THE IWW AND THE LIMITS OF INTER-ETHNIC ORGANIZING: Reds, Whites, and Greeks in Grays Harbor, Washington, 1912

by
Philip J. Dreyfus

Racial and ethnic divisions played a major role in shaping the direction of the American labor movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Modern historians are acutely aware of the racial exclusivity of the American Federation of Labor as well as the prevalence of racist and nativist sentiments among a large segment of the native-born "white" working class. David Brody, for example, has commented that

> since Reconstruction, relentless pressures had forced blacks out of their traditional Southern jobs as artisans and down into menial and segregated work in both North and South . . . By the time the A.F.L. faced the issue, blacks were so confined economically as to pose no present danger to the trade unions . . . Craft unions had always tried to restrict access and control labor markets. What more efficacious way than along the color line?[1]

One should understand, of course, that it was efficacious because it could be shown to serve the interests of "white workers" to discriminate on racial lines. Brody went on to note that at the turn of the century, labor faced a more significant crisis from eastern and southern European immigration than from the excluded blacks: "It was a telling commentary that a Welsh miner, himself by no means certain that he would remain in America, referred derisively to Slavs and Italians entering the mines as 'foreigners'."[2] Organized labor's response to the "new" immigration both drew upon and helped solidify American racial definitions. As Brody points out,

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[1]David Brody, *In Labor's Cause* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), 115.
[2]*Ibid.*, 116.

> The A.F.L. . . . claimed much of the credit for the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and during the 1890s the Federation became a fervent advocate of a literacy test for entering immigrants. This, Gompers argued in 1902, "would exclude hardly any natives of Great Britain, Ireland, Germany, France, or Scandinavia. It will shut out a considerable number of South Italians and of Slavs and other[s] equally or more undesirable and injurious.[3]

Other historians, while recognizing "white" labor racism, have found that such racism was often reconciled with "progressive" labor goals. Such is the case with Daniel Cornford's study of Humbolt County, California lumber workers in the Gilded Age, where the author sees Sinophobia coexisting with a "radical democratic-republican ideology" and a "labor theory of value."[4] The same may be said of Michael Kazin's work on the San Francisco Building Trades Council. Kazin comments that two impulses, "the inclusive, optimistic faith in class solidarity and the appeal to racial fears and hatred, did not pose an agonizing contradiction either for white labor leaders or for most of their followers."[5] "White" American workers essentially saw racism as a part of a legitimate defense of their interests. One might add that racism and nativism were *essential* components of a strategy to defend the particular prerogatives of white labor in a segmented labor market.

Some historians have justly attempted to balance this picture of racial disunion by describing instances of inter-racial or inter-ethnic cooperation among workers, instances which shed important light on the possible, but which nonetheless appear as the products of rather specific demographic circumstances. In a recent article, Lisa McGirr chronicled the cooperative efforts of "blacks" and "whites" in the IWW-affiliated Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union Local 8. While such cooperation was notable, it is significant that it took place in the context of a labor force comprised of an African-American majority and a minority consisting of recently arrived Eastern Europeans.[6] A similar demographic situation applied to Birmingham, Alabama's mine districts at the turn of the century in a study by Paul Worthman which stressed the inter-racial successes of the United Mine Workers Union in that locality.[7] Additionally, in one of the most notable polyglot organizing efforts of the pre-World War I period, the IWW conducted a successful

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[3] *Ibid.*, 117.

[4] Daniel Cornford, *Workers and Dissent in the Redwood Empire* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1987).

[5] Michael Kazin, "Reform, Utopia, and Racism," in Daniel Cornford, ed., *Working People of California* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995).

[6] Lisa McGirr, "Black and White Longshoremen in the I.W.W.," *Labor History*, 35 (1995), 95–119.

[7] Paul Worthman, "Black Workers and Labor Unions in Birmingham, Alabama, 1897–1904," *Labor History*, 10 (1969), 173–194.

textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912 which required forging a unitary movement among workers of at least two dozen different nationalities. Notably, however, all were foreign-born.[8]

Unlike most AFL affiliates, the IWW did profess a doctrine of racial equality and worker internationalism, but its efforts were generally limited by the human beings it sought to represent. In the midst of West Coast anti-Asian agitation, the IWW played a role in the development of the Fresno Labor League from 1908 onward. Yuji Ichioka has indicated, though, in his study of the Issei, that the league's membership was essentially Japanese.[9] Few white workers could be attracted to its ranks. The IWW's internationalist vision and professions were sorely tested by American racial realities.

The above examples clearly indicate that it was possible to organize African-American workers, immigrant Japanese workers, immigrant Eastern European or Middle Eastern workers, and even to organize some of these groups in combination with one another. The most intractable problem faced by the early 20th-century U.S. labor movement, however, was that of bridging the chasm between workers who saw themselves as "Americans" or "whites" and those whom they identified as "others." This problem is especially significant in light of the fact that some of the more seemingly Marxist scenarios of class conflict and consciousness emanated from segments of this "white" working class in isolation from the internationalizing effects of the period's global migration patterns.

Melvyn Dubofsky once commented that "class war in the West created a class ideology, and that . . . ideology was Marxist because the Mountain West from 1890 to 1905 followed the classic Marxian pattern of development." Citing the examples of class struggle in Leadville and Cripple Creek (Colorado), Coeur D'Alene (Idaho), and Butte (Montana), Dubofsky went on to claim that "Western corporations encountered a labor force less tractable than the uprooted and ethnically-divided immigrants of the East." And further, "while in some mining districts the foreign-born outnumbered the native Americans, no great ethnic division separated foreigners from natives. In most mining communities the dominant foreign nationalities were of Irish, English, and Canadian extraction."[10] This suggests that whatever working class solidarity was

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[8]See Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969) or Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement of the United States*, Vol. IV, *The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905–1917* (New York: International Publishers, 1965).

