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Louise Olivereau and the Seattle Radical Community (1917 1923)

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1986

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This work is dedicated to opponents of war everywhere, throughout time.

northwest? Will it not merely strengthen the yards at Hog Island, in which he is more interested?

When the shipyard owners of Seattle were on the point of agreeing with the workers, it was Mr. Piez who wired them that, if they so agreed— HE WOULD NOT LET THEM HAVE STEEL.

Whether this is camouflage we have no means of knowing. But we do know that the great eastern combinations of capitalists COULD AFFORD to offer privately to Mr. Skinner, Mr. Ames and Mr. Duthie a few millions apiece in eastern shipyards stock, RATHER THAN LET THE WORKERS WIN.

The closing down of Seattle's industries as a MERE SHUTDOWN, will not affect these eastern gentlemen much. They could let the whole northwest go to pieces, as far as money alone is concerned.

BUT the closing down of the capitalistically controlled industries of Seattle while the WORKERS ORGANIZE to feed the people, to care for the babies and the sick, to preserve order—THIS will move them, for this looks too much like the taking over of POWER by the workers.

Labor will not only SHUTDOWN the industries, but labor will REOPEN, under the management of the appropriate trades, such activities as are needed to preserve public health and public peace. If the strike continues, Labor may feel led to avoid public suffering by reopening more and more activities,

UNDER ITS OWN MANAGEMENT.

And that is why we say that we are starting on a road that leads NO ONE KNOWS WHERE!

Seattle Union Record, 4 February 1919

Appendix A: On Thursday at 10 A.M.

There will be many cheering and there will be some who fear.
Both these emotions are useful, but not too much of either.

We are undertaking the most tremendous move ever made by
LABOR in this country, a move which will lead NO ONE KNOWS
WHERE!

We do not need hysteria.

We need the iron march of labor.

LABOR WILL FEED THE PEOPLE.

Twelve great kitchens have been offered, and from them food will
be distributed by the provision trades at low cost to all.

LABOR WILL CARE FOR THE BABIES AND THE SICK.

The milk-wagon drivers and the laundry drivers are arranging
plans for supplying milk to babies, invalids and hospitals.

LABOR WILL PRESERVE ORDER.

The strike committee is arranging for guards, and it is expected
that the stopping of the cars will keep people at home.

A few hot-headed enthusiasts have complained that strikers only
should be fed, and the general public left to endure severe discom-
fort. Aside from the inhumanitarian character of such suggestions,
let them get this straight– NOT THE WITHDRAWAL OF LABOR
POWER, BUT THE POWER OF THE WORKERS TO MANAGE
WILL WIN THIS STRIKE.

What does Mr. Piez of the Shipping Board care about the clos-
ing down of Seattle's shipyards, or even of all the industries of the

Chapter 1: Pre-War Seattle: Progressives, Radicals And Preparedness

In the first decade of this century, Seattle appeared to be a pio-
neer's dream realized. Just a dozen years after the devastating 1889
fire, Seattle was a thriving, industrious city indeed, a metropolis.
With shipping and lumber as its prime commercial assets, Seattle
heartily filled the role of outfitter (and receiver) during the Alaska
gold rush of 1897. The quest for Klondike gold helped to line the
pockets of Seattle merchants. The iron foundries and machine shops
which appeared in Seattle by the early 1890s enabled shipbuilders
to construct steel-hulled ships for the Alaska-bound argonauts and
for the Spanish- American War in 1898.¹

The rush for Alaska gold also spawned a rush to Seattle; the city's
1900 population of 80,000 ballooned to 237,000 by 1910.² A portion
of this increase can be attributed to the annexations of such adjoin-
ing communities as West Seattle and Ballard in 1907; in 1910 the
voters of Georgetown and Laurelhurst responded favorably to Seat-
tle's beckoning to join the city limits.³

During the ten years of this dramatic growth in population, Seat-
tleites also saw a flurry of public works projects. Street improve-

¹ Clarence B. Bagley, *History of Seattle: From the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1916), p. 606.

² Abstract of the Thirteenth Census of the United States (1910).

³ Annexation Records, 1907 and 1910, Municipal Archives, City of Seattle.

ments, sewer additions and large scale alterations of the city's geographic characteristics, such as the regrade of Denny Hill in 1907 through 1908, all heralded Seattle's arrival at city status.

No longer the struggling mill town vying for trade with better established Pacific coast cities such as Portland or San Francisco, Seattle by 1910 had come into her own as a center of commerce and industry. The railroads had played a large part in this development, and in 1915 a Seattle booster crowed that Seattle "is the point where the transcontinental railways meet the ships of the world in the commerce of the Pacific Ocean."⁴ This focus on transoceanic trade was a theme at the 1909 Alaska Yukon and Pacific (AYP) Exposition, a lavish production hosted on the grounds of the University of Washington which lasted 108 days and attracted almost four million visitors. While celebrating the commercial link between Seattle and Alaska, the Exposition also played up the prospects of trade with the Orient. Boosterism abounded during the AYP, and further evidence of this civic pride could be found in the citizens' enthusiasm for public parks, or in the recently completed downtown library, a classical structure erected with the aid of a generous donation from Andrew Carnegie.⁵

Seattle citizens were also proud of their city-owned water supply, the source being the Cedar River which flowed from the foothills of the Cascade mountains. In 1902 the city council presented a bond issue to the public which would establish municipal ownership of the electrical supply, a \$590,000 proposal which the voters endorsed. The city lighting plant went into operation in 1905, and city officials soon boasted that Seattle's street lighting system supplied over 700 miles of lights.⁶ By city charter amendment, lighting and water be-

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⁴ Folk's City Directory of Seattle, 1915, p. 226. Introduction by C.B. Yandell.

⁵ For parks bonds, 1900-1912, see Bagley, chapter XV; for library, see Polk's 1915, p. 229. Carnegie donated \$220,000.

⁶ For electricity bond issue, see Bagley, p. 452; for lighting plant and street-lighting system, see Polk's 1915, p. 226.

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came two separate city departments in 1910.⁷ Citizen boosters in 1915 proclaimed Seattle the “healthiest city in the world,” attributing the city’s low death rate to “an unlimited supply of water of chemical purity.”⁸

Municipal ownership of utilities was one of the staple ingredients in the progressive movement, and by the early years of this century Seattle residents exhibited progressive tendencies.

In 1911 the citizenry would use another device brought about by the progressive reform—the recall. The target for recall was Hiram Gill, an attorney and former city council president who won the mayoral election of 1910. An easygoing man whose clients included the saloonkeepers and brothel owners of the Skid Road district, Gill made the unfortunate move of appointing Charles Wappenstein chief of police. Soon after his swearing in, Wappenstein set up a system with brothel owners in Skid Road whereby he would receive ten dollars a month for each woman working in the bordellos. This arrangement would net “Wappy” (as he was known all over town) about \$1,000 each month. The deal was, of course, that the police would then leave the red-light houses alone. Gill also had close friends who owned shares in the Skid Road district businesses, men who gained a good deal by being so close to the mayor. The people had known that Gill favored an “open town” at the time of his election, but what resulted was a bit too “open” for them. By 1911 a recall campaign successfully ousted Gill from office. Three years later he would run again and seeing the error of his previous ways he would proclaim himself a reform candidate, running on a “closed town” platform. His 1914 victory was overwhelming; Seattle citizens again gave him the mayoral seat in 1916.⁹

The Hiram Gill recall episode proved to the citizens that progressive reforms worked that they could exercise some control over the

⁷ Bagley, p. 453.

⁸ Folk’s 1915, p. 226.

⁹ Murray Morgan, *Skid Road; An Informal Portrait of Seattle* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), Chapter IV

machinations of city politics. The newspapers undoubtedly influenced public opinion on civic issues, and by 1910 Seattle readers had plenty of local newspapers from which to choose. Having a remarkably low illiteracy rate, Seattleites could inform themselves on local, regional and national news with at least four English-language and five foreign-language daily newspapers.¹⁰

The foreign-language press found an audience among the large number of immigrants arriving in Seattle; by 1910 twenty-five percent of the city's population consisted of people born outside of this country.¹¹ Often taking unskilled or migratory jobs in the Seattle area, the immigrant population was usually the hardest hit when economic downturns prompted a reduction in employment. When Seattle's turn of the century prosperity stagnated from 1910 through 1915 (paralleling the national economic slump of 1912 through 1914), the result was a sharp rise in unemployment, and the immigrants without trade skills were the first to lose their jobs.

The nature of Northwest industries such as logging, mining and shipping attracted rootless, unskilled workers.

Because the American Federation of Labor (AFL) organized along craft and skilled trade lines, the migratory laborers often saw themselves as the disinherited within the labor union realm. These men were thus attracted to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), an organization calling for one big union based on industry, instead of on skilled trades.

Founded in 1905 in Chicago, the IWW operated on the premise that "the working class and the employing class have nothing in common."¹² Calling for the abolition of the wage system and the

¹⁰ Statistical Atlas of the United States (Government Printing Office, 1914), Plate 223 cites Washington's illiteracy rate at 1 to 3% in 1910; for newspapers, see Folk's 1915, p. 228.

¹¹ Statistical Atlas..., Plate 145 gives this breakdown of the Seattle population in 1910: 45% "native white-native parentage;" 25% "native white foreign or mixed parentage;" 25% "foreign born white;" 5% "Negro and all other."

¹² Preamble to the Industrial Workers of the World, Chicago, 1905.

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eventual overthrow of capitalism, the IWW declared that “by organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.”¹³ With such inflammatory rhetoric, the IWW quickly became an anathema to both the employers and the AFL, “Wobblies”—as they were called in the West by supporter and enemy alike—were often depicted as violent agitators, an undeserving portrayal considering that violence was usually directed at the organization, not generated by it. Indeed, the IWW songs and rhetoric alluded to violence, which alarmed many people; however, the organization did not advocate violent measures in strikes or organizing. As a striking Wobbly on the Mesabi Range in northern Minnesota said in 1916, “we don't want to fight anybody, what we want is more pork chops.”¹⁴

Organizing in logging camps and the harvest fields, the IWW stressed solidarity and education, believing that “an idea is the most dynamic thing in the world. The power to transmit ideas is the power to change the world.”¹⁵ IWW literature usually bore the motto “Education Organization Emancipation.” The Wobblies believed that this tripartite evolution was a logical progression towards changing the existing industrial order under which they saw the worker struggling. The growth of the IWW reflects the extent to which the AFL ignored the needs of the unskilled worker. Rootless, often unmarried, and many of them recent immigrants, industrial laborers found a voice in the IWW.¹⁶

¹³ IWW Preamble.

¹⁴ Joseph R. Conlin, “The IWW and the Question of Violence,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* (Summer 1968), 51; 316–26, p. 316. Conlin delivers a convincing argument for the IWW's lack of violent ideology.

¹⁵ Carlos A. Schwantes, “The Churches of the Disinherited: The Culture of Radicalism on the North Pacific Industrial Frontier,” *Pacific Historian* (Winter 1981), 25:54–65, p. 63.

¹⁶ Foster Rhea Dulles and Melvyn Dubofsky, *Labor in America, A History*. Fourth Edition (Arlington Heights, 111.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1984), Chapter XII. The point concerning the All and the unskilled worker is borrowed from Dubofsky.

The IWW also attracted such young men as Harvey O'Connor, who, after graduating from Tacoma High School in 1914, went to work in a logging camp. He soon joined the 16 Lumber Workers' Industrial Local 500, the IWW local in western Washington, which represented many of the men who worked in the dense forests, felling Douglas firs for ten hours each day. After meeting Walker C. Smith, editor of the IWW-owned *Industrial Worker*, O'Connor tried his hand at journalism between logging jobs. By 1917 he was writing for the *Socialist Daily Call* in Seattle.¹⁷

Most of those who joined the IWW were wage workers who sought better working conditions; however, others were attracted to the organization because of an ideological appeal. Louise Olivereau was one of those who embraced the ideals that the IWW espoused. Although never a member, she did work in the Seattle IWW office, and she perhaps is an example that predates the expression of "fellow traveler." After attending college in Illinois, Olivereau wandered west, living a transient life and supporting herself by taking jobs as a stenographer. She read widely on political theory, embracing socialism in 1909 and later moving even further left toward the tenets of anarchism. Believing that the IWW represented the nearest example of anarcho-syndicalism, Olivereau was undoubtedly influenced by Jack Whyte, an IWW organizer who was shot and killed in Tonopah, Nevada, in 1915. Olivereau referred to Whyte as the "Dearest Rebel" in her prison correspondence of 1917 through 1920, and, if their relationship was not a love affair, it was at least a deep friendship. Whyte was known for his organizing role in the free speech fights in Fresno and San Diego in 1912, and he was on a lecture tour for the IWW in Nevada when he was shot by a professional gambler. Whyte died six weeks later in a San Francisco

¹⁷ Harvey O'Connor, *Revolution in Seattle, A Memoir* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964), Preface. 18. that he might get better medical treatment.

