

Bachelor History Thesis (GE3V14054)

The 'Revolutionary' History of the Industrial Workers of the World.

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Abstract:

The history of organized labour movements in the United States of America has always been typified by struggle between workers and employees. One of the targets in in the late 1910s were the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), commonly referred to as Wobblies. The existing literature fails to explain relations in the perspective from the government towards the IWW and the difference between a perceived and self-declared ‘revolutionary’ industrial union before the major Red Scare (1917-20) almost wiped out the organisation. The main research question tries to fill the hole by asking how the Industrial Workers of the World develop from its creation in 1905 to an organization deemed dangerous and revolutionary by the United States (local) government starting repressions in 1917? To answer this, the thesis is split in two parts, covering the ideological side of the IWW and a sample of actions perpetrated by the Wobblies in the period 1905-1917. From its creation, the IWW saw itself as the best kind of union for all industry workers to organise for a coming revolution. There seems to be a subtle difference in preparing passively and participating actively in one, as for the IWW could not make up its ideology in its early years. From their writing works, there seems no clear indication of further revolutionary means besides of the economic context. From works analysed in this thesis, they did not seek peril with the institutions of the government, as they would seemingly bypass them by economic means and focus on the capitalists and employees instead. In the samples of strikes investigated, the IWW only gained minor, short lasting victories on a small, local scale. Yet they were well known and successful strikes throughout the United States for the Wobblies, that their ‘revolutionary’ potential was only limited to improving conditions. It also seems like IWW adversaries were often the ones that struck first with violence to break a strike, in which the Wobblies sometimes responded with violence of their own, maybe changing perception of union where violence always seemed to follow them. The perception of reality and theory was certainly skewed, but it can be said that the IWW did not hold true to the definition of revolutionary as explained in this thesis and is as it was mentioned in contemporary times.

The ‘Revolutionary’ History of the Industrial Workers of the World: An Analysis of a Labour Union.

The history of organized labour movements in the United States of America has always been typified as a struggle between workers and employers. Throughout the Progressive Era, where widespread social activism and the longing for political reform, the first labour strikes, labour Unions, and repression by government actors and companies themselves, led to frequent incidents.¹ American workers began finding ways to coordinate their efforts in local, regional, and later national situations. One of the most infamous and first nationwide crackdowns occurred during the First Red Scare in the late 1910s. Fuelled by the view of a revolutionary Europe, anarchist bombings and hyperbolic smear campaigns by the press, widespread fears of (extreme) left/labour and- anarchist movements developed into coordinated raids on various (labour) organisations.² Large scale search and seizure operations led to mass arrests and deportations, starting from 1917 as the United States entered the First World War, up until the Palmer Raids in 1919. One of the targets in, although not directly linked to bombings or direct violence, were the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), commonly referred to as Wobblies.³ The IWW identified themselves filling a gap in the labour union world by forming an industrial type of union since 1905. They embodied a ‘syndicalist’ type movement dedicated to put all types of labourers together in one big union, to collectively organize and focus on the ‘class struggle’, as described in traditional Marxist texts.

Not long after the raids and the Red Scare it became clear that the measures were mostly unjustified, generating suspicion on what really happened and what was perceived at the time.⁴ Even before 1917, when the repressions started on a federal level, other organisations, such as the Socialist Party of America and the American Federation of Labour, were not major targets in contrast to the IWW. According to labour historian Melvyn Dubofsky the IWW was already mostly paralyzed as an organisation by 1917 due to the federal Espionage Act of that year, with

¹ John D. Buenker en Edward Robert. Kantowicz, *Historical dictionary of the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (New York, NY, [etc] 1988).

² Patrick Renshaw, ‘The IWW and the Red Scare 1917-24’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 3 (1968) 63–72.

³ Michael R. Johnson, ‘The I.W.W. and Wilsonian Democracy’, *Science & Society* 28 (1964) 257–274.

⁴ National Popular Government League en Rome Green Brown, *To the American People: Report Upon the Illegal Practices of the United States Department of Justice* (zp 1920) 238–9.

many prominent members being incarcerated thereafter.⁵ The Palmer raids proved to be a final stroke that reduced the IWW to a minor labour organisation.⁶ How did the IWW become part of those federal measures, and how dangerous or revolutionary were they really. The existing literature fails to explain relations in the perspective from the government towards the IWW and the difference between a perceived and self-declared ‘revolutionary’ industrial union. The Red Scare and the Wobblies have had their separate share of research, but not a focused effort on how to interpret the revolutionary elements within Wobbly the organisation as a main enquire point of view.

With this direct relation missing, it is possible to ask a (new) research question for this thesis: **How did the Industrial Workers of the World develop from its creation in 1905 to an organization deemed dangerous and revolutionary by the United States (local) government starting repressions in 1917?** In addition, this research paper will combine theoretical perspectives on (revolutionary) syndicalist movements and industrial unionism to their respective actions. For the sake of the limited scope and resources of this thesis, it will not include the Red Scare itself since a variety of historians have already covered those incidents. 1917 will be the final year of this enquire, because it was the first-year major repercussions against IWW leadership started in September, yet it also is one of the most active years relating to IWW activities, such as strikes.⁷ This investigation tries not to be a descriptive history of the IWW, but it aims to focus on revolutionary elements surrounding the organisation.

To answer this research question, the thesis will be split into two parts. It follows a framework to define syndicalism movements made by Van der Linden and Thorpe of three analytical levels, which are useful to define and investigate syndicalism that this thesis resonates. The three levels according to them are 1) ideological, 2) organisational and 3) the shopfloor level.⁸ The first will be mentioned further in the first part, and the last one in the second part, which investigates the actions the workers of the organisation they favour. The second one will be passed, since the scope of this thesis cannot contain the complex and everchanging

⁵ Melvyn Dubofsky, *We shall be all: a history of the Industrial Workers of the World*. The working class in American history (Abridged ed; Urbana 2000).

⁶ Marcel van der Linden, *Revolutionary syndicalism: an international perspective* (Aldershot, Hants, England: 1990) xi, 260 pages ; 215–217.

⁷ University of Washington, ‘Number of strikes by year and industry (chart)’, http://depts.washington.edu/iww/map_strikes.shtml (21 januari 2021).

⁸ Marcel van der Linden, ‘Second thoughts on revolutionary syndicalism’, *Labour History Review (Maney Publishing)* 63 (1998) 182–196, aldaar 182–183 <doi:10.3828/lhr.63.2.182>.

organisational nature of the IWW and its subsidiaries from 1905 up to and including 1917. I will not use the second level as it does not fit this research. Instead, I will use existing works which already expounded the organizational structure of the organisation where it is relevant.⁹ Because of the many sub factions and split offs the IWW had during its first fifteen years of existence, I will consider all literature and works produced under the IWW umbrella relevant since they were all persecuted in the end.¹⁰

Part one of this paper relates to the question of how revolutionary the IWW was according to existing theories, their own texts, and how their most important members viewed the Wobblies movement. This needs to be reevaluated/re-examined because within the existing literature surrounding this subject there is no strong consensus on how the IWW can be viewed within the framework of syndicalism and/or industrial unionism.¹¹ The question if they were truly ‘revolutionary’ at the time leading all the way up to the Red Scare era becomes one that is not easily answered. Even syndicalism as an ideology is hard to define, since so many interpretations are available. The part will also include a short history of how/why the industrial union came to be and how it fits within the rise of labour organisation in the early 20th century the United States. However, theory is not all according to Van der Linden, who says that the ‘[...] ideological criterion as the least important; what counts is what the movement does in practice, and not how it justifies what it does.’¹²

This brings me to the second part of the thesis: action. This part enquires the perpetrated domestic actions surrounding the IWW during its first fifteen years of existence. It is necessary to examine what concrete activities the IWW and its members were involved in, since theory and reality often differ from each other as real-world circumstances are variable and more complex.