[9]Yuji Ichioka, *Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885–1924* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

[10]Melvyn Dubofsky, "The Origins of Western Working Class Radicalism, 1890–1905," *Labor History*, 6 (1966), 103–120.

forged under the conditions of Western capitalist expansion was at least not disrupted by ethnic or racial division and perhaps at most strengthened by a sense of racial familiarity. But this was only because of the racial solidarity manifested among workers who considered each other "white." This fact is crucial to understanding the limited success of interracial or inter-ethnic labor organizing in the U.S., especially on the part of its most vocal and determined proponent, and an offspring of the American West, the Industrial Workers of the World.

Consider the conduct of the "Greek strike" of 1912 which took place under IWW auspices in Hoquiam, WA, a major timber products center situated in the Grays Harbor region about 90 miles southwest of Seattle. The strike involved a unique and revealing alliance of IWW and AFL-affiliated unions, a substantial episode of open class warfare, and a bitter electoral contest. Its resolution offers some insight into the relationship of class to nationality in the U.S. and into the significance of race in the great Northwestern woods.

At the turn of the century Hoquiam and its sister city Aberdeen comprised a major timber products center in Grays Harbor or Chehalis County, Washington. The "twin" cities were home to 3000 inhabitants in 1890 and grew to 22,000 by 1910. Between 1890 and 1905, the largely working class population was heavily native-born, consisting of many workers who had followed the timber industry from the north woods of the upper Great Lakes to the yet unharvested stands of Douglas fir in the trans-Cascadian West. The Americans were joined in labor by some Canadians and recent northern European immigrants. And although men typically outnumbered women in northwestern industrial towns, by 1900 married men made up half the labor force in Hoquiam mills and two-thirds in Aberdeen. Marriage and home-ownership, which were frequently linked, were achieved with different degrees of success by workers at different levels of skill and in different occupations. Shingle mill workers were the most likely to possess home and family. Common laborers in the lumber mills were less likely to be married homeowners, no doubt because of their significantly lower wages, and lumberjacks were rarely family men on account of their transiency and isolation in the lumber camps.[11] Craft, skill and status distinctions within this working class do not however appear to have produced any deep or abiding hostilities between various groups of workers. Only the inattention of the unionized minority to the fate of the unorganized presaged any potential intra-class animosity.

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[11]U.S. Bureau of the Census, *11th Census*, 1890; *12th Census*, 1900, *Population*, Part I. pp. 402–8; *13th Census*, 1910, v. III, pp. 969–1009; manuscript census schedules, *11th Census*, 1890, and *12th Census*, 1900, Chehalis County, cities of Aberdeen and Hoquiam.

Americans, Canadians, and Englishmen found the most ready concord as they were all English-speaking Protestants, but even the growing number of recent Scandinavian immigrants were integrated with relative ease into the local working class. A. E. Johnson, immigration promoter for James Hill's Great Northern Railroad, had nothing but praise for the Scandinavians.

> We claim the Scandinavian countries as first choice from which to secure the best foreign immigration, for the reason that the best class of foreigners already located in the Northwest are from Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and by proper effort and intelligent work, this class of immigrants can be very materially increased. . . .[12]

Swedes and Norwegians, although occasionally treated with the disdain accorded to non-English speakers in the U.S., were not met with the same vicious invective reserved for non-Protestants, southern and eastern Europeans, and Asians. In fact, ethnic impulses often drew Scandinavians into nativist alliances with other "white" workers. A racial construction binding "Anglo-Saxon" and "Nordic" workers into a common tribal stock produced powerful alliances against workers of other "races." When workers in Anacortes turned back an attempted landing of 100 Japanese there in June 1900, the Norwegian-language newspaper *Tacoma Tidende* editorialized that:

> We do not hold with the mishandling of either Japanese or Chinese, or people of other nations, because we do not ourselves wish to be mishandled on account of our nationality; but the workers in Anacortes would be dumb indeed if with open arms and cheers they should welcome their Asiatic brothers who come in large numbers to take bread from the mouths of the white man.[13]

The *Tidende* displayed an ambivalence suggestive of the Scandinavians' vulnerability to nativist attacks, but also their ultimate acceptance of American racial definitions.

In short, national distinctions between Americans and European immigrants during the first wave of immigration to the Pacific Northwest were not substantial enough to cause serious ethnic cleavages among workers in the timber industry. In his description of early 20th-century Everett, Norman Clark could just as easily have been speaking of Hoquiam, Aberdeen, and other similar timber towns when he stated: "Despite its initial linguistic multiformity, Everett was essentially white

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[12]Jorgen Dahlie, *A Social History of Scandinavian Immigration, Washington State, 1895–1910* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 17; quoted from "The New Immigration Movement," the *Northwest Illinois Monthly Magazine*, Jan. 1896, 7.

[13]*Ibid.*, 110; quoted from *Tacoma Tidende*, June 16, 1900, 4.

and Anglo-Saxon in its values. The native American was clearly the dominant culture."[14] This muting of ethnic divisions was not to last, however, due to a quantitative and qualitative change in immigration patterns after 1905. The old working class in timber would be confronted in subsequent years with a substantial migration of "unassimilable" immigrants whose presence would complicate inter-class and inter-ethnic relations in the Northwestern milltowns. Between 1901 and 1910, the growth of Grays Harbor County and of its working class was partly the result of a second wave of immigration that brought a new crop of strangers – Finns, Russians, Greeks, Croats, Slovenes and Dalmatians – into the mills.[15] One of the most noteworthy conflicts deriving from this new state of affairs occurred in Hoquiam in 1912.

R. F. Lytle, president of the Hoquiam Lumber and Shingle Company and a tireless advocate of the open shop, fired the opening salvo of a protracted conflict in early October 1911. Lytle fired all his union workers and on November 1 he announced a general wage reduction of 10% for all categories of labor. Those non-unionized workers who were dissatisfied with the new terms of employment were replaced by Greeks.[16] The firing of union men affected only the company's shingle operations, since the only union of timber workers at the time was the International Shingle Weavers' Union of America, which had been engaged in a wage struggle with Lytle since 1910. The ISWUA, as a consequence of its control of a skilled craft, was a union of native-born men, many of whom were old-stock Americans, and some of whom were the native children of Irish, German or Scandinavian immigrants.[17] Immigration from southern and eastern European sources had little actual or potential impact on the monopoly that such workers held over shingle production. In fact, shingle manufacturers typically found it very difficult to find adequate replacements for striking or locked-out shingle weavers and usually engaged them in battle only at times of market glut. It was therefore in Lytle's lumber mill that the greatest potential for inter-ethnic conflict existed as it was here that the unskilled or semi-skilled children of the "old" working class mingled increasingly with non-English-speakers from Finland, Greece, or the Balkans. Lytle's actions in the late fall of 1911 ignited a conflict that produced an odd and shifting alliance of workers of varied skill, craft, and ethnicity, and which produced

[14]Norman Clark, *Mill Town—A Social History of Everett* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1970), 79.