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hospital; his fellow IWW members had arranged for his removal to that city in order that he might get better medical treatment.¹⁸

The loss of Jack Whyte deeply affected Olivereau, who was living in Portland at the time. Due to the absence of evidence, it is difficult to determine when or how Olivereau came to know Whyte. Those were migratory years for her; she lived in Salt Lake City, worked in a Northwest lumber camp as a cook, and briefly settled in Portland. While living in Portland, Olivereau came to know Minnie Parkhurst, who also had spent the previous few years moving around the Northwest with her husband, Ed Rimer. Parkhurst and Rimer settled in Seattle around 1914, and Olivereau wrote Parkhurst often from Portland. The two women shared a love of poetry and drama, a penchant for hiking in the mountains and swimming in lakes, and a keen interest in radical politics. When Olivereau moved to Seattle in late 1915, she and Parkhurst were already fast friends, and they spent much of their free time together.¹⁹

Minnie Parkhurst had been living in Boise when she married Ed Rimer in 1912. Although she took his last name when they were wed, she later returned to her birth name because, as she said, “I wish to be responsible only for myself.”²⁰ Rimer was a pressman by trade who agreed with his wife’s radical politics. Soon after the marriage, Parkhurst ran for a city commissioner position on the “IWW-Socialist” ticket. Her platform demands included the abolition of the city contract system; a minimum of three dollars per each eight-hour day for all city workers; municipal banking; and the establishment of a city yard that would sell wood, coal and ice to citizens at cost. Her campaign for the city seat was unsuccessful.

¹⁸ Minnie Parkhurst Papers, Mss., University of Washington. Clippings, Box 2 folder 43, 13 Feb. 1915 (no title of newspaper); see also Olivereau to Parkhurst correspondence of 1917-1920. Hereafter: Parkhurst.

¹⁹ Parkhurst, the material in this section comes from a study of the collections as a whole, Chapter II discusses Louise Olivereau in detail.

²⁰ Parkhurst, Parkhurst to Olivereau, 10 Feb. 1918, postscript.

ful.²¹ The tenuous coalition between the IWW and the socialists in Boise snapped over the results of a May Day rally which police and the press labeled a “riot,” and in which Parkhurst was arrested for carrying a red flag.²²

Parkhurst reportedly had left the IWW hall with a red flag under her arm and headed for Columbia Park, where the rally was scheduled to begin. Just down the block from the hall, a police officer grabbed Parkhurst and lifted her off of her feet as she struggled to free herself. Ed Rimer, who had followed Parkhurst out of the hall, rushed up to the grappling pair and took a swing at the officer. As a result, Parkhurst was arrested for carrying a red flag in the streets, and Rimer for “interfering with an officer.” The meeting at Columbia Park went on as planned, but not without fistfights erupting in the crowd. The following morning, Parkhurst received a ten dollar fine and a suspended sentence of 60 days. The judge dropped the charges against Rimer because, as the judge told the court, Rimer had reacted to the policeman “handling the lady so roughly” and “he thought the policeman was hurting his wife.” The judge also noted that the two were still on their honeymoon.²³

The incident cost Ed Rimer his job, and it resulted in the local Socialist Party barring all IWW members from party membership. A.R. Ketchum, organizer for the Socialist Party in Boise, blamed the May Day ruckus on the IWW, saying that Parkhurst should have carried the U.S. flag along with the red flag. The Boise press had used the terms “IWW” and “Socialist” interchangeably, and Ketchum made a point of emphasizing the distinction between the two groups.²⁴

Parkhurst and Rimer left Boise after that incident, and it is unclear as to whether they went immediately to Seattle. However, by 1914 they had settled in Seattle on lower Queen Anne hill. Rimer got a job as a pressman, and Parkhurst joined a local theater group

²¹ Parkhurst, clipping file 2-43, n.d.

²² Parkhurst, clipping file, 2-43, Idaho Daily Statesman 6 May 1912.

²³ Parkhurst, clipping file 2-43, Idaho Daily Statesman 6 May 1912.

²⁴ Parkhurst, clipping file 2-43, n.d.

among radicals died as a result of the jailings of leaders, deportations and factional in-fighting. For many individuals, the experience of a prison sentence served to break the spirit of dissent. For others who had witnessed repression and intolerance from fellow citizens, the fight appeared futile. Even the hope for a “new world order” engendered by the Bolshevik revolution began to fade by 1922, when news of revolutionary atrocities in Russia reached this country. But American radicalism did not sputter and die after the World War I era, instead it smoldered for a time, until the necessary spark of dissent appeared in the early 1930s, when once again democracy was challenged. The threat to democracy in that decade did not come from a President’s edicts or from a distant war; it came from the challenge of the Great Depression, and once again radical agitation emerged to accept that challenge.

Suspicion grew, accusations of disloyalty spread, and some citizens fought each other with the same vehemence that was directed against the “Hun” overseas. Because U.S. participation in the war was not a popular, united campaign, the Wilson Administration saw the need for propaganda and proof of loyalty all the more acutely. As a result, the homefront experience became fraught with anxiety and fear.

Among those opposed to the country’s role in the war were those who suspected a financial motive they called it a “capitalists’ war.” And there were those who felt that the United States had no reason to become entangled in European disputes. And there were those, as Anna Louise Strong later described Louise Olivereau, “to whom war never became a statistical movement of forces, but always vividly remained torn flesh, scattered brains and blood.”¹⁸

The Armistice in Europe did not bring an end to the conflicts on the homefront. In place of the “Hun” as enemy came the “Bolshevik.” Fear of Bolshevism fueled the intolerance which was already burning in many American minds. Alienation grew alongside of that intolerance, and a despair emerged over the wartime experience, a despair from which the nation would take years to recover.

Throughout the decade following the war, hope for European stability withered when it became apparent that the Peace of Paris would not be a lasting one. Those who had suspected financial gain as a motive in the United States entering the war were proven right with the results of the Nye Committee during 1934 through 1937. The Nye Committee findings revealed that the munitions manufacturers had reaped enormous profits during the war. By the 1930s most Americans saw the 1917 through 1919 entry in the war as a tragic mistake.¹⁹

The war left deep scars on the country; a post-war malaise lingered for years in the American mind. The sense of community

¹⁸ Strong, *I Change Worlds*, p. 63

¹⁹ David A. Shannon, *Between the Wars; America, 1919-19A1* (Boston:

and worked for the Neo-Malthusian League, an organization concerned about population growth and the availability of birth control information.²⁵ Although the couple made friends among the Seattle socialist and IWW circles, Parkhurst would often make derisive remarks about “socialist politicians.”²⁶

Radical politics came comparatively late to one woman who would later become well-known in Seattle—Anna Louise Strong. From a well-educated, “proper” family, Strong arrived in Seattle in 1908, after completing a Ph.D. in philosophy at the University of Chicago. She came to join her widowed father, Sidney Strong, a respected, progressive-minded minister with a small congregation. Anna Louise Strong felt a lack of direction for her life at the time, and so her father helped her organize a program called “Know Your City.”²⁷ The undertaking included walking tours of the city and public lectures, and it was such a success that other Western cities adopted the program. At this time Strong also helped her father with his writing, oversaw the running of his house, and accompanied him to Japan in 1909.

Upon her return from Japan, Strong grew restless and decided to go to New York, where she took a position with the Russell Sage Foundation, a social welfare organization.

She was then offered a job with the National Child Labor Committee, where she organized Child Welfare exhibits, a task which combined her Christian social beliefs with the progressive-based principle of social work. Soon she was in charge of the exhibit program, taking it to such cities as St. Louis and Kansas City, and later to Dublin, Ireland.

During this period, Strong witnessed the poverty which existed in American cities, and she began to search for a political answer to the inequities she saw. Her job had expanded her world, much

²⁵ Parkhurst, Box 2 folder 17, letter of 26 Feb. 1916.

²⁶ Parkhurst, see Parkhurst-Olivereau correspondence, 1917/1920.

²⁷ Tracy B. Strong and Helene Keyssar, *Right in Her Soul: The Life of Anna Louise Strong* (New York: Random House, 1983), pp. 47–48. Material from this sec-

more so than her travels abroad or her higher education ever did. She found herself attracted to socialism, but she was rebuffed by a Socialist Party member in Kansas City when she admitted that she didn't know what "class struggle" was. Still, this awakening excited Strong, and she cabled her father from Kansas City:

"Exhibit very complete...(M)uch more radical than the others but the executive committee will stand for it thanks for telegram please come by the way I'm turning socialist better come and see about it."²⁸

By 1916 Strong felt her work with the Child Welfare Exhibit Program was complete, and after a series of disappointing relationships with men (including Roger Baldwin, to whom she was engaged), she decided to return to Seattle. She needed a new environment; she was not convinced that Seattle was the right place for her, but her father was there and the two had always had an especially close relationship.

Within just a few months after her arrival in Seattle, Strong won a seat on the Seattle School Board. Progressives in the city liked the well-educated minister's daughter, and she told citizens that their school board needed "a woman's point of view."²⁹ Strong became acquainted with the IWW while covering the trial of Thomas H. Tracy, a defendant in the "Everett Massacre" case, for the New York Evening Post in early 1917. In November 1916 the Seattle boat Verona arrived at the Everett waterfront carrying over 200 IWW members intent on supporting the shingleweaver's strike in that city. As the boat docked, the sheriff and 200 of his "deputies" were waiting on the shore. Shots rang out—the scene left five Wobblies and two vigilantes dead, with 50 more wounded. Seventy-four IWW members were arrested and charged with murder. Strong's coverage of the trial enabled her to talk at length with IWW organizers,

tion on Strong comes from this book and, Anna Louise Strong, *I Change Worlds; The Remaking of An American* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935).

²⁸ Strong and Keyssar, *Right in Her Soul*, pp. 54–55.

²⁹ Strong and Keyssar, *Right in Her Soul*, p. 65.

that is all that radicalism really had at its core ideas. To espouse new or extreme ideas during the war was the primary "crime" that radical groups committed. According to the provisions of the Espionage Act, if an idea served to fire the imagination of the people of this country, this was then equal to the act of sedition or disloyalty.

Radicalism had been under attack long before the birth of the Espionage Act, however. From the 1886 Haymarket Square bombing in Chicago, anarchism had been equated with violence and the destruction of all democratic ideals.

Industrial violence since the late 19th century had blackened the reputation of organized labor, and the emergence of the IWW in 1905 threatened American business.

The 1912 presidential election saw the largest Socialist Party voter turnout, with almost one million ballots cast for Eugene V. Debs. All of these groups, no matter how diverse or distinct their doctrines were, would be collectively labeled "radicalism" during the war. When federal wartime laws went into effect these radicals became the most common targets because of their vociferous agitation of the previous years. Intolerance for radical ideas did not simply blossom in 1917; it had been apparent in American society for years. What the laws served to do was to legitimize this bigotry. In the face of such systematic prejudice, the radicals saw the necessity for unification, for a collectivization of thought and effort, for the formation of community. With such a large force acting against them, the radicals saw no other option available. Their indignation over social and political inequities exploded into a fury when the United States entered the European war.

It is important to remember that the centerpiece of American dissent during 1917 through 1919 was the war in Europe.

Because of the heightened patriotism prompted by the preparedness movement, pacifists, conscientious objectors and other opponents of the war were quickly deemed radicals.

The jingoism which prevailed blocked out all reasonable discussion for the merits of going to war against Germany.

Wilson more than ever saw himself the dictator of peace.”¹⁶ Because Wilson regarded his mission as a noble and righteous one of saving the world for democracy, he allowed domestic democracy to languish under stringent laws. And since dissenters became law-breakers in the eyes of the federal courts and the authorities, such suppression opened the way for vigilantism, fed the flames of intolerance and heightened the war hysteria which gripped the nation. After the Armistice, this hysteria was directed at organized labor, immigrants and radical political groups, with anti-syndicalist laws, “Palmer raids,” and the deportations of 1919 through 1920. The Wilson Administration had unleashed a monster upon the nation; once released it could not be contained before extensive damage had been done.

One aspect of the federal suppression of dissenting voices was a strain of anti-intellectualism. This can be seen in the new censorship role that the Post Office Department took on, in determining which publications would be “mailable” under the Espionage Act. During the autumn of 1917, an assistant to Postmaster General Albert Burleson told a reporter that he was intent on censoring the New Republic because

“I know exactly what I am after. I am after three things and only three things pro-Germanism, pacifism, and ‘high-browism.’ I have been watching that paper for months; I haven’t got anything on them yet, but I shall one of these days.”¹⁷

The Post Office Department sought the silencing of opinions and ideas; the Espionage Act had given that department the license and legitimacy to do so. Just as the IWW had proclaimed that ideas could be the most powerful agents of change, the federal government saw ideas as the most dangerous elements in society. This attack on ideas found its target in radical doctrine quite easily, for

¹⁶ Oswald Garrison Villard, *Fighting Years; Memoirs of A Liberal Editor* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1939), p. 326.

¹⁷ Villard, *Fighting Years*, p. 357.

and she found herself sympathetic to their cause. At this time she also became active in the anti-preparedness movement, establishing the Seattle chapter of the American Union Against Militarism.³⁰ With her activity against preparedness, and her increasing association with local socialists and Wobblies, the progressive school board member began to look more and more like a radical.

Originally called the Anti-Preparedness Committee, the American Union Against Militarism had begun in New York City; by the summer of 1916 the Union had chapters throughout the nation. The military preparedness movement began in this country in 1915, a year after the outbreak of the Great War in Europe. Bloody warfare reigned in Europe, and the United States’ poorly-trained and ill-equipped army drew notice from businessmen, conservative congressmen and military enthusiasts such as Theodore Roosevelt. With Mexico in the throes of revolution, and the European nations torn asunder by battle, the preparedness movement can be seen as a defensive, even isolationist development.³¹ Much more an urban than a rural trend, preparedness called for America’s arming against post-war uncertainties.

Within six months after the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May, 1915, preparedness had become a national theme, permeating magazines, motion pictures, and popular music.

