterpart, the AFL, contributed to actualized changes implemented in American society in favor of the labor movement.

### Outline of Chapters

The body of historiography as explored in chapter one, is reflective of the traditionally purveyed sentiments held by practitioners of history that have struggled to come to grips with the significant changes that were occurring within a relatively short period of time. For those at the end of the Victorian Era and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a confusion as the emerging ideas clashed with those of the past. Although later works have increasingly implemented newer theories such as Postmodernism which have put these shifts in the greater context that social constructs included those relating to labor are subject to change, and there is an increasing need to look at issues from the vantagepoint of the average person opposed to that of the elites. But, within the body of scholarship over the span of recent years; there is a lacking record of works pertaining to labor that are removed from the dynamics relating issues contemporary to 2022.

There is an idealistic link between considering labor in the past and present which coincide as a result of the deep cultural, social, and economic relationship these facets continually have. Although a re-exploration of labor in the 20th century in terms of how different respective labor advocacy organizations had on this era can yield new perceptions of this time and how to consider it. In the following chapters which explore ‘Perseverance In-Spite of Suppression by the Government,’ ‘Recognizing the Changing Times,’ ‘Keeping Labor Issues Relevant,’ with the combining influences of both the AFL and the IWW respectively; changed the trajectory of labor and America and the world at large. The reforms and changes implemented into the country which was drastically changed by mechanized industrialization’s emergence set forth the new systems that replaced the remnants of the past as it related to the workplace.

## **II. Body of the Paper**

### Chapter One: Historiography

Within the body of historiographical scholarship, the analyses by historians have often viewed labor issues under the prism of concerns pertinent to this era. The dynamic of dramatic changes occurring within a brief period contributed to the fantastic nature of these rapid shifts. Historians often identified that relationships between the various factions of the labor movement, along with business and governmental interests, was related to tensions that were boiling over within the various ‘classes.’ This is a common narrative shared by historians across eras. As the early 20<sup>th</sup> century historians faced unprecedented pace of fast changes, the reaction was to consider the surface level qualities without having the benefit of knowing that these shifts were going to increase in pace opposed to becoming simply a new norm for many years to come. Additionally, the more contemporary historians generally utilized elements of Postmodernism

when considering the developments in the labor movement. This has often yielded ideas relating to class. In Beverly Gage's "Why Violence Matters: Radicalism, Politics, and Class War in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era," it was stated, "Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries experienced the problem of 'class war.'"<sup>12</sup> The description of these events under the category of a 'war' is metaphorically representative of the options at play for the various parties involved to seek an upper gain, whether through 'shock and awe tactics' or on the negotiation table. In terms of looking at the powers at play representing the organized labor movement; the openly aggressive nature of the IWW and the more generally amicable affront of the AFL contributed to the developments in the viewpoint of practitioners of history over previous generations of scholarship

Practitioners of history considering this movement from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond have considered the corollary effects between the violent radicalism that the IWW had engaged in and analyze how this may have turned some segments of society off. It is the case for the west coast particularly, many more extreme leaning elements permeated; and historians have taken note of this in their analyses. It is regarded that, many of the structures in place were under the weight of pressure for the betterment of the 'general' populace or working-class persons. In "Why Violence Matters: Radicalism, Politics, and Class War in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era." Beverly Gage stated, "Radicalism did not extend to the bombings and assassinations that had been so much a part of the public image of radical movements, especially anarchists and Wobblies – during the Gilded Age and the Progressive era."<sup>13</sup> It is noted in works of scholarship

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<sup>12</sup> Beverly Gage, "Why Violence Matters: Radicalism, Politics, and Class War in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era." *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* Vol. 1, No. 1 (2007), 101.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41887565>

<sup>13</sup> Beverly Gage, "Why Violence Matters: Radicalism, Politics, and Class War in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era." 103.

that the dynamic cultivated by the IWW and other aligned groups with these ideological inclinations, presented a threat to reformations not being implemented into the systems of American industry.

The provocative nature of popular culture's response to the IWW and the Wobblies movement has been extrapolated upon within the academic literature on these events. They held a brand of radical activities that also provided ammunition for those with business interests who sought to preserve the status quo. For many individuals within American society not as directly related to 2 activities of mechanized production, they were often turned off by the tactics that elements of the IWW and other likeminded people engaged in during the period. Gage stated, "The often secretive and highly organized campaigns of bombing and assassination carried out by a range of radical individuals and groups – what was, already by 1920, often referred to as left-wing 'terrorism.'"<sup>14</sup> A hyperfocus of these details, as many historians over time have generally engaged with is representative of only part of the larger picture. This was not representative of the labor movement, as there was re-organization and adjustment made by agents of change.

An alternative was offered by the AFL, and other moderately oriented organizations that were prepared to seek their aims with the long term in mind, opposed to expecting a quick result that would reform and change the structures of labor relations within a short time frame as the IWW often expected. The more reserved approach of getting to the negotiation table with business interests and putting a more conservatively oriented public image for the populace made

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<sup>14</sup> Beverly Gage, "Why Violence Matters: Radicalism, Politics, and Class War in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era." *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* Vol. 1, No. 1 (2007), 100.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41887565>

their position look more tenable and realistic for a larger portion of the American society to be inclined to consider. The extreme and severe measure of taking violent actions to achieve means was not an aim that the majority were inclined to come on board with. Although, at the very least such actions garnered a degree of attention and notoriety for the public.

Another component that has featured within the historiographical record is the attention to acts of violence committed by the IWW. This is to establish the legitimacy of opponents of certain wings of the labor movement. Although, in more recent years many of these perceptions have been challenged as historians have re-evaluated whether these alleged events have appropriate sources that corroborate that they occurred. In the Western states particularly, acts of vigilantism were engaged by groups such as the IWW in order to pursue their aims, as explored by Michael Cohen in “‘The Ku Klux Government’: Vigilantism, Lynching, and the Repression of the IWW,”<sup>15</sup> In the years of 1909 to 1914, there were individuals referenced such as the “Wobblies” that engaged in demonstrations called ‘Free Speech Campaigns’ in western cities such as Denver, Fresno, and Spokane.<sup>16</sup> The IWW, arrived in places across this region of the country and focused on organizing migrant workers to advocate for their positions by any means necessary. There were regular skirmishes between the protestors and law enforcement officials that were often tasked with putting down these activities. The form of boycott and protest taken by the AFL differed greatly from this more ‘in your face’ style. For Cohen, as was the case with Gage’s analysis; it is reflective of a narrow focus interested in the tumultuous issues that were created by the IWWs framework which resulted in limited success. Although, when looking at the actual

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Cohen, “‘The Ku Klux Government’: Vigilantism, Lynching, and the Repression of the IWW,” 34.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Cohen, “‘The Ku Klux Government’: Vigilantism, Lynching, and the Repression of the IWW” 35.

longevity of the IWW and the continuance of the more radical wings of the labor movement and their contributions to eventual success, there is more to consider.

The usage of suppressive tactics by government agencies in response to the organized labor movement, or a contrary negotiable response, was often catered and adjusted by the perceived need to have control over the reforming process. In Eric L. Clements “Pragmatic Revolutionaries?: Tactics, Ideologies, and the Western Federation of Miners in the Progressive Era.” he stated, “Americans’ political and economic response to the ascendancy of industrial capitalism remained undecided and much debated a century ago. Like the rest of the world, neither the nation nor the west adjusted smoothly or quietly to the industrial revolution.”<sup>17</sup> As many countries throughout the world responded with these developments by implementing a significantly increased centralized government to meet these demands, the U.S. solution was more gradual and incremental and consisted of long-term negotiations with organizations such as the AFL and the government which were largely peaceful. This is an evident narrative prominent with the historiography but misses the mark as it pertains to the radical labor elements that continued to permeate even following the decline of the IWW because of the First World War. As it related to issues of civil rights, those inclined to have sympathies with the IWW’s message contributed to pushing the AFL more towards it conceptually.

The inability for the IWW to effectively make the necessary adjustments to become more respectable in the eyes of the powers at be contemporary to America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century led to a perception that the group was heading into a period of demise and decline. As a result, the

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<sup>17</sup> Eric L. Clements, “Pragmatic Revolutionaries?: Tactics, Ideologies, and the Western Federation of Miners in the Progressive Era.” *Western Historical Quarterly* 40, No. 4 (2009), 445. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40505518>.

narrative evident within the scholarship is cognizant of it. This was exacerbated by the organization seemingly doubling down on their strategies in terms of engaging with the society at large and attempting to make changes in the community in favor of the laborers.<sup>18</sup> In an analysis by academic John S. Gambs in *The Decline of the IWW*, explores the organization's significant shortcomings in the face of the ineffective seemingly aggressive measures they were engaging in while seeking to fulfill their aims.<sup>19</sup> As an active organization, the IWW was not necessarily at risk of ceasing to exist, although it was losing influence as a notable group within academic and intelligence circles, counting them out as a significant contributor to the labor movement.

The dynamic between the factions of the labor movement that were apparently more inclined to be within the category of extreme did not necessarily engage in behavior and actions that would honestly warrant such a label. A lot of the negative sentiments within the public was formulated by the way the media and governmental bodies treated people that represented groups such as the IWW. This included the prosecution and conviction of individuals that were later revealed to have been innocent. In Centralia Washington on November 11, 1919, there was a scuffle between members of the IWW and the American Legion that resulted in several fatalities.<sup>20</sup> Despite the even nature of the fight, the press and governmental officials levied the blame on the IWW members that were involved in the altercation. A twenty-two year old veteran of World War One named Wesley Everest. In the aftermath of an angry mob arriving at the

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<sup>18</sup> John S. Gambs, *The Decline of the IWW*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1932.

<https://doi.org/10.7312/gamb93294>

<sup>19</sup> John S. Gambs, *The Decline of the IWW*.

<sup>20</sup> Copeland, Tom, "Wesley Everest, IWW Martyr." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* Vol. 77, No. 4 (1986): 122  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40490296>

jailhouse, Everest was hung by the crazed group and allegedly castrated prior to his lynching.<sup>21</sup> The effect of this incident turned Everest into a martyr and served as a rallying cry for many to get involved in the organized labor movement. A sense of excitement and sympathy for Everest's cause had an effect that was contrary to the aims of the interests that sought to silence his voice, and the angry mob that mutilated and murdered him. In contemplating the seemingly downward spiral of the IWW, historians have particularly focused on this event in more recent years as indicative that the longstanding narratives of this era have possibly been incorrectly purveyed for in secondary accounts.

The IWW drew many headlines across the country and garnered interests for labor issues. Although, in an underlying essence the organization was overwhelmingly becoming increasingly restricted and insular as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed. As a result of the narratives and stereotypes surrounding the organization, it was reflective of people who had skepticism about the actual benefit it could provide; even those who were interested in the labor movement. This is the narrative ascribed by historians such as David M. Rabban's "The IWW Free Speech Fights Popular Conceptions of Free Expression before World War I," the failure for the organization to appear to adjust in the formal sense is explored.<sup>22</sup> In terms of those not involved with mechanized industry, large scale agrarian labor, or the management of these respective businesses themselves, any sort of relationship or attempt to develop ties with the IWW was not sensible given perceptions.<sup>23</sup> The AFL was an alternative to fill this role from many historians'

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<sup>21</sup> Tom Copeland, "Wesley Everest, IWW Martyr.": 125.

<sup>22</sup> David M. Rabban, "The IWW Free Speech Fights and Popular Conceptions of Free Expression before World War I." *Virginia Law Review* 80, No. 5 (1994): 1055-1158.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1073625>.

<sup>23</sup> David M. Rabban, "The IWW Free Speech Fights and Popular Conceptions of Free Expression before World War I." 1068.



perspectives. They sought reforms and changes to the structures relating to labor. Although, their proposals aimed for a more slow and incremental push to changes over an extended period. Additionally, the AFL was not questioning and aiming to change the America's major social, cultural, and even economic status quo; at least not in the short-term frame of reference. As a result, the AFL has been understandingly perceived as representing a more reasonable end of the labor movement.

Historians have identified feelings of complacency within the AFL, and respect for the more aggressive tactics of the IWW that more so seemed to be on the forefront was symbolic of an acknowledgement many had, that the management of businesses and their favored representatives in government were attempting to undercut potential successes and unity amongst the people making up the working-class sphere. In "A Theory of Labor Market Segmentation, Michael Reich, David M. Gordon, and Richard C. Edwards stated, "Firms were segmenting their internal labor markets, similar efforts were under way with respect to the firm's external relations. Employers quite consciously exploited race, ethnic, and sex antagonism in order to undercut unionism and break strikes."<sup>24</sup> In response to this the AFL cultivated an agenda that focused on the white male working class, while leaving out minority groups and women. In contrary to this the IWW sought reforms for the society. These differing approaches benefited the movement's development while simultaneously presenting increased challenges. Although, this is the reality of identity interests and how they relate to formulating a political cause.

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Reich; David M Gordon; Richard C. Edwards, "A Theory of Labor Market Segmentation." *The American Economic Review* 63, No. 2, Papers and Proceedings of the Eighty-fifth Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association (1973), 359.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1817097>.