Van der Linden also insists on not calling movements ‘revolutionary syndicalist’ on an only practical level. Therefore, to demonstrate if and how revolutionary the IWW was, the thesis revisits the period with both questions as incentive. To do this, the thesis will not only re-examine old and new literature on the subject, but it will use primary sources such as papers, song lyrics, speeches, and manifests (made and) used by the IWW, affiliates and its most prominent members during the 1905-1917 period. Both ‘sides’ have their accommodating

⁹ Paul Frederick Brissenden, *The I.W.W. : a study of American syndicalism* (zp 1919), Appendix I & II.

¹⁰ Michael Cohen, “The Ku Klux Government’: Vigilantism, Lynching, and the Repression of the IWW’, *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 1 (2007) 31–56, aldaar 42–45.

¹¹ This will be touched upon in part one when creating a theoretical framework for various definitions.

¹² Van der Linden, ‘Second thoughts on revolutionary syndicalism’, 183.

(political) bias, which has been noted by the author of this thesis. Lots of material was written and/or published by the Wobblies years later, the subject of which this thesis treats carefully. In the contemporary historiography, there are only a handful of non-politicized secondary source works available, which mostly cover a chronological history of the organisation.¹³ For a long period after the first world war, the subject was never comprehensively researched, even until as late as 2003 according to ‘long time Wobbly’ Franklin Rosemont.¹⁴ Yet, the IWW did see an increase in historical works during the sixties, as social changes in US culture brought new attention to political left and labour history. For the last 20 years, there is an increasing reinterest in the left political spectrum in the contemporary USA. Only a couple of studies have been made on the first red scare and the IWW, and these studies tend to not go into detail about any direct revolutionary elements within the organisation.¹⁵ Using these existing works, this thesis revisits primary sources in digital databases, with a specific focus on revolution characterizations, in its aim to answer the main research question.

Part one: The ‘Revolutionary’ I.W.W. in its Writings.

To understand what the Industrial Workers of the World as an organisation were, what their goals were and how they eventually acted on them, we need to understand how they came to be. To enquire what revolutionary means within the context of syndicalism, industrial unionism and the IWW, it is necessary to find a definition of the ‘ideology’ of syndicalism and industrial unionism. Syndicalism, unfortunately, is not a single, definable political theory that can be explained within one sentence. As noted by labour historian Ralph Darlington, ‘the movement was a product of various intellectual and ideological influences, and even if they did not produce any profound analytical texts syndicalists presented coherent and well-argued cases in many of their pamphlets, leaflets and speeches.’¹⁶ First, I use various definitions to create a framework to work with, after which I go over the context of early 20th century syndicalism and industrial labour movements in the United States to understand why and how the IWW was different from its contemporaries as it was founded in 1905.

¹³ Brissenden, *The I.W.W.*; Dubofsky, *We shall be all*.

¹⁴ Peter Cole, *Wobblies of the world: a global history of the IWW* (London : 2017) 1 online resource (312 pages) : 10.

¹⁵ Johnson, ‘The I.W.W. and Wilsonian Democracy’; Renshaw, ‘The IWW and the Red Scare 1917-24’.

¹⁶ Ralph Darlington, *Syndicalism and the transition to communism: an international comparative analysis*. Studies in labour history (Aldershot, England ; 2008) 19.

Starting with the basics, linguistically, syndicalism is widely regarded as originating from 19th century France, with the literal translation of the word *syndicat* being a (local) trade union. A problem in translation is apparent here, in that the French General Confederation of Labour Union (GCL) called their movement as *syndicalisme revolutionnaire*. However in English literature it is often simply referred to as syndicalism.¹⁷ This distinction is useful to mention, since Americans and the IWW had its own road of development within the international context of organized labour movements at the turn of the 20th century and is often viewed as its own, unique form and creation.¹⁸ Making things more difficult, the concept of ‘syndicalism’, can be viewed with different definitions with no ‘objective criterion’, according to Van der Linden and Thorp.¹⁹ Further problematization occurs since they argue that ‘revolutionary syndicalism’ and ‘industrial unionism’ can be grouped together because of their similar means of action.²⁰ This ‘broad’ definition stands in contrast with a more ‘narrow’ definition according to Erik Olssen, where the first one ‘[tends] to blur the distinctions between industrial unionism, syndicalism, and revolutionary socialism.’²¹ A final point to add to this discussion, following from Larry Peterson, is that it is possible to not define the IWW as syndicalism, as some of the leadership within the organisation drifted away from syndicalist ideas. Eventually, several of those who held on to these ideas left the union.²² To not further argue semantics and with these assertions in mind, I will define the IWW as an industrial labour union with syndicalist tendencies.

It is also necessary to use a definition of ‘revolution’ that fits the research of this thesis. Within the historiographic framework of revolutions, the definition by the well-known historian Theda Skocpol is the most complete: the *social* revolution. These are ‘rapid, basic transformations of society's state and class structures, accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below”, accrediting revolutions to a combination of several conflicts between the state, elites, and the lower classes, each in its own set of circumstances.’²³ It suits this case because it not only encapsulates the major change in society the defenders of the status quo

¹⁷ Ibidem, 4.

¹⁸ Larry Peterson, ‘The One Big Union in International Perspective: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism 1900-1925’, *Labour / Le Travail* 7 (1981) 41–66, aldaar 53–56.

¹⁹ van der Linden, ‘Second thoughts on revolutionary syndicalism’, 182.

²⁰ Ibidem, 182–183; Darlington, *Syndicalism and the transition to communism*, 5–7.

²¹ Erik Olssen, ‘Revolutionary Syndicalism. An International Perspective. Ed. by Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe. Scholar Press, Aldershot 1990. xi, 260 pp. £32.50.’, *International Review of Social History* 37 (1992) 107–109, aldaar 108 <doi:10.1017/S0020859000110983>.

²² Peterson, ‘The One Big Union in International Perspective’, 53–54.

²³ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Canto Classics (Cambridge 2015) 33 <doi:10.1017/CBO9781316423998>.

expected with revolution, but also the conflicts between the various labour movements including the IWW, the repressing state and the capitalists elite comprising of wealthy business owners. It is important to note that Skocpol uses a Marxist framework for her analyses, made for successful revolutions in her work. Therefore, I will also note how the IWW and its members perceived themselves as revolutionary and how the term revolution is perceived in contemporary times in the conclusion part.²⁴

Several studies of comparative analysis about international syndicalist theories in the 20th century exist already. I will focus on the IWW variant to understand the unique development of American syndicalism/industrial unionism.²⁵ To further understand this ‘American’ Syndicalism and the IWW, it is important to know the difference between trade/craft unionism and industrial unionism, as the foundation of the IWW showed that the latter came forth out of discontent with the first. Industrial unionism tries to organize labour throughout all industries, in contrast to craft unionism that focuses on unions organised by craft. Not wanting to completely describe the labour history of late 19th and early 20th century America, I will focus on the roots of the industrial labour movement first.