Newly formed defense societies and the commercial press spearheaded the movement, and Roosevelt became its standard-bearer. Preparedness contributed to the growing rift in public opinion over the European war; its proponents were so steeped in patriotism that those in opposition to armaments buildup immediately became suspect. Pacifists found their loyalty challenged when they voiced their protests.

³⁰ Albert F. Gunns, *Civil Liberties in Crisis; The Pacific Northwest. 1917–1940* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983), p. 5.

³¹ John Patrick Finnegan, *Against the Specter of A Dragon: The Campaign for American Military Preparedness, 1914–1917* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1974). Finnegan argues this “defensive” angle of preparedness effec-

Opposition to preparedness fell into four often overlapping groups: farmers, organized labor, German-Americans, and socialists.³² Opponents of war saw a military buildup as a step leading to war, not a move in its prevention. Radicals suspected the motives of the movement because its most vociferous supporters were members of the business class; to the radicals, militarism was capitalism in its grossest form. Preparedness had increased almost to the degree of mania when Nebraska Senator George Norris said, “there seems to be a preparedness germ or an epidemic that has swept the country. Nearly everyone has it.”³³

The question of America’s role in relation to the European war was the primary reason for William Jennings Bryan’s resignation from his position as Secretary of State in June, 1915. Bryan gave up his post because of the Lusitania incident—and Wilson’s heavy-handed warning to Germany which followed. Believing that mediation was the only policy for the U.S. to pursue in European affairs, Bryan had suggested to Wilson that a ban be imposed on travel to Europe for all U.S. citizens. Bryan wanted no part in war; Wilson was intent on the U.S. playing a role in the peace making process. The two could not reach a compromise in this classic conflict of isolationism versus internationalism.³⁴ Bryan resigned in order to maintain his ideals, since he had also developed a distaste for the constant compromise he had faced as Secretary of State.

After stepping down, he continued to urge for mediation between the Allies and Germany.

Bryan’s dramatic leave taking represented the minority anti-war sentiment which was growing in this country by the middle of 1915. Pacifists and German-Americans both tried to claim Bryan as one of their own, but he remained aloof and unaligned. The press por-

tively.

³² Finnegan, p. 124.

³³ Finnegan, p. 91.

³⁴ Kendrick A. Clements, *William Jennings Bryan; Missionary Isolationist* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), Chapter VI.

“civil liberties” drew little attention until the implementation of the Espionage Act in 1917. Just as the progressives had struggled to reconcile the role of the individual within the corporation, civil libertarians attempted to resolve the conflicts between the individual and the state.¹⁴

It is indeed ironic that many radicals would seek protection in the Bill of Rights. Anarchists who professed no use for governments attempted to shroud themselves in the first amendment; Wobblies intent on overthrowing the status quo were the first to stage “free speech fights.” This contradiction is not surprising however, when we consider that contradiction is a basic facet of most radical movements. Irony has been called “the handmaiden of American radicalism,”¹⁵ and yet it was the wartime radical community who so clearly pointed out the contradiction between American constitutional freedoms and the execution of such laws as the Espionage Act. To these radicals the promise of democracy in the United States was an empty one, in the light of their risking jail for public utterances against the war.

Irony was not confined to radical movements during this time, and Woodrow Wilson himself personified the contradictions extant during the war. Wilson’s “New Freedom” campaign of 1912 became a travesty by the summer of 1917, when the provisions of the Espionage Act curtailed public speech and criminalized individual behavior.

Wilson’s rigidity and rejection of dissenting opinion exemplify the dark side of progressivism. He claimed that a consensus-abiding citizenry was crucial to the collective war effort, and he agreed to the suppression of individual freedoms in favor of the collective good. As Oswald Garrison Villard wrote, during the war “Woodrow

¹⁴ See Paul L. Murphy, *World War One and the Origins of Civil Liberties in the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1979).

¹⁵ Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 329.

as a progressive-minded social worker; her political evolution led her to the role of revolutionary propagandist.

The progressive movement in the United States at the turn of this century proved to be a springboard for many who would eventually turn from reform ideas to radical thought.

With the root word, “progress,” the progressive tendency promised reform and betterment for all citizens of this country, an amelioration of social and industrial conditions which could only come from government intervention and regulation. Or so the progressives believed. The early progressive reforms did improve the lot of children, immigrants and some industrial workers; however, by the time the United States entered the First World War, the propensity for government regulation resulted in a curtailment of individual freedoms. Dissenters who saw this as a progressivism gone awry often turned toward radical ideas. Progressivism had failed these people; a cynicism towards reform by government decree set in, and was only confirmed by the appearance of the Espionage Act in the spring of 1917.

Undermining the freedoms found in the first amendment of the Bill of Rights, the Espionage Act can be seen as a turning point from government control over social policy to government-implemented wartime restraints under Woodrow Wilson. Because of the progressive legacy, the interference of government in the realm of free expression was all too easy to carry out. Progressives had begun to view the federal government as a paternalistic type of apparatus, and this enabled the government to exercise even further control over individual behavior. It is no wonder, then, that the concept of “civil liberties” stems from the wartime suppression of free speech and free press. What was once an abstract concept within the democratic foundations of this country namely, the Bill of Rights emerged as a concrete public policy issue during and after World War I.

Americans had not had their first amendment rights challenged by law since the Sedition Act of 1798, therefore the necessity of

trayed him as an ardent pacifist, which was a false depiction, according to historian Kendrick Clements. Bryan maintained that his primary concern was national interest, and not pacifism. He spoke against preparedness, saying that the country needn't worry about its international power, because, as the Europeans were “killing off soldiers and burning money,” America's strength was “increasing RELATIVELY as other nations exhaust themselves.”³⁵ Bryan also indicated that he suspected a profit motive behind the preparedness movement, because of the movement's most ardent supporters the armaments manufacturers.

The military preparedness movement can be seen as an outgrowth of the progressive tendency for order, systemization and efficiency. The anxiety engendered by the collapse of European (and Mexican) stability prompted the general public to look to the federal government for a solution to the question of U.S. security. This too was illustrative of progressivism the propensity towards giving the government a paternal role in caring for the well-being of the nation. However, what resulted was a patriotism at fever-pitch, a distrust of pacifism, and an opportunity to root out radical Americans who would erode the status quo. In an atmosphere of growing nationalism, groups such as the IWW and the socialists became perfect targets for national intolerance. Because of the preparedness movement, when war did come to the U.S., and the time came to rally public sentiment to pro-war (and pro-American) action, it was that much easier to do so—the people were prepared.

³⁵ Clements, p. 115

Chapter 2: The People Do Not Want This War: Anti-War Radical Culture And Community

“What I am opposed to is not the feeling of the pacifists, but their stupidity. My heart is with them, but my mind has a contempt for them. I want peace, but I know how to get it and they do not.”

– President Woodrow Wilson to the American Federation of Labor. 12 March 1917¹

“The American people did not and do not want this war. They have not been consulted about the war and have had no part in declaring war. They have been plunged into this war by the trickery and treachery of the ruling class of the country through its representatives and National Congress, its demagogic other servile agitators, its subsidized press, and instruments of public expression.”

– *American Socialist*, 21 April 1917²

The United States’ entry into the First World War sharpened the division of public opinion which had already existed in the prewar days of preparedness. This polarization of public sentiment had become apparent in 1916, when the Wilson administration joined the preparedness campaign, despite its diplomatic stance of neutrality.

¹ Oswald Garrison Villard, *Fighting Years; Memoirs of A Liberal Editor* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1939), p. 159.

² H.C. Peterson and Gilbert C. Fite, *Opponents of War 1917–18* (Madison:

Although her interest in drama and poetry continued, there is no evidence of her continuing radical activity of any sort. She is perhaps an example of a radical who gave up activism in favor of the more lucrative pursuits of a business career. Minnie Parkhurst died in May, 1971, at her Woodinville home.¹²

If both Olivereau and Parkhurst had dropped out of radical activity for their own personal reasons by the 1920s, one of their companions from the war years, Anna Louise Strong, only increased her activism during that time.

In 1920, Strong decided to visit the U.S.S.R. with a delegation of the American Friends Service Committee, to see first-hand what the Bolshevik revolution had done to transform that country. Apparently Strong liked what she saw; she stayed in the Soviet Union for some twenty years, until she was expelled in 1949 for suspicion of espionage activities. Strong made frequent trips back to the United States during her long life; in the early 1950s she settled briefly outside of Los Angeles. The author of nearly forty books and pamphlets, most of them examining revolutionary movements in the Soviet Union, Spain, Poland and China, Strong proved to be remarkably resilient in her peregrinations across the globe. The final twenty years of her life were spent in China, where she became a personal friend of Mao Tse-tung. Strong died in March, 1970, at the age of 84, and her ashes were interred in the Babaoshan Cemetery of Revolutionary Martyrs on the outskirts of Peking. Her epitaph reads, “Progressive American Writer and Friend of the Chinese People.”¹³ As the title of her 1935 autobiography suggests, Strong did indeed “change worlds” throughout her life. She had set out on her journey

¹² See Folk’s City Directory of Seattle, 1926, 1931–39; Parkhurst, Boxes 2–31, 2–49; Sally Flood, “The Search for a Cause: Louise Olivereau,” unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Washington, 1979, p. 91.

¹³ Tracy B. Strong and Helene Keyssar, *Right in Her Soul; The Life of Anna Louise Strong* (New York: Random House, 1983), and *Anna Louise Strong, I Change Worlds; The Remaking of An American* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935)

the best friend I ever had or ever expect to have! Just to imagine what these two years in prison would have been, without you, so faithful about writing, so eager and working so hard to do any and every possible thing that could hasten my release or give me any comfort or happiness while I must stay here...you are such an inspiration because of what you've done for and with yourself! Yes indeed, Minnie Parkhurst's birthdays and every day she lives, are important days of high courage and accomplishment."¹⁰

Such evidence of the mutual support, love and encouragement that the two women shared appears quite often in their correspondence of 1917 through 1920. When Olivereau's release was secured for the spring of 1920, Parkhurst wrote her that she hoped Olivereau would return to Seattle to live. "Of course I fully intend to go straight to Seattle," Olivereau responded, "and, if things work out well, stay there. But beyond that, I can't plan at all." She closed this letter with, "...and soon-ah, soon now! We can make up for all that these letters didn't contain."¹¹ With such devotion, one wonders what could have occurred to pull the two apart in later years. The two were reunited for just a short time, because within a few months after her return to Seattle, Olivereau moved to Portland and later on to Los Angeles. It is not known whether Parkhurst and Olivereau ever saw each other again.

Minnie Parkhurst became a businesswoman during the 1920s, first selling Ford Motor Cars for a Seattle dealership and then establishing herself as an independent real estate agent. She shared a business address with her husband, Ed Rimer, who had established "Rimer's Printing Press" by the early 1930s. "Parkhurst Realty" was at least a modest success; the couple moved to Woodinville, a rural community on the outskirts of Seattle. Land which Parkhurst owned there is now a public park which bears her name.

¹⁰ Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 2 January 1920.

¹¹ Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 15 January 1920.

Conservative businessmen formed the National Security League, bankrolled by Eastern commercial interests, while progressive-backed groups such as the American Union Against Militarism and the Women's Peace Party emerged. Public discussion concerning American neutrality filled the nation's newspapers at the same time that anti-German propaganda increased in the press. Pro-German comment, such as that turned out by the Hearst newspapers, abruptly stopped.

With the declaration of war on 6 April 1917, and the military mobilization to defeat Germany, came distinctly drawn lines of proand anti-war sentiment. This division widened when, in May 1917, the Selective Service Act became law. The drafting of young men fueled the rage of those opposed to the war entry, and their protests increased in those early summer weeks. Supporters of the war viewed the pacifists as disloyal, pro-German sympathizers who would undermine the security of their great nation. The country had contracted "war fever," and one symptom was a fervent patriotism, a "jingoism" which frustrated and often horrified the nation's pacifists.

This jingoism translated into government action which struck at the heart of constitutional liberties. By June, 1917, Congress passed a law which became commonly known as the Espionage Act. Ostensibly instituted to curtail domestic activity of German spies, the Act instead became a government tool of repression used against American dissenters. With sweeping generalities, the law prohibited any criticism of the war or military action, and it outlawed any attempt to "cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny or refusal of duty in the military or naval forces of the United States."³ Violators were met with severe fines and lengthy prison sentences. With the passage of the Espionage Act came the abrogation of the First

University of Wisconsin Press, 1957), p. 9.

³ Peterson and Fite, *Opponents*, p. 17

Amendment of the Bill of Rights, one of the pillars of American democracy.

Wilson's "contempt" for the pacifists had been translated into a legal dragnet, and domestic dissenters became regarded as enemies of their own country.

Those opposing the war were of all political stripes, and yet because pacifism was largely regarded as un-American, it was equated with radicalism during the First World War. Radicalism had threatened the American status quo in the years preceding the U.S. declaration of war, with violent labor strikes and the increase in membership of the Socialist Party. To the left of the Socialists stood the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), calling for industrial unionism, abolition of the wage system, and class war. Such groups demanding drastic social changes frightened the majority of American citizens, and the war heightened their alarm.

A radical xenophobia emerged, and extremists who advocated revolutionary measures were seen as a foreign threat on the domestic landscape. Most Americans believed that radicalism was an imported notion; it did not germinate in the soil of American democracy.⁴ Native radicalism went unacknowledged; instead most believed that the agitators were backed by German forces, or that the IWW was financed by "Kaiser gold."