Importantly, there has been scholarship interested in considering the divisiveness that had been cultivated by various actors and interests seeking to preserve their power. This includes the exploration of employers that actively aimed at expanding upon ethnic differences amongst their labor pools and create divisions that would inhibit and limit the possibility to effectively unify and organize for changes. Reich, Gordon, and Edwards stated, “The manipulation of ethnic differences was, however, subject to two grave limitations as a tool in the strategy of ‘divide and conquer.’”<sup>25</sup> The United States was one of the first industrially developed countries to have a diverse populace make up its society. In terms of the plans of those in business management, they aimed at preserving their control over the country’s financial systems. The process of effectively running a factory or mill required a large labor pool that was needed to properly maintain this. Additionally, there was a need for extensive control over the worker and an imploration to ensure that their laborers did not exert their power in a way that they would take a degree of influence and control over themselves. To counter this, business leadership looked to the multi-ethnic makeup of the American working class as a strategy to seize the initiative and influence for themselves. The National Civic Organization, or NCF was formed in 1900 as a collection of consumer, ownership, and laborer participation. Although, this group leaned toward the management interests and was used as a tool for those in power to create an idea that the workers were getting opportunities and participation that were not necessarily representative of the reality on the ‘ground.’<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Michael Reich; David M Gordon; Richard C. Edwards, “A Theory of Labor Market Segmentation.” *The American Economic Review* 63, No. 2, Papers and Proceedings of the Eighty-fifth Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association (1973), 360-361.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1817097>.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Reich; David M Gordon; Richard C. Edwards, “A Theory of Labor Market Segmentation.” 360.

In “The Industrial Workers of the World and the Unemployed in Edmonton and Calgary in the Depression of 1913-1915,” by David Schulze, the longstanding narrative within the historiographical record as it related to considering the radical and provocative actions of those in the labor movement, such as the IWW is challenged.<sup>27</sup> For Schulze, there is much more to consider when putting the labor movement into perspective than merely the alleged actions that had regularly made headlines for their provocative nature. This was additionally placed within a more global context, in that it considers Canada, which subsequently places the increasingly more internationally inclined world into the larger context. The Industrial Revolution itself expanded the frameworks beyond the borders of the U.S., and nearby Canada stood as an example of this adjustment period from an early standpoint. There has long been a tendency to cover even more moderately oriented groups such as the AFL to focus on aspects of the organization that had permeated over the generations that placed these groups in a negative light.

Although, there is increased complexity to these dynamics in consideration of the events from a purview removed from the bias and questionable evidence presented by interests that had a vested interest in preserving a status quo that would be more favorable for business interests. In his analysis Schulze stated, “To the extent that the historiography of the IWW has gone beyond narrative, the major texts have judged the organization’s ideology less important than its actions, which represented the extension of the benefits of trade unionism to the previously unorganized.”<sup>28</sup> Schulze and other historians that re-evaluated this movement in the late 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> David Schulze, “The Industrial Workers of the World and the Unemployed in Edmonton and Calgary in the Depression of 1913-1915.” *Labour / Le Travail* 25 (1990): 47-75  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25143340>

<sup>28</sup> David Schulze, “The Industrial Workers of the World and the Unemployed in Edmonton and Calgary in the Depression of 1913-1915.” *Labour / Le Travail* 25 (1990): 47.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25143340>

century and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries introduced a new train of thought within the historiography. This is not necessarily a unanimous opinion held within scholarship across the board but has been building in more recent trends.

Schulze considers the interpretation of an event that occurred on December 30, 1914 in Calgary Canada, which consisted of a demonstration that included the participation of a couple hundred activists.<sup>29</sup> It was represented within previous scholarship that this event was describable as out of control and riot like in nature. Although, in Schulze's estimation it was actually a generally peaceful demonstration in which many workers, many of which were immigrants came together and voiced concerns with regards to their working conditions and demanded better support.<sup>30</sup> The police took an aggressive stance against the protestors that were discussing labor issues and listening to speeches by activists that had come to the location to express their views for change.<sup>31</sup> The actions of the police of forcibly dispersing the protestors was itself a violent action. Nevertheless, the previously held narrative, as was the case with other events that occurred with regards to the activities related to labor activism, presented a narrative that was conducive towards the business interests and the narrative that they had aimed to put forward in terms of describing what occurred during these moments.<sup>32</sup> Although, a re-exploration of these events with the utilization of new lenses and perspectives such as Postmodernism which

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<sup>29</sup> David Schulze, "The Industrial Workers of the World and the Unemployed in Edmonton and Calgary in the Depression of 1913-1915." *Labour / Le Travail* 25 (1990): 57.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25143340>

<sup>30</sup> David Schulze, "The Industrial Workers of the World and the Unemployed in Edmonton and Calgary in the Depression of 1913-1915." *Labour / Le Travail* 25 (1990): 57. 0

<sup>31</sup> Schulze, David. "The Industrial Workers of the World and the Unemployed in Edmonton and Calgary in the Depression of 1913-1915.": 57-58.

<sup>32</sup> Robert MacPherson, "Antisystemic Movement Analysis: Tracing the World-Scale Determinants of Syndicalism." *Social Problems* Vol. 65, No. 4 (2018): 491-515.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26990964>

attempts to reconsider events with skepticism towards those historically in power and favor to the historically marginalized; a new viewpoint is permeated.

Interpretations regarding syndicalism, which effectively transferred power for the means of production from the business owners to the labor unions. For earlier scholarship, the interpretation of such aims was influenced by the sentiment that suggested that such aims were too radical and unreasonable expectations. Although, in his analysis Macpherson sets out to expose this previously held position to be rooted in the ideology of antisemitism that had previously been common in American society and left an impact within the record of scholarship.<sup>33</sup> The narrative that business interests attempted to push forward to the American people through media and government interests that they lobbied through was made possible by using their positions of influence and power. Although, MacPherson along with other more recent works of scholarship have re-evaluated.

An essential deviation between the more recent train of thought on the labor movement comparatively between the position of scholars such as MacPherson and earlier practitioners of history, is the legitimacy of the involved parties advocating for reforms and their actual actions and policies towards promoting changed; opposed to the perceptions and stories that have persisted regarding them. In his analysis MacPherson stated, “Contemporary movement research, much work was done simply to demonstrate that movements are coherent social phenomena.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Robert MacPherson “Antisystemic Movement Analysis: Tracing the World-Scale Determinants of Syndicalism.” *Social Problems* Vol. 65, No. 4 (2018): 491-515.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26990964>

<sup>34</sup> Robert MacPherson “Antisystemic Movement Analysis: Tracing the World-Scale Determinants of Syndicalism.” *Social Problems* Vol. 65, No. 4 (2018): 492.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26990964>

This was an inconvenient reality for the business interests contemporary to the labor movement, though this was identified by MacPherson in his analysis.

In contrary to the longstanding narratives that those within the frameworks of the IWW or the AFL that considered them to be categorically syndicates in their philosophical orientations were well organized and set up demonstrations that were often nonviolent actions that came in the forms of practices such as strikes.<sup>35</sup> This differed from the idea that they were unhinged dangerous radicals who sought sabotage and other means of violent change in the name of ideas that were foundationally based on standpoints which were conceptually rooted within antisemitic ideas that business interests saw as a potential avenues to manipulate the American people to move away from an apparently ostracized labor movement whose positions were not tenable for their interests.<sup>36</sup>

Aims to effectively discredit the reputational integrity of not only the groups representing the labor movement, but the ideologies themselves that were favorable to their cause have been fading with time as new lenses and perspectives have become the predominant trains of thought as it relates to understanding this movement from a foundational context. For historians such as MacPherson, an understanding of the purview respective of the historically marginalized, with a skepticism towards the viewpoints that had traditionally held weight as it related to trying to make a sense of society from a sociological context has become more sophisticated of looking at issues from a diverse standpoint, while the prejudices that were commonly held norms of the past

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<sup>35</sup> Robert MacPherson, "Antisystemic Movement Analysis: Tracing the World-Scale Determinants of Syndicalism." *Social Problems* Vol. 65, No. 4 (2018): 495.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26990964>

<sup>36</sup> Robert MacPherson, "Antisystemic Movement Analysis: Tracing the World-Scale Determinants of Syndicalism." *Social Problems* Vol. 65, No. 4 (2018): 495.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26990964>

have faded away as they have become increasingly outdated as a result of the important breakthroughs of postmodernist theory, and even postcolonial theory which have provided practitioners of history a greater degree of skepticism as it related to the commonly held pillars that have influenced sentiments in the past. This is important to note as it relates to labor, as people within lower socio-economic positions have often been in a position of marginalization and lack of empathy within the sphere of the industrial age and beyond.

The eventual success of the labor movement in its totality had an effective contribution in reforming America as it related to the workplace. Although, a lot of scholarship in the record tends to expound upon failures in the west, while there was success in the east. There were radical activities associated with the IWW and their so-called ‘Wobblies,’ that had a profound effect on the West coast of the country. Contrary to their counterparts, the AFL had been gaining connections and networks with a deep foundation in the east coast, and the Midwest even before the turn to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The IWW was failing to gain inroads because of their own volition to a large extent. In “The Industrial Workers of the World: A West Coast Perspective,” James Pruitt stated, “The western Wobblies did not comprehend that in industrial unionism required the same day-to-day, member-service activity that the AFL provided. Their suspicion that collective bargaining was a form of compromise with the ‘master class hindered development. Strikes were essentially agitation and harassment.”<sup>37</sup> For many historians, the IWW as an organization was being left behind because of their inability to appropriately adapt. Although, the individual activists, and members themselves were able to contribute to the

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<sup>37</sup> James Pruitt, “The Industrial Workers of the World: A West Coast Perspective.” *Perspectives on Work* Vol. 10, No. 2 (2007), 43.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23272131>

progressive movement's furthered development in the broader sense when looking at the movement from the greater picture.

In the record of historiography, the IWW has been described as an organization with ineffective strategy, and eventual gains within the labor movement were mostly the product of the AFL and moderately minded activists. Nevertheless, the IWW and the radically inclined participants in the movement played a role that went beyond the mere membership rates of the organization itself. The labor movement rather re-adjusted and evolved to the new factors presented by the negative sentiments that permeated in large segments of the American population because of the public relations image communicated to communities across the country during the World War One era. Considering the available primary source evidence, labor reforms were made possible through the efforts of the more extremely included activities, and the more moderately conservative approaches. The implementation and introduction of new lenses and perspectives has offered important new insights that have allowed the foundation for future scholarship that will continuously evaluate and scrutinize the available evidence and yield new conclusions and takeaways from what occurred during the labor movement and what it means within the greater context of human history.

## Chapter Two: Perseverance In-spite of Suppression by the Government

The road for more fair laws relating to labor in America was paved by a simultaneous effort of interests that engaged in tactics that invoked a response by the government. For the later, the more moderate leaning parties engaged in a more diplomatic approach which cultivated an environment in which business interests found to be tolerable. This dichotomy presents a picture of two very different forms of activism that elicited uniquely independent responses by those who held power in business and the governing institutions in power. There were complex



dynamics between various factions across the labor movement, business administration, and government bureaucracy that admitted to the need for changes to be implemented in the future but were more inclined to listen to what was put forth by the AFL over the IWW. In places such as San Diego in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the city council had a degree of sympathy for many of the IWW's demand. Although, they nevertheless gave a degree of resistance that included complicating the IWW's ability to organize by implementing ordinances that would allow them to publicly demonstrate.<sup>38</sup>

Relationships between the various factions of the labor movement and business and governmental interests were related to tensions that were boiling over within the various 'classes.' The groups that people were essentially in a conflict with each other over influence and power. For Harrison George, a senior leader in the Communist Party of the United States, and IWW affiliate in a document titled, "Is Freedom Dead?"<sup>39</sup> The description of these events under the category of a 'war' is metaphorically representative of the options at play for the various parties involved to seek an upper gain whether through 'shock and awe tactics' or on the negotiation table. In terms of looking at the powers at play representing the organized labor movement; the more openly aggressive nature of the IWW and the more generally amicable affront of the AFL contributed to the developments.

This was a period that included challenges imposed in the society that stemmed from terrorist attacks with a root in extremist sentiment for proponents of the labor movement specifically. For the west coast particularly, many more extreme leaning elements resulting from the movement of people with more fringe ideas that did not necessarily take on a strong root on

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<sup>38</sup> George Harrison, "Is Freedom Dead?" (Chicago: IWW Publishing Bureau, 1918), 5.

<sup>39</sup> George Harrison, "Is Freedom Dead?" (Chicago: IWW Publishing Bureau, 1918), 5.

the east coast had been permeating for a period. As a result, many of the structures that were in place were placed under the weight of pressure for the betterment of the 'general' populace or working-class persons. There were acts throughout this period that could be considered as under the realm of radicalism, particularly through the activities of the Wobblies. Although, this was not necessarily through acts of terrorism such as assassination or property damage that was historically correlated with such activities.<sup>40</sup> The dynamic cultivated by the IWW and other aligned groups with these ideological inclinations, presented the threat of reformations not being implemented into the systems of American industry.

Although this also provided ammunition for those with business interests who sought to preserve the status quo. For many individuals within American society not as directly related to the activities of mechanized production were often turned off by the tactics that elements of the IWW and other likeminded people engaged in during the period. This often permeated in acts of left-wing terrorism that included violence to achieve goals as referenced in sociologist Philip Taft's mid-century commentary, "Violence in American Labor Disputes."<sup>41</sup> The work was produced approximately a decade into the AFL's 1955 re-orientation. There are media stories presenting a narrative in support of business ownership that was stimulated and convinced by the significantly violent nature of many of the activities that was vested with the labor movement were involved in. This was not representative of the labor movement as a whole. An alternative was offered by the AFL and other moderately oriented organizations that were prepared to seek their aims with the long term in mind, opposed to expecting a quick result that would reform and change the structures of labor relations within a short time frame as the IWW often expected.

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<sup>40</sup> Harrison George, "Is Freedom Dead?" (Chicago: IWW Publishing Bureau, 1918), 5.

<sup>41</sup> Philip Taft, "Violence in American Labor Disputes," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 364 (March 1966): 127-140.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1039563>.