[15]U.S. Bureau of the Census, manuscript census schedules, *13th Census*, 1910, Chehalis County, cities of Aberdeen and Hoquiam.

[16]*Shingle Weaver* (hereafter *SW*), Feb. 22, 1912, 1.

[17]U.S. Bureau of the Census, manuscript census schedules, *13th Census*, 1910, Chehalis County, cities of Aberdeen and Hoquiam, and Snohomish County, city of Everett.

a prominent role for a new arrival on the Grays Harbor scene, the Industrial Workers of the World.

The IWW launched an organizing drive and free speech fight in neighboring Aberdeen from November 1911 into early 1912, with the intention of establishing its regional headquarters on Grays Harbor.[18] By February 1912, the Wobblies had succeeded in organizing a large number of the area's unskilled and previously nonunionized millhands, including Lytle's Greeks. Hoping to deflect the IWW's new-found popularity and to benefit from the mill workers' mobilization, the ISWUA, which had rarely demonstrated any concern for unskilled timber workers outside of the shingle mills, began to address, at least rhetorically, the predicament of the millhands.

> Lytle wishes it understood among the unorganized that he will punish anybody who dares oppose his will. He gives the unorganized to understand that he has punished them for the audacity of the Shingle Weavers in daring to show him up and fight back. . . . To punish the Four Hundred employees in the Lumber Mill because he is mad at a few Shingle Weavers who defy his attempts to destroy their Union, will only drive the Four Hundred themselves to organize in self-protection. . . . And that is what is happening. Many of the old employees in the Lytle Mill refused to accept the 10 per cent cut and left. Their places have been filled by Greeks. . . . Does R. F. Lytle encourage ["family-men"] when he drives them away and imports Greeks to take their places?[19]

The ISWUA discovered the potential solidarity of the unskilled millhands through the appeal of the IWW, and was not to turn away potential allies in a joint struggle against a common enemy in the person of R. F. Lytle. Yet the union's rhetoric also revealed a determination to promote the leadership of trade unionists in the larger struggle, as evidenced by the emphasis on the weavers' audacity and fighting spirit and the key role they occupied in Lytle's anti-labor machinations. Furthermore, the weavers' new interest in unskilled workers clearly did not extend as far as the Wobblies' commitment to recognize the foreigners as "class comrades" of the American-born. If anything, the ISWUA's combative strategy relied heavily now on a broadened class struggle from which the foreign-born were both excluded and transformed into the objects of battle. In March, the foreigners would call this strategy into question by their actions.

On Thursday, March 14, 1912 the unskilled millhands of the North Western Lumber Company went on strike for higher wages. Common

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[18] Vernon Jensen, *Lumber and Labor* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1945), 121; and *Aberdeen Herald* (hereafter *AH*). Jan. 8, 1912, 1, and Jan. 11, 1912, 1.

[19] *SW*, Feb. 22, 1912, 1.

laborers who had been paid $1.75 per day now demanded from $2.50 to $3.50. Organized under IWW auspices, workers from North Western marched on the Lytle mill, calling out all the men there as well.[20] This was the first concerted labor struggle to include workers of all of Hoquiam's "new" nationalities, and was consequently dubbed, with some derogatory intent, the "Greek strike." While middle-class Hoquiam and the trade unionists appear to have been caught off guard by the strike, the ISWUA nonetheless wasted no time in joining the fray. The first night of the strike, workers held a meeting at Hoquiam's Finn Hall at which the IWW affiliates appointed a strike committee of two Greeks, two Finns, two Scandinavians, and two English-speakers. The shingle weavers contributed two prominent speakers. One was J. G. Brown, the International's president and an active Socialist. The other was Dr. Hermon Titus, a former Socialist Party leader who had been called to Hoquiam in February by the weavers to help settle the lockout against them. This nascent united labor front was aided as well by the sympathy of Hoquiam's mayor, Reverend Harry Ferguson, a clerical advocate of social harmony who initially rejected the mill owners' appeals for police intervention in the strike.[21]

Faced with a surprisingly broad opposition, the mill operators chose to make nationality the main focus of the conflict. The biggest employer of until-now cheap foreign-born labor, the Lytle mill, refused to meet with the strike committee on the preposterous grounds that the Hoquiam Lumber and Shingle Company would have nothing to do with anyone save Americans and American citizens.[22] The *Aberdeen Herald* subsequently reported that "it seems certain that the foreigners will be replaced in the mills by American men of families . . . [and possibly at] an increase in wages." The newspaper's ethnically divisive appeals were reinforced by a tendency to lump all of the new immigrants into a general category of "other" as it described the events on the Harbor as "the strike of Greek and other Slavic laborers."[23] Clearly, racial or ethnic categories were being drawn to define a broad pool of un-American stock. The IWW strike committee responded by demanding that "in the event of a settlement of this matter, all men are to be reinstated in their former positions. No men are to be discriminated against for reasons of color, nationality or union affiliations."[24]

By March 23, nine days after the onset of the strike, workers had succeeded in closing several additional mills in Hoquiam and Aber-

[20] *AH*, Mar. 18, 1912, 1.
[21] *(Hoquiam) Daily Washingtonian* (hereafter *DW*), Mar. 15, 1912, 1, and Mar. 16, 1912, 2.
[22] *DW*, Mar. 16, 1912, 2.
[23] *AH*, Mar. 18, 1912, 1.
[24] *Ibid.*, 4.