By late 1917, conservative spokesmen tagged proponents of organized labor "Bolsheviks." This anti-radical outlook became integrated with anti-German hysteria in the American mind. Although the "red scare" has often been attributed to the year 1919, the examination of wartime anti-radical hysteria calls for a readjustment of that assertion. The American red scare began before the post-war turmoil of 1919; its origins are chronicled in the domestic tumult of 1917.

Even though pacifists were regarded as radicals by many citizens during the war, these two groups did not view their goals as

⁴ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860–*

administrator's file reported that there was no family to contact.⁸ Perhaps there was not; her family had long ago rejected her because of her imprisonment.

Because of what we know about her earlier years, perhaps we can assume that Olivereau was alone most of her later life.

Louise Olivereau seems to have felt that she functioned best alone, and there are many allusions to this in her letters.

Her political protest was carried out alone; her marriage failed because she preferred to be alone; even her anarchist ideals were based on the individual, the person who acts alone.

Among the many questions that Olivereau left behind, the most compelling surrounds the deep friendship she had with Minnie Parkhurst during 1915 through 1920. Parkhurst had been her steadfast friend from the time of her arrest in September, 1917, until after her prison release and return to Seattle in the spring of 1920. It is surprising that no evidence that the friendship lasted after 1922 has come to light. During Olivereau's stay in prison the two women wrote each other constantly; their correspondence reveals a deep fondness and mutual respect based on shared opinions about the world around them. Both women appeared to be lonely people who found making friends extremely difficult.

Parkhurst's devotion to Olivereau's cause was illustrated by her endless hours of work on the prospect of an appeal, and by her writing and publishing of the pamphlet which described the Olivereau case. Once, when Parkhurst was feeling especially frustrated and lonely, she wrote Olivereau that "this is my birthday... as far as I can see my birthday might just as well not have been."⁹ In an attempt to boost her friend, Olivereau responded with

"As far as I'm concerned, it would make a whole lot of difference if your 'birthday hadn't been'! Don't you go talking that way about

⁸ Olivereau Certificate of Death; Public Administrator File #164082, San Francisco.

⁹ Minnie Parkhurst Papers, Mss., University of Washington, Parkhurst to Olivereau, 27 December 1919.

IWW member, and the couple moved to a small ranch in Willow Creek, California.⁶ The Filignos often visited Park and Olivereau in Palo Alto during the late 1920s. Brown and Filigno were apparently among the few friends with whom Olivereau kept in touch from her earlier years.

Apart from her activities with Alice Park, it seems that Olivereau did not involve herself with radical causes or activities during her later life. She remained well-informed on current issues, read widely and expanded her knowledge on art—she was especially interested in Asian art and she would occasionally send a small donation to the IWW defense fund in Washington state. In 1929 Olivereau moved to San Francisco, and Park would often visit her there. Typically the two would visit art galleries or museums, and then have an early dinner in Chinatown.

Olivereau took a job as a typist for a retail seed company, a position she would keep until her retirement in 1950.⁷

Olivereau lived in at least four different locations during her years in San-Francisco, presumably alone. The final thirty years of her life are difficult to document, in the absence of solid evidence. Perhaps she opted for anonymity, or perhaps this was not a conscious choice. She did appear to lead a quiet life in her later years, which was quite a change from the notoriety that her crime and trial had brought her. On March 11, 1963, Olivereau collapsed on a street a few blocks from Golden Gate Park, just three days after she had moved into a new apartment in that neighborhood. She was pronounced dead on arrival at a nearby hospital; cause of death was a severe heart attack.

She was 78 years old. A close friend in Sausalito arranged her funeral—she had requested cremation—and settling her estate became a case for the public administrator in San Francisco. The ad-

⁶ See Gibbs M. Smith, *Joe Hill* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1969), pp. 90–91, 129, 179.

⁷ Park Papers, see diaries 1926–33; Louise Olivereau Certificate of Death, #82–3920, San Francisco Department of Health.

the same. True pacifists do not denounce selective wars; they are against all wars.

While the IWW opposed the European war as a “capitalist war,” that organization was not opposed to the prospect of a class war. “Do not confound us with the pacifists,” wrote anarchist Alexander Berkman in June of 1917:

“we believe in fighting. Aye, we have been fighting all our lives fighting injustice, oppression and tyranny...we are not pacifists. But we want to know what we are fighting for, and we refuse to fight for the enemies and the exploiters of humanity.”⁵

To use “pacifist” and “radical” interchangeably thus misrepresents each group. The phrase “anti-war radical” seems to best fit those people examined here. Many radicals would proclaim themselves pacifists; however, most opposed the war on different grounds than a pure pacifist conscience.

The experience of Seattle anti-war radicals vividly illustrates the intolerance directed “by the majority of Americans toward opponents of the war. During the summer of 1917 tensions mounted in Seattle, due to the wartime stress and the Northwest lumber strike which had virtually halted the industry and resulted in the dispatch of federal troops to the lumber camps.⁶ Seattle’s labor movement was growing in strength, but so, too, was the public animosity toward the IWW. The summertime lumber strike caused a dramatic influx of Wobblies to Seattle, and citizens were frightened of the angry, itinerant workers who argued for class war on the streets of the city. Commercial daily newspapers such as the *Seattle Times* took vehement anti-radical editorial stances. Public anti-war speeches were often disrupted by soldiers and sailors whose presence in Seat-

1925 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955), p. 219.

⁵ The Blast is on microfiche in UW Microforms, M271 (Greenwood Reprint Corp., 1968). Blast, 1 June 1917.

⁶ William Preston Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters; Federal Suppression of Radicals 1903–1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), chapters four and six.

tle had grown with the war mobilization efforts. Veterans of the Spanish- American War founded the Minute Men of Seattle, a vigilante group intent on quashing local radical activities. This “patriotic league,” with an estimated membership of 2,500 during 1917 through 1919, communicated frequently with federal agents.⁷

Prominent Seattleites wrote President Wilson of the radical menace in their city. In January, 1918, Wilson wrote Attorney General Thomas Gregory that “it is thoroughly worth our while to consider what, if anything, should and can be done about the influences preceding from Seattle.” Wilson told Gregory that if the reports of seditious activity in Seattle were true, “they state a very grave situation.”⁸ The federal eye was on Seattle, and local arrests stemming from violations of the Espionage Act increased as the war dragged on.

Faced with government repression and local civic intolerance, those people expressing minority views against the war felt an increasing need for a sense of community.

Before the war, Seattle radicals had experienced a factionalism of ideology and motivation, but the persecution they witnessed in mid-1917 spurred a unification of effort and ideas.⁹ They were all opposed to the war—this was a view on which they could finally agree. Because they were sharply aware that their beliefs were in the minority, they felt the need for some kind of affinity and sustenance all the more acutely.

Just as Seattle radicals opposed to the war felt that they could find strength in unity, those people against U.S. participation in the European war across the country put aside their differences for the

⁷ Preston, *Aliens*, pp. 155–56; Harvey O’Connor, *Revolution in Seattle, A Memoir* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964), p. 11.

⁸ Preston, *Aliens*, p. 153. Preston quotes a letter from Reverend Mark Matthews of the First Presbyterian Church in Seattle, in which Matthews suggests that military authorities be granted the policing of radicals, and “they could arrest these fiends, court martial and shoot them.” p. 152.

⁹ This unity lasted only as long as the war did; by 1919 the radical com-

many western women who spent time behind the bars of federal prisons.⁴ Park knew of Olivereau long before the two women met. By the 1920s, Park worked for a variety of political and social causes, including the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the National Women’s Party, abolition of the death penalty, “humane education” for children, the Farmer-Labor Party, the release of political prisoners, and an end to “Marine rule in Nicaragua.” Her work with the WILPF took her to Europe on several occasions, and she corresponded with such notable women as Charlotte Perkins Oilman, Lena Morrow Lewis and Sara Bard Field. Park also had known Anna Louise Strong and her father, Sidney Strong, for many years. It is therefore logical that Park and Olivereau would finally meet and quickly become friends.

Olivereau took on the role of personal secretary and companion to Alice Park, answering her voluminous correspondence, running errands and assisting in the upkeep of Park’s house in downtown Palo Alto. The two women enjoyed art museums and Chinese restaurants, and they shared opinions on topics such as the Sacco-Vanzetti case, and the IWW members who still remained in jail from wartime prosecutions.⁵ Park and Olivereau also shared some of the same friends, including William Thurston Brown, with whom Olivereau had worked in Portland at the Modern School some fifteen years earlier. During the 1920s Brown and his wife Elsie ran a boarding school for boys in nearby Menlo Park.

Virginia Snow Stephen Filigno was an old friend of Olivereau’s from Salt Lake City who also had known Alice Park for many years. She had been an art instructor at the University of Utah when she headed the Joe Hill defense committee in 1915; after Hill’s execution the University Board of Regents fired her for her activities on Hill’s behalf. In 1916 she married Constantine Filigno, a former

⁴ Park Papers, Box 29. Park comments on following the cases of Anita Whitney of California; Dr. Marie D. Equi of Oregon, Flora Forman of Texas and Olivereau.

⁵ Park Papers, see diaries of 1926–33, Boxes 25–26.

Conclusion

By the middle of the 1920s, Louise Olivereau was once again living a transient life. She remained in southern California for a time, taking a variety of jobs including a position as saleswoman for Bullock's, an uppercrust department store, while living in Venice, a new and fashionable community on the ocean.¹ In 1926 Olivereau moved north to Palo Alto and rented a room in a house near the Stanford University campus.

While living in Palo Alto, Olivereau became friends with Alice Park. A woman with an indefatigable zest for social activism, Alice Park lived to be one hundred years old.² As a leader in the western women's suffrage movement from 1902 to 1920, Park traveled extensively, and it was in 1909 that she first visited Seattle to attend the Women's Suffrage Convention. That trip introduced her to the IWW, and after attending an IWW street meeting, Park later wrote that "I was a quick convert... I tried to join the IWW in 1912 but was ineligible because I was not a wage worker."³ Park then became involved in the international peace movement, and she was a member of the Ford Peace Expedition—the ill-fated voyage of the "peace ship"—in 1915.

With the United States entry into the European war and the implementation of the Espionage Act, Park became interested in the

¹ Los Angeles City Directory, 1924.

² Alice Park Papers, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University. Park lived from 1861–1961; included in this collection are detailed diaries, correspondence, clippings, and a typescript autobiography. Hereafter: Park Papers.

³ Park Papers, typed autobiography, Box 29.

sake of a common cause. One organization which brought together Americans opposed to the war was the People's Council of America for Peace and Democracy, founded by journalist Louis P. Lochner, a member of Henry Ford's ill-fated "peace ship" expedition to Europe in 1915. This loosely-knit group established local branches in most major American cities, and it appealed to people holding various political views. The People's Council held open-air meetings across the country during the summer of 1917, where speakers demanded the repeal of the Selective Service Act and of the Espionage Act.¹⁰

However, the primary aim of the People's Council was a negotiated peace with Germany, and "Peace by Negotiation— Now" became its slogan. As a result, those citizens who called for the total defeat of Germany labeled the peace organization as pro-German. By the fall of 1917, the national executive committee of the People's Council had several socialist members, and the organization itself, originally founded to appeal to all Americans who were against the war, became associated with radicals.

The Seattle branch of the People's Council had several socialist members as well, and during the summer of 1917 the local group held several outdoor meetings on a vacant lot near the downtown business district.¹¹ During one of these meetings, where the speakers' topic was "Is Conscription Constitutional?" a group of angry soldiers attempted to disrupt the speech. In a banner headline the socialist Seattle Daily Call reported "5,000 CITIZENS INSULTED." The newspaper attributed the calming of the crowd to socialist or-

munity was once again divided, except in regards to the efforts surrounding the general strike in February.

¹⁰ Peterson and Fite, *Opponents*, pp. 74–75.

¹¹ Minnie Parkhurst Papers, Mss., University of Washington. Minnie Parkhurst wrote Louise Olivereau on 7 January 1918 that "...the People's Council Local, I mean which organization is run by the Socialists and the politician Pohlman, this makes the P.C. a good cat's paw for them." Parkhurst often had run-ins with H.W. Pohlman, a member of the Seattle Daily Call board, and she consistently exhibited resentment toward local socialists in her letters to Olivereau. Hereafter: Parkhurst.

ator Kate Sadler, while “bluecoats of the right metal (sic)” ushered the young soldiers away from the crowd.¹²

In his memoirs, Harvey O’Connor recounted another meeting of the People’s Council held outdoors, after the Labor Temple had sponsored an all-day session featuring guest speakers from across the country. The evening rally featured Sadler, Louise Oliverreau and Harry Ault, among others. O’Connor remembered that

“While Kate Sadler was speaking, the police thought they heard her refer to Wilson as a “traitor.” After her speech, they nabbed her and led her away from the platform. The astonished crowd, seeing what was happening to Seattle’s best-loved radical orator, closed in and rescued her. The police sought safety in flight and Kate returned to the rostrum in triumph. The next day the police showed up at her home where she found herself badly outnumbered and suffered another of her innumerable arrests.”¹³

Arrests of anti-war radicals and labor agitators increased dramatically that summer, and the International Workers’ Defense League organized community functions to raise funds for political prisoners. The Defense League sponsored picnics with featured speakers, evening socials where homemade goods were raffled off, and monthly meetings where members learned of the latest arrests in the region.¹⁴ Picnics hosted by the Defense League became so popular that, after the war, members founded the People’s Park Association with the aim of raising money to purchase a park so that, according to Minnie Parkhurst, “there would always be a place for everybody to hold picnics.”¹⁵

¹² Seattle Daily Call, 31 July 1917.