The more reserved approach of getting to the negotiation table with business interests and putting a more conservatively oriented public image for the populace made their position look more tenable and realistic for a larger portion of the American society to be interested and inclined to consider. The extreme and severe measure of taking violent actions to achieve means was not an aim that the majority were inclined to come on board with. Although, at the very least such actions garnered a degree of attention and notoriety for the public.

The usage of tactics that included imprisonment were a tactic utilized by governmental officials against groups that were perceived to be troublesome. This was the case with the Everett Massacre, which resulted in the deaths of IWW activists that were seeking better work conditions.<sup>42</sup> A local Seattle newspaper article covered details pertaining to the aftermath of the 1916 riots in, “Everett Prisoners’ Defense Committee urges organization and protest against the jailing of members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) following the Everett Massacre, November 1916,”<sup>43</sup> Although the blame within the sphere of mass media placed the blame on the IWW, it was later revealed by released subsequent evidence that agents of the government that included a detective and spy had been responsible for the spiraling out of control violence that permeated.<sup>44</sup>

In response to the significant attacks launched by institutions with power within American society on the IWW, the response by labor activists was to ban to show strength in the face of these challenges being revealed. The response by government officials was to backtrack and re-allocate

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<sup>42</sup> Everett Prisoners’ Defense Committee urges organization and protest against the jailing of members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) following the Everett Massacre, November 1916,” Pacific Northwest Historical Documents, University of Washington Libraries. Special Collections, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.29381830>.

<sup>43</sup> “Everett Prisoners’ Defense Committee urges organization and protest against the jailing of members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) following the Everett Massacre, November 1916,”

<sup>44</sup> “Everett Prisoners’ Defense Committee urges organization and protest against the jailing of members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) following the Everett Massacre, November 1916,”

their position regarding the manner. For the mayor of Seattle, H.C. Gill came forward with criticisms towards those that had pressed him and his city administration from not being more aggressive in terms of disciplining the IWW and the ‘Wobblies’ from engaging in the strike activities that led to the ‘Everett Massacre’ in the first place. The mayor additionally directed supplies and assistance be directly provided to the jailed activists. In the locally published newspaper article contemporary to the event it stated, “Mayor H.C. Gill yesterday afternoon personally directed the carrying of 300 warm blankets and an assortment of tobacco to the 250 prisoners now held in the city jail.”<sup>45</sup> This dramatic shift in response by the leadership interests whose authority was at least theoretically above the management of the business’s, was a result of the work and activism for the IWW and labor movement activists to successfully take the effective efforts to reclaim the narrative and place pressure on their opposition for change even in the aftermath and face of an apparent defeat.

There were additionally sentiments within the American populace itself that opposed the acts of aggression which were taken against protestors at times. This included the response within the popular society in the aftermath of the Everett Massacre. The Seattle mayor Gill in the aftermath of the events that transpired stated, “The men who met the IWW’s at the boat were a bunch of cowards. They outnumbered the IWWs five to one, and in spite of this they stood there on the dock and fired into the boat, IWW’s innocent passengers and all.”<sup>46</sup> As with other scenarios that consisted of clashes between groups representing the labor movement and those standing as a barrier of business interests; there was a difference between the narrative that was put forth with regards to what

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<sup>45</sup> “Everett Prisoners’ Defense Committee urges organization and protest against the jailing of members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) following the Everett Massacre, November 1916,” Pacific Northwest Historical Documents, University of Washington Libraries. Special Collections, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.29381830>.

<sup>46</sup> “Everett Prisoners’ Defense Committee urges organization and protest against the jailing of members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) following the Everett Massacre, November 1916.”

happened through the guise of the management, and what actually happened in terms of considering the situation from a more impartial perspective.

The Mayor of Seattle additionally stated, “McRae and his deputies had no legal right to tell the IWW’s or anyone else that they could not land there. When the Sherriff put his hand on the butt of his gun and told them they could not land, he fired the first shot, in the eyes of the law, and the IWW’s can claim that they shot in self-defense.”<sup>47</sup> In the aftermath of significant pressures that were placed on the governmental systems in support of the labor movement, members of the municipal government within Seattle that included the mayor’s office adjusted their position. This is representative of sentiments that were prevalent within the society. There were efforts to create a narrative that was supportive of the businesses and the garnering of negative sentiments by the IWW and other labor activists by an attempt to reflect them being illogical and violent. Although, persistence and resilience by members of the movement to rise above the force that was used against them which included death, jailing, and censorship; they nevertheless persisted and pressed on with their cause.

The spirit and confidence that was predominant within the mindset of many labor activists was reflective in the literature put forth such as *The Scarlet Review, an Industrial Workers of the World* , which was distributed as a pamphlet.<sup>48</sup> The document states, “You accuse me of having violated law and order. What matters this alleged law and order to me, to whom it has been only disastrous.”<sup>49</sup> The literature that was permeated through their communication and public relations elicited an

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<sup>47</sup> “Everett Prisoners’ Defense Committee urges organization and protest against the jailing of members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) following the Everett Massacre, November 1916,” Pacific Northwest Historical Documents, University of Washington Libraries. Special Collections, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.29381830>.

<sup>48</sup> Industrial Workers of the World, *The Scarlet Review, an Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) booklet*, probably between 1918 and 1919, University of Washington Libraries. Special Collections, Equity Printing Company, 1919. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.29381886>.

<sup>49</sup> Industrial Workers of the World, *The Scarlet Review, an Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) booklet*.

approach of defiance in the face of the challenges that faced them. Albeit this openness to speak openly about engaging in acts of open defiance often had ideas related to violence. Although, this was nevertheless a successful strategy in terms of maintaining posture and a sense of order in response to the tactics utilized against the movement. It was often organized around the attempt to weaken the IWW, and other more radically inclined labor organizations that was seeking to achieve significant inroads in making changes as it related to the workplace.

The AFL in its earlier years before its dramatic re-alignment and reconfiguration in 1955 was very different comparatively to what it became. This was explored by T.S. Williams in 1906 during a significant response to the labor movement that was in the process of rapidly gaining prominence as an important facet of work in America.<sup>50</sup> In similarity with tumultuous scenarios that unfolded between the IWW and the forces of business interests; throughout the country there were clashes at events aiming at bringing relevance and attention to the labor movement. There were attempts to provoke labor activists to counter and garner a response with a narrative that would be conducive for a reply. Although, this was often levied through various means of available mass communication via forms of media that were maturing and becoming more realized; with a lacking a factual basis in terms of the activities that actually happened<sup>51</sup>

In light of the allegations that the labor movement was inclined to have a violent and aggressive nature, T.S. Williams identified that the available data contemporary to 1904 to 1912 study by researcher Slason Thompson, indicated that violence that was occurring throughout the country in situations that related to labor activism and reforms to the workforce was more commonly the

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<sup>50</sup> T. S. Adams, "Violence in Labor Disputes," *Publications of the American Economic Association* 3rd Series, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1906), 176-206.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2999972>.

<sup>51</sup> T. S. Adams, "Violence in Labor Disputes," 184.

consequence of behaviors of business interests, rather than organizations such as the AFL.<sup>52</sup> Williams stated, “Comparatively speaking, violence in labor disputes is not widespread, although they do not-at least on their face- bear out his contention that the employer and the employer’s agents are responsible for most the violence.”<sup>53</sup> This dynamic was identified and internalized by not only those with interests in changing labor dynamics, but the larger society at a relatively early stage in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although, it would not have the effect on dramatically putting an end to the labor movement as a legitimate societal cause, it did call for those with such interests to make tough choices in terms of planning for the long term. The response by labor activists was largely to double down in their positions in the face of opposition which was presented by the vested interests of power within the companies’ management.

T.S. Adams additionally identified that developments within American society going into the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were not experiencing the degrees of violence and upheaval some proponents of hysterically leaning sentiments were attempting to convey.<sup>54</sup> There was also the push of views by business interests that activism through the usage of ‘strikes’ were new. Although, there were such activities in the country since the late 1700s and throughout the 1800s.<sup>55</sup> The ideas that these dynamics were new and unprecedented were essentially fear mongering that tried to place such activities as unparalleled in nature, and a threat to the peace and order within the society. There was also the takeaway from various travelers to the U.S. during this period that the activists engaging in strikes were well mannered and dressed, opposed to the picture that some elements of business

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<sup>52</sup> T. S. Adams, Violence in Labor Disputes, *Publications of the American Economic Association* 3rd Series, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1906), 177.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2999972>.

<sup>53</sup> T. S. Adams, Violence in Labor Disputes, *Publications of the American Economic Association* 3rd Series, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1906), 178.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2999972>.

<sup>54</sup> T. S. Adams, “Violence in Labor Disputes.” 184-185.

<sup>55</sup> T. S. Adams, “Violence in Labor Disputes.”185.

management tried to depict them as.<sup>56</sup> The ability of labor activists including those within the AFL during the early years; had a great ability to overcome and resist narratives that were placed on them which were often not indicative of the realities granted the available evidence of the activities which were going during this era. A resiliency to push through these challenges was fundamental in the eventual accomplishments and achievements by the labor activists worked over the span of generations to achieve important societal changes.

In the Western states particularly, groups such as the IWW engaged acts of vigilantism to pursue their aims.<sup>57</sup> In the years of 1909 to 1914, there were individuals referenced as the “Wobblies” that engaged in demonstrations called ‘Free Speech Campaigns’ in western cities such as Denver, Fresno, and Spokane.<sup>58</sup> The IWW, arrived in places across this region of the country and focused on organizing migrant workers to advocate for their positions by any means necessary. Regular skirmishes between the protestors and law enforcement officials were often tasked with putting down these activities. The form of boycott and protest taken by the AFL differed greatly from this more ‘in your face’ style. The officially published works set forth by the organization such as the *Proceedings of the American Federation of Labor* which consisted of reports that the group was engaged in throughout the country.

It additionally would go into particulars with regards to what sub-factions it would publicly endorse and calling out others which were not staying the course with the mission of the AFL; “The committee on Labels reports favorability upon the reindorsement of the union stamp

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<sup>56</sup> T. S. Adams, Violence in Labor Disputes, *Publications of the American Economic Association* 3rd Series, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1906), 185.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2999972>.

<sup>57</sup> Harrison George, “Is Freedom Dead?” (Chicago: IWW Publishing Bureau, 1918), 5.

<sup>58</sup> Harrison George, “Is Freedom Dead?” (Chicago: IWW Publishing Bureau, 1918), 5.



of the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union."<sup>59</sup> Additionally, decisions regarding the organization and process of engaging in activist activity were integrally formulated by the organization's central command that actively sought for the AFL and their chapters to maintain a posture that coincided with their aims. In *Proceedings of the American Federation of Labor*, "It was moved that so much of the resolution as refers to boycott be referred to the Executive council to take the usual course."<sup>60</sup> This included an active engagement with ideas that the society had an interest in. The President of the AFL organization from 1895 to 1924 would incorporate extensive religious ideals into his public speeches such as his introduction for James C. Keller, the head of the National Letter Carriers' Association at an AFL event.<sup>61</sup> In contrary to a placing mere pressure on the social and cultural constructions that many people placed a great deal of value on, they made an effort to develop and placate their strategy around effectively creating a narrative and set of arguments in support of their propositions with the consideration of the society's interests. This form of negotiation was essential in reconfiguring the conversation away from controversy that can arise with challenging the status quo, and rather promoting one's viewpoints with a greater degree of ease.

The usage of suppressive tactics by government agencies in response to the organized labor movements or a contrary negotiable response, was often catered an adjusted by the perceived need to have control over the reforming process. The power largely lay with business ownership and governmental organizations that held the authority to levy governmental

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<sup>59</sup> *American Convention of the American Federation of Labor*. Washington DC: Allied Printing, 1902. 177.

<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=xIUrAQAAIAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA3&dq=american+federation+of+labor&ots=ZismUhwAUL&sig=STDajoemqW5V41Ecmlzn1wgHvk#v=onepage&q=american%20federation%20of%20labor&r&f=false>

<sup>60</sup> *American Convention of the American Federation of Labor*. 177.

<sup>61</sup> *American Convention of the American Federation of Labor*. 180.

restrictions. In the years since the industrial revolution emerged, the business interests consistently adjusted their stances and sought their options on the negotiation table so that they could minimize the increasing rights of the workers and a surrender of big business as the sole controlling entity. This was a survival tactic that was essential for the survival of capitalism in America as the social and cultural structures within society were behind the economic shifts that had been in play; because of the technological innovation that completely revolutionized the means of production and the order for society at large. In 1908 work by Charles Emil Strageland, “The Preliminaries to the Labor War in Colorado,” in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century regions of America that had been historically under the category of the American west were gaining a new sense of identity, standards, and expectations in the workplace in terms of support from both their employers and governing agencies.<sup>62</sup> As many countries throughout the world responded with these developments by implementing a significantly increased centralized government to meet these demands, the U.S. solution was more gradual and incremental and consisted of long-term negotiations with organizations such as the AFL and the government which were largely peaceful.

The inability for the IWW to effectively make the necessary adjustments to become more respectable in the eyes of the powers at be contemporary to America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century led to a perception that the group was heading into a period of demise and decline. This was exacerbated by the organization seemingly double down on their strategies in terms of engaging

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<sup>62</sup> Charles Emil Strageland, “The Preliminaries to the Labor War in Colorado,” *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 23, No. 1 (1908), 1-17.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2140939>.

with the society at large and attempting to make changes in society in favor of the laborers.<sup>63</sup> This was reflected in an analysis by academic John S. Gambs in *The Decline of the IWW*, explored the organizations significant shortcomings in the face of the ineffective seemingly aggressive measures they were engaging in while seeking to fulfill their aims.<sup>64</sup> As an active organization the IWW was not necessarily at risk of ceasing to exist, although it was losing influence as a notable group as academic and intelligence circles were counting them out as a significant contributor to the labor movement.