The IWW was not the first (industrial) union, it was rather a succession of other, different forms of unions before the turn of the 20th century. According to Louis Levine, the decline of the Knights of Labour (KOL), an industrial labour movement which embraced ‘vague humanitarian values’ in the late 19th century, was followed by the rise of the American Federation of Labour (AFL). They were a more ‘narrow homogeneous’ craftsman trade union founded back in 1886.²⁶ The Knights are important to mention because it set the stage for all industrial unions in the United States, as it was a mass organisation who embraced everyone and every worker, where individual craft intertests were subordinated to the welfare of the whole, who looked forward to the end of the wage system, and even adopted a watchword ‘an injury to one is the concern of all.’²⁷ Yet the organisation eventually lost touch with its base at

²⁴ I am aware that this puts me in line of the Marxist framework, which I will use because I will argue that the IWW accept Marxist theories of class struggle and revolution. I will not solely test if the IWW fits in their own view/standard of what a revolutionary element they were or should have been.

²⁵ Peterson, ‘The One Big Union in International Perspective’; Darlington, *Syndicalism and the transition to communism*; Linden, *Revolutionary syndicalism*; David. Berry, *New perspectives on anarchism, labour and syndicalism : the individual, the national and the transnational* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK : 2010) 1 online resource (xi, 228 pages); Ralph Darlington, ‘Syndicalism and Strikes, Leadership and Influence: Britain, Ireland, France, Italy, Spain, and the United States’, *International Labor and Working-Class History* 83 (2013) 37–53 <doi:10.1017/S0147547913000136>.

²⁶ Louis Levine, ‘The Development of Syndicalism in America’, *Political Science Quarterly* 28 (1913) 451–479, aldaar 453–456 <doi:10.2307/2141947>.

²⁷ Marion Dutton Savage, *Industrial unionism in America* (zp 1922) 15.

its highpoint, when it encompassed over 700.000 members, and saw the better organised AFL slowly take over as the most major national union.²⁸ This federation of craft unions was better able to cope with the challenges of that period, which ‘emphasized craft autonomy, or the entire (in-) dependence of each trade group to shape its own destiny; it inculcated strict loyalty to contracts made with employers; it was averse to strikes and advocated conciliation and arbitration whenever possible; it was indifferent if not hostile to socialism and, in general, to any ultimate social ideal; it was opposed to independent political action through a separate party organization.’²⁹

Differences between the organisations, even within the AFL, around the turn of the 20th century led to numerous local unions banding together throughout that time, who saw this as the only viable option after various failed strikes made them disenfranchised with craft-unionism.³⁰ Miners and brewers were the most prominent ones, which gave way to the Western Federation of Miners, followed by Western Labour Union that accepted a varied set of unskilled labourers. Eventually these would merge into the American Labour Union in 1902, that emphasized on the principles of industrial labour, staying out of politics yet ‘officially’ endorsing the Socialist Party of America but privately staying in favour of economic action.³¹ These are only two notable unions of many, that would eventually make up the IWW.³²

The period between 1898 and 1905 saw a dramatic rise in union membership because of growing frictions between employer and employee, increasing inequality, which led to around 2 million union members.³³ Yet this was still only a fraction of the American work force. Therefore, new plans were made by the industrial unions leadership that would try to shape the industrial union movement into something more cohesive and non-local as most of them did not see a labour friendly future with the AFL in place, which held 80 percent of union membership up until that point.³⁴ So far, it seems that the history of the IWW rather reflects a

²⁸ Ibidem, 16.

²⁹ Levine, ‘The Development of Syndicalism in America’, 454–455.

³⁰ Ibidem, 456–459.

³¹ Ibidem, 459–460.

³² According to the database of the University of Washington, around 300 local unions were active between 1906 and 1907. This number changed to circa 160 locals and 20 major Industrial Unions. University of Washington, ‘IWW Local Unions 1906-1917 (maps)’, http://depts.washington.edu/iww/map_locals.shtml (21 januari 2021).

³³ Howard Kimeldorf, *Battling for American Labor : Wobblies, Craft Workers, and the Making of the Union Movement* (Berkeley 1999) 1–3.

³⁴ Ibidem, 2.

split between union ideologies and the welfare of American labourers, rather than a proactive role towards a real and possible revolution by the lower classes.

The local industrial union leaders and individuals met up, as representatives of 42 labour organisations were invited who convened for several days to produce the Industrial Union Manifesto in January 1905. As mentioned before, the union did not create extended/grand theoretical works, but this manifesto covered a clear message for what the IWW aspired to be. The organisation was officially established after the conference in June that was issued by the Conference of Industrial Unionists in Chicago.³⁵ This work, in combination with other self-produced works of the Wobblies, which are digitalized on the internet and are considered by the IWW itself as ‘official literature’, will help in identifying any revolutionary elements.

The manifesto opens with the bad contemporary industrial conditions of the labours at the time and the switch from the appreciation of skilled labour to the increasing demand of unskilled labour in a more mass industrialised America. Power and wealth of the capitalists will keep increasing slowly, as men with trades and skills will be eventually replaced by machines. The whole movement is ‘founded on class struggle’ where the administration ‘must be conducted in harmony with the recognition of the irrepressible conflict between the capitalist class and the working class.’ The worker grows weaker when prices increase and wages drop, sending him all over the country in search of work, accepting every job available whatever the conditions may be. The employer holds all the cards and presents a ‘united front’, where the workers try to find ways to organise themselves against these conditions, but in an uncoordinated way. It will not improve and ‘the clouds of darkness and despair [are] settling down upon the world of labour.’ What follows is a denouncement of craft unionism, explaining how it leads to hatred of worker for worker, prohibitive initiation fees, fostering political ignorance thus divergence, assisting employers, hindering class consciousness of workers and ultimately the ‘enslavement of the workers through the wage system.’ Therefore, previous attempts at organising and bettering the working class have proven ineffective and too little. Henceforth, the universal economic problem of the working class requires a universal, industrial working-class movement solution. It needs to ‘embrace all industries, be founded on class struggles, be a non-political economic organisation with collective membership.’ There should be uniform membership between unions at different local/national levels where

³⁵ Industrial Workers Of The World Archive, ‘Industrial Union Manifesto (1905), https://archive.iww.org/history/library/iww/industrial_union_manifesto/ (21 januari 2021).

transfers are universal. Lastly, the manifest calls for regular publications of its principles and a central defence fund.