¹³ O’Connor, *Revolution*, p. 97.

¹⁴ The Defense League is mentioned often in the ParkhurstOliverreau correspondence, and in a letter to Emma Goldman which appeared in the June, 1917, issue of *Mother Earth*, Parkhurst credits herself as one of the founding members of the local branch.

¹⁵ Parkhurst, Parkhurst to Oliverreau, 19 October 1919.

nate certain organizations sent many to jail; deportations sent many to other nations; internecine disputes in political groups sent many home. When this disillusionment was compounded by a personal prison experience, the radical often saw no good reason to keep fighting.

America during the 1920s experienced an unusual case of political indifference. Whether Americans were war-weary, or whether they were too preoccupied with “prosperity,” political interest and activity waned during this decade.

But with the Worker’s College, we see an example of a place where there was no apathy; where there was no lethargy in regards to new ideas or world events. Taking classes at the Worker’s College could be practical, or challenging, or fun.

The College became a nucleus for Seattle’s radical community. It was a place to meet people who shared the same ideas or values—or, if they didn’t they could at least discuss their differences. In one of its (frequent) angry moments, the *Union Record* asked, “Is the Labor Temple to be the only Faneuil Hall, the only Cooper’s Institute in Seattle?”⁴⁴ Examination of the evidence elicits an affirmative answer to that question. As a gathering place during trying times, the Worker’s College kept the fabric of community from unraveling.

⁴⁴ Seattle *Union Record*, 3 January 1920.

Temple. The Junior Labor College for children ages six to fourteen staged special programs at Christmas time.

A notice describing the Junior Labor College said that the boys and girls “will have a good time and come to appreciate the aims and ideals of labor.”⁴¹

The cover of the class program for winter term, 1923, proclaimed, “Knowledge is Power,” and the College described itself as

“an educational organization operating solely for service not for profit. It aims to give the workers of Seattle the benefits of the latest and best thought in the fields of History, Natural Science and Sociology. It will furnish lecturers to labor unions and other organizations upon request. It is sustained entirely by voluntary contributions.”⁴²

The Worker’s College operated successfully throughout the 1920s, and in the middle of the decade, the Vanguard newspaper became its mouthpiece. In 1932 the Vanguard became the Unemployed Citizen, the publication of the newly formed Unemployed Citizen’s League.⁴³ The Unemployed Citizen became the legacy of the Worker’s College and the efforts of its supporters during the 1920s. The Worker’s College was the bridge which spanned the gap between wartime radicalism and the Depression-era agitation and organizing.

Political movements such as the Farmer-Labor Party sputtered and died before the decade was out; meanwhile the Worker’s College remained an arena for new ideas on political and economic alternatives. It appears to be the only vestige of radical heritage extant in Seattle in the 1920s. Its members may have disagreed vehemently with each other, but they kept the College going.

Many radicals had “dropped out” by the early 1920s, and in considering the many factors at play during this time, we can understand why they lost their momentum. State laws designed to elimi-

⁴¹ Litchman Papers, Class Program 1923–24.

⁴² Litchman Papers, Class Program 1923–24.

⁴³ Gunns, pp. 117–18.

Along with fundraising social activities within the Seattle radical community came an apparent interest in culture and education. According to O’Connor, a group of young Seattle radicals organized a cultural club which presented lectures on art, literature, history and politics, a group which grew when word of it reached the University of Washington campus.¹⁶ Radical UW students became welcome at Anna Falkoff’s home near the campus, where the Russian-born anarchist encouraged the students to share their ideas on politics and education. O’Connor claimed that he received his introduction to radical politics and to hard liquor at Falkoff’s home.¹⁷ Louise Olivereau hosted a small study group at her Wallingford home, where she spent evenings leading discussions on poetry, philosophy and the theater.¹⁸ Raymer’s Old Bookstore, downtown on First Avenue, carried books on radical philosophy. O’Connor recalled Charles Raymer as “the atheist, in his cavernous, musty old bookstore preaching municipal socialism but selling the Masses and the Liberator by the hundreds every month...”¹⁹ Anti-war radicals in Seattle had found an outlet for both their politics and their cultural interests in these lectures, study groups and bookstores. Moreover, these pursuits served to affirm the growing sense of community among a diverse group who had previously found few mutual interests. As O’Connor remembered it, prior to wartime “[O]n the raw frontier of the Pacific Northwest there was little enough of cultural life in the radical movement...”²⁰

¹⁶ O’Connor, *Revolution*, p. 101.

¹⁷ Cassette tape from O’Connor to author, 11 August 1983. On Anna Falkoff: “Her house was very close to the campus and it was a rallying point...a whole bunch of people were seated around a table and they offered me a glass of water, which I gulped down. But it turned out to be vodka. It was my first introduction to hard liquor.”

¹⁸ O’Connor, *Revolution*, Appendix Two by Jessie Lloyd, “One Woman’s Resistance,” p. 248

¹⁹ O’Connor, *Revolution*, pp. 243–44; Polk’s City Directory of Seattle, 1916.

²⁰ O’Connor, *Revolution*, pp. 100–101.

Cultural and social gatherings among the radical ranks increased during wartime in Seattle; however, the concern for political prisoners and the raising of funds for their legal defense—remained the primary rallying point for these people. Although the foremost concern was for local cases stemming from wartime sedition laws, the Defense League also offered its support to nationally known causes such as the Tom Mooney case in San Francisco. After a bomb explosion during a “Preparedness Day” parade killed ten people in that city in July 1916, Thomas Mooney and Warren Billings were arrested and convicted of the crime.

Sentenced to hang and then granted a commutation to life imprisonment, Mooney became a nationwide cause celebre for radicals and trade unionists alike, until California governor Culbert Olson pardoned Mooney in 1939.²¹

When Mooney was sentenced to death in the spring of 1917, the Seattle Defense League called for a ten-minute work stoppage of all Pacific coast workers, a proposal endorsed by the Seattle Central Labor Council. In a letter to Emma Goldman, Minnie Parkhurst reported that the first of May general strike protesting Mooney’s death sentence was a success, and that “while it was only ten minutes, it was ‘effective in that it made the masters sit up and take notice. Many of the workers quit for the whole day.’”²² Seattle radicals maintained a great interest in the Mooney case, organizing such fundraising efforts as selling “Mooney tags” at meetings and picnics and forwarding donations to Mooney’s defense fund in San Francisco.²³

Northwest radicals were able to follow the defense of Mooney through the pages of nationally circulated radical magazines such as the *Blast*, the *Masses* and the *Liberator*.

²¹ See Richard H. Frost, *The Mooney Case* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968).

²² Parkhurst, Parkhurst to Goldman, 1 May 1917, appeared in *Mother Earth*, June 1917.

²³ Parkhurst, Parkhurst to Olivereau, 30 July 1918, mentions selling Mooney

program given by the Dramatic Club of the Worker’s College...we wish good luck to the players and hope that many people will turn out to encourage them...so that we may gradually establish a real Worker’s Theatre to express the heart of labor in dramatic art.”³⁹

Arms and the Man enjoyed an extended run at the Press Club Theater, and the Dramatic Club then prepared for a production of *The Lower Depths* by Maxim Gorky. Choosing a play which expressed the “heart of labor in dramatic art” was not always easy, however. In her letters to Olivereau, Minnie Parkhurst often described the internecine quarrels which erupted when the troupe set out to choose a new play.⁴⁰

This is characteristic of the Seattle labor movement in general during this time, and so even a cultural outlet such as the Dramatic Club was not spared the factionalism endemic to radical labor.

The Worker’s Dramatic Club survived the quarrels and disagreements of its members, as did the Worker’s College.

By 1923 the College was thriving; class offerings expanded to the natural sciences and a series of lectures on evolution. Guest speakers such as James Duncan lectured on topics germane to the local labor scene. Duncan’s talk was on “Practical Problems of the Labor Movement;” Dr. Sidney Strong told his audience “What I Saw in Russia.” The free Sunday night forums attracted large audiences, and a “library and free reading room” had been installed in the Labor

³⁹ Seattle Union Record, February 1920.

⁴⁰ Parkhurst, See especially Parkhurst to Olivereau, 20 February 1920; in at least three letters written during this time Parkhurst complains about the method of choosing plays; she certainly is venomous towards Strong: “Our friend Anna Louise wants to pick all the plays and pick the people who play in them, tho she knows nothing at all about such work regardless of what she may know about some things.” At one point she calls Strong, “her majesty Olivereau to Parkhurst, 11 February 1920,

Olivereau puts in her two cents about the choice of *Arms and the Man*; “I can think of about two dozen other plays cTfShaw’s that would be more timely, but of course any Shaw is good.”

for those with a flair for acting and drama, with the Worker's Dramatic Club rehearsals. The Dramatic Club premiered in December, 1919, with a production of J.M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. The play was well-received and the Dramatic Club became a staple in the Worker's College. The Club presented plays at the Press Club Theater at Fifth Avenue and University Street, a 300-seat playhouse which was later dubbed the "Labor Temple Annex."³⁵

The most significant aspect of the Worker's Dramatic Club was that all proceeds from its productions went to funds for political prisoners. In a decided blend of art and politics, the Dramatic Club produced plays three times a week, usually allowing each play a three-week run. The Club was open to any interested persons, and plays were often directed by Maurice Brown, an instructor in drama at the Cornish School.³⁶

In the spring of 1920, the Club staged *Arms and the Man*, a quintessential Shaw play replete with barbs at the ruling classes, battling of the sexes and a last-minute upheaval of plot. The *Union Record* gave the production a favorable review, commenting that the players "form a more capable acting group than the average professional caste (sic) seen in Seattle."³⁷ To the *Union Record*, producing a Shaw play was more than appropriate for a group such as the Worker's College Dramatic Club. "More than one person in the audience," the *Union Record* wrote, "came to the conclusion that only a labor audience has the real intelligence to appreciate the trenchant wit of Bernard Shaw as he punctures bubble after bubble of modern society."³⁸

Later that week, the paper ran an editorial applauding the establishment of the Dramatic Club:

"As a means of lightening the seriousness of our daily grind, and of the political conflicts now going on, we welcome the second

The sharing of common ideas by means of the press served to maintain a certain cohesion that those who held minority anti-war views desperately needed during wartime.

Convictions were strengthened and renewed when similar ideas could be circulated and shared. National publications illustrated the idea that those opposing the war in one place were not operating alone, but instead were part of a larger group that shared the same anti-war sentiment.

Alexander Berkman's *Blast* combined that anti-war sentiment with an anti-capitalist fury. In 1915 Berkman left New York for San Francisco to aid his friends Matthew Schmidt and David Caplan, who had been convicted of the 1910 bombing of the Los Angeles Times building, a dynamiting which killed twenty and injured seventeen. Berkman felt that a nationwide campaign would bring the release of Caplan and Schmidt, and so the *Blast* first appeared in early 1916 with the subheading, "A Revolutionary Labor Paper."²⁴ Berkman was editing the eight-page weekly during the summer of 1916, when the preparedness parade explosion brought on the arrests of Tom Mooney and Warren Billings. Berkman mobilized a campaign to exonerate the two men, and the pages of the *Blast* became his forum in that effort.

Richard Drinnon wrote that "a sense of absolute emergency pervades almost every column" of the *Blast*,²⁵ and with the talent and incisive commentary of cartoonist Robert Minor, the rage that the *Blast* expressed still springs from its pages. The *Blast* fought for imprisoned radicals with such ferocity that, as Drinnon wrote, the pages "seem to have blown out of the eye of a social hurricane."²⁶ This intensity is captured in a stunning graphic by Minor which appeared a month after postal authorities had informed Berkman

tags downtown;

²⁴ November 1918: "Have you seen by the papers what Seattle is doing about the Mooney case, and what is being done throughout the country?" *Blast* 1916.

²⁵ Introduction to Greenwood Reprint of *Blast* by Richard Drinnon, 1968.

²⁶ Drinnon introduction, *Blast* reprint.

³⁵ Parkhurst, Parkhurst to Oliverreau, 8 December 1919.

³⁶ Seattle *Union Record*, 20 February 1920.

³⁷ Seattle *Union Record*, 20 February 1920.

³⁸ Seattle *Union Record*, 19 February 1920.

that his publication was “not a newspaper or other periodical by the law of 1879.”²⁷ The illustration shows a brawny-shouldered “U.S. government” stabbing a maiden “Free Press” in the throat, with the caption, “YOU AND I CANNOT LIVE IN THE SAME LAND.”²⁸ Berkman’s accompanying editorial railed against press suppression and reprinted the postal department letter.

The Blast did endure for another year, and in the summer of 1917 Berkman published the final issue before returning to New York, where he was arrested for writing articles against conscription.²⁹ In that last issue was a piece by Berkman headed, “War Dictionary,” an acrimonious denunciation of the war and of Wilson, including such “definitions:” CONGRESS The valet of Woodrow the First CENSORSHIP–The rape of Free Speech CIVILIZATION–In God We Trusts LIBERTY LOAN–The bread line of the Unborn LOYAL CITIZEN–Deaf, dumb and blind KAISER A President’s ambition SEDITION The proof of Tyranny TRENCHES Digging your own Grave VICTORY–Ten Million Dead³⁰

For Berkman, war was the “propaganda of Democracy,” and his Blast gave vent to his wrath against the war and the Wilson administration. His audience seems to have been of a very limited size; the lack of circulation figures for the Blast leads to the conclusion that this publication never achieved a very wide readership. The magazine with a much larger national audience, and one that appealed to anti-war radicals, was the Masses, and later its offspring the Liberator.