‘Wobblies’ active on the west coast of the US embodied the IWW’s resilience to make a difference despite the suppressive tactics used by the government and even the media to hold a sense of control. This was empowered by the business interests that these various institutions related to.<sup>65</sup> On the surface the IWW was facing a blow in that almost two dozen of its members were arrested and were facing criminal charges because of their ‘in your face style’ activism; but this organized tactic was maintained following the arrest and re-postured to continue to illicit support and attention from the broader society during the resulting legal proceedings. Although, the media was engaging in a campaign with an effort to discredit the organization, its members, and their audacious aims. The media falling in line with the interests of businesses and factions within the government that sought to preserve the status quo, the IWW was subjected to structural suppression. This is a vitally important aspect of the struggle of organized labor that was effectively the reality simultaneously to alternatives that were more so based in an aim to be negotiable.

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<sup>63</sup> John S. Gambs, *The Decline of the IWW*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1932.

<https://doi.org/10.7312/gamb93294>

<sup>64</sup> John S. Gambs, *The Decline of the IWW*.

<sup>65</sup> John S. Gambs, *The Decline of the IWW*.

The dynamic between the factions of the labor movement that were apparently more inclined to be within the category of extreme did not necessarily engage in behavior and actions that would honestly warrant such a label. A lot of the negative sentiments within the public was formulated by the way the media and governmental bodies treated people that represented groups such as the IWW. This included the prosecution and conviction of individuals that were later revealed to have been innocent. In Centralia Washington on November 11, 1919, there was a scuffle between members of the IWW and the American Legion that resulted in several fatalities.<sup>66</sup> Despite the even nature of the fight, the press and governmental officials levied the blame on the IWW members that were involved in the altercation. A twenty-two-year-old veteran of World War One named Wesley Everest. In the aftermath of an angry mob arriving at the jailhouse, Everest was hung by the crazed group and allegedly castrated prior to his lynching.<sup>67</sup> The effect of this incident turned Everest into a martyr and served as a rallying cry for many to get involved in the organized labor movement. A sense of excitement and sympathy for Everest's cause had an effect that was contrary to the aims of the interests that sought to silence him and the angry mob that mutilated and murdered him.

The IWW drew many headlines across the country and garnered interests for labor issues. Although, in an underlying essence the organization was overwhelmingly becoming increasingly restricted and insular as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed. As a result of the narratives and stereotypes that surrounded the organization, people had skepticism with regards to the actual benefit it could provide; even for the standpoint for those who had an interest in the labor movement. In

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<sup>66</sup> Luke May papers, UW Libraries, Accessed September, 15, 2022. <https://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:80444/xv26400>.

<sup>67</sup> Luke May papers.

terms of those not involved with mechanized industry, large scale agrarian labor, or the management of these respective businesses themselves, any sort of relationship or attempt to develop ties with the IWW was not sensible given perceptions. The AFL was seen as a practical alternative to fill this role. They sought reforms and changes to the structures relating to labor. Although, their proposals aimed for a more slow and incremental push to changes over an extended period. Additionally, the AFL was not questioning and aiming to change the major social, cultural, and even economic status quo of America; at least in the short-term frame of reference.

The need for organization and cooperation was recognized as a key component to the movement's success by the AFL from an early standpoint by the organization's leadership and subsequent planning as discussed in Morton Aldrich' *The American Federation of Labor*, in 1898.<sup>68</sup> Aldrich stated, "So much success as trade unions in the United States have as yet attained is due in considerable measure to their combination for concerted action. Before 1850 a trade union seldom extended beyond the members of a trade in a single town."<sup>69</sup> This trend continued throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> and into the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. As other organizations that leaned more on the fringes failed to make the necessary adjustments, the AFL in a general sense took the necessary steps to make themselves a tenable and reasonable option for people in the American populace. Their more conservative approach may have not

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<sup>68</sup> Morton Arnold Aldrich, *The American Federation of Labor*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1898. [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=jVQXAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA217&dq=american+federation+of+labor&ots=g7-abHNLtY&sig=NGihjaqtnLc-uY\\_DjNqAehGtEas#v=onepage&q=american%20federation%20of%20labor&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=jVQXAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA217&dq=american+federation+of+labor&ots=g7-abHNLtY&sig=NGihjaqtnLc-uY_DjNqAehGtEas#v=onepage&q=american%20federation%20of%20labor&f=false)

<sup>69</sup> Aldrich, Morton Arnold. *The American Federation of Labor*, 219.

been what many reformers were looking for, though this was at least a step in the direction that many aimed for in terms of modernizing the society.

The AFL additionally played into the interests of the society's majority while putting forth the façade that it was encouraging a sense of diversity. From an early standpoint of the organization's history in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, their collection of unions that became members of their group covered a wide array of different trades and disciplines, and this was an important aspect of the narrative that was put forth by the organization's narrative toward the public. Aldrich stated, "The workmen who are united through these trade unions in the American Federation of Labor are in other respects by no means homogeneous."<sup>70</sup> At the same time the AFL was open in that some regions, particularly in the Southeast; African Americans were left out from being admitted as members of the group.<sup>71</sup> This was a significant contrast from the IWW's confident aims of pursuing issues relating to the labor movement, while also being open to engaging with and showing support for other issues that people were facing. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and even more increasingly during the 20<sup>th</sup> century; issues pertaining to the rights of racial and ethnic minorities became increasingly important to the American people. The IWW moved in a fashion that was too fast for many elements within the country, while the AFL pursued this in a way that would not create a hostile reaction. Nevertheless, in terms of effectively holding to liberal and progressive values, the AFL fell short for many with this regard. It was the prerogative for the AFL to stick with 'dinner table' subjects that were perceived to not be as eye opening and threatening to the status quo that many perceived to be of great importance. Aldrich stated,

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<sup>70</sup> Morton Arnold Aldrich, *The American Federation of Labor*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1898. 225. [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=jVQXAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA217&dq=american+federation+of+labor&ots=g7-abHNLtY&sig=NGihjaqtnLc-uY\\_DjNqAehGtEas#v=onepage&q=american%20federation%20of%20labor&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=jVQXAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA217&dq=american+federation+of+labor&ots=g7-abHNLtY&sig=NGihjaqtnLc-uY_DjNqAehGtEas#v=onepage&q=american%20federation%20of%20labor&f=false)

<sup>71</sup> Aldrich, Morton Arnold. *The American Federation of Labor*, 226.

“Workmen believe that this increased demand for labor under the eight-hour system will help counteract the immediate effect of the rapid introduction of machinery, which operates to throw workmen out of employment not only directly, but, as they believe, indirectly also, by causing overproduction and industrial depression.”<sup>72</sup> This strategy was relatively effective for the AFL to establish itself as a mainstream option for those interested in the organized labor movement in comparison to more radically inclined options such as the IWW. The AFL sought to focus solely on changing the dynamics of labor in America while maintaining relatively conservative oriented posture in terms of other issues that society was going through.

The government’s reaction to the radical elements of the labor movement and response to the moderate and/or conservative wing was vastly different. At the essence of their intentions was the imploration to preserve the status quo that business interests had invested money in keeping in place. The AFL wanted real changes to the US economic systems but was nevertheless willing to ‘play the long term’ opposed to the quick and more immediate results that others were interested in accomplishing. The front put forth by the AFL that was conciliatory in nature was perceived by the powers at be to reach the threshold of sufficient grounds to be open at the table of negotiations and a willingness to give up some elements of their preferences to keep the capitalist system in place that was potentially at threat of falling through if necessary. Although, extensive reforms were not implemented. At the same time the more radical nature of the IWW that not only sought fast changes as it related to the labor movement, but also interest in issues of equity throughout the various facets of American culture was extended to a point that many within the American society contemporary to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century were not

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<sup>72</sup> Morton Arnold Aldrich, *The American Federation of Labor*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1898. 242.[https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=jVQXAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA217&dq=american+federation+of+labor&ots=g7-abHNLtY&sig=NGihjaqtNLC-uY\\_DjNqAehGtEas#v=onepage&q=american%20federation%20of%20labor&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=jVQXAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA217&dq=american+federation+of+labor&ots=g7-abHNLtY&sig=NGihjaqtNLC-uY_DjNqAehGtEas#v=onepage&q=american%20federation%20of%20labor&f=false)

prepared to accept. As a result, there was active suppression and persecution that in many circumstances were later established to be fictitious in nature or at least exaggerated. The strategies of the various factions within the labor movement and the subsequent reactions by those in power are an essential aspect to understanding the unique contribution provided by groups such as the AFL and the IWW; which were vastly different on the surface, but nevertheless shared the common goal of reforming labor in America.

### Chapter Three: Recognizing the Changing Times

The labor movement as symbolic of deep underlying changes occurring within not only American society, but the world at large. As a result, it became apparent for many that reforms were needed to effectively make the appropriate adjustments moving forward into the future. Although, this was also present within the labor movement itself. Many different factions during this development in human history saw different respective visions for labor in America. During the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution itself, there were significant changes that were emerging over the course of the decades and even years that required a different approach for the respective parties involved. The radical elements of the movement represented in the IWW, and the more reserved AFL changed and evolved with the intention of remaining updated with the changing times. It is subjective to a degree in terms of coming to conclusions regarding the respective successes and setbacks that these two groups experienced during this timeframe. Although, in terms of gaging their respective relevance within the mainstream, the membership statistics and acknowledgment within the society's conventions are legitimate barometers that are available in coming to conclusions regarding their successes.

As the IWW went into a period of relative decline, albeit not a complete collapse; the AFL continued to develop and grow in significance amongst the various labor interests within



America. There were periods of progressive development along with other times that consisted of declines, but the overall progression was a net-positive for the AFL. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century developed many unions rallied around the AFL, their social, cultural, and economic power grew incrementally year to year. In terms of political power, both the Democrat and Republican parties sought to build and cultivate relationships with the AFL and their affiliated groups to maintain and further their power and influence. At the same time, the IWW faded increasingly from mainstream discourse, but nevertheless held a degree of significance and power over the more extremely inclined fringes that felt sympathies with their viewpoints. The various inclinations with the labor movements reconfigured and adjusted with the changing times, but with different strategies and subsequent levels of effectiveness.

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century America were a society in which religious ideology and institutions played a central role in the lives of most individuals. As a result of the important place this had in the lives for people throughout the various socio-economic classes, the framework that came with these traditions was influential in the policies that were crafted by those involved in the labor movement. As was the case with many other issues people sought to change in society, an engagement and drawing in of ideas and concepts relating to religion which played a vital role in grabbing the public's interest. This assisted in the cultivation of a 'mainstream' perception' for unions. The viewpoint that the AFL sought to purvey was one that was aligned with traditional values that the conservative oriented people within the American society outside the realm of mechanized industry, along with those even not directly involved with the factories and mills across the country would feel a sense of interest and inspiration to get involved or at the very least support the movement.

As reflected in the 1920 U.S. Census, the country was going through a period of changes and shifting that had never been seen.<sup>73</sup> The data being revealed and as the nuance of extrapolating upon what was occurring within the society was indicative of significant shifts being under the process of occurring. It effected every aspect of society, and features as they related to work were amongst the dynamics that were on the forefront of what was in the process of revealing. This additionally is a factor at play as it relates to the decision-making framework of those aligned more so within a conservative mindset. Those that had a commitment to older ideas and concepts were more likely to have an interest in the preservation of the current systems that were in place, and the 1920 U.S. census was reflective of trends in play across the country which were dramatically changing the overall character of the country to something new.”<sup>74</sup> The new economic systems ushered in by the era of mechanized industry completely uprooted virtually every aspect and norm of American society. At the same time many of the reforms offered by organized labor on the face appeared to pose the possibility of even more extreme change that many people sensed they were not prepared for. Although, the AFL’s strategy to attempt a seamless transition that respected many of the deeply held norms; was seen as an acceptable option.

There has historically been precedence in many countries throughout the world, including the United States which suggests that there is a corollary relationship with sympathies for radicalism to achieve a means along with religious convictions. At the same time, they were competing interests that were related to fundamentally important aspects of the human psyche

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<sup>73</sup> *Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920*, Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1923. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1923/dec/abstract.html>.

<sup>74</sup> *Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920*.

concerning to the meaning of life and the conception of focusing on improving the world of the present day, or preparing for a new world in the afterlife. The populace of the United States was in a process of coalescing their populating around urban centers throughout the country.”<sup>75</sup> This resulted in a situation in which influences relating to both the labor movement and religion competing for the same interests. It has been empirically demonstrated in retrospect of this era that in 1926, regions of America with higher levels of labor movement activity; particularly with the IWW had lower amounts of Church membership.<sup>76</sup> This although was not necessarily a result in the organization intentionally trying to put forth a negative image of religion with the methodologies and approaches of their activism.

There was the development of a sentiment that suggested that the AFL stood as an organization that was not only indifferent towards respecting religious institutions and frameworks but developed the reputation that they were allies of their interests. On the other hand, groups within the labor movement that were more inclined to be hostile towards society’s traditional norms such as the IWW, were seen as being a hostile force and potentially a foe to the religious communities. A scholar of religion Kevin Christiano stated, “The I.W.W. was not unalterably opposed to more traditional religions; at any rate, religion was never a formal target of its campaign. ‘The majority of Wobblies,’ a recent student of the group (Winters, 1985: 62) estimates, ‘seemed to view religion, at least as it relates to personal faith, as a private matter having little or nothing to do with the economic realities of capitalistic society.’”<sup>77</sup> Regardless of whether the IWW was actually a threat to religious interests, these perceptions were at play and

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<sup>75</sup> *Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920*, Washington D.C., Government Printing Office. 1923. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1923/dec/abstract.html>.