The whole document shows clear signs of the undesirable situation at the time, which was unfixable through craft/trade-unions according to the writers and could only be solved with industrial unionism. This was commonly shared by many different unions preceding the IWW, as mentioned before.³⁶ Less visible are direct references on acting on Marxism and acting on a revolution, with the document only recognizing the ‘irrepressible conflict’ and struggle between the two classes. ‘The working class and the employing class have nothing in common’ is a direct opening describing this. The manifesto does call for the abolition of the wage system and a more centralized form of industrial unionism but on other points it stays, probably as intended to discuss during convention, rather vague. This vagueness could also serve a purpose to not alert the authorities and keep a low-profile to not make enemies before even coming into existence. But the manifesto was only the call towards action by labour activists to form a new association of industrial unionism, where discussion among the attendees would further ‘finetune’ the ideology for IWW. This would result in the preamble of the many constitutions of the IWW, which detailed the class struggle and the important part of the industrial union in less, but more direct words.³⁷

Following the manifesto and the call for a new organisation toward anyone who felt affiliated with the message, a convention in July that same year brought together 186 delegates of 34 unions and labour groups.³⁸ During that convention, and in the years following, multiple variants of a ‘constitution’ were created and improved upon by members of the IWW.³⁹ The first three ‘annual proceedings’ were documented, and the transcriptions are completely preserved.⁴⁰ This gives great insight on how discussion between its many subsidiary organisations and members, pushed the IWW towards an industrial economic direction for the next decade. Although more transcriptions of proceedings after 1908 exist, for the purpose of this small enquiry I can only investigate the first three, as they are fully digitalized and are in

³⁶ Linden, *Revolutionary syndicalism*, 205–207.

³⁷ Brissenden, *The I.W.W.*, 349–350. See Also: Industrial Workers of The World Archive, ‘Preamble to the IWW Constitution’ <https://archive.iww.org/culture/official/preamble/> (21 januari 2021).

³⁸ Levine, ‘The Development of Syndicalism in America’, 563.

³⁹ Brissenden, *The I.W.W.*, 67.

⁴⁰ These can be found on in the Marxist internet archives and were digitalized by Robert Bills from the SLP. Marxist Internet Archives, ‘Industrial Workers of the World’, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/unions/iww/index.htm> (21 januari 2021).

my opinion the most interesting as the first years of the Wobblies are distinctive in their formation process.⁴¹

When looking for revolutionary elements in the first Convention, it is mentioned by speakers, not concluding anywhere on how to proceed on them. Delegate Kerrigan did ‘not come here to preach democracy, but [came] to preach working class interests[...]’.⁴² Others like delegate Arnold, pleaded for a non-political revolutionary movement.⁴³ Members of the Emancipation Club of Los Angeles wrote about themselves that they ‘...formed for the purpose educating the working class along the lines of purely revolutionary socialism.’⁴⁴ More delegates just saw themselves as revolutionist or connected to the revolution in some way.⁴⁵ Only William D. (Big Bill) Haywood directly recognized the movement as revolutionary.⁴⁶ Coming from the Western Federation of Miners, also a self-called revolutionary industrial labour organisation, Haywood praises its militant posture and hopes to bring this to the IWW together with the goals of the abolition of wage-labour. Later during the convention, Delegate Wright notes the right conditions exist in the United States: ‘that is, wherever it is possible to get at the mass of working people and present a program of the International revolutionary proletariat [...]’.⁴⁷

Guy Miller noted that ‘The Strike is in its Incipiency a revolution,’⁴⁸. I will later note on the importance of strikes being used as one of the many means by the Wobblies in part two. Some saw the revolution as inevitable without making a direct statement of being in its vanguard.⁴⁹ Saunders even wanted Chicago to come first because ‘it is going to be the centre of the revolutionary spirit.’⁵⁰ But only a few delegates saw the IWW as *the* direct organisation with this revolutionary spirit.⁵¹

The second convention in 1906 contained over twice as many references to the word revolution, with even in the opening mention the Industrial Workers of the world as ‘the greatest

⁴¹ The organization saw many splits, internal struggles, and directional challenges in these years. The most important once relevant to this thesis will be discussed were needed.

⁴² Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1905), <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/unions/iww/1905/convention/iww.pdf> (21 Januari 2021), p 58.

⁴³ Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1905), p 69.

⁴⁴ Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1905), p 125.

⁴⁵ Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1905), pp 467-68, 624, 185-6, 205-210.

⁴⁶ Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1905), p 187-191.

⁴⁷ Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1905), p 274.

⁴⁸ Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1905), p 314.

⁴⁹ Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1905), p 391.

⁵⁰ Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1905), p 680.

⁵¹ Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1905), pp 703, 153, 175-6, 334, 229.

revolutionary working class convention ever held on the American continent [...]'.⁵² Talks increase about the build of a 'revolutionary industrial union' by a rank-and-file controlled working class.⁵³ There is still a lot of talk about the organisation as an Industrial Economic organisation, steering away from politics.⁵⁴ Even more are plain mentions of allegiance by members and delegates to revolutionary industrial unionism.⁵⁵ Delegate Parks somewhat accuses another delegate of not associating with the revolution and the movement.⁵⁶ Delegate Veal oppose going further with taking a more proactive stand with the forces of revolution.⁵⁷

A more interesting exchange is between delegate Kinnon and the chairman, were the delegate wants to point out that they 'are not here as revolutionists. We are here as industrial unionists.'⁵⁸ He states there is no revolution about 'this' at all and doesn't even want the word itself to go on record. He is met with staunch opposition from the chairman and the crowd, and his point of order is set aside. Furthermore, a delegate of the Western Federation of Miners discusses how 'revolutionary' the IWW is, according to its preamble and the ever-looming class struggle.⁵⁹ One member notes that a 'Revolution does not mean to break off with the past' and talks about less radical change.⁶⁰ Even more interesting, delegate Petriella raises concerns about a lacklustre policy that is not fighting, and certainly not revolutionary enough.⁶¹ She advertises for a change in that policy, with the general strike as the main weapon and a rejection of politics and even suggests the use of violence, in the 'revolution' everyone is only *talking* about. This point is discussed and is concluded upon when the IWW membership is deemed too low at that point to make an impact.⁶² A revolutionary school will be set up for

⁵² Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1906), <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/unions/iww/1906/convention/iww.pdf> (21 januari 2021), pp9, 280, 311.

⁵³ Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1906), pp 58, 68-71.

⁵⁴ Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1906), pp 247, 273-4.

⁵⁵ Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1906), pp 276, 326, 332, 468, 513, 573, 764, 883, 885.

⁵⁶ Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1906), p 312.

⁵⁷ Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1906), p 319.

⁵⁸ Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1906), p 352-53.

⁵⁹ Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1906), p 370.

⁶⁰ Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1906), p 479.

⁶¹ Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1906), pp 599-601.

⁶² Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1906), pp 602-3.

organisers.⁶³ A lot of the convention was about the position of a president within the IWW, as it was deemed not in revolutionary spirits.⁶⁴

During the 1907 convention, less is spoken about revolutionary ends and means for the IWW as was present in the previous convention. There is mention of ‘dilly-dallying and pollywogging’ that is delaying the revolutionary potential of the organisation.⁶⁵ It refers to a lot of passive talk about when the revolution will happen and how to play into it once it occurs, instead of leading it somewhere.⁶⁶ Yet conditions are deemed not ready for any action.⁶⁷ Discussion still exists about the use of physical force, and it was rejected by some, but embraced by others.⁶⁸ It is duly noted that revolution is, up until this point, only an idea in peoples head for a long time now.⁶⁹ A lot of questions are made relating to if an entrance fee for the organisation is in truly revolutionary spirits and to cover legislation of the revolution by the IWW.⁷⁰ There is only one mention of making the working class revolutionary, but no concrete plans are made.⁷¹ Although a digital version of the conventions until the tenth are missing, one of the present members describes the amended preamble as noteworthy, as the breakup with US socialist politics was finalized.⁷² This preamble generated a new ‘revolutionary’ watchword, ‘Abolition of the wage-system.’ and the general concept of the removal of the capitalist system in 1908.⁷³ It seems that in the first years, there was not much consensus on many subjects within the IWW and its ideology about its role in the revolution.