deen, the Grays Harbor longshoremen had joined the strike, and the mills of the E. K. Wood and Grays Harbor Lumber companies maintained operations only by promptly granting their employees' demands. Mill managers fought back by creating a special force of mill police, appointed by Hoquiam Police Chief Quinn and confirmed by the city commission, but serving on company payroll. Mayor Ferguson stood alone on the commission in opposing the alliance of millmen and publicly wielded power, but he was consistently outvoted on these matters.[25]

As the conflict mushroomed and the sides became more clearly drawn, the ISWUA engaged itself more actively in the labor alliance. But since this rebellion was neither of their making nor under their control, the shingle weavers would have to give their role some justifiable public definition. Without elaboration, the union described the walkout of common laborers as "indirectly due to the lockout against the shingle weavers in Hoquiam." The weavers blamed "a few business men," who were members of the Hoquiam Commercial Club.[26] The ISWUA was careful not to alienate the entire business community of the city, as it worked to split Hoquiam's middle and small mercantile classes from the millmen.

The union posited the division of Hoquiam into three social classes. First, "the mill owners, the very rich and their immediate dependents, their superintendents, bosses, clerks, lawyers, journalists. . . . They want large profits and low wages and consequently less money to be spent in Hoquiam." Second, "the small business men, the storekeepers and all those dependent on them. They must sell their goods or go to the wall . . . It is the thousands and thousands of men employed by the Lumber Industries . . . who keep the stores prosperous." Third, "the wage class—practically the only class in this city, 80 per cent of all the population . . . THEY ARE THE RULING CLASS OF HOQUIAM. . . . They are the city."[27] ISWUA propaganda was aimed at generating a community struggle against the millmen based upon an alliance of economic self-interest between the small merchants and the workers.[28] The union also promoted an awareness of the potential political power of the city's working class.

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[25] *DW*, Mar. 21, 1912, 6; *SW*, Mar. 23, 1912, 4.
[26] *SW*, Mar. 23, 1912, 2.
[27] *Ibid.*, 1.
[28] Herbert Gutman pointed out that merchants and shopkeepers often played pivotal roles in the labor/capital struggles of 19th century industrial communities. Both workers and industrialists vied for the allegiance of this segment of the middle class, and its loyalty to "big capital" was by no means assured. The shingle weavers' position and strategy consequently had its antecedents. See for example Gutman's "Trouble on the Railroads in 1873–1874" and "Two Lockouts in Pennsylvania, 1873–74," in *Work, Culture & Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Random House, 1979), especially pp. 311, 328, 340–1.

The ISWUA made great efforts to emphasize the unity of labor in this struggle, a circumstance that they clearly had not anticipated.

> The most astonishing and gratifying feature of this uprising is the hearty cooperation among the different unions. The Central Labor Council, composed of delegates from the various unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor . . . enthusiastically endorsed this great Lumber Workers' strike, which is being conducted by the organizers of the Industrial Workers of the World. . . . The I.W.W. has now enrolled several hundred Lumber Workers, BOTH SKILLED AND UNSKILLED, into one Industrial Union. . . . One of the best organizers in the I.W.W. advised the longshoremen in the ranks of the I.W.W. to join the I.L.A. . . . so as to have no divisions in the ranks of strikers. The representatives of the Shingle Weavers' Union, the Longshoremen's Union and I.W.W. have met in common conference and have practically joined forces to win this strike.[29]

The ISWUA, confronted with a substantial strike against some of its own most stubborn enemies, readily made common cause with its natural allies. Nonetheless, the union's willingness to join in struggle with the IWW was unusual for an AFL union and was even a risky gamble in light of the dangers of inflaming middle class public opinion. But the weavers had few better options in this strike and could justify their position to other AFL workers by noting the lack of bitter jurisdictional disputes between the labor organizations involved in the conflict.[30]

An even thornier matter was that of race and nationality. On this, the ISWUA adopted a seemingly rational position that addressed the issue of foreign labor as a material rather than as a racial concern.

> What was the real complaint against the Greeks when they came here five years ago? . . . Why they lowered wages. . . . They made "white men" work for less. . . . But THESE VERY GREEKS ARE LEADING THE FIGHT FOR HIGHER WAGES AND BETTER CONDITIONS. . . . And business men blindly take up the old cry when the occasion of the old cry is gone and when the Greeks have learned enough to demand better conditions for themselves and their fellow workers. . . . The Greeks are fighting for the best interests of Hoquiam.[31]

This shift from the union's initial nativist stance regarding the Greeks was notable, and was perhaps a realistic and palatable shift in the minds of the ISWUA's Socialist leadership, given the course of events in Hoquiam, but it was as risky as the IWW alliance. It remained to be seen how the ethnic issue would play out among the workers and businessmen of Grays Harbor as the strike progressed.

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[29] *SW*, Mar. 23, 1912, 1.
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] *Ibid.*

By March 27, every mill in Aberdeen was closed and the strike had spread to Raymond and South Bend on Willapa Harbor. 19 Grays Harbor millmen issued a statement proclaiming the impossibility of raising wages "under present conditions of the lumber market." Rumors circulated that the Greeks were arming themselves with revolvers. On March 29, about 100 members of the Hoquiam middle class convened a citizens' committee and enrolled about half its number in a voluntary "committee of public safety." Mayor Ferguson, who had opposed confirmation of the mill police, gave his approval to this new "special police" force and asked that volunteers register with the Chief of Police. It is not clear whether the mayor had finally come to fear the retribution of the middle class electorate, whether he genuinely wished to create a police force that was beholden to neither worker nor boss, or whether he wished to exert some municipal control over a middle-class response to the strike that he viewed as inevitable. The result of his concession, however, was that the original force of 50 "specials" grew to 100 within two days, and construed itself as a middle-class vigilante organization dedicated to the forcible reopening of the Lytle mill on Monday morning, April 1.[32]