<sup>76</sup> *Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920*.

<sup>77</sup> Kevin Christiano, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* Vol. 27, No. 3 (1988): 378-388. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1387376>.

subsequently had an effect on the labor movement's influence. In terms of the religious presuppositions at the time, Americans were observantly pious in terms of what the general populace identified as. Although there were secular segments of the populace that were influenced and swayed by groups such as the IWW that were at least more inclined to be indifferent as it related to religion. The belief systems held by people is not a constant, from generation to generation and even within a matter of years the framework that people hold as it relates to religious concepts is subject to change. As has been the case with other movements for developments throughout history, those seeking labor reforms took religion into account as an area of focus or lack of based on what they perceived to be the best option moving forward.

Concepts relating to the divisions of labor within groups, whether it be by race, gender, and socio-economic class were going through changes because of the new systems that were emerging in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These shifts were continuously exacerbated during the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the trends that had been in place simply increased at an even more rapid pace. The growing pains of effectively adopting to these new norms was a challenge for many in a way that hadn't been seen previously for the most part as the rate of new emerging developments was coming at an unprecedented rate and had no sign of slowing down. There was a process of diversification effecting virtually every aspect of life that included the dynamics at the workplace. The feelings of complacency many had at times when regarding the AFL, and respect for the more aggressive tactics of the IWW that more so seemed to be at the forefront was symbolic of an acknowledgement many had of the management of businesses and their favored representatives in government were attempting to undercut potential successes and unity amongst the people that made up the working-class sphere. In "A Theory of Labor Market Segmentation, Michael Reich, David M. Gordon, and Richard C. Edwards provided commentary of the AFL before their 1955

reforming process from the standpoint of the early 1970s stating, “Firms were segmenting their internal labor markets, similar efforts were under way with respect to the firm’s external relations. Employers quite consciously exploited race, ethnic, and sex antagonism in order to undercut unionism and break strikes.”<sup>78</sup> In response to this the AFL cultivated an agenda that focused on the white male working class, while leaving out minority groups and women. In contrary to this the IWW sought reforms for the society. These differing approaches both benefited the development of the movement while simultaneously presenting increased challenges. Although, this is the reality of identity interests and how they relate to formulating a political cause.

The increased complexities that came with a more industrialized society along with the unique pressures such challenges came with, ushered in the need for a more organized and centralized front in the face of the divisions and lack of unity amongst the working classes in America. This was the case for an AFL chapter active in the Seattle area contemporary to 1919; which discussed their prospects moving forward in a more unified front as described in the AFL’s Central Labor Council of Seattle and Vicinity’s “Proposals for reform of Seattle’s Central Labor Council,” memo document.<sup>79</sup> It is stated, “Sometimes rivals criticize us because our obvious weakness, but we have nothing to fear from rivals so long as we will profit by experience and through the application of the results of our best thought and study keep strengthening our organization according to the dictates of common sense and

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<sup>78</sup> Michael Reich; David M Gordon; Richard C. Edwards, “A Theory of Labor Market Segmentation.” *The American Economic Review* 63, No. 2, Papers and Proceedings of the Eighty-fifth Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association (1973), 362.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1817097>

<sup>79</sup> Central Labor Council of Seattle and Vicinity, “Proposals for reform of Seattle’s Central Labor Council,” University of Washington Libraries. Special Collections Division. March 12, 1919,  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.29378341>.

practicability.”<sup>80</sup> A vital aspect to the AFL and their allies, along with other emerging labor movements in the late 1800s and early 1900s was to organize and advocate for a sense of unity amongst their members and other constituents with similar interests granted the changes that were occurring within the society. This was largely reactionary in nature in terms of coming up with an appropriate response granted the challenges that were being presented by the business interests themselves seeking to preserve the power and wealth they had amassed by seeking to keep facets of the workplace in place that were vestiges of outdated approaches to policy that were appropriate in a setting that had essentially become obsolete and no longer tenable; granted the changes that came with the mechanized industry. The subsequent shifts it had whether it be social, cultural, or economic structures of society. To have a realistic aim at changing these deeply embedded structures that were in place, a more centralized and unified approach was needed in order to make it possible.

Recognition of the changing times was increasingly becoming a facet of the greater western society which was becoming very difficult to deny going into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was reaching a point where even the vested interests that would be most conducive and beneficial from the systems that were dominant in the past were reaching a realization that a reversal of these trends was not possible and a least aimed to create a new order that would be the best for themselves. Although, this was a failure to realize the greater trends that were reaching a point of interest in the broader sense.<sup>81</sup> In the dynamic of a fast-changing society, comes the need for significant changes and reforms with a quick

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<sup>80</sup> Central Labor Council of Seattle and Vicinity, “Proposals for reform of Seattle's Central Labor Council,” University of Washington Libraries. Special Collections Division. March 12, 1919.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.29378341>.

<sup>81</sup> Welfare Federation of Cleveland, “Collection of Policy Decisions of Committees of the Welfare Federation of Cleveland, Ohio,” Cleveland Public library, 1937.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.32526462>.

pace that is sufficiently corollary to maintain its rate with the changing norms that were driven by the fast-evolving state of the industrial world.

In “Collection of Policy Decisions of Committees of the Welfare Federation of Cleveland, Ohio,” the shifts in the nature of the AFL during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is showcased.<sup>82</sup> The organizational leadership was able to identify areas that needed changes, and as a result moved forward to establish the reforms which American society needed. In documentation covering the inner dynamics of the of the AFL organization as it related to their plans moving forward. This reflected that they identified that to stay relevant, they not only needed to pursue issues that were important to the labor movement specifically but needed to remain up to date in terms of the organizational structure of the group itself. This included the implementation of an election for term of office and process of removal for the organization’s leadership, and a process that would entail an approval procedure or their pathway moving forward.<sup>83</sup> The formal implementation of these structures to the systems within the movement was effectively a product of the changing times and the new expectations that people had for bodies of authority and leadership.

An ability to attain a degree of urgency in the identification of needed changes and adjustments; are necessary for a better future and ability to maintain it over the course of years also required an acumen for the labor movement to identify issues that held prominence over greater society. The capture of these ideas assisted in maintaining interest and participation amongst the greater community that included people that were not necessarily directly affected. During the First World War, the IWW particularly took advantage of the current geopolitical situation to promote

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<sup>82</sup> Welfare Federation of Cleveland, “Collection of Policy Decisions of Committees of the Welfare Federation of Cleveland, Ohio,” Cleveland Public library, 1937.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.32526462>.

<sup>83</sup> Welfare Federation of Cleveland, “Collection of Policy Decisions of Committees of the Welfare Federation of Cleveland, Ohio,” 2.

their own cause. Although it was a risk to potentially compromise their positioning within society by questioning the popularly held status quo within the mainstream, there was a segment within the left leaning wing of society particularly that took interest to the usage of such ploys.

During World War One the IWW went through a period of significant challenges because of their general opposition to the American involvement in the war effort, and an encouragement to rather focus on domestic issues. This was also the interests of many within the AFL organization, though the IWW took a more blatant stance to garner interest of the left leaning fragments of society to push forward with their intended agenda for the future of labor in the country. This is reflected in an activist campaign pin in 1917 which represented this sentiment.<sup>84</sup> The provocative messaging that including writing font which that is describable as ‘bloodlike’ is particularly striking.<sup>85</sup> Although beyond the mere imagery of the pin button itself, there is strong messaging in that it challenges not only a re-orientation of the labor system but directly objects to the war effort the U.S. was attempting to mount. This directly challenges people to take up labor issues rather than join military service and participate in the war effort in Europe. This striking usage of an integral point of the American mainstream and an attempt to re-orient the narrative towards the favor of the IWW by attempting to garner support from their broader base is reflective of identifying issues during a particular time and seeking to extrapolate upon it. Additionally, the reference to “Be a Man,” but get involved with the labor movement opposed to the military is also a utilization of a concept that was particularly

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<sup>84</sup> “Industrial Workers Of The World -- Why Be A Soldier? Be A Man -- Join the I.W.W. And Fight On The Job For Yourself And Your Class,” Street Art Graphics Digital Archive, 1917. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.18606976>.

<sup>85</sup> “Industrial Workers Of The World -- Why Be A Soldier? Be A Man -- Join the I.W.W. And Fight On The Job For Yourself And Your Class.”



cognizant to the current era contemporary to World War One which was deeply patriarchal and using it to ‘fuel’ their own respective cause.<sup>86</sup>

The failure of the IWW to persist as the primary organization within the mainstream of American culture was largely a result of their response and subsequent activities during the First World War era. Nevertheless, the labor movement itself was not destroyed or weakened in consideration of the overall picture. In terms of the organizational integrity of the IWW itself, it was able to coalesce a segment of the populace that was inclined to be interested in such more radically inclined prerogative as it related to bringing in changes. The damage that this pin and other public displays of criticism towards the American mainstream viewpoint that could be describable as an insult to some; may have brought criticism and negative press towards the IWW and other similar groups specifically, but not to the movement in totality.<sup>87</sup>

In 1920, during the immediate aftermath of the First World War, many of the veterans were beginning to return home and participating with the domestic workforce. Additionally, there was a normalcy which was returning to the American populace following the war period. At this point it appeared on the surface that the IWW had essentially failed to remain at the forefront of labor issues. Although, it rather went through a period of evolution and re-orientation. In a document dated 1920, the IWW set forth their post-war agenda that included the key issues that should be pursued in the coming years. This included references to an ‘abolition of the wage system,’ and the ‘overthrow of capitalism.’<sup>88</sup> These lofty aims were not realistically aimed with the interests of the American people,

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<sup>86</sup> “Industrial Workers Of The World -- Why Be A Soldier? Be A Man -- Join the I.W.W. And Fight On The Job For Yourself And Your Class.”

<sup>87</sup> “Industrial Workers Of The World -- Why Be A Soldier? Be A Man -- Join the I.W.W. And Fight On The Job For Yourself And Your Class,” Street Art Graphics Digital Archive, 1917.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.18606976>.

<sup>88</sup> Industrial Workers of the World, “Immediate demands of the IWW,” 2.

but nevertheless representative of elements within it. This was particularly important for many within the working-class segments of society because of the growing need for labor reforms granted the economic systems that were in the process of continuously culminate within not just the U.S. but the ‘West’ and increasingly the world.

The published documents of the IWW were continuously aimed at their development and prospects going forward but understood the dynamics relevant to the times and their place in the ‘bigger picture.’ This can be seen in a 1920 published document that described the IWW vision for the future as it related not just to themselves but the broader labor movement. It states, “In fact, the writers of the preamble take it as a matter of course that the first function of a labor union is to make immediate demands in regard to wages, hours and conditions and to fight for them, giving a second place to ultimate function of the IWW i.e., to build industrial unions which are to serve as organs of production and distribution in a new society.”<sup>89</sup> In pressing issue for many in the aftermath of the war, was the significant increase within the labor force as a result of more individuals returning home and getting employment that was often involved with labor on factory floors with the exchanged transaction of a wage in return. Although, this system faced many issues as the governmental structures had not implemented sufficient means of regulation to preserve and protect the well-being and quality of life for the workers.

Effectively, the divergence between the success of those that advocated for the labor movement, and others that sought to preserve their current status quo; differed as it related to their stance regarding realizing the relevant issues for most of the people granted the changes that had occurred. The AFL took a more diplomatic approach to this to illicit a sense of diplomacy between

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<sup>89</sup> Industrial Workers of the World, “Immediate demands of the IWW,” University of Washington Libraries. Special Collections; Industrial Workers of the World. Seattle Office. Accession No. 544, Box 7, 1920. 2. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.28702437>, 3.

themselves and the business interests. Although, the IWW went on a more aggressive campaign with the aim to garner attention for the cause regardless of whether it would necessarily be widely popular at least in the more immediate timeframe but result in changes in the more immediate sense. In consideration of these differences, the points of divergence at least as it related to the various respective strategies to achieve their means, an ability to recognize the significant changes that were needed and understanding that needs pertinent the present would be needed to place the in-place systems on a realistic path for change.

Employers actively aimed at expanding upon ethnic differences amongst their labor pools and create divisions that would inhibit and limit the possibility to effectively unify and organize for changes. Reich, Gordon, and Edwards stated, “The manipulation of ethnic differences was, however, subject to two grave limitations as a tool in the strategy of ‘divide and conquer.’”<sup>90</sup> The United States was one of the first industrially developed countries to have a diverse populace make up its society. In terms of the plans of those in business management, they aimed at preserving their control over the countries financial systems. The process of effectively running a factory or mill; a large labor pool was needed to effectively maintain this. Additionally, there was a need for extensive control over the worker and an imploration to ensure that their laborers did not exert their power in a way that they would take a degree of power and control over themselves. To counter this, business leadership looked to the multi-ethnic makeup of the American working class as a strategy to seize the initiative and influence for themselves. The National Civic Organization, or NCF was formed in 1900 as a collection of consumer, ownership, and laborer participation. Although, this group leaned toward the management

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<sup>90</sup> Michael Reich; David M Gordon; Richard C. Edwards, “A Theory of Labor Market Segmentation.” *The American Economic Review* 63, No. 2, Papers and Proceedings of the Eighty-fifth Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association (1973), 363.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1817097>

interests and was used as a tool for those in power to create an idea for the workers that they were getting opportunities and participation that were not necessarily representative of the reality on the ‘ground.’<sup>91</sup>

Employers sought to weaken what organizations that were particularly represented by the IWW that other socialist leaning organizations tried to cultivate. To accomplish this while simultaneously promoting a degree of power surrendering and exchange with the workers, conservative leaning organizations such as the AFL were given preference on the negotiation table.<sup>92</sup> There was a cultivated façade, that they simply were isolating their train of focus on labor issues specifically and did not want to get distracted with others that were at play. In the contrary, they were given a ‘seat at the table’ because of their more restrained inclinations to advocate for the working class. In response to emerging hurdles pertaining to the integrity of the movement and the prospect of continuing to preserve the continuity of the labor movement there were elements of interests that sought to utilize the functions available within the society and attempt to create the best position possible given the situation with a more realistic sense of being within society’s mainstream framework. This was contrary to the IWW and other more radically inclined parties that dug in deeper with respect to their position in the aim of furthering their cause.