⁶³ Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1906), p821.

⁶⁴ Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1906), pp 353, 365, 376, 435.

⁶⁵ Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1907), https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/unions/iww/1907/iww_conv_1907.pdf (21 januari 2021), p 108.

⁶⁶ Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1907), pp 113, 117, 135.

⁶⁷ Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1907), p 118-19.

⁶⁸ Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1907), pp 137-38, 147, 166.

⁶⁹ Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1907), p 173-76.

⁷⁰ Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1907), p 299.

⁷¹ Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago (1907), p 508.

⁷² Vincent St. John, ‘The IWW: Its History, Structure and Methods’, (Versie 1917), <https://archive.iww.org/PDF/HistoryStructureAndMethods.pdf> (21 januari 2021), p6.

⁷³ Brissenden, *The I.W.W.*, 349–350. See Also: Industrial Workers of The World Archive, ‘Preamble to the IWW Constitution’ <https://archive.iww.org/culture/official/preamble/> (21 januari 2021).

This was something inevitable to come, where the industrial union will take its part, but not in a possible vanguard.⁷⁴

To analyse some missing years between 1907 and 1916, I will use reports of IWW papers on these conventions where parts of the sessions have been published. Marxist archives digitalized the Industrial Bulletin, running from 1907 until 1909, and the Industrial worker, running from 1907 until 1913.⁷⁵ During the 4th convention of 1908, the preamble of the constitution was changed and there was a definite split with the Socialist Labour Party of America led by Daniel DeLeon.⁷⁶ They would later split into the Detroit IWW, also known as Workers' International Industrial Union.⁷⁷ Beside this, only organisational matters were handled and not much on revolutionary elements was discussed. During the fifth annual convention in 1910, mostly issues like membership fees, commission reports and resolutions votes and amendments were published in the *Industrial Worker*, point by point. Unfortunately, proceedings from the 6th convention are only later published in the October 1913 edition, which are not digitalized.⁷⁸ Because of this, I jump to 1916 and the 10th convention, which is completely digitalized. All earlier points of organisational matters are discussed, with additions about centralizing 'to fight the capitalists.' and some are reaffirming 'the chief aim of the I.W.W. is to unite the workers for the purpose of abolishing the capitalist social order.'⁷⁹ Yet the mentions are few and one of the main subjects is the Anti-War stance the Wobblies took, considering the First World War.⁸⁰

Beside text produced by the IWW itself, there are numerous works of prominent members and union leaders available. There are speeches given at events such as rallies or protests at the

⁷⁴ These conventions produced the constitutions, that I would like to have investigated for possible revolutionary elements, since the conferences gave a good impression but not any substantial policies. Unfortunately, the seemingly only website holding them in digitalized form, by [Jim Crutchfield's IWW and Workers' Education Page](#), is no longer online writing January in 2021.

⁷⁵ Marxist Internet Archives, 'Industrial Worker and Industrial Union Bulletin', <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/industrialworker/> (21 januari 2012). To find the dates of the conventions, I used the bibliography of Paul Brissenden (1919), P386-7.

⁷⁶ Marxist Internet Archives, 'Industrial Worker and Industrial Union Bulletin', Vol. II No. 27, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/industrialworker/iub/v2n27-nov-07-1908-iub.pdf> (21 januari 2012) p. 3. & Marxist Internet Archives, 'Industrial Worker and Industrial Union Bulletin', Vol. II No. 29, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/industrialworker/iub/v2n27-nov-07-1908-iub.pdf> (21 januari 2012), p 4. & Marxist Internet Archives, 'Industrial Worker and Industrial Union Bulletin', Vol. II No. 31, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/industrialworker/iub/v2n27-nov-07-1908-iub.pdf> (21 januari 2012), p 2-4.

⁷⁷ Brissenden, *The I.W.W.*, 229.

⁷⁸ This also the case for all but the 10th convention, which are not available on the internet January in 2021.

⁷⁹ Industrial Workers of the World, *Proceedings of the 10th Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World* (zp 1916) 57, 67.

⁸⁰ The Wobblies saw the war as another capitalists undertaking in which the ordinary worker would be taken advantage of. See Declaration 112, Proceedings of the 10th convention, page 128.

time, that were transcribed into pamphlets and published under the IWW banner.⁸¹ With *Revolutionary Unionism* (1905), Eugene V. Debs, former member of the American Railway Union and one of the founders of the IWW, writes that industrial unionism will unite, organize, and enlighten the working class and explain the current problems of class divide.⁸² Yet it still staves passives and talks about revolution when it comes. In another address that same year he speaks more toward a direct revolution, addressing the facts that the IWW is a revolutionary movement made of revolutionary workers, but mostly to draw contrast to the trade unions.⁸³ In an appeal a year later, he mentions the impending social revolution, where revolutionary education and organisation is a ‘vital’ need for the working class.⁸⁴ In a 1911 address he argues for the best revolutionary means with the industrial union, not a political party.⁸⁵ One piece that is designated as ‘official literature’ according to the IWW website, is the speech by William D. Haywood given in March 1911, of which a pamphlet summary was published.⁸⁶ In the dialogue with audience members, he mentioned means for a possible revolution: the (general) strike. In one of William Trautman works, who was a founding general-secretary of the IWW and an organizer, he argues the revolution as inevitable historical process, following Marxist theory.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the strike and the difference between craft unionism is propagandized, where he slowly became a bit more militant after the Chicago 1911 strike.⁸⁸ Another official Wobbly piece of literature, made by Vincent S. John in 1917, who was a labour organizer and for a short while general secretary for the IWW until his retirement in 1915, captures previous points, a short history of the IWW, its organisational structure at the time and tactics/methods.⁸⁹

⁸¹ I cannot cover all published works, so I will try to focus on those containing references to revolutionary elements. I understand the problem of representation when not using all the available sources.

⁸² Eugene V. Debs, ‘Class Unionism’, (1905), <https://archive.iww.org/PDF/history/library/Debs/Debs1.pdf> (21 Januari 2021).

⁸³ Eugene V. Debs, ‘Industrial Unionism’, (1905), <https://archive.iww.org/PDF/history/library/Debs/Debs5.pdf> (21 Januari 2021), p 11.

⁸⁴ Eugene V. Debs, ‘You Railroad Men!’, (1906), <https://archive.iww.org/PDF/history/library/Debs/Debs8.pdf> (21 Januari 2021), p 31-2.

⁸⁵ Eugene V. Debs, Charles Edward Russel, ‘Danger Ahead’, (1911), <https://archive.iww.org/PDF/history/library/Debs/Debs4.pdf> (21 Januari 2021).