On March 30, P.J. Mourant, ex-mayor, Commercial Club officer and chairman of the "committee of public safety," appealed for the arrest of the strike leaders. City Attorney Callahan complied with the issuance of warrants against ISWUA organizer Titus and IWW organizers Anderson, Newell and Yager. Chief Quinn and Sergeant Hardwick proceeded with the arrests. That night, six police officers spirited the four men out of the city jail and drove them under cover of darkness to the county jail in Montesano, where striking workers would presumably be less likely to stage a jail break. Dr. Titus, who was successfully bailed out by his wife on the following day, was promptly rearrested under a federal warrant prepared by one of Lytle's attorneys and was transported to Tacoma, far from the Grays Harbor events, to await grand jury proceedings over a month away. The charge?—violating the constitutional rights of strike-breakers by intimidating them from going to work. The complaint was ultimately dismissed by U.S. District Attorney Todd in Seattle.[33]

At dawn on April 1, with the strike leaders under arrest, over 100 businessmen armed with shotguns, rifles, revolvers, and clubs congregated on the Lytle mill in Hoquiam. They wore the white ribbon badges of the "special police." As workers approached the mill along Monroe Street, each was halted and asked "Going to work?" If one said "No,"

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[32]*DW*, Mar. 31, 1912, 1.
[33]*Ibid.*; *SW*, April 6, 1912, 1.

he was arrested and held in a big "stable" opposite the "bull-pen" constructed for scab labor. The vigilantes warned the detainees "that any attempt to break out would result fatally." 250 strikers were rounded up in this way and then herded into box cars waiting on the Northern Pacific tracks–

> . . . eighty in one car, sixty-four in another, and so on, till they were packed like sardines, the doors shut tight and spiked, with only cracks for air, and run down the main line ready to be shipped out of town.[34]

Only the intervention of Sheriff Payette secured their release and prevented a wholesale deportation. Having successfully forced the reopening of the Lytle mill, albeit short-handed, the citizens' police proceeded to the North Western mill, which was started up that afternoon under similar circumstances.

Meanwhile in Aberdeen, 50 special police and a dozen mill guards opened the Slade mill with a show of weaponry as daunting as that in Hoquiam. Strikers who resisted orders to move on were promptly arrested. Aberdeen Chief of Police Templeman sent out a dragnet for the IWW leaders, resulting in the arrests of organizers W.A. Thorne, John Roderick, and Carl Conrad. A "mechanized division" of vigilantes combed city streets by car, sweeping up 26 "others who appeared disposed to . . . incite riot or a breach of peace." 100 citizens' police in Raymond swept through the Finnish boarding houses and the Greek settlement there, rounding up 50 Finns and 100 Greeks who had refused to report for work. All were deported–the Finns by boat and the Greeks by rail–with transportation paid by the Raymond citizens' committee. In Bellingham, the trustees of the Chamber of Commerce called upon the mayor to swear in 300 special officers to support "the cause of law and order."[35] This intimidating display of force, death threats, deportations, and arrests succeeded in reopening the mills. Lumber concerns were unable, however, to secure full crews for many weeks. Despite the absence of pickets, workers were scarce, prompting plant manager McGlauflin of the North Western Company to estimate that the crews he had been engaging "were only 60 per cent efficient."[36] It was important, however, that once the strike organizers had been disposed of, the vigilance committees directed their most ardent persecutions at specific categories of workers–Greeks, Slavs and "Red" Finns. What message were they sending to "American" workmen? What ultimate resolution of the strike did they envision? What was to be offered to

[34] *AH*, April 1, 1912, 1.
[35] *AH*, April 1, 1912, 4; *DW*, April 2, 1912, 1; *SW*, April 6, 1912, 1, 4.
[36] *AH*, April 4, 1912, 1.

the striking Anglo-Americans, Irish-Americans, German-Americans, Norwegian-Americans, Swedish-Americans, Danish-Americans—the "white" workers who had thus far stood in common struggle with the "new" immigrant workers? The answer was soon delivered.

On April 4 and 5, the citizens' executive committee in Hoquiam and committees organized by the AFL Central Trades Council and striking workers met frequently with the mill operators in order to achieve an agreement that would allow work to resume. The mill owners' compromise proposal appeared in the *Daily Washingtonian* on Saturday, April 6 emblazoned with the headline, "HOQUIAM IS TO BE A WHITE MAN'S TOWN." The proposal, authored jointly by the executive officers of the citizens' committee and of the big mills, provided for the exclusion of the IWW and any of its members from the mills, nondiscrimination against members of other unions, the creation of a Citizens' Labor Bureau with exclusive control over the recruitment and screening of workers for positions on Grays Harbor, and a minimum wage of $2.25 per day to *white* labor as of April 1, 1912.[37]

On April 2, organizers and former prisoners Titus, Anderson, and Yager pleaded for continued labor unity. Titus particularly seemed to fear that the mill owners' offer would weaken the resolve of the shingle weavers to maintain their role in the labor alliance. He consequently vowed to offer his services to the IWW should the weavers lose their will to fight.[38] Titus and the Wobbly organizers proceeded to organize pickets to slow the return to work beginning on Monday morning, April 8. If the local press can be believed, the "white labor" agreement had a marked effect on the ethnicity of the pickets, while a new strategy on the part of the strike leadership had a marked effect on their gender.

> About 150 women, almost all the wives of "Red" Finns, gathered at the Slade mill Tuesday and were dispersed by the application of the water cure, via fire hose. A number of them were accompanied by baby buggies. . . . the insults of this bunch of unsexed women is becoming unbearable.[39]

From this point onward, the Grays Harbor press launched a propaganda barrage apparently designed to isolate a large majority of workers from the union leaders and from a dispensable few of their fellows who could be blamed for the entire debacle. The IWW became the most obvious and appealing target of attack as it could be most effectively linked in the public mind to the "racially undesirable" Greeks and the politically "un-American" Finnish Socialists.

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[37] *DW*, April 6, 1912, 1.
[38] *DW*, April 17, 1912, 1.
[39] *AH*, April 11, 1912, 1, 8.