The Masses, published in New York from 1911 to 1917, was a lively magazine which focused on art, literature, socialism, and cooperatives. “Our appeal will be to the mass, both socialist and non-socialist, with entertainment, education and the livelier kinds

²⁷ Blast, June 1916.

²⁸ Blast, June 1916.

²⁹ Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (New York: New American Library, 1977), abridged edition, Richard Drinnon, ed., pp. 610–611.

³⁰ Blast, 1 June 1917.

The Union Record saw this move to give women equal time as an exercise in democracy; and democracy, politics and the role of industry were by far the most common topics of discussion at the Sunday night forums. Sunday night speakers often were quoted in the Monday editions of the Union Record editorial page: “‘A world-wide determination by the people that they will not be shut out’ is a good definition of the democratic movement in the world, as given by one of the Worker’s College speakers on Sunday.”³⁰

Marxism often shared the podium with democracy at the College, especially after 1921, when Mark Litchman became president of the College.³¹ Litchman, a Seattle attorney well-known for his defense work in immigration cases, embraced Marxism heartily. He saw himself as a “lawyer for the downtrodden,” and after the war he worked on several deportation cases.³² Litchman’s influence in the Worker’s College can be seen with the increase in classes and lectures concerning Marxist economics and thought. These classes were well-attended, and Litchman often recruited personal friends to give lectures on Marx. From 1921 to 1924 Litchman taught at the College, lecturing on “Human Progress” and “Labor and the Law.”³³ He was enthusiastic about his work with the College, and saw it as the best way to deliver Marx to the worker. In a letter to a friend he described the state of Seattle labor with, “the Marxians are making themselves felt not only in the Central Labor Council, but out of it. They are barking at the heels of labor in tactics and education.”³⁴

The Worker’s College was not entirely concerned with ideology and education, however; it also aimed to entertain the Seattle labor community. Sunday afternoons at the College held some promise

³⁰ Seattle Union Record, 13 January 1920.

³¹ Litchman Papers, Box 1. Fact sheet for Seattle PostIntelligencer, 1925.

³² Litchman Papers, Litchman to Rubenstein, April 1934, quoted from Albert F. Gunns, *Civil Liberties in Crisis: The Pacific Northwest 1917–1940* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983), p. 100.

³³ Litchman Papers, Litchman to Gilbert, 31 December 1920.

³⁴ Litchman Papers, Litchman to Slater, 2 November 1920.

tured on “Social Government” on Sunday afternoons. Leaving the academic environment once a week to teach the working class followed the progressive ideals of higher education, and Smith and Savery were frequent contributors to the Worker’s College program.²⁶

On Saturday evenings at the Labor Temple one could attend the Speakers’ Club, where each week a different speaker held forth on some topic of current interest. For young mothers, Dr. Maud Parker taught a class on “How to Care for Children” each Sunday afternoon.²⁷ The College addressed the “Americanism” issue by offering an elementary English class taught by Dr. F.W. Meisnest. The Union Record reported that a group of 35 adults representing twelve nationalities took Meisnest’s class, and that “the class is a little piece of work in Americanism that will come out in the building of the Republic.”²⁸

Not all of the activities offered by the College were of a strictly academic nature, however. The free Sunday night forum often featured music and “mass singing” at the Labor Temple. In fact, the Sunday night forum was the most diverse aspect of the Worker’s College program. At 8:00 p.m. each Sunday a featured speaker or program would begin, preceded first by 30 minutes of open discussion on current world events. Topics such as “Industrial Democracy” or “Legal Rights and Duties of American Citizens” undoubtedly led to lively open discussions. One Sunday in March, 1920, forum night was turned over to women, when “What Women Need” was the scheduled topic. “Women will have the first, last and middle words at the Labor Temple open forum,” the Union Record announced, “and while both men and women will be freely admitted, it is planned that only women shall speak from the platform or from the floor.”²⁹

²⁶ Seattle Union Record, 3 January 1920.

²⁷ Seattle Union Record, 10 January 1920 (quarter-page advertisement)

²⁸ Seattle Union Record, 13 January 1920.

²⁹ Seattle Union Record, 12 March 1920.

of propaganda,” the December 1912 issue proclaimed.³¹ Morris Hillquit called the Masses “the Vanity Fair of the labor press,”³² and its staff did emphasize the importance of synthesizing art and politics, calling it a “meeting ground for revolutionary labor and the radical intelligentsia.”³³ While Berkman aimed his Blast at radical workers, Masses editor Max Eastman spoke to radical intellectuals. When the August 1917 issue was deemed unmailable by the Postmaster of New York, the Masses, as Eastman later wrote, died an “unnatural death.”³⁴

By early 1918 Eastman and his sister Crystal had founded a new magazine, the Liberator, which also combined art and politics. Published from 1918 to 1924, the Liberator reflected the early American communist movement, and the staff of this magazine found a solution to the crisis of world capitalism in the fledgling ideology of Soviet communism. Richard Fitzgerald wrote that “the Masses was a cultural product indigenous to the spirit of socialism and bohemian revolt prior to World War One: the Liberator was the inheritor of the tradition and the final gasp of that ethos.”³⁵ A notable feature of both magazines was the trenchant art work of Art Young, John Sloan, and Robert Minor among others. The humorous and often emotional “cartoons” were actually fine artistic works, utilizing a style which still carries a forceful impact today.³⁶

As publications aiming at a nationwide audience, these magazines all depended on second-class mailing privileges for their circu-

³¹ Richard Fitzgerald, “The Masses and the Liberator,” in Joseph Conlin, ed., *The American Radical Press 1880–1960* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1974), v. II, p. 532.

³² Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don’t Weaken* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1940), p. 410.

³³ Fitzgerald, in *American Radical Press*, p. 532.

³⁴ Max Eastman, *Love and Revolution; My Journey Through an Epoch* (New York: Random House, 1964), chapters eight and ten.

³⁵ Fitzgerald, in *American Radical Press*, p. 538

³⁶ See sRichard Fitzgerald, *Art and Politics; Cartoonists of the Masses and Liberator* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973).

lation. However, when the Espionage Act was enacted in June 1917, a controversial provision of the law prohibited the use of the U.S. mails for the circulation of messages criticizing the war effort or discouraging military enlistment. The Postmaster General was empowered to declare material unmailable if it expressed opposition to the war, and postal employees were encouraged to turn over any suspicious matter to their supervisors.³⁷

Postmaster General Albert Bursleson took his job very seriously, and by August 1917 at least fifteen major publications were declared “nonmailable.” These included the *Masses*, *Mother Earth*, the *International Socialist Review*, the *Appeal to Reason*, *American Socialist*, the *Milwaukee Leader*, *Nation*, and the *New York Call*.³⁸ The Post Office Department would deem a certain offensive issue unmailable, and then inform the publication’s staff that, because the issue was not mailable, it was not a continuous publication and therefore was ineligible for second-class mailing privileges. Several of the above publications fell under this curious Post Office Department reasoning, and many ceased publication by the winter of 1917.³⁹

Emma Goldman tried to circumvent the prohibition of her *Mother Earth* magazine by producing a smaller version called *Mother Earth Bulletin*, but within months the Post Office Department deemed that publication unmailable also.⁴⁰

As the grip of government-sponsored suppression tightened, most anti-war publications belabored the point that, while the U.S. had gone to fight in Europe to “keep the world safe for democracy,” American democracy was trying to withstand the staggering blows delivered by the federal wartime laws. This inconsistency was often emphasized by the three Seattle newspapers which held anti-war

³⁷ Donald Johnson, “Wilson, Bursleson and Censorship in the First World War,” *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 28 no. 1 (February, 1962), pp. 46–58.

³⁸ Johnson, *Journal of Southern History*, p. 48.

³⁹ In his memoirs, Oscar Ameringer wrote that the *Milwaukee Leader* was even denied postal delivery privileges.

⁴⁰ *Mother Earth* is on microfiche in UW Microforms.

ever, polled almost 40 percent of the votes, a result which the *Union Record* called “A Moral Victory.”²²

While labor-oriented political activity in Seattle enjoyed a brief upsurge in 1920 with the Triple Alliance and Duncan’s campaign, labor-oriented cultural activity thrived by means of the Labor College. Housed in the Labor Temple at Sixth Avenue and University Street, the hub of activity for the Central Labor Council, the Labor College represented the educational arm of organized labor. Dubbed the “Worker’s College,” the school offered an eclectic blend of political ideology and practical instruction.

By January of 1920 the Worker’s College offered ten-week courses held on weekends and evenings, and the *Union Record* announced the College’s winter term with,

“One trouble with all mankind is the temptation to stop growing intellectually. One weakness in every movement—among business men as well as among the workers—is failure to take advantage of educational opportunities... and remember that the college is open to all citizens of Seattle—without distinction.”²³

For two dollars and fifty cents a Seattle citizen could take a class in Advanced Economics, the Co-operative Movement, Debating or Business Administration. Each class met once a week for an hour of lecture followed by an hour of “discussion and recitation.”²⁴ The opening night of registration for the winter term featured music by the Skinner and Eddy Band, and instructors gave a brief overview of their courses. The College signed on 147 new students for that term, and instructors included University of Washington professors J. Allen Smith and William Savery.²⁵

Savery, founder and chairman of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Washington, taught a “highly popular” class in “Social Ethics.” Professor Smith, an eminent political scientist, lec-

²² *Seattle Union Record*. 3 March 1920.

²³ *Seattle Union Record*, 10 January 1920.

²⁴ *Seattle Union Record*, 3 January 1920.

²⁵ *Seattle Union Record*. 5 January 1920.

were just ten percent higher than those of 1914.¹⁹ Migrant labor jobs once so appealing to the-IWW declined sharply, and fissures within the ranks of labor created by the general strike widened. The boom of wartime became the bust of the peace years, and labor looked for a new approach in organizing.

The Farmer-Labor Party was a natural outlet for unionists in search of a new political machine. Statewide the AFL, the Railroad Brotherhoods and the Grange formed the Triple Alliance, a coalition which launched an enormous effort to organize an independent political party, supporting candidates in municipal elections. William Bouck, heading the Grange and a Northwest delegate to a Farmer-Labor Party congress in Chicago in early 1920, was hailed by the Union Record as “a John the Baptist of the new industrial and political order!”²⁰

The Triple Alliance fired the enthusiasm of a flagging labor movement in the state, and in Seattle the mayoral campaign of James Duncan elicited excitement among unionists. Duncan, secretary of the Central Labor Council, ran for mayor in the spring of 1920 with Triple Alliance backing. The Union Record campaigned for Duncan vigorously; just prior to the February primary the paper ran a front-page endorsement with bold headlines proclaiming: “FOR THE PEOPLE: DUNCAN/FOR THE PLUNDERBUND: FITZGERALD”²¹ Duncan came in first in the primary, only to be defeated in March by Hugh M. Caldwell, a Republican attorney. Duncan had, how-

¹⁹ Friedham, *The Seattle General Strike*, p. 162; Litchman Papers, Litchman to J. Gilbert, 8 July 1921, Litchman describes breadlines in winter of 1920–21, and sudden fall in employment: “The winter is going to be a hard one—we are in for a bad spell.”

²⁰ Seattle Union Record, 10 February 1920; for an excellent study of the FLP, see Hamilton Cravens, “The Emergence of the Farmer-Laobr Party in Washington Politics,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* LVII, 1966, pp. 148–157.

²¹ Seattle Union Record, 17 February 1920.

views: the labor-owned Union Record; the socialist Seattle Daily Call; and the IWW-sponsored Industrial Worker. The front page of the 31 July 1917 issue of the Daily Call carried an editorial cartoon depicting an “American Autocrat” gagging a man labeled the “labor press,” with the caption, “IN ORDER TO BRING DEMOCRACY ABROAD MUST WE SUBMIT TO TYRANTS AT HOME.”⁴¹ Of these three newspapers, the Daily Call took the most acrimonious stance against the war. Until its demise in the spring of 1918, this socialist publication hammered away at the relationship between American capitalists and the war effort. Staff members included Harvey O’Connor and Anna Louise Strong.⁴²

The Industrial Worker, published first in Spokane and then Seattle, became a victim of wartime intolerance in the spring of 1918, when its editors could no longer find printheuses willing to print the paper. As the official journal of the Western IWW locals, the Industrial Worker faced the federal assaults directed at the IWW as a whole.

The weekly publications appeared at irregular intervals after the federal raids on IWW offices in September 1917, and after seizures and suppression on both the state and federal levels later that year, the Industrial Worker ceased publication altogether.⁴³

In light of the hazards involved in publishing unpopular opinions during the war, the most enduring of these local publications was the Union Record. Established as a weekly in 1900 and owned by the Seattle Central Labor Council, the Union Record began publishing daily editions in April 1918. The Daily Call faced bankruptcy that spring, and after a conference between the two papers’ editors, it

⁴¹ Seattle Daily Call, 31 July 1917.

⁴² Carlos Schwantes, “Washington State’s Pioneer LaborReform Press,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* (July 1980), p. 125.