⁸⁶ William D. Haywood, ‘The General Strike’, (1911), <https://archive.iww.org/history/library/Haywood/GeneralStrike/> (21 Januari 2021).

⁸⁷ W. E. Trautmann, ‘One Big Union’, (1911), <https://archive.iww.org/history/library/Trautmann/OBU/> (21 Januari 2021).

⁸⁸ W. E. Trautmann, ‘Why Strikes are Lost & How to Win’, (1912), <https://archive.iww.org/history/library/Trautmann/loststrikes/> (21 Januari 2021). & W. E. Trautmann, ‘Industrial Unionism: The Hope of the Workers’, (1913), https://archive.iww.org/history/library/Trautmann/industrial_unionism/ (21 Januari 2021).

⁸⁹ Vincent St. John, ‘The IWW Its History, Structure and Methods’, (Versie 1917), <https://archive.iww.org/PDF/HistoryStructureAndMethods.pdf> (21 Januari 2021).

These tactics advocate the use of militant ‘direct-action’ tactics, mostly focused on strikes as they are the main method of action.

Other examples of texts produced and published by the IWW and affiliates are songs. A few historians have covered these already, so I will try to focus on any revolutionary elements within these song texts.⁹⁰ In 1909, the one branch of the International Workers of the World compiled twenty-four songs into a little red book called *Songs of the Industrial Workers of the World*, with the intention ‘to destroy the old myths that have enslaved us for so long. We will have songs that hold up flaunted wealth and threadbare morality to scorn, songs that lampoon our masters.’⁹¹ Although over 250 songs have been recorded to have been linked with the IWW since 1905, I will focus on this ‘Little Red Song Book’ since it holds the commonly known songs at the time.⁹² The version used is from 1913 which contains 50 songs in this 6th edition.⁹³ Although it does not contain any direct references to the term revolution, it is full of IWW/Marxist rhetoric. ‘The Industrial union bids ye [wage] slaves arise’ is language found more within the songbook, with emphasis on the rise of the labourer towards its freedom without a wage system.⁹⁴ The overthrow of the capitalist class seems near and the labourer must unite when ‘Freedom now draws nigh.’⁹⁵ Most songs reference to joining this labour struggle and organizing it by joining the IWW itself, with songs such as ‘Everybody Joining It’, ‘We are the Only Union’ and ‘Workers of the World, Unite’. Only the Song ‘Unite! Unite!’ combines this with the idea to ‘overthrow the parasites.’⁹⁶ The songs seem rather tame compared to earlier analysed literature, yet it might be an understandable choice not to use harsher language when singing along events and rallies. Probably to not antagonize other parties such as the government, when the Wobblies saw itself as apolitical and purely active with economic means, pushing it closer towards syndicalist tendencies of direct-action by workers. The whole songbook can be viewed as an IWW instrument to unite the working class toward an upcoming path of change, not give them instructions to any specific revolutionary actions or acts of violence.

⁹⁰ Industrial Workers of the World (Chicago), *Songs of the workers to fan the flames of discontent* (34th ed., 3rd print.; Chicago 1976).

⁹¹ Faron Levesque, ‘The Big Red Song Book’, *International Labor and Working-Class History* 76 (2009) 180–182, aldaar 180 <doi:10.1017/S0147547909990159>.

⁹² *Ibidem*, 9–12.

⁹³ Industrial Workers of the World, ‘*Songs to fan the flames of discontent*’ (zp 1913), <http://archive.org/details/songstofanflames00unse/21> Januari 2021).

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, 3, 9, 12–13, 19, 23, 25–30, 40.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, 19, 34.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, 43.

Concluding, with the upper remarks in mind, we now have a clearer picture of the revolution as prescribed by the Wobblies: the ends are a society with no wage labour, where the capitalist class does not exist and the most major means the (general) strike. It is purely an economic battle, where politics are left aside in 1908 and seen as not beneficial in the workers struggle for 'freedom'. The path of the organisation on paper seemed to change somewhat since its foundations were laid down and amendment in 1905. Yet, it is important to remember that these texts are only some of total, which makes it unfeasible to draw representative conclusion. With all this known theory, contextual history and IWW textual sources elaborated, it is not possible yet to say how revolutionary the Wobblies were in their means.

Part Two: The 'Revolutionary' I.W.W. in Practice.

Now that it is established how the IWW perceived in their own words in connection with revolution, the actual events need to be investigated. According to Darlington, it was not necessarily their extensive theoretical works but 'their experiences of bloody industrial warfare' that made them act and turn toward 'violent' conflicts.⁹⁷ In this part one will examine a couple of major events that are affiliated with the IWW. Among these are the many different 'direct-actions' by the Wobblies, described by Dubofsky, but only a couple major ones can be examined within this study.⁹⁸ As mentioned before, strikes were one of the most important forms of action which was also proclaimed by Haywood in his speech. According to historian Phillip Foner, the general idea of the General Strike to ultimately give the workers control of the means of production came only until 1911 to the Wobblies.⁹⁹ The IWW means of action also changed between their founding and 1917, perpetrating more 'sabotage' tactics from 1910. This meant the slowdown of industries as the common method, nearly all of the time.¹⁰⁰ Within the IWW database of the University of Washington, there were over 400 strikes between 1905 and 1920 with a connection to the IWW registered.¹⁰¹ Accompanying strikes, 'free speech fights' were a tool of action by the IWW to generate publicity and create awareness among

⁹⁷ Darlington, 'Syndicalism and Strikes, Leadership and Influence', 38.

⁹⁸ Dubofsky, *We shall be all*, 41.

⁹⁹ Philip Sheldon 1910-1994. Foner, *History of the labor movement in the United States. Volume IV, The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905-1917* (New York 1997) 140.

¹⁰⁰ Peter Carlson, *Roughneck : the life and times of Big Bill Haywood* (zp 1983) 196-197.

¹⁰¹ University of Washington, 'Number of strikes by state (chart)', http://depts.washington.edu/iww/map_strikes.shtml (21 januari 2021).

local populace.¹⁰² These events mostly happened between 1907 and 1916 and meant that ‘when local communities [authorities] resisted attempts by Wobblies to speak on public street corners in central locations. Wobblies generally responded by engaging in widespread civil disobedience. They openly violated laws that restricted speech, successfully provoked arrests, overcrowded the prisons, and clogged the courts. With these tactics of direct action, the Wobblies tried to force communities to allow street speaking.’¹⁰³ Yet I will not look into any of those particular events, because they rarely recruited large amounts of new members and hammered on the use of the first amendment, which reaffirms the status quo, not leading to change.¹⁰⁴ The use of violence throughout Wobbly events is debated. This historical debate ranges over various events, as violence did happen, as who was responsible for it: the IWW or its counterparts.¹⁰⁵ I will take a sample of three major events between 1905 and 1917 to try and investigate how and if they adopted the many different forms of action and with which means. These are the 1907 Goldfield Strike, 1912 Lawrence Textile ‘Bread and Roses’ Strike and the Lumber Strikes of 1916-17. To analyse these events, I will use the neutral/academic narratives already provided by various academics.¹⁰⁶

The Goldfield Strike in Nevada is important to start with because, according to Brissenden, this was one of ‘the first notable application of IWW principles’ and the local(union) ‘aimed to include all wage-earners in the community.’¹⁰⁷ Preceding the events of the November strike are events relating to the Western Federation of Miners and IWW to unite all workers in the two unions in Goldfield. This led to disputes with the existing AFL union members and mine owners which resulted in an agreement in April: only WFM/IWW miners were allowed to work in the mines, most of the towns workers that were part of the unions got an increase in pay and the 8-hour work day.¹⁰⁸ This ‘victory’ was short lived when later that year, during the Banker’s Panic of October and November, the mine owners changed the miners wages into non cash. This generated a new clash and failed negotiations that led to a new strike at the end of the

¹⁰² David M. Rabban, ‘The IWW Free Speech Fights and Popular Conceptions of Free Expression before World War I’, *Virginia Law Review* 80 (1994) 1055–1158 <doi:10.2307/1073625>.