With all the difficulties involved in the struggle to expand reforms in the face of efforts aiming to cause strife and division within the labor movement; there was pivoting towards unity. The IWW and their ‘Wobblies’ that held a high degree of controversy within the mainstream of

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<sup>91</sup> P.F. Brissenden, *The Launching of the Industrial Workers of the World*, Berkely, 1913.  
[https://www.google.com/books/edition/The\\_Launching\\_of\\_the\\_Industrial\\_Workers/BSG3AAAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PP5&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Launching_of_the_Industrial_Workers/BSG3AAAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PP5&printsec=frontcover)

America, nevertheless pressed forward with a diverse vision in mind. This was consistent throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and was firmly based in the essence of the organization's aims when it was initially established in 1905.<sup>93</sup> The Wobblies held to the supposition that the constitutional framework that the country was operating in was within itself fraudulent with regards to its claims that the 'founding fathers' set forth to cultivate a nation that would offer representation to the working class.<sup>94</sup> For the IWW, and other related groups this was conceptually a lie and a message put forward by the elites in order to create a narrative that would allow the people to be more easily controlled.

Before the First World War, the IWW had the lofty goals of essentially forcing the bourgeoisie class to 'surrender' control over the means of production to the working class, and for society's reformulation to be fairer and more equitable across the various spheres of life; with fundamental changes with the economic systems in place particularly.<sup>95</sup> Although, in the aftermath of WWI, the radical end of the labor movement met logistical issues as it related to successfully achieving the aims it had set for itself, or getting anywhere near the goals they had initially envisioned. As a result, there was a reformulation of their goals and the means this would come about. Additionally, there were progressive leaning politicians committed to the left that made the decision to distance themselves from the IWW to not only preserve their own

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<sup>93</sup> P.F. Brissenden, *The Launching of the Industrial Workers of the World*, Berkely, 1913.  
[https://www.google.com/books/edition/The\\_Launching\\_of\\_the\\_Industrial\\_Workers/BSG3AAAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PP5&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Launching_of_the_Industrial_Workers/BSG3AAAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PP5&printsec=frontcover)

<sup>94</sup> P.F. Brissenden, *The Launching of the Industrial Workers of the World*, Berkely.

<sup>95</sup> P.F. Brissenden, *The Launching of the Industrial Workers of the World*, Berkely.

reputations, but to advocate for their goals of societal reforms more effectively.<sup>96</sup> The importance of what was best for the movement itself superseded the standing of a particular organization.

In particular, the IWW's reputation on the west coast had been badly tarnished and tattered by the perceptions that had been permeating. The aggressive stance taken by many within the organization and the activities of the Wobblies was controversial. It is questionable with regards to the extent of which these events were accurate, as business interests within the media aimed to set a narrative that was often more extreme than the actual reality. A well-known 'progressive' senator Miles Poindexter, representing the state of Washington opted to publicly go as far to not only distance himself from the IWW, but openly condemn them wholly. This separation from the organization was not representative of him distancing himself from the movement, but rather a re-posturing that would be to the benefit of the integrity for future reforms and developments in the future remaining respectively in the mainstream. Poindexter stated, "The Industrial Workers of the World Organization, at least the leaders of it, are outlaws, because their official utterances, their printed literature, their speakers, advocate murder, and openly advocate it. They openly advocate the destruction of property."<sup>97</sup> Regardless of the accuracy of these allegations levied against the IWW, there was a clear publicity issue that had emerged as a significant facet for the prospects of labor reform. As a result, there was an imploration for organizers to actively distance themselves from it.

As the IWW was seemingly fading away as a well-known and recognized organization that was taken seriously, the more radical end of the movement did not go away nor cease

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<sup>96</sup> Congressional Record (65<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session), LV, 5949, 11 August 1917. [https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/crecb/\\_crecb/Volume%20055%20\(1917\)](https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/crecb/_crecb/Volume%20055%20(1917)).

<sup>97</sup> Congressional Record (65<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session), LV.

making contributions. It rather selected to operate separate from the IWW to be distanced with the ‘baggage’ that came with the relationship. This was not a reflection of the viewpoint being put forward by the AFL as necessarily being the preferred option within itself for those interested in joining and engaging with issues pertinent to the organized labor movement. Although, this was a representative that a front that indicated more ‘modestly’ aimed and amicable goals were seen as a less threatening option for the standpoint of ruling elites and therefore a preferable option to deal with. As a result, business interests calculated that it would be more sensible to open dialogue with the AFL for the delegation of allowing the working class to think that they had a fair, or at least improved position at the bargaining table of negotiation. This shows that those that held power as owners of industry identified an area in which they could maximize their hold of power despite the recognition that some surrender of more sole control was needed to merely preserve the structures in place that were facing serious stresses. This was a juxtaposition in that the laborers that sought for change within the society also came to the realization and took the appropriate measures to acknowledge that they had to give in to some degree and sacrifice some of the measures they were interested in implementing in the present, for the possibility of a better situation going forward in the future.

There were radical activities affiliated with the IWW and their so-called ‘Wobblies,’ that had a profound effect on the West coast of the country. In contrary to their counterparts, the AFL that had been in a process of gaining connections and networks with a deep foundation in the east coast and the Midwest even prior to the turn to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the IWW was failing to gain inroads because of their own volition to a large extent.<sup>98</sup> In “The Industrial Workers of the

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<sup>98</sup> “Preamble to the IWW Constitution,” Industrial Workers of the World: A Union for All Workers. Accessed September 27, 2022. <https://archive.iww.org/culture/official/preamble/#:~:text=The%20working%20class%20and%20the,the%20good%20things%20of%20life.>

World: A West Coast Perspective,” James Pruitt stated, “The western Wobblies did not comprehend that industrial unionism required the same day-to-day, member-service activity that the AFL provided. Their suspicion that collective bargaining was a form of compromise with the ‘master class’ hindered development. Strikes were essentially agitation and harassment.”<sup>99</sup> The IWW as an organization was being left behind because of their inability to appropriately adapt. Although, the individual activists and members themselves were able to contribute to the progressive movement’s furthered development in the broader sense when looking at the movement from the greater picture.

The full swing of industrialization in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was remarkably societally altering for virtually every aspect and sphere of society. The societal, cultural, and economic norms were facing drastic developments within individual person’s lifetimes in a way that had never been seen before in human history previously. In terms of changes with regards to the dynamic of organized labor and business ownership interests; reasonable individuals on both sides concluded that reforms and changes were needed to preserve capitalism and the market system that to a degree had beneficial attributes for society as a whole; albeit those on the higher echelons of the economic ladder saw the best end of these developments. The AFL rose to the need to arrive at the negotiation table, and the more radically inclined wings of the movement had to seek alternatives from what was offered by the IWW.

#### Chapter Four: Keeping Labor Issues Relevant

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<sup>99</sup> James Pruitt, “The Industrial Workers of the World: A West Coast Perspective.” *Perspectives on Work* Vol. 10, No. 2 (2007), 43.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23272131>.



Participants of the labor movement throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century were able to effectively keep labor issues within a relevant place in the public sphere. The push for reformations as it pertained to mechanized industry were in the forefront of the popular domain. Serious debates were emerging across the industrialized world with regards to how implemented changes could cultivate better societies for the masses within these structures. The United States were ‘breeding grounds’ for the socialist movement to take hold and contribute to reforming society. The development of American mechanized industry emerged simultaneously with the writings of important socialist thinkers such as Karl Marx and Georges Sorel, whose vision for the world included the implementation of syndicalism to create additional balances between the business interests and the working classes.<sup>100</sup>

A consistent act of putting forth arguments in support of these ‘eye catching’ reforms kept the idea of labor reforms, conceptually a dependable aspect of the conversations across the country. In 1919, in the midst the First World War and the subsequent tumultuous period that the IWW was going through, to remain relevant in the face of a widespread social cancelation of the Wobblies as not holding patriotic values compatible with what was expected of the American people during this time of war; arguments of syndicalism were reformulated and put forth.

In his 1919 cultural commentary, *The IWW: A Study of American Syndicalism*, labor activist, Paul Frederick Brissenden counters confidently counters the narrative purveyed by the media regarding the IWW stating, “There are immense possibilities of a constructive sort in the theoretic basis of the IWW, but the press had done its best to prevent the public from knowing it.

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<sup>100</sup> P.F. Brissenden, *The IWW: A Study of American Syndicalism*. London: Columbia University, 1898, 9. Google Books, accessed July 8, 2022.  
<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=5CRAAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA25&dq=iww&ots=8UAoOiMvwi&sig=cPpdlnSv-cf307YfYRqgX3fzb0Y#v=onepage&q=iww&f=false>

And it must be said that the IWW agitators have themselves helps to misrepresent their own organization by their personal predilection for the lurid and the dramatic.”<sup>101</sup> In response the attack which the labor movement was flanked on by the business interests during World War One, the IWW, and more specifically the ‘Wobblies’ were a weak spot for them. Nevertheless, Brissenden and other representatives of the labor movement held firm with their convictions and continuously argued their position regardless of the active suppression the U.S. government engaged in during the war period in order to squash those that were perceived to be an opposition and a threat.<sup>102</sup>

Implementing ideals that originated abroad also invigorated a sense of offering ideals that was conducive to the prioritization and refocusing for the domestic movement within the country. The globalist systems that would go on to hold dominance were still fermenting within their developmental stages but were nevertheless increasingly important factors to consider. As a result, political events that were permeating in countries such as France were increasingly gaining traction abroad in the United States regarding various issues such as the restructuring of industry’s means of control like syndicalism. This option was emerging as an alternative for the structuring of an economy. Brissenden stated, “French Syndicalism, then, has entered the IWW to give a certain characteristic strike tactics and set a foggy philosophical concepts about the

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<sup>101</sup> P.F. Brissenden, *The IWW: A Study of American Syndicalism*. London: Columbia University, 1898, 9. Google Books, accessed July 8, 2022.  
<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=5CRAAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA25&dq=iww&ots=8UAoOiMvwi&sig=cPpdlnSv-cf307YfYRqgX3fzb0Y#v=onepage&q=iww&f=false>

<sup>102</sup> P.F. Brissenden, *The IWW: A Study of American Syndicalism*.

General strike, the ‘militant minority;’ etc. To this extent the IWW is a syndacalist union.”<sup>103</sup> On face value this development made the organization a less desirable group for the labor class to rally behind, but it rather brought a sense of urgency and attention to the movement’s interests. Additionally, the train of focus within the academic class and even the popular culture to take note of and pivot on the issues of the labor movement and the imperative need to make the proper and effective reforms to stay on the correct path. The issues relating to labor were kept relevant not just because it became an ‘obvious’ direction to orient public policy planning, but also because these issues were communicated as being of importance by the labor interest organizations themselves such as the IWW.

From the standpoint of the country embroiled in a World War, there were many that flocked away the labor movement and towards supporting the narratives and status quos that was most conducive to the nationalistic elements within America that argued that it would be necessary for the populace to rally around the government’s focus abroad in a loyal fashion while letting go of some of the personal interests that people had been putting work towards in the previous decades but was not aligned with the government’s agenda. Brissenden stated with reference to the period immediately prior to the war, “There was thus a number of ‘national’ organizations and many locals in other bodies which were anxious to create some central labor organization to strengthen the forces of industrial unionism.”<sup>104</sup> For Brissenden, his preference

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<sup>103</sup> P.F. Brissenden, *The IWW: A Study of American Syndicalism*. London: Columbia University, 1898, 275-276. Google Books, accessed July 8, 2022.  
<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=5CRAAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA25&dq=iww&ots=8UAoOiMvwi&sig=cPpdlnSv-cf307YfYRqgX3fzb0Y#v=onepage&q=iww&f=false>

<sup>104</sup> P.F. Brissenden, *The IWW: A Study of American Syndicalism*. London: Columbia University, 1898, 55. Google Books, accessed July 8, 2022.

was this to be through the capacity of an organization such as the IWW, although there was a willingness to coalesce behind the AFL organization.

For the AFL, there was planning and preparation in the ‘long-game’ sense. There was a vision for formulating the details of a long process to reform and change the fundamentals of what made up the dynamic between business and labor interests. There were more radical groups that certainly made headlines at moments for their prerogative of exercising public demonstrations such as forms of demonstrations and protests like aggressively exercised strikes. Although, this was not necessarily an enduring strategy. In order to set forth for competition that would be favorable for labor interests in the long term, The AFL set forth with a strategy that was slower moving, lacking a sense of attention-grabbing flare; but nevertheless, developing a reputation of respect and dignity that the everyday person could get behind.<sup>105</sup> At the forefront of the AFL’s philosophy, was to remain within the guidelines of the rules set out by the law, and not violating them in order to further their cause, opposed to the IWW that at times decided to engage in such activities.<sup>106</sup>

Tables of negotiation were a fundamental aspect of the AFL’s strategies in achieving their goals. It was not a headline catching practice, but it incrementally achieved goals and made progress for the labor movement more broadly. As the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries progressed, the dynamics and rules around the workplace was being changed at ease within America with generally peaceful events. The business interests themselves accepted these reforms with time

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[https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=5CRAAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA\\_25&dq=iww&ots=8UAoOiMvwi&sig=cPpdlnSv-cf307YfYRqgX3fzb0Y#v=onepage&q=iww&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=5CRAAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA_25&dq=iww&ots=8UAoOiMvwi&sig=cPpdlnSv-cf307YfYRqgX3fzb0Y#v=onepage&q=iww&f=false)

<sup>105</sup> Mollie Rae Carrol, *Labor and Politics*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923. XV, <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=uADUAAAAMAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=american+federation+of+labor&ots=BdP4j9i4IK&sig=xefiQANYZgCEueH6VoEeURlIyc#v=onepage&q=american%20federation%20of%20labor&f=false>.