> The I.W.W. agitators' . . . purpose is to OBSTRUCT and DESTROY. . . . Every hour these anarchists become more insolent and insulting, yet put a few of them in jail and they become martyrs. If they "rough house" the jail and are restrained, are they entitled to the sympathy of any one? If they can shut that mill down so that 800 to 1000 men who want to work will be forced to remain idle, who is entitled to protection, the 800 working men, or the I.W.W. hordes? Have they the right to demand that the flag of the United States shall protect them when they do all that they can to tear down that flag?[40]

The press further attempted to inflame nationalist passions against the IWW and its allies and the workers they represented with reports such as the following:

> Chief Examiner John Speed Smith of the U.S. naturalization bureau . . . and the different judges before whom the applicants [for citizenship] come have decided that the recent outbreaks on the part of the socialists and the Industrial Workers of the World demand a stringent test on the part of Uncle Sam before new voters are admitted in the future. "The courts and our bureau have agreed that any man who would countenance the supplanting of the star-spangled banner by the red or any other flag should not be allowed to become a citizen," said Examiner Smith. "Further, it is possible that persons who are citizens and who make seditious utterances will lose their citizenship rights."[41]

Given the fact that many workers were returning to their jobs by mid-April, and that powerful propaganda was driving home the liabilities of IWW-affiliation, the ISWUA made a seemingly surprising move. On April 13, the union's official organ printed the following remarks:

> The Shingle Weavers, the Longshoremen and the Central Labor Council are all "identified" with the I.W.W. in this strike in spite of strenuous efforts by the capitalist press to split them up into rival factions. LABOR IS UNITED IN HOQUIAM. The only settlement which can be permanent is a settlement with organized labor, INCLUDING THE I.W.W. . . . All branches of wage workers are standing together in this strike. . . . They all recognize that the next battle to be won is THE RECOGNITION OF THE UNIONS BY THE MILL OWNERS, not of one union by itself, but of all unions. . . . CONSOLIDATED LABOR IN HOQUIAM WILL WIN THIS SECOND BATTLE FOR DIRECT RECOGNITION AS IT HAS WON ITS FIRST BATTLE FOR ADVANCED WAGES, EVEN IF IT TAKES ALL SUMMER AND FALL.[42]

Why would the ISWUA continue to risk identification with the IWW in such a hostile climate if the wage battle had been won? It must be

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[40] *DW*, April 9, 1912, 1.
[41] *DW*, April 6, 1912, 1.
[42] *SW*, April 13, 1912, 1, 4.

remembered that the weavers had been engaged in their own struggle with millman R.F. Lytle before the onset of the "Greek strike." The minimum wage settlement in the millhands' strike may have been a victory for unskilled "white" labor but it had no effect on improving the wages of the more highly skilled and higher-paid weavers. The settlement also required a return to work on the basis of non-discrimination toward "individual" workers. There was no advantage gained by the ISWUA in its efforts to gain recognition as a collective bargaining agent. The ISWUA was consequently still deprived of the power to enforce union scale for its members.

While one should not utterly dismiss the socialist affiliation of many ISWUA officers as a factor in its tolerance of the IWW, it seems more likely that the two organizations' marriage in Hoquiam was viewed as a tactical necessity. By 1912, shingle weavers were becoming a smaller and smaller minority of timber workers. Skilled jobs were shrinking in proportion to the total number of jobs in the industry as new technologies reshaped the shop floor. As more dangerous "upright machines" replaced the old "ten-blocks," more and more shingle sawyers were disabled or maimed and entire categories of labor were eroded. The old ten-block machines were operated by a sawyer, four packers, and five knot sawyers; the new uprights by a sole sawyer. Consequently, the men were separated from one another, teamwork diminished, the union weakened, and jobs that might have been filled by the sawyers' sons faded from view.[43]

Since the ISWUA was making little headway in preserving union control in shops like Lytle's, it was now seeking to ally itself with the lumber mill workers it had once ignored. Unfortunately for the union, the willingness by mid-April of many unskilled "white" laborers to return to their jobs at an advance in wages, but without union-affiliation, and without Wobblies and Greeks, left the weavers with few allies to carry on their own fight. This produced the ironic situation of a skilled, native-born and once nativist union fighting a recognition campaign in the shingle mills alongside some of the most unpopular cast-offs of the multi-ethnic struggle that the IWW had tried to lead in the lumber mills.

If the shingle weavers might have considered other options, these were no doubt narrowed by the behavior of the millmen's political allies. On April 10, Hoquiam City Clerk Harry Kress, a shingle weaver, secretary of the Trades Council, and strike supporter, was removed from office by Commissioners Ogden and Willis over Mayor Ferguson's objections.[44] This was the beginning of a middle-class campaign to weaken

[43] *SW*, March 2, 1912, 1.
[44] *DW*, April 11, 1912, 1.

the political power of the weavers in city government. The Commercial Club's "Upholders of Good Government" campaign now also sought the recall of centrist Mayor Ferguson for failure to offer more determined and diligent protection of property rights. A primary date for the selection of Ferguson's opponent was set at May 20, with the recall election slated for June 3.[45] From this point onward, the attention of Grays Harbor residents increasingly shifted from the "Greek strike" to the upcoming political campaign.

As far as the strike in the lumber mills was concerned, most millhands returned to work by the end of April, attracted by higher pay and unwilling to struggle any longer for union recognition. The IWW found itself increasingly handicapped by the success of the employers' racist appeals, bolstered by wage incentives. Further IWW strike efforts were thwarted as well by local governments' attacks on strike-related speech and assembly. In Aberdeen, for example, Police Chief Templeman forcibly closed the Finn Hall to prevent its use for Wobbly meetings. When the Finnish Socialist club failed to win a court restraining order against Aberdeen authorities, club president and secretary Charles Kauppi and John Likkanen accepted Superior Court Judge Irwin's decision to reopen the hall on the condition that the IWW be barred from it. The Finnish Socialists in effect decided that support for the IWW strike did not warrant their own organizational demise. Isolated and without a sufficient workplace following, the IWW called off its strike on April 27.[46]

The ISWUA continued its own efforts to resolve the shingle weavers' grievances throughout the month of May, and linked its strike to the impending elections. The union threw its support to Mayor Ferguson, describing the mayoral contest as a "continuation . . . of the industrial contest . . . waged the last two months by all organized Labor and for the last two years by the Shingle Weavers Union."[47] While the weavers' concern for their political representation was understandable, it should be noted that the politicization of the Grays Harbor labor struggle would exclude the workers who had initiated the lumber strike in March. Most of the foreign-born workers in the region were not naturalized and consequently would have no access to the ballot box. The theatre of battle now shifted entirely to a stage dominated by native-born Americans, and here the weavers' efforts would founder.