¹⁰³ Ibidem, 1062.

¹⁰⁴ Benjamin G. Rader, ‘The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917’, *Pacific Historical Review* 36 (1967) 189–207, aldaar 196 <doi:10.2307/3636721>.

¹⁰⁵ Philip Taft en Philip Ross, *American Labor Violence: Its Causes, Character, and Outcome*. The History of Violence in America: A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (zp 1969); Dubofsky, *We shall be all*, 224.

¹⁰⁶ I will not try and recreate a narrative of these events with original sources, since these academic narratives are nonpartisan enough by themselves and are sufficient for analyses using and quoting primary sources themselves, I argue.

¹⁰⁷ Brissenden, *The I.W.W.*, 191–2.

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem, 200.

month.¹⁰⁹ To prevent a second failure the Governor send telegrams to the president presenting a state of affairs where ‘domestic violence and unlawful combinations and conspiracies’ exist.¹¹⁰ Troops were sent and a special commission was also dispatched to investigate the troubles, which eventually concluded that a permanent presence was unnecessary but advised a local police or militia to be created to solve similar future problems.¹¹¹ The combination of this crackdown (aided by company owners) together with the split between the WFM from the IWW, the financial troubles the Wobblies faced during the 1907 crises, (that also led to lower interest in resources of Goldfield) broke the strike up.¹¹² Vincent Saint John would later look back at this era as somewhat of a golden age for the IWW, where workers of all sorts were organised and demands were met, at least for a while.¹¹³ It is also important to note the scale of these events, with the village which had no more than 20.000 inhabitants and the union members just in the lower thousands at the time.¹¹⁴

In contrast, the 1912 Lawrence textile strike featured a proportionally bigger strike that lasted for 3 months. The strike, that broke out early January in the Massachusetts textile city, was started by mostly immigrant workers when they found out about pay cuts as the result of reduced hours from 56 to 54.¹¹⁵ The IWW was already active, but according to Watson, had a few hundred actual members.¹¹⁶ Yet the strike caught on, and over 23.000 strikers were active.¹¹⁷ Conflict arose between the IWW and local AFL members, such as United Textile Union boss John Golden, who denounced IWW involvement in the strike and called it ‘a revolution led by men whose hold upon the wage workers lies in the fact they stir up bitter class hatred’, but was ultimately unsuccessful to gain control of the strike because the IWW was more successful in uniting the many different nationalities.¹¹⁸ Joseph Ettor was the local IWW organiser who, together with Arturo Giovannetti of the Italian Socialist Federation, took

¹⁰⁹ Ibidem, 198.

¹¹⁰ Ibidem, 196. Note 3 for the direct cited telegram.

¹¹¹ Lauri Clayton D en Ronald H. Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1877-1945* (Washington 1997) 199.

¹¹² Brissenden, *The I.W.W.*, 200–202; Clayton D en H. Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1877-1945*, 200–201.

¹¹³ Brissenden, *The I.W.W.*, 203.

¹¹⁴ Sally Zanjani, ‘‘Hang Me If You Will’’: Violence in the Last Western Mining Boomtown’, *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 42 (1992) 38–49, aldaar 40–42.

¹¹⁵ Bruce Watson, *Bread and roses : mills, migrants, and the struggle for the American dream* (zp 2005) 12; Robert J. S. Ross, ‘Bread and Roses: Women Workers and the Struggle for Dignity and Respect’, *WorkingUSA* 16 (2013) 59–68, aldaar 59 <doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/wusa.12023>.

¹¹⁶ Watson, *Bread and roses*, 12.

¹¹⁷ Brissenden, *The I.W.W.*, 282.

¹¹⁸ Watson, *Bread and roses*, 67. Note 40.

leadership of the strike with the help from Bill Haywood, who was sent by the IWW later on.¹¹⁹ A period of conflict and stalemate took on: militia were called in by the government for continuous crackdowns, so the IWW switched from more militant tactics to passive resistance. This led to the creation of relief committees and creative tactics such as sending strikers children to New York City homes who supported the strikers, with the help of organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.¹²⁰ The strike gained national attention, which in part led to the victory of the strikers who got increased pay and showed that this method of the IWW in organising unskilled labourers was possible and successful even.¹²¹ It showed Haywood the possibilities the general strike could have to reach greater goals.¹²² Commentators such as Golden, Ettor the New York Tribune and Saint John wrote of the event as revolutionary, but here too, the long term effects wouldn't be lasting.¹²³ The next year, most of the IWW lead organisers were gone, the union members began to fall back into ethnic lines, and union membership slunk back to the hundreds.¹²⁴ The whole strike follows the same pattern as the Goldfield one: a successful end to the initial strikes on Wobbly terms, calling the event somewhat revolutionary and having to term solutions to the workers conditions. To note, this was one of the more successful and famous strikes with the involvement of the IWW.¹²⁵

Lastly, I will look at the 1916-17 Lumber Strikes. 1917 was a year of many campaigns and strikes according to the University of Washington database: at least 128 IWW affiliated strikes were registered in over 11 different industries, of which the largest portion, 57, were in the lumber industry.¹²⁶ Two of these strikes are already well documented by historians: those in Minnesota and in Montana.¹²⁷ According to the narrative of historian John E. Haynes, the strike started in December 1916 in Virginia (MN) after workers noticed wage differences in across the region.¹²⁸ When the workers, supported by the IWW 490 local led by Jack Beaton and Charles Jacobson (who initially wanted to wait for better organized conditions and ask Haywood for advice), finally demanded better terms and wages and didn't get a fast enough

¹¹⁹ Brissenden, *The I.W.W.*, 284–285; Watson, *Bread and roses*, 59.

¹²⁰ Watson, *Bread and roses*, 157–161, 186.

¹²¹ Brissenden, *The I.W.W.*, 288–290.

¹²² *Ibidem*, 287.

¹²³ Watson, *Bread and roses*, 54.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*, 245–247; Brissenden, *The I.W.W.*, 290–291.

¹²⁵ Watson, *Bread and roses*, 241–242.

¹²⁶ University of Washington, 'Number of strikes by year and industry (chart)', http://depts.washington.edu/iww/map_strikes.shtml (21 januari 2021).

¹²⁷ John E. Haynes, 'Revolt of the 'Timber Beasts': IWW Lumber Strike in Minnesota', *Minnesota History* 42 (1971) 162–174; Rader, 'The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917'.