⁴³ Melvyn Dubofsky, “The Industrial Worker,” in *American Radical Press*, vol. I, pp. 103–108.

was agreed that if another “working class daily” was launched in Seattle, the Call would agree to fold.⁴⁴

The Union Record was more restrained in its criticism of the war than the Daily Call had been, but it did appeal to both the radical workers and trade-unionists. In 1918 the paper claimed to have a circulation of 112,000—a tremendous increase from the 1916 circulation of 12,000. ⁴⁵ One consistent feature of anti-war opinion in the Union Record of 1918⁴⁵ was the satirical verse written by Anna Louise Strong, under the pseudonym “Anise.”⁴⁶

The Union Record did experience federal suppression in November 1919, when federal agents raided the newspaper office and charged the staff with conspiracy to violate the Espionage Act. The raid stemmed from an editorial by Harry Ault entitled, “Don’t Shoot in the Dark,” denouncing the Centralia shooting between the IWW and American Legionnaires.⁴⁷ Publishing rights were suspended for six days until charges against the staffers were dropped, a decision which Ault called “one of the first signs of returning sanity from wartime hysteria.”⁴⁸

But during January 1918 that “wartime hysteria” had been all too prevalent in Seattle, when a group of people—the majority of them sailors—mobbed the Piggot Printing Plant. The Piggot concern printed the Daily Call and the Industrial Worker. During the vigilante raid, employees of the plant were forced to lie on the floor while the mob stuck iron bars into the running presses. Type forms for several publications were smashed, and type cabinets were over-

⁴⁴ Harry Ault, “The Seattle Union Record,” unpublished mss. in Northwest Collection, University of Washington, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Carlos Schwantes, *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* (July 1980), p. 119.

⁴⁶ Anna Louise Strong, *I Change Worlds: The Remaking of An American* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), pp. 66–67, 73.

⁴⁷ Harry Ault, “The Seattle Union Record,” unpublished mss. in Northwest Collection, University of Washington, pp. 24–25.

⁴⁸ Harry Ault, “The Seattle Union Record,” unpublished mss. in Northwest Collection, University of Washington, p. 25.

war years with, “free discussion is the very breath of Americanism. Repression is the very breath of Prussianism.”¹⁶

The editorial pages often hammered away against the new state anti-syndicalism laws and the federal sedition laws which still kept anti-war dissidents behind bars. “No man can measure the harm that may ensue if the laws of a nation or city encroach upon freedom of expression,” the Union Record raged. “Suppression can not silence truth; but it can work evils... [S]edition laws produce revolutions, instead of preventing them. Let France and Russia bear witness.”¹⁷

The Union Record reported stories on deportations, “Red raids,” and infringements on “civil liberties,” a nascent phrase used frequently since the war. Because organized labor became a target during the days of Red hysteria, labor was on the defensive, and the Union Record reflects this in its pages. When Federal District Judge Jeremiah Neterer ruled that “declarations against the capitalist system do not necessarily indicate any attempt to overthrow the government of the United States” in his decision in a local sedition case, the Union Record ran a lengthy editorial applauding Neterer’s decision.

“We heave a sigh of relief! Labor has for so long been trying to get this idea across. We have wondered sometimes what was the matter with our use of the English language; it seemed so difficult to convince certain types of folks that we could love our country and still dislike the present system of profit-making.”¹⁸

This circuitous approach to proclaiming loyalty to the country came during a time when Seattle’s organized labor tried to maintain the gains it had achieved during the wartime. But with the Armistice came the cancellation of shipbuilding contracts. Shipyard jobs dried up, wages fell and by 1921 industrial employment figures

¹⁶ Seattle Union Record, 3 January 1920.

¹⁷ Seattle Union Record, 10 February 1920.

¹⁸ Seattle Union Record, 31 December 1919.

parent result emerging can only undermine the will to keep on trying. This too is expressed frequently in the memoirs of dissidents of the era. Harry Ault, long-time editor of the Seattle Union Record, explained the change in that newspaper's tone by 1920 through 1921 with, "it was getting a bit sick of constant battling... the class war spirit was dying."¹⁴

The Union Record suffered from an identity crisis by 1920, when it was viewed as too reactionary a paper by IWW members, and when conservative trade unionists saw it as much too radical. The general strike of 1919 had contributed to the paper's problems, when many Seattle citizens felt that the strike leaders had given way to the radical element in organized labor. Many trade union members turned to the Seattle Star for their news; the Star had been hostile to the general strike and ignored the radical union element.¹⁵

Despite its uneven—often schizophrenic—tone, the Union Record remained on the whole an indignant voice in the Seattle press in the early 1920s. The paper viewed itself as a watchdog over constitutional freedoms, and it used the term "Americanism" in a fashion which countered the jingoistic usage of the word. An editorial discussing the difficulties which certain groups were having in obtaining meeting halls railed that "it is to the everlasting shame of our city and a sad comment on our Americanism to know that it is difficult for organizations suspected of having a new idea to obtain halls." The editorial then harkened back to the language of the

time for a sedition conviction at McNeil Island, Washington, and Leavenworth, Kansas. His memoirs contain rich detail, except for his post-prison days in the early 1920s. Wells had trouble getting work upon his release from Leavenworth, and he lost his mortgage during his prison stay. There is little discussion of his life in the early 1920s; he picks up details with enthusiasm for 1929 and forward.

¹⁴ Harry Ault, "The Seattle Union Record," unpublished mss. in Northwest Collection, University of Washington, p. 55. Ault also wrote that the paper became a "political football" after the general strike, p. 59.

¹⁵ Harry Ault, "The Seattle Union Record," unpublished mss. in Northwest Collection, University of Washington, p. 69.

turned. The police finally broke up the mob action, but not until an estimated \$15,000 damage had been done.⁴⁹ Many Seattle citizens viewed this incident with disgust and anger, especially since the majority of the "hoodlums" were sailors in the United States Navy. On Monday, January 7, the local branch of the People's Council sent telegrams to President Wilson and Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, denouncing the lawlessness of the sailors, and requesting action of some sort to prevent further outbreaks of mob violence.⁵⁰ And on that Monday morning the Daily Call—boasting that the incident had not held up the week's issue ran a poem by "Gale," another pseudonym used by Anna Louise Strong:

The Battle of the Print Shop
Oh the boys were out on a Saturday night,
Our sailor boys! Our sailor boys?
Roaming the city to see the sight
And make their share of the noise,
When up there stepped two brawny men
And said: "Do you want the chance
To have some fun and swat the Hun,
Before you go to France?"

//

They made reply with a loud Aye! Aye!
And hurried along the street
Until they came to a printing shop
Where a bridge and a sidewalk meet.
Hist! All is still! They look within
Where plainly may be seen
Six strange suspicious printers,
And a linotype machine.

//

⁴⁹ Peterson and Fite, *Opponents*, pp. 168–69; Parkhurst, Parkhurst to Olive-creau, 16 January 1918; O'Connor, *Revolution*, pp. 95, 110.

⁵⁰ Seattle Daily Call, 7 January 1918.

“Ha! Ha! Prepare to follow me,”
 Their leader muttered low; “Within these haunts they print the
 Call,
 That dares to tell the truth to all.
 We’ll smash it with a blow.
 Rise up! Protect Democracy!
 This is the country of the free
 The Call The Call must go.”
 We know not what dime novels
 Inspired each sailor heart,
 But brains aren’t right on Saturday night
 And they were young and trained to fight;
 And keen to do their part.
 //
 Charge Chester, charge! On Stanley, on!
 Smash forward undismayed!
 Not all the type in all the forms
 Shall make our hearts afraid.
 //
 Now when the smoke of battle
 Above the wreckage cleared
 Two murdered linotype machines
 And one dead press appeared;
 And many Red Cross pamphlets
 Lay slaughtered on the floor,
 And Ole Hanson’s mayor cards
 Were slain to rise no more.
 //
 ‘Twas thus our Jackies won the day
 And captured Piggot’s shop;
 They smashed the windows, desks and door
 Before they had to stop;
 They made a mess upon the floor,
 Of forms and type and printer’s ink,

citizens to prove their loyalty to America, the greatest democracy in the world.

These factors have been collectively labeled the “Red Scare” by historians, and 1920 was a year of national hysteria over what appeared to be an insidious threat to American livelihood and safety.¹²

By its very nature, however, hysteria can only be short-lived. Due to the intensity and fervor of hysterical reaction it cannot last long. The fever must subside, allowing way for a return to lucidity a return to “normalcy,” if you will. What did endure after the hysteria was a suspicion, a none-too-subtle change in attitude towards those people who espoused fundamental changes in the political and economic status quo.

Radical groups during the dawning of the new decade were not only attacked externally, they were also undermined from within. Factionalism over ideology and method of action increased after the war, and many radical leaders were absent due either to jail sentences or deportation. In September, 1919, two domestic communist parties had been established, forcing many radicals to choose lines of allegiance. The IWW was characteristically causing strife within organized labor, while purists of the industrial unionism cause were battling the ideas of the “labor capitalists.” When we view this internal strife in conjunction with the demoralization resulting from a long, isolating stay in a prison cell, we can perhaps understand why Louise Olivereau chose to withdraw from radical activity of any sort. Many zealous dissidents of the war years underwent this transformation after serving prison sentences and witnessing, upon their release, the feckless operations of their former comrades.¹³

This disillusionment can also be prompted by a simple weariness, a drain of spirit and motivation. Constant effort applied with no ap-

¹² See Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919–1920* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955); William Preston, Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

¹³ Hulet Mi Wells, “I Wanted to Work,” unpublished mss. in Hulet M. Wells Papers, Manuscript Division, University of Washington Library. Wells served

“As for my place in the radical movement—that seems to be a good deal of a dream, or joke, or something. In the first place, I can’t find any radical movement... I’m very skeptical as to their accomplishing anything whatever by it. The Reds, I mean; the police are efficient all right. The California jails and prisons are full of reds convicted under the anti-syndicalist laws, but I can’t do anything about it, and don’t see the use of going to jail in protest.”¹⁰

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Olivereau’s friends in Seattle heard little or nothing from her after her move to California; perhaps she had severed those ties because of the changes she had seen on the outside after her nearly three years in prison.¹¹

The robust idealism and unity of purpose of 1917 were gone by 1920. During the war socialists, anarchists and Wobblies had congregated—against a common enemy, but when the war ended that fragile unity crumbled.

Wartime sedition laws had legalized the silencing of radical voices; state-level syndicalism laws by 1920 kept up the momentum of repression. Mandatory deportations of foreign-born radicals culminated in the much-publicized odyssey of the “Soviet ark” Buford in November, 1919, while “Palmer raids” rounded up dissidents by the score. Young J. Edgar Hoover headed the “alien radical division” of the Bureau of Investigation, an outgrowth of the systematized federal inquiries into radical activity of the war years.

The threat of foreign radical ideas germinating in American soil combined with the ardent patriotism born of the Allied victory in Europe brought about a new strain of nativism by 1920. The term “Americanism” became both a challenge and a threat, prompting

¹⁰ Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 27 November 1922.

¹¹ Litchman to A. Brilliant, letter fragment, n.d. (1921?), Mark Litchman Papers, Manuscripts Division, University of Washington Library. Litchman to Brilliant: “Louise Olivereaux (sic) I think has settled down to a quiet life, for we hear nothing about her.” Hereafter: Litchman Papers

But the Seattle Daily Call
They didn’t touch at all.
For sailor boys are trained to fight
They are not trained to think.
//
The days are done in Washington,
Of boozing to excess,
And only Huns delight we know
In sprees of “frightfulness.”
//
We recommend this substitute
That’s furnished by the war,
It doesn’t hurt your conscience
Like the jags there were before.
For all the actions idiotic,
Destructive or despotic,
May be hallowed by the flag,
And just being patriotic
Is the latest form of jag.⁵¹

The poem expressed an anger which many Seattle radicals must have felt during the war years. “Gale” conveyed the collective feelings that civic bigotry was justified when it was carried out under the guise of patriotism; that radicals were equated with “Huns” on the homefront; and that, in their minds at least, the Daily Call and other anti-war publications dared to “tell the truth to all.” As evidence of a common opinion which existed among Seattle’s wartime radicals, the poem conveys a true flavor of that era.

During 1917 and 1918 the radicals felt the “contempt” of Wilson and of others who attempted to silence them, and they reacted by forming a collective identity, a community.

⁵¹ Seattle Daily Call, 7 January 1918; apparently Strong used “Anise” at the Union Record and “Gale” at the Seattle Daily Call, see scrapbook of her poems in Anna Louise Strong Papers, Mss, University of Washington.

The sharing of ideas, art and literature, and the raising of funds for those imprisoned as a direct result of wartime legislation sustained this small group of people throughout the duration of the war. The resentment which grew from their wartime experience would prove to be an impetus in early 1919, when that joint co-operation they had founded would be called upon again, with the plan for a general strike. But by the middle of 1917, when the legal terms of the Espionage Act were being applied in full force by federal agents and the courts, the radical community saw several of its members jailed for expressing opposition to the war. The intolerance towards anti-war radicals during this time can be seen in the case study of Louise Olivereau, a Seattle woman who suffered the wrath of the wartime legal system and of inflamed public opinion.

Radical-Communist Party.” The reporting agent, who had more than his share of misinformation, wrote:

“the above named subject was alleged to be now in this city (Portland) and that she is alleged to be the head of all Russian propaganda in the United States; that in 1919 subject had been convicted of radicalism at Seattle and sent to Leavenworth, Kansas, for a period of 10 years and that she later received a presidential pardon...”⁸

The agent attempted to track Olivereau by using the local post office, but he was told that there was no record of her receiving or calling for any mail. The report reveals more about the fever pitch of the anti-Red campaign launched by the federal government after the war and it exposes the propensity for inaccurate facts in filing such reports—than it does about Olivereau’s life in Portland.