<sup>106</sup> Mollie Rae Carrol, *Labor and Politics*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923. 6.

with the incremental scale of accepting the developments. In 1923, an American economist and thinker Mollie Rae Carrol credited the AFL for playing a strategic role in maturing the American economy for the new demands present for the economy during the post WWI era and setting a framework for the future.

The practice of collective bargaining which consisted of open communication and dialogue between labor unions and companies got into the rhythm and consistency of advancing labor causes. Carrol stated, “The American Federation of Labor has asserted that its primary interest lies in collective bargaining, and that it will use political and legislative machinery only to advance the interests of groups unable to bargain collectively, or for the solution of problems which cannot be solved through direct economic methods.”<sup>107</sup> The respectability and integrity earned by the AFL leadership and their members amongst the American populace, contributed to the organization’s legitimacy and labor issue’s pertinence in the societal landscape. For an issue to hold relevance on a consistent basis within the framework of public discourse, there needs to be ‘reasonable’ discussions that balance the need for change to a system that people sense a need for, while also putting forth a narrative and option as a rational possibility.

By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the systems put in place by the AFL and other likeminded organizations had taken a strong and confident hold in the palette of representatives for the American labor movement. This was largely the results of effective tactics by labor interests that facilitated effective demonstrations alongside negotiations balanced with vision and compromise. Although, the cultural changes were shifting in a society along with the economic systems

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<sup>107</sup> Mollie Rae Carrol *Labor and Politics*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923.  
6.<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=uADUAAAAMAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=american+federation+of+labor&ots=BdP4j9i4IK&sig=xefiQANYZgCEueH6VoEeURIIyc#v=onepage&q=american%20federation%20of%20labor&f=false>

emerging within society was a factor that contributed to sentiments of relevancy remaining prominent in the public picture. The sociologist Robert Dubin stated in 1956, “Industrial man seems to perceive his life history as having its center outside of work for his feelings of enjoyment, happiness and worth.”<sup>108</sup> The ‘industrial worker’ was their-self as an individual and a group very distinct from the peasantry class, and other lower socio-economic classes that had come before them, and with that distinct interests that for people of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; such developments were not yet fully comprehended and understood. Although, these new dynamics fueled an interest that contributed to labor movements continual relevancy.

As a result of the increasingly international and globalist nature that was expandingly becoming prevalent, the AFL identified this issue and sought to expand their activities outside merely the U.S. and other countries across the world such as the various nations within the American continents. This is reflected in a 1917 Manifesto pamphlet of the AFL that the organization was interested in expanding and developing their operations with the international picture in mind.<sup>109</sup> This officially published document by the AFL reflects their imploration to strike an accord of relevance with society by communicating an interest in Latin America and creating literature that was simultaneously in both English and Spanish. This broadening of their audience additionally runs counter with the reputation that they were an organization that consistently fell short of diversifying their audience and rather focus on building accord with

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<sup>108</sup> Robin Dubin, “Industrial Workers' Worlds: A Study of the "Central Life Interests" of Industrial Workers.” *Social Problems* 3, No. 3 (1956): 140.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/799133>

<sup>109</sup> “Pan-American Federation of Labor Manifesto, in English and Spanish, issued February 10, 1917” (Conference Committee, Pan-American Federation of Labor, Washington DC, February 9, 1917).  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.29378490>

merely males of Northern-European heritage; subsequently not having a significant impact on the status quo.

The Manifesto reflects the AFL's imploration to engage in advocacy that the organization had reputationally had been silent for. The organization explicitly identifies 'capitalists' based out of both Europe and North America that were seeking alternative locations and regions to engage in business.<sup>110</sup> As a result of the lacking rights for workers in these regions, businesses were seeking to move operations to these areas and essentially exploit the local populaces for their labor. The AFL in their manifesto detailed their plans to create new committees and delegations in countries within the Latin American region such as Mexico, with the aims to represent and advocate the workers interests.<sup>111</sup> The idea of 'Pan-Americanism' was put forward as an opportunity to unite the working classes of America to see the common issues and struggles that workers were not only dealing with in the U.S. but the regions of the Americas as a whole; particularly as businesses sought to further expand their activities and operations.

A sense of putting forth the issue of labor as an international problem the AFL needed to continually expand their operations, this was drawn from other issues at play contemporary to the time such as colonialism and empire that was deeply rooted in the imperialist European institutions that had garnered and developed significant powers over the course of the previous centuries was quickly becoming outdated in the modern world, but nevertheless held a degree of influence on the norms that continued into even the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the era of the First World War that was exposing many of the faults in this systems. The Manifesto stated, "Above

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<sup>110</sup> "Pan-American Federation of Labor Manifesto, in English and Spanish, issued February 10, 1917" (Conference Committee, Pan-American Federation of Labor, Washington DC, February 9, 1917). 1. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.29378490>

<sup>111</sup> "Pan-American Federation of Labor Manifesto, in English and Spanish, issued February 10, 1917," 1.

all things, the Pan-American Federation of Labor should stand as a guard on watch to protect the Western Hemisphere from being overrun by military domination from any quarter.”<sup>112</sup> In order to illicit support from the populace amongst people that may be interested more specifically with issues relating to colonial subjugation, or even more conservative leaning elements interested in preserving the integrity and stability of countries abroad within the region of the Western Hemisphere. These sentiments were sufficient to hold relevancy amongst greater societal interests.

The line of argumentation consisted of the purveyance of the sentiment that the AFL’s goals of bringing better working conditions that included ‘Higher Wages,’ Shorter workdays,’ and ‘Prohibition of child labor’ should be extended beyond the America and for the world as a whole.<sup>113</sup> The Manifesto document was produced by the AFL organization themselves and was intended to be used for purposes of internal dialogue and communication. It was sent to various sub-organizational chapters across the country to set a point regarding the organization’s interests moving forward. Additionally, this was intended to be used abroad in the communications with labor organizations in Latin America; particularly Mexico to show support and interest in furthering the dividends of making a more full, unified, and internationally engaged organization.<sup>114</sup> As the U.S. continuously progressed to a greater degree of diversity, and as the world largely became a more globalized community; engagement abroad in making the AFL increasingly internationally focused; was essential in fostering an identity that was pertinent and relevant for the populace to stay focused and engaged in.

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<sup>112</sup> “Pan-American Federation of Labor Manifesto, in English and Spanish, issued February 10, 1917” (Conference Committee, Pan-American Federation of Labor, Washington DC, February 9, 1917). 3. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.29378490>

<sup>113</sup> “Pan-American Federation of Labor Manifesto, in English and Spanish, issued February 10, 1917,” 4.

<sup>114</sup> “Pan-American Federation of Labor Manifesto, in English and Spanish, issued February 10, 1917,” 1.



IWW activities in the west coast, particularly through sub-groups such as the Wobblies led to a questioning of the labor movement amongst the mainstream because of a fueling of anti-labor movement sentiments that were propagated by business interests that took advantage of examples of radical activity to subsequently push their narratives through avenues of the media. To a large degree the IWW continued their strategy despite the impact of losing significant numbers during the First World War particularly.<sup>115</sup> In the midst of World War One and the tumultuous activities that were occurring internationally along with the activities domestically that the U.S. was embroiled in, on May, 20<sup>th</sup> 1919, there was an internal letter-memo created by the AFL discussing the issues that the organization was dealing with as it related to concerning activities of extreme groups in the labor movement along with ‘insidious’ actions that the government was engaging with themselves in an attempt to hold the labor movement at bay.<sup>116</sup>

The 1919 ‘General Strike’ that occurred in the city of Seattle is asserted by the AFL as being an event that was organized by the business owners with the support of their governmental and media backing they had lobbied for, to cultivate an incorrect picture of what had actually happened in order to defame the integrity and respect of the labor movement.<sup>117</sup> According to the AFL letter-memo specifically, “Realizing what the effect would be when the truth regarding the situation got to other industrial centers, our foes set out to discredit us and Ole Hansen has been proclaimed by them to be the hero who suppressed the Seattle revolution.”<sup>118</sup> The mayor of

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<sup>115</sup> Research Working Group on World Labor, “Global Patterns of Labor Movements in Historical Perspective,” *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* Vol. 10, No. 1, Anniversary Issue: The Work of the Fernand Braudel Center (1986), 137-155. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40241051>.

<sup>116</sup> “Seattle Central Labor Council letter to labor bodies affiliated with the American Federation of Labor regarding the true history of the Seattle general strike, May 20, 1919.”

<sup>117</sup> “Seattle Central Labor Council letter to labor bodies affiliated with the American Federation of Labor regarding the true history of the Seattle general strike, May 20, 1919.”

<sup>118</sup> “Seattle Central Labor Council letter to labor bodies affiliated with the American Federation of Labor regarding the true history of the Seattle general strike, May 20, 1919” (University of Washington Libraries. Special

Seattle Ole Hansen, took a hardline on squashing public activism that the labor movement was in engaging in under the sentiment that such activities were eliciting endorsement and support for forms of Marxism and Bolshevism which were being oriented in the national picture as enemies of American interests.<sup>119</sup> In this period, the country was grappling with the struggles that came with war and conflict that was permeating in Europe particularly. The AFL understood that the public relations campaign being raged against them posed a risk of challenging their place as holding importance within the public sphere. There was subsequently a response that needed to be orchestrated to counter these developments.

Elsewhere on the west coast which was seemingly dominated by the radical fringes of the labor movement represented by the IWW, the AFL sought to spread their influence in San Francisco. This push to further their interests was simultaneous to the sentiments brewing during the era contemporary to the First World War that suggested that the American people were inclined to see activism and push to reforms while the country was engaged at a time of war would be contrary to the aims and goals of their nation and subsequently be reflective of posturing that omits patriotism.

In the 1950s, the importance of human relations as a facet of value in the workplace that was just starting to take a place of noteworthiness. In the years before the Enlightenment Era particularly, the common worker was essentially out of discussions all-together. At that standpoint in time, most of the human populace had been working in agricultural settings and

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Collections Division, Central Labor Council of Seattle and Vicinity, 1919).  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.29378517>.

<sup>119</sup> Seattle Central Labor Council letter to labor bodies affiliated with the American Federation of Labor regarding the true history of the Seattle general strike, May 20, 1919” (University of Washington Libraries. Special Collections Division, Central Labor Council of Seattle and Vicinity, 1919).  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.29378517>.

planned their lives around the annual harvests. Although with the cultural revolutions that completely altered society's framework's, and the advent of mechanized industry. These various factors at play with each other were factors that effectively were organically in place and subsequently aspects that could be utilized by the labor movements seeking to bring changes for the country. Although, the AFL sought to engage the structures in place in a fashion that made the appearance of respect and amicableness towards the status of the current aims of the American government. This was reflected in a labor agreement with the Steel Shipbuilders that was signed in the fall of 1919.<sup>120</sup>

In particular, the agreement sought to establish that going forward the Steel Workers should have an eight-hour work week.<sup>121</sup> In documentation it additionally stipulated that going forward workers that worked additional time over what was agreed upon in the contract, and on Sundays and holidays would be eligible to be paid double the regular rate.<sup>122</sup> For the past several decades, particularly since the Chicago World Exposition of the 1890s it had become an expectation that workers should be eligible to have eight hour work days and special rates

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<sup>120</sup> "Agreement entered into between the Pacific Coast Metal Trades Council and the Metal Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor with the Steel Shipbuilders of Puget Sound and San Francisco Bay Districts, to become effective on October 1, 1919" (Pacific Northwest Historical Documents, University of Washington Libraries. Special Collections Division) October 1, 1919.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.29378483>

<sup>121</sup> "Agreement entered into between the Pacific Coast Metal Trades Council and the Metal Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor with the Steel Shipbuilders of Puget Sound and San Francisco Bay Districts, to become effective on October 1, 1919."

<sup>122</sup> "Agreement entered into between the Pacific Coast Metal Trades Council and the Metal Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor with the Steel Shipbuilders of Puget Sound and San Francisco Bay Districts, to become effective on October 1, 1919."

allocated on holidays.<sup>123</sup> As a result of other interests that had been at play, many of these developments were stalled.

Business interests had lobbied to maintain and restore the systems that benefited them. In taking the initiative with the intention of furthering the causes valued by the labor movement and overcome the hurdles that had been presented by the poor public relations image fermented by the IWW's more brazen and radical activities, the AFL was able to successfully get these reforms implemented in a rather seemingly easeful fashion as they engaged on the tables of negotiation with the business interests which were reluctant to give up on the power they were holding. Additionally, the dynamics that came with the war that was occurring offered a rationalization that could be used to challenge the loyalty and commitments of the labor movement to the country and suggest that labor interests were not tenable for the best positioning of the American nation in the present and going forward in the future in light of the challenges that were being presented at the time. The cultivation of these dynamics effectively assisted in seizing the moment in taking note a deep interest the American people were seeking to adjust for as it related to the workplace and subsequently negotiating these changes with the new agreement between the management and the workers in the Steel Workers industry.