On May 20, Chris Knoell, a retired butcher, won the primary election, and received pledges of support from the other eight candidates

[45] *DW*, April 25, 1912, 1.
[46] *DW*, May 3, 1912.
[47] *SW*, April 20, 1912, 1.

who had hoped to fill Ferguson's seat. Knoell had no political experience at all in politics or public life, but committed himself to a platform framed by the citizens' committee. Its most notable elements were a ringing condemnation of the sitting mayor and a pledge "to stamp out by every means . . . riot and sedition in whatever guise or form."[48] With the IWW out of the picture, what could these words have meant? Although there was some political utility to keeping alive the memory of the Wobbly "hordes," it also appears that the Socialist-affiliation of the ISWUA served as a straw man for the political campaign. Throughout May, local press reports focused extensively and approvingly on physical attacks launched against individual Socialists as well as against Socialist meetings and offices by members of the Grays Harbor Commercial Club, the Grand Army of the Republic and the Spanish War Veterans. Much discussion centered on the formation of a Loyal Legion of Loyalists to defend patriotism and the flag.[49] The weavers' union's response to these nationalist stirrings was very interesting considering the earlier evolution of its position on the "Greek strike":

> The American flag is being used just now for all it is worth. . . . The national emblem was used to hide the perfidy of the millmen. For though it was announced that only American men with families would be given employment, many of the mills began hiring Hindus and Italians, while flags and signs reading "I.W.W. Keep Out" acted as a warning to any one wanting living wages.[50]

The fact that the ISWUA could revert so quickly to a nativist stance is an indication that the union never really abandoned its Americanist position or its perception that its primary audience and constituency would be essentially "American." The Greeks had been embraced for short-term tactical reasons but clearly not from a committed sense of worker internationalism. The weavers were perfectly comfortable with the common language of racial difference, and the political campaign in which they were engaged was essentially a debate over different versions of Americanism.

Election day, Monday, June 3, came and went. The final vote count was Knoell, 1363, Ferguson, 870—a Knoell victory by almost 500 votes. The ISWUA blamed Ferguson's defeat on propaganda, strong-arming, and subterfuge. Labor officials said that the churches had defamed Ferguson, the pimps had financed Knoell, and that the lumber barons had threatened to fire workers who opposed their candidate.[51] While this

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[48] *DW*, May 26, 1912, 1.
[49] See *DW* and *AH* from April 25, 1912 through the month of May.
[50] *SW*, May 11, 1912, 1.
[51] *SW*, June 8, 1912, 1.

may have been true, the unionists overlooked the role of nationality in the election results. There were at least 6000 voting-age persons in Hoquiam. At least one-third of these were unnaturalized immigrants who certainly had a stake in the political contest, but who could not exercise political power. This left 4000 or so potential voters. Only 2600 of these registered. Was this by reason of indifference, despair, or lack of durable residency? We do not know. But we do know that this reduced substantially the pool of actual voters, and that almost all of the nonregistrants were workers. Voter registration levels in the two distinctly middle class wards was so high as to include virtually every adult man and woman. Although registered workers turned out to vote with almost the same regularity as their middle class counterparts, they were at best half as likely to register in the first place. In fact, more native-born and naturalized workers did not vote in this municipal contest than did. Knoell did, however, carry every ward. In the predominantly middle class districts, he did so by landslides in excess of two to one, while he polled simple majorities in the working class neighborhoods.[52]

Although the shingle weavers were surprised and disappointed by the results, especially in light of the sheer numerical superiority of Hoquiam's working class, there is a plausible explanation for the outcome of the election. First of all, the middle class citizens were most determined to have a government that offered no quarter to "revolutionists" and "rabble-rousers." At best, Ferguson had been too soft on the radicals for middle-class tastes. Second, those workers most likely to suffer under the employment terms offered by the millmen and supported by the citizens' committee mayor could not vote. Third, many American or "white" workers stood to gain materially from the millmen's offer. This could have explained both the working-class pro-Knoell votes and the fence-sitting of those who voluntarily stayed away from the polls. This latter group may have consisted of "white" workers who lacked enthusiasm for middle class vigilantism but preferred a wage increase to further unemployment and violence. Besides, without a determined effort by most "white" workers to maintain their solidarity with the foreigners, and given the political leanings of the city commission, even a Ferguson victory would effect no positive change in the differential treatment now to be meted out to "non-white" workers in the mills.

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[52]Election data are drawn from *DW*, May 19, 1912, 1, and June 4, 1912, 1. Population statistics are drawn from the closest census to the election, *13th Census*, U.S. 1910, vol. III, 969–1009. Since all indications in this analysis are of an increase in both population and immigration between 1910 and 1912, the points made here would be strengthened by 1912 demographic information.

In fact, with the demise of the IWW campaign and the re-emergent nativism of the weavers, so-called non-white workers no longer had any American allies to count on.

To what life, then, did the people of Hoquiam return in the aftermath of the elections? The conduct of business in the mills returned to normal. The shingle weavers remained locked out and on strike. No mills of any sort agreed to recognize unions of any sort. The citizens' committee had their preferred mayor and their favored city commission. The IWW, which had planned to locate its regional headquarters in Hoquiam, walked away from Grays Harbor in disappointment and chose Centralia as its northwestern hub. The lumber barons felt themselves to be masters of their mills, having beaten back the threat of union prerogatives. The middle class felt themselves to be masters of their city, having forcibly driven off the "revolutionary hordes." The American flag was everywhere in evidence, and the "traitors' mayor" had gone down to an ignominious defeat.