There were no further FBI reports filed concerning the alleged “head of all Russian propaganda in the United States.” Perhaps the agent further tried to track Olivereau but failed, because by 1922 she and her husband, Paul Drew, were living in Los Angeles. The last extant letter from Olivereau was written in November, 1922, from Los Angeles.

In it she tells Parkhurst that they moved to California and bought an acre of land, but when Drew lost his job teaching horticulture at San Luis Obispo, they pitched a tent on the land and lived in it for several months. They decided to sell the land for “a fair profit,” which they split between them. At the time she wrote the letter she was living alone on Lucas Street in Los Angeles, and she described their breakup in just a brief sentence: “we decided it would be better for me to live alone for a while.”⁹

That letter to Parkhurst ends with a paragraph which sums up Olivereau’s feelings about radical activism, and perhaps represents the feelings of many other radicals of that era:

⁸ United States Department of Justice, FBI report filed 22 November 1921.

⁹ Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 27 November 1922.

the machine, which they did not make and do not understand the workings of.”⁵

Upon seeing the “disgruntled Wobs” vying for operation of the Portland trades “machine,” Olivereau withdrew and continued working on her own, on behalf of her jailbirds.

One of those jailbirds was Jack Miller, who, as an IWW organizer during the war, went by the name of Jack Leonard.

Miller had served time at Alcatraz for distributing IWW literature while he was in the army at Camp Lewis, Washington. When Miller was released from “the Rock,” he headed back to the Northwest, stopping first in Portland before going back up to Seattle. A friend of Miller’s in Portland told him that there was a woman who wanted to meet him. When Miller looked up Olivereau, they discussed doing their “bit for the war” in prison, and Olivereau gave him \$20.00 to help him in his readjustment to the outside. She told him she had earmarked the money for the next ex-political prisoner she would meet.⁶

After her meeting with Jack Miller, Olivereau decided to tell her co-workers about her stay in the federal penitentiary. In a long letter to Parkhurst she described their varied reactions, and she told Parkhurst that “there is still one man who has to be informed as to my ‘past.’ And I really care a great deal about his good opinion.”⁷ That man was Paul Drew, who worked in the same law office, and the two would be married in the following year.

It is difficult to determine whether Olivereau joined any radical organizations or political parties in those years following her release, but apparently the Federal Bureau of Investigation was interested in pursuing her activities and whereabouts at that time. In an FBI report filed 22 November 1921, she was listed as an “Alleged

⁵ Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 30 June 1920.

⁶ Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 13 July 1920; Interview with Jack Miller, 26 January 1985, Seattle.

⁷ Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 13 July 1920.

Chapter 3: A Woman Acting Alone: Louise Olivereau And The First World War

During the summer of 1917, Louise Olivereau was a stenographer for the secretary of the Lumber Workers, a division of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in downtown Seattle. A college-educated woman, Olivereau tutored English at night to supplement her weekly income of eighteen dollars. A woman well-versed in literature, she often lectured to local women’s groups on the plays of Henrik Ibsen.¹ As a politically astute woman, she became increasingly concerned about America’s entry into the European war. Her abhorrence of war and the action she took to protest American troops being sent overseas would bring her into a federal courtroom in November, 1917.

Three days after the U.S. declaration of war, Louise Olivereau marked her thirty-third birthday. Born in Douglas, Wyoming, and the daughter of French immigrants, she went east after high school to attend college at what is now Illinois State University in Bloomington, Illinois.² After college she travelled west and lived in Salt Lake City and Portland. During 1911 through 1912 Olivereau worked as an assistant to William Thurston Brown, a socialist writer

¹ Modern School, January-March 1920, p. 48

² Sally Flood, “The Search for a Cause: Louise Olivereau,” unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Washington, 1979, p. 38.

and educator, at the Portland Modern School.³ The American Modern School movement grew out of the education theories of Francisco Ferrer, a Spanish anarchist. The Portland and New York Modern Schools were the first of these experimental schools founded in the United States. The basic tenet of this anarchist education movement was that children would be more responsive to learning in an unstructured, loving environment, in contrast to the discipline of the traditional classroom. The Modern School in Portland held day classes for children, and evening and weekend “study groups” for adults. Olivereau often headed these study groups. The school closed in 1912, and W.T. Brown moved on to establish Modern Schools in other American cities.⁴

Olivereau moved to Seattle in 1915, where she had a good friend, Minnie Parkhurst. The two women had long been interested in the activities of the Socialist party; however, the declaration of war brought about a serious split in that political party, with several members voicing support for President Wilson and the war. Olivereau later wrote that she had become a Socialist in 1909, but by the spring of 1917 she considered herself a philosophical anarchist, embracing the belief that individuals could function better without the constraint of any government.⁵ She followed the writings of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, and however naive her political philosophy may have been at the time, the war and conscription imposed by the government strengthened her belief that the right of the individual must transcend any law. Parkhurst too had become disillusioned with the Socialist party, and she referred to local Socialists as “politicians,” a slur against the party faction often referred to as “ballot-box Socialists.” The two women attended rallies against the war during the summer of 1917.

³ Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement; Anarchism and Education in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 48 and 362.

⁴ Avrich, *Modern School*, p. 63.

⁵ Harvey O'Connor, *Revolution in Seattle, A Memoir* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964), p. 249

reported that she spoke on the “fearful conditions at Canon City.” The newspaper report indicated that she spoke of incidents where she had tried to come to the aid of women prisoners who were ill, only to be told by prison officials “not to butt in.”²

Olivereau went to Portland shortly after those speaking engagements, and she wrote Parkhurst several times throughout the summer of 1920. In Portland she spoke at union meetings on her prison experience and visited the Oregon State prison.³ At a Finnish May Day celebration she sold copies of the pamphlet Parkhurst had published while Olivereau was at Canon City, and with the proceeds she started what she called her fund for “my jailbirds.” She wrote to political prisoners still in jail, and corresponded with Ricardo Flores Magon at Leavenworth, and with Magon’s wife in Los Angeles.⁴ While working in a law office to support herself, she devoted her evenings and weekends to raising funds for Magon and her other “jailbirds.”

Through her work with the Joint Defense Committee of the Metal Trades Council and the Portland Central Labor Council she witnessed the increasing factional in-fighting between members of the IWW and the trade unionists. To Parkhurst she wrote that when certain IWW members returned from jail,

“those fellows think now they could do a better job; so they are going to have a try at it. It’s wicked, but I for one shall enjoy seeing them come to grief, because there was such a beautiful little machine built up, a machine that could get by with anything under the sun, it worked so smoothly, and I’m quite sure those disgruntled Wobs won’t get by with much of anything when they take over

² Seattle Union Record, 13 April 1920.

³ Jessie Lloyd, “One Woman’s Resistance,” in Harvey O’Connor, *Revolution in Seattle, A Memoir* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964), p. 260.

⁴ Minnie Parkhurst Papers, Mss., University of Washington, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 3 May 1920

Chapter 6: Hysteria, Disillusionment and Normalcy: Seattle's Radical Community, 1920–23

After serving 28 months of a ten-year conviction for violating the Espionage Act of 1917, Louise Olivereau was released from the federal penitentiary at Canon City, Colorado, on 25 March 1920. Returning to Seattle, she was met by a few close friends at the train station. Unsure of what she would do next, Olivereau stayed with her good friends Minnie Parkhurst and Ed Rimer.

The *Seattle Union Record* edition of 9 April ran an editorial title, “Prisons for Reform?” announcing that Olivereau was scheduled to speak on “A Model Prison from the Inside” at the Labor Temple in downtown Seattle on Sunday, 13 April. The *Union Record* wrote:

“Miss Olivereau spent over two years in the Colorado State prison, which under the administration of Warden Tynan has been known as an extremely successful example of the application of the most advanced ideas of prison reform. The record of first hand experience and observations should be of great interest and value to all interested in any phase of the prison question.”¹

In her speech at the Labor Temple Olivereau apparently did not dwell on the “advanced ideas of prison reform” under Warden Thomas Tynan, because the following day the *Union Record*

¹ *Seattle Union Record*, 9 April 1920.

One rally Olivereau did not attend that summer was planned by the Seattle Chamber of Commerce in honor of the return of a diplomatic mission to Vladivostok sponsored by the U.S. government and led by Elihu Root, an emissary for the Wilson Administration. On 4 August Seattleites greeted the ship at the waterfront, and a luncheon and rally followed. At the rally Root spoke of the dangers the country faced in the war with Germany. He said, “don’t argue about the cause of war, or whether we should or should not have entered it.” If the U.S. was to lose the war, he added, the Germans would surely take over.⁶ Root’s speech received front page coverage in the three commercial daily newspapers.

After reading accounts of the speech, Olivereau became incensed at the idea that one should not question the reasons for entering the war. She decided to act against Root’s message in the most effective method she felt was available to her. She wrote and mimeographed a circular to young men who were to be inducted into the military, and by doing so she took the step that would eventually bring her ideology and abhorrence of war into a court of law. During the first week of August the *Times* and the *Star* listed the names of men called up for service. From these listings Olivereau chose the names of men to whom she would mail her anti-war message.⁷

The circular began, “Fellow Conscript,” and the text which followed was a rebuttal of Root’s speech using quotations from Thoreau, Mark Twain and Thomas Jefferson.

The leaflet argued that citizens must discuss questions concerning war, and urged the reader to think carefully about his responsibilities in fighting the war. “We do not counsel resistance,” Olivereau wrote, “we counsel but one thing—obedience to your own conscience...we do not ask you to resist the draft IF YOU BELIEVE THE DRAFT IS RIGHT.”

⁶ *Seattle Star*, 4 August 1917.

⁷ Minnie Parkhurst Papers, Mss., University of Washington. Box #2–33, p. 134. Hereafter, Parkhurst.

On the subject of the draft and conscientious objectors she wrote, (T)he emotional appeal made by millions of posters, by screeching headlines, by patriotic magazine articles, moving pictures and music, have all failed to raise an adequate army by voluntary enlistment. What does this mean? THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY DO NOT WANT THIS WAR. YOU ARE BUT ONE OF MILLIONS WHO ARE AT HEART CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS.

After urging the reader to act on his own convictions, the leaflet ended with, “AND WHAT ARE THESE ABSTRACT SENTIMENTS OF LIBERTY, FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND INDEPENDENCE WORTH TO US IF WE MUST BE SLAVES TO PRESERVE THEM FOR OUR MASTERS?”⁸

She spent about forty dollars on paper and postage for her lone task, and she mailed the circulars on three different occasions in August, using mailboxes in various Seattle neighborhoods.⁹ Using the mails for circulation of messages against the war was specifically prohibited by the Espionage Act, and Olivereau was probably aware of the consequences her actions might bring.¹⁰

On 5 September, federal agents raided the downtown IWW hall. This action followed the Department of Justice’s plan to investigate IWW activities, in order to find a connection between the IWW and “German propaganda.”¹¹ Raids on IWW halls across the country were scheduled for the same hour. The Star reported that no arrests were made during the Seattle raid, but that all correspondence, journals and pamphlets were confiscated.¹² The government

⁸ Parkhurst, #2–36.

⁹ Parkhurst, #2–32, U.S. District Court Western District of Washington Northern Division, indictment.

¹⁰ Statutes at Large of the United States of America from April 1917 to March 1919, Vol. XL, Part I (Washington Government Publications Office, 1919).

¹¹ Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 9 August 1917; H.C. Peterson and Gilbert C. Fite, *Opponents of War 1917–18* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957), pp. 62–63.

¹² The New York Times reported the raids as occurring at 2 p.m. Central Time, 6 September 1917; Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All; A History of the In-*

learn many details of the intimate relation between my family and many public events...”

Louise Olivereau to Minnie Parkhurst, 25 February 1919⁵⁶
;&

“I shall try and do as the mail clerk requests about writing business and personal matters tho I hardly know what he means by those two words, and I am afraid that he’-‘will have a hard time to know just exactly what my business and personal matters are, since I have been through necessity connected with the Labor movement all my life, therefore why should it not be somewhat personal to me?”

Minnie Parkhurst to Louise Olivereau, 9 March 1919⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Parkhurst, Parkhurst to Olivereau, 9 March 1919.

ened labor's position; what resulted instead was a growing confusion and lack of direction as time wore on.

Strong leadership was sorely lacking right from the start—no one was willing to come to the fore and direct the Strike Committee, not even James Duncan, the figurehead of Seattle's organized workers. Anna Louise Strong's ambiguous but nonetheless forceful editorial elicited alarm and enhanced the revolutionary tone of the strike. Nationwide this news of a revolution in Seattle fed the flames of the red scare which raged throughout 1919. Finally, one obvious blunder was the absence of the Union Record at a crucial time when citizens needed to be informed and reassured. The labor community's "voice" via the press could not be heard during a time of crisis; in its place were rumors, accusations and inflammatory, anti-labor rhetoric.

These failings should not eclipse the strike's successes, however. The feat of convincing 60,000 rank and file working people to leave their jobs in a show of support for their fellow union members is an accomplishment which should not be underestimated. And the lack of violence during a time rife with conflict and bloodshed is perhaps the most significant achievement of the Seattle strike.

Participants of the strike deserved to be proud when they boasted, "sixty thousand men and not even a fistfight." The strike resulted from a myriad of conditions in a post-war setting, and it should not be dismissed as