There were many issues that were important to the populaces of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century that were on face value highly removed from the labor movement conceptually such as the prohibition movement. Although, there was connection in that alcoholic beverages were consumption products that had an impact on all classes of people including everyday laborers in

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<sup>123</sup> David Silkenat, "Workers in the White City: Working Class Culture at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1998-)* Vol. 104, No. 4 (2011), 266-300. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41345580>

American society.<sup>124</sup> The leadership of the AFL identified issues that would come up as it related to prohibition legislation and the discontent it would stir in their constituency. As a result, there was an aim to align the organization's efforts, supported policies, and public statements around the interests of the 'American worker.'

As a result, the organization successfully used prohibition and other policies that lacked popularity amongst large swaths of populace and was utilized for adding 'fuel to the fire' to further invigorate facets that would enable and build upon a base going forward with the labor movement. This was expressed in a letter correspondence in 1919 amongst leaders in the AFL; Samuel Gompers and J.L. Campbell.<sup>125</sup> In his letter; Samuel Gompers stated, "Permit me to say in reply that the Act is an improper interpretation of the Eighteenth Amendment. Therefore, the American Federation of Labor, at its convention held in Denver... declared, that essentially passage of the Volstead Act was passed under assumptions that were not necessarily conducive to the claims that such decision would have a positive impact and benefit for those with a vested interest in labor reforms."<sup>126</sup> In this period in which mass media was still in an early stage, the imploration and aims for the AFL to take in interest in taking a side on a strongly contested issue, was contributory for the organization to remain and cultivate relevancy within the sphere of the population pool with an interest in labor issues.

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<sup>124</sup> William F. Bynum, Chronic Alcoholism In The First Half of The 19th Century, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* Vol. 42, No. 2 (1968),160-185.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44450720>.

<sup>125</sup> "Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor letter to J.L. Campbell of Texas regarding the Volstead Act, May 19, 1922" (Pacific Northwest Historical Documents, University of Washington Libraries. Special Collections.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.29380083>

<sup>126</sup> "Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor letter to J.L. Campbell of Texas Regarding the Volstead Act, May 19, 1922."

The increased opportunities for lower income people to live in relatively higher degrees of luxury was at least becoming possible for the emerging middle class. The was comparatively progress in relation to people that had lived in most of human history. There were issues regarding the necessary adjustments needed to make society sufficiently updated for the new world that was emerging, and it was at the utmost forefront of most of the populace's thoughts. Dubin stated, "Viewed from the standpoint of industrial management there are two broad and contradictory influences at work in society. Work is no longer a central life interest for workers."<sup>127</sup> This reflects the perspective of society of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century that was in the process of pulling away from the norms that had dominated Western thought almost exclusively until the waning years of the Victorian era and had managed to survive to some degree throughout the period of industrialization spreading in its earlier stages. A newly found sense of freedom had been attained because of the new means of production and the complete evolution of the economic systems.

The people of America, and across the developed world were freed to expect more from institutions and people that held power; the center of which was during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was mechanized industry. Although, this was extended across the various spheres of work. It was identified that society was in need for a new train of focus, and this would include an aim to consider the plights of the laborers themselves as an important consideration in terms of what to expect from business's management, as well as from governmental bodies themselves legislating and executing new policies to enforce. A key aspect of this was acknowledging that

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<sup>127</sup> Robin Dubin, "Industrial Workers' Worlds: A Study of the "Central Life Interests" of Industrial Workers." *Social Problems* 3, No. 3 (1956): 140.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/799133>

‘diversity’ in every sense was fundamental to successfully setting up urban environments for a resourceful and productive future.<sup>128</sup>

In essence, people expected more than simply being another ‘figure’ or ‘number.’ They were rather unique personalities that required a dignity that was not historically offered to those that occupied the lower socio-economic places within society. To achieve these aims, labor issues were continually on the forefront as a hurdle for people to get a step closer to the new society they envisioned living in one day. The changing societal issues themselves were vital in the relevancy of labor issues; and the vehicle for these changes was from within organizations including the AFL and the IWW. Their respective approaches to solving these solutions were rooted in the strong urge people had developed from the changes occurring themselves. The subsequent task was for them to arise to the occasion and meet the needs for change that people strived for.

At the heart of the of creating a ‘brand’ or an image that the broader society will be inclined to accept and implement to their own perception of what their community should be in the present and stride for in the future; considering what the people are interested in and have a vested interest to seek protection and future growth is central to achieving such an aim. For the AFL and the IWW, there was a variety of interests and variables at play that both would have benefited and have been possibly detrimentally affected by the success of the movement. As a result, in order to hold relevancy in the long term and successfully balance garnering the support and attention of the working class and simultaneously remain tenable for the business interests that had the access to resources of media and government to potentially hurt such causes in the

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<sup>128</sup> Robin Dubin, “Industrial Workers' Worlds: A Study of the "Central Life Interests" of Industrial Workers.” *Social Problems* 3, No. 3 (1956): 139.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/799133>

event the perception of threat became too real; the need to remain conscious of these aspects was fundamental for leaders and participants of the labor movement.

AFL and the IWW as organizations had very different approaches to this issue. Although, they both nevertheless were able to successfully balance these issues involved to successfully garner significant changes for the country. Such shifts would have been unthinkable for the American people only a few generations earlier. But, the successful ability to keep the interests and values of the movement relevant and pertinent to everyday life was central for such incredible change within a relatively short period of time to be actualized and accomplished. There were the increasing predicament of an expanding degree of Americans and people around the world being impacted with labor issues because of the Industrial Revolution. The factors at play and effective strategies implemented by those in the labor movement were able to identify the needs and take note of what the current day was demanding, and successfully put forth and execute a plan that people were desperately in need to accomplish.

### **III. Formal Conclusion**

#### Conclusion

The dichotomy between the more radical and the more moderately conservative wings of the labor movement culminated in great changes for the United States and the world at large during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Industrial Workers of the World and the American Federation of Labor; particularly represented these vital changes. Through the Perseverance in the face of governmental suppression, ability to recognize the changing times, and the engagement to keep labor issues relevant; these factors came together to achieve the



results visionaries had for the future of work. This was accomplished utilizing tactics that were simultaneously within the framework of both respective major mindsets during this era.

As has been identified by previous historians within the historiographical record, there were both radical and more moderately inclined elements within the labor movement. This is identifiable within the qualities of both the IWW and the AFL. There are practitioners of history with a variety of political interests that subsequently have influenced them to come to a diversity of conclusions with regards to which respective group ultimately played the more pivotal role with the changes that occurred. Although in a more wholistic approach with the influences of ideas relating to Postmodernist theory, the key issues at play relating to the successfully implemented reforms as explored in each chapter reflect the beneficial contribution that both the IWW and the AFL made. This includes the ‘Perseverance In-spite of Suppression by the Government,’ ‘Recognizing the Changing Times,’ and ‘Keeping Labor Issues Relevant,’ was actualized by the ability for radical and moderately inclined parties to play a part in adjustments that were made. There can be critical outlook in terms of the negative aspects each of these parties could have had in progress, while there were also positive contributions ‘across the board’ that were made in terms of being effective agents of systemic changes.

Ideas and concepts that relate to labor issues carry a degree of controversy, as people generally hold strong and confident views for their respective positions. This is reflected in the works of scholarship by historians and practitioners of history that have analyzed the labor movements which emerged in response to the issues that came the industrial revolution. In the decades that have passed since the subsequent reforms, many new problems and areas for improvement have arisen. Although, the overall systems influencing society’s social, cultural, and economic frameworks have changed; individuals looking back on previous events often

bring their lenses and biases pertinent to the present and subsequently place it upon what had occurred in the past. This is present within the historiographical record as it relates to determining what approach to the labor movement yielded the best success. The analyses such as Patrick Renshaw in “The IWW and the Red Scare 1917-24,” which considers how the spread of fears regarding socialism within the American populace re-oriented the way people viewed causes that were perceived to be on the radical left such as the IWW.<sup>129</sup> There are those that perceive the radicalism of the IWW, was the source that fueled the changes that society was looking for. In contrast, other viewpoints hold that the AFL with their moderate philosophy that can be described as conservative and restrained, was the force needed to get the reforms that society needed to continue functioning properly.

There are limitations for a variety of factors when considering labor during the industrial era within itself. The complexity of the various elements at play requires a high degree of applied contextualization and nuance to not simplify an analysis to the point in which it is disingenuous in consideration of the numerous elements that contributed to these events. The AFL and IWW had very different methods, but generally had the common goal of achieving labor reforms. Although, depending on the interests and desires of a specific time; observations of what was occurring can alter significantly. As a result of the various issues that had been permeating, the increasingly globalized world that was emerging made localized affairs increasingly interconnected with the broader community. Therefore, significant events on the geopolitical stage such as the emergence of the First World War and the subsequent sentiments that swept into the American consciousness shifted the IWW and their methods away from the mainstream.

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<sup>129</sup> Patrick Renshaw, “The IWW and the Red Scare 1917-24.” *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 3, No. 4, 1918-19: From War to Peace (1968): 63-72. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/259851>

The resulting image of a conservatively oriented affront which culminated during the 1950s made organizations such as the AFL more acceptable alternatives for the broader society. This was not necessarily a rejection for the need of changes and reforms as it related to labor. There have been many analyses that previously committed to either organization under an ideological pre-supposition. It was the imploring of more recent works to avoid this, though it is challenging in consideration of a significant body of the available primary source evidence is from the standpoint of individuals that had strong vested interests with any of the respective sides within these involved issues.

The available primary source material especially as it pertains to the IWW consists of documentation within the organization itself, and the opinions held by others, particularly their vocal opposition. As a result, the long-held narratives which often over-simplified the issues of this period get fueled. Additionally, the moderate perception that the AFL maintained on the surface has appeared to be reflection of a form of conservatism winning out against the more progressive forces. Although, this is actually a reflection of an effectively executed re-orientation of their public persona and narrative in order for the populace to view them differently. For future scholarship, practitioners of history should be cognizant of these facets and try to remain on a track that is removed from the political baggage that has amassed as it related to labor issues over the course of the previous century and decades that followed the emergence of the industrial movement. An analysis that is focused on the simultaneous contributions of the AFL and IWW, along with acknowledgment of the calculation behind their posturing over the course of their activities can yield important insight into this timeframe in the future as it relates to historical scholarship.

There are limitations with fully analyzing and understanding events that occurred before the internet and the mass communications systems that have been increasingly conducive to the preservations of writings and other forms of media that to an extent preserve a piece of what happened. The documents and reports produced by organizations within the labor movement and social commentary on their actions could only have been preserved to a degree for future researchers to consider. Additionally, there is the component of how many documents may be stored in archives and venues in the general sense that are not conducive towards the widespread usage of them by historians in the field that are researching the topic. For future works considering the contribution the IWW and AFL had in changing the workplace, extensive research towards the areas of such documents is held could be extremely beneficial. It would also be helpful to many practitioners of history that do not have the same level of access to travel to inspect these items. Therefore, contributions to the digitization would be helpful in terms of expanding the pool of individuals that can contribute to studying this period and offering their distinctive insights to what happened.

On the surface the popularity of proposed radical policies with the quick rise and fall of the IWW on the mainstream, along with the AFL's mid-century shift towards maximally mainstreamed organization respected by the political core of the society; is appealingly indicative of the success and the failure of a particular approach over the other. This is represented in the viewpoint of Lawrence Glickman, who considers the untenable nature held by some in the early stages of the labor movement that could be described as almost outside the realm of being considered to be legitimate political activities, and 20<sup>th</sup> century development which ushered in a viewpoint that was primarily interested in the consumerist qualities that emerged in benefit of the newly formed middle class in particular which settled in with a more

conservatively oriented front.<sup>130</sup>This is reflected in Glickman's work "Workers of the World, Consume: Ira Stewards and the Origins of Labor Consumerism," stated, "historians have generally depicted labor's consumerist century in nonpolitical terms and in the twentieth century as a conservative."<sup>131</sup> Although, underneath this façade, deeper underlying factors suggest the dynamics to be much more complicated than some historians have presented in their analyses.

The radical and more aggressively inclined wing of the movement did not dissipate and dissolve along with the influences of the IWW, it rather took a different shape. Additionally, the more negotiable and more tenable in appearance orientation of the AFL was not indicative that they were not interested in serious terms. Their outer qualities were rather reflective of an inner imperative to make a significant difference and press reforms forward in a fashion that would not turn off the populace. As a result of these dynamics, the labor movement ultimately geared reformations and change on a trajectory that became mainstream and stable. For the subsequent generations, both radically inclined thinkers and more reserved counterparts successfully re-think and re-imagine what a workplace and its dynamics should constitute. This was made possible by the foundation that was set by the efforts of those involved with the activities of both the IWW and the AFL, and the subsequent effectively implemented adjustments along the way which allowed the groundwork for the consensus that the labor movement was overall a successful development. The important questions that have played a central role in discussions relating to the workplace that have dominated discussions relating to the social, cultural, and economic

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<sup>130</sup> Lawrence Glickman, "Workers of the World, Consume: Ira Steward and the Origins of Labor Consumerism." *International Labor and Working-Class History* No. 52 (1997), 73.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/27672406>

<sup>131</sup> Lawrence Glickman, "Workers of the World, Consume: Ira Steward and the Origins of Labor Consumerism." *International Labor and Working-Class History* No. 52 (1997), 73.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/27672406>

facets of America since the emergence of the industrial age will not likely go away anytime soon. As a result, many will seek the contextualized nuance that a historical analysis can provide in terms of understanding the systems contemporary to modern times. Additionally, even beyond future changes of revolutionary proportion that may uproot the world's systems even more significantly and dramatically than the Industrial Revolution did; an understanding of how labor was reimagined following the emergence of mechanized industry can provide a framework of support for further moments of great change in the coming years.

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