But something else had happened as well. Wages were higher for "white" labor in the lumber mills and yet Hoquiam did not become a "white man's town." The vigilantes did not deport or even attempt to deport all of the foreigners in town. How could they have? How would business have functioned? No, the immigrants, even the "racially undesirable ones," were now a fact of daily life. The mills needed them, as did the grocers, doctors, and publicans. By 1912 they had become indispensable to the city's very existence. A market glut may have allowed employers to seek a temporary constriction of their labor force, perhaps of sufficient proportions to cover increased wages for *some* workers, but the industry could not realistically operate on an "all-American" basis. What the mill owners accomplished, however, was cross-class agreement on who would suffer the brunt of cost-reduction ("non-white" workers) and who would reap the benefits ("white" workers and millmen). The millmen's April Fool's Day offer turned out not to be a plan to "whiten" the city, but to be precisely and narrowly what it had been represented to be: a minimum wage of $2.25 a day to "white" labor. Ironically, these were to be the fruits of the IWW's struggle.

What is so notable about this entire episode is that the inter-ethnic cooperation which appeared at the onset of the "Greek strike" could prove to be so shallow. The fragility of the multi-ethnic coalition which the IWW had helped to forge and to which the ISWUA temporarily adhered merits examination. This fragility is perhaps best explained by viewing most native-born workers' attachment to the IWW as a situational radicalism, motivated by short-term concerns such as the wage rather than ideological affinity, and driven as well by the general neglect of unskilled laborers by AFL-affiliated craft unions. If this is the case,

then the IWW's campaign was from the very beginning vulnerable to disruption along ethnic lines as a result of the presence of an American majority in the lumber mills. In addition, one of the most promising aspects of this labor struggle as it got underway was the skilled/unskilled coalition reflected in the ISWUA-IWW alliance. This was particularly notable since the AFL and the Wobblies were typically and mutually inimical. But if one understands the ISWUA's position as equally situational, the ultimate decision by Grays Harbor workers to turn over the "non-whites" among them as sacrificial lambs becomes more fathomable.

What evidence do we have that nationality and "race" were more powerful factors in the thinking of "white" workers than radical appeals for working class unity? One piece of evidence is that the AFL Trades Council in Hoquiam's neighboring city of Aberdeen refused to grant its endorsement to the Hoquiam strike from the very beginning. The Aberdeen Trades Council was very explicit in indicating that it viewed foreign workers as scabs and that it viewed its responsibility as the defense of "American" workers' jobs.[53] Since the local shingle weavers had chosen to locate their merged Grays Harbor union in Hoquiam in 1906, they exerted no influence over the Aberdeen Council but substantial influence in Hoquiam.[54] Therefore it clearly appears that the special situation of the weavers in relation to their employers in 1910–12 caused their union to adopt a stance toward the IWW strike that was entirely out of keeping with the bulk of organized labor. It may be added that even in Hoquiam itself, the Building Trades Council refused to endorse the strike for the same reasons as the AFL unions in Aberdeen.[55]

Why then, did the ISWUA behave as it did? As already mentioned, the union had by 1912 been struggling for two years to gain recognition from R.F. Lytle and other open-shop employers. The unexpected strike of lumber mill workers might have exerted just enough pressure on labor's common enemies to bring about a resolution favorable to the weavers. But ISWUA support for the so-called Greek strike required some intellectual gymnastics on the weavers' part. On the one hand, the weavers' union had shared the generally negative view of "cheap and passive" immigrant labor that characterized American unionists. On the other hand, such foreign labor was not and would never become a threat to shingle weavers' jobs. The weavers could afford, if tactical needs dictated, to demonstrate some verbal largesse toward immigrant labor without fearing any disruption of the essentially "white" monopoly

[53] *Timber Worker*, March–April 1912.
[54] *SW*, November 12, 1906, 2.
[55] *DW*, April 4, 1912, 1.

over employment in the shingle mills. This fact leads to the important conclusion that the ISWUA had never attempted nor ever construed its role as to organize the unorganized in the timber industry—American or foreign-born. When presented with an uprising of the workers that its history, structure and orientation had caused it to neglect, the ISWUA, even under Socialist leadership, became the tail to the IWW's dog while trying to cloak itself in some semblance of a leadership role. But the weavers' ability to turn their participation to advantage was severely constrained by a need to keep up with the shifting loyalties of the non-ISWUA lumber mill workers within the IWW-led movement. When it first appeared that the IWW's multi-ethnic coalition would hold together, the ISWUA turned the Greeks into "white" men. When it began to disintegrate, the weavers found it difficult to reverse their new-found racial acceptance of the Greeks, but found Italians and Hindus to replace them in labor's racial hierarchy. The ISWUA's need to maintain some influence over unskilled workers outside of its organization made it difficult for the union to stick to a position on ethnicity and race that was out of keeping with prevailing rank-and-file sentiment. If the IWW's failure can be linked to its determination to lead on the issue of worker solidarity, the ISWUA's can be linked to its awkward vacillation attendant to the attitudes of the rank-and-file. Both unions' efforts foundered on the rocky shoals of race.

What can the unions' failures teach us about the ordinary workers of Grays Harbor? Were their best efforts at real class solidarity thwarted by powerful lumber barons, aggressive middle-class vigilantism, propagandistic press and hostile governmental power? The answer is, in part, yes. One cannot ignore the size of the stick wielded against the labor coalition of spring 1912. But one should also not ignore the readiness of so many workers to grab the carrot, especially when this carrot reflected and promoted racial sentiments that had a long history—a history which permitted a fluid adaptation of racial "whiteness" to justify privilege for some and restricted opportunity for others. In the final analysis, American workers on Grays Harbor, and those Europeans they deemed equally "white," accepted a role as their employers' partners in enforcing a "racial" segmentation of the labor market in their mills. If this could be done to African-Americans and Asians, why not to Greeks, South Slavs or Finns? If even nominal Socialists could comfortably lead unions whose structure was premised on exclusion, what might one expect from "ordinary" Americans? And if "white" racial consciousness was so powerful because there were economic gains to be derived from it, organizations like the IWW had a formidable task ahead of them indeed.