¹²⁸ Haynes, 'Revolt of the 'Timber Beasts'', 164.

reply, they went on strike the 28th.¹²⁹ The only tactic that was feasible for the IWW, to undermine the owners ability to replace the workers, was for a general strike in the lumber industry. Yet the Wobblies were in the midst in preparing for this possible strike and not ready yet when Beaton called out for a strike in Virginia.¹³⁰ The IWW gained the strikers alliance by virtually being the only union caring about the seasonal workers prior to the strike.¹³¹ Throughout the region, the IWW quickly organised and successfully persuaded the many lumberjacks to join the strikers in Virginia, who confronted by employees supported by local law enforcement and plant guards not long after the start of the strike. Under false charges by the local officials and hysteria created by the newspapers, the authorities campaigned against the Wobblies and classified them as ‘undesirables.’¹³² Mass-arrests on dubious charges of virtually all wobbly leaders effectively killed the strike of the loggers, while the mill workers held on longer until February. The IWW claimed partial victory: conditions improved somewhat and a slight increase in wages occurred, but the Wobblies would never return as the State of Minnesota passed criminal syndicalist laws, making the union completely disappear not long after.¹³³

During the summer of that eventful year, a more major strike erupted that started in Eureka, Montana and spread over a large area covering the Cascades all the way to the pacific coast.¹³⁴ The lumberjacks and the IWW union in Montana suffered somewhat the same fate as in Minnesota, only later. The IWW local was formed in early March 1917, which went on strike mid-April, just 10 days after the war declaration.¹³⁵ This was met with a swift response from local and federal authorities, causing the strike to break at the end of the month. But this strike sparked a campaign of new ones, in contrast to the failed one in Minnesota. The Wobblies tried to negotiate with collective bargaining but were unsuccessful in the face of a growing anti-IWW sentiment in the region. This arose after the exploitation of the anti-war sentiment the Wobblies had, combined with false violence and violent sabotage accusations, by the - mostly company owned- newspapers across Montana.¹³⁶ For a period local arrests and raids did not break the strikes, but with the help of new federal anti-IWW troops these strikes would collapse

¹²⁹ Ibidem, 165.

¹³⁰ Ibidem, 166–167.

¹³¹ Ibidem, 169.

¹³² Ibidem, 170–172.

¹³³ Ibidem, 174.

¹³⁴ Rader, ‘The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917’, 189.

¹³⁵ Ibidem, 197.

¹³⁶ Ibidem, 199–202.

when martial law was declared by September.¹³⁷ In this case too, the conditions were improved and wages were raised slightly to prevent future troubles, providing a similar victory for the striking Wobblies, who would not return because of the now imposed measures against them. The war-effort was now the governments primary focus and the IWW held a grip on vital war industries, just like the one in Montana.¹³⁸

There is a pattern visible in these selected ‘successful’ strikes, despite the scale and periods varying widely: bad conditions and/ or wages led to unsatisfactory feeling by the workers; they would, with the help of (local) IWW organisers, go on strike as collectively as possible. Sometimes they were met by local authorities that would often ask for federal assistance, especially in later years. The results of the strikes varied, but most of the time conditions and wages improved, but the lasting effect of IWW worker organisation would vanish over time. Concluding with these remarks, it seems the Wobblies posed a danger towards employees with their demands. Yet these were not revolutionary at all, and mostly gained increased wages and better conditions, and did not lead to grand transformations of society or the economic system.

Concluding remarks.

With both parts concluded, we can answer the main question of the thesis that asked how the Industrial Workers of the World developed from its creation in 1905, to an organisation deemed dangerous and revolutionary by the United States (local) government who started repressions in autumn of 1917.

From its creation, the IWW saw itself as the best kind of union for all industry workers to organise for a coming revolution. There seems a subtle difference in preparing passively and participating actively in one, as for the IWW could not make up its ideology in this regard in the earlier years. It seems like IWW, like many more radical labour organisations, had many internal squabbles and endless discussions but no rigid short-term solutions for long term revolutionary ambitions. They hammered on Marxist ideals of a utopian society with complete freedom for the workers in the form of a wage-free system. However, they only had one major economic mean called, the strike, in their toolbox. In their written works, there seems to be no clear indication of further revolutionary means, except for the economic context, as politics were brushed aside from 1908 onwards. Prominent members were mostly men and women of

¹³⁷ Ibidem, 206–207.

¹³⁸ Renshaw, ‘The IWW and the Red Scare 1917-24’, 66.

action who refrained of writing instructions for a revolution, but were organisers trying to rally the workforce against the capitalist class. From works analysed in this thesis, they did not seek peril with the institutions of the government, as they would seemingly bypass them with economic means and focus on the capitalists and employers instead.

The difference between theory and the practical application of means seems disproportionately present in the first 12 years of IWW activities. The three samples show us that the grand ideals of the Wobblies during the first years were met by the realities of the difficulties of organising so many different unskilled workers for long periods of time, which were almost always met with rigid resistance by other unions and the employers who enjoyed law enforcement support. In the described samples of strikes, the IWW only gained minor, short lasting victories on a small and local scale. Yet they were well known and were seen as successful strikes throughout the United States for the Wobblies. However, their ‘revolutionary’ potential was only limited to improving conditions, not coming close to replacing them with a new economic system or a Marxist utopia in the end. To add, their membership potential had somewhat been reached around 1917, with their highest membership recorded in the lower hundred thousands, which would steeply decline in the years thereafter.¹³⁹ The means were seemingly non-violent and passive, but were often exaggerated by hostile press reports, which contributed to a violent image of the IWW, even before wartime comparisons to the Bolsheviks.¹⁴⁰ It also seems like IWW adversaries were often the ones that struck first with violence to break a strike, in which the Wobblies sometimes responded with violence of their own, maybe changing perception of union where violence and danger always seemed to follow them. The perception towards reality and theory was certainly skewed, but it is possible to say that the IWW did not hold true to the definition of revolutionary as mentioned in this thesis and in contemporary times.

It might be impossible to say if the IWW, as the overreaching organisation with all its subsidiaries combined, had a solid revolutionary agenda in the form of an upheaval of society and economics, based on this thesis alone. They did certainly have a desire and an ultimate goal with the removal of the wage system, but according to this enquiry were far from united and able to reach those goals in the period 1905-1917. It is noted that this thesis only covers a minor part of the available texts surrounding the IWW at the time, and for a more complete narrative I suggest a more extensive enquiry in non-digitalized sources. Furthermore, this thesis

¹³⁹ Brissenden, *The I.W.W.*, 352–357. Yet this was only a fraction of total workers and total union members across the United States.

¹⁴⁰ Renshaw, ‘The IWW and the Red Scare 1917-24’, 68–70.

only covers one Wobbly part of history. To create a more complete historical analysis, with a global context, it is necessary to dig deep into the sources that tell us about the opposite side of the industrial union at that time: the employers, local and the federal government and the (international) context of labour movement (perception) the Wobblies found themselves in. We have seen in part two that perceived interpretation can lead to heavy handed action, so to build a more comprehensive narrative, more sources providing more insight into governmental perceptions of the Wobblies, such as papers, pamphlets, and policy papers from both sides, would be required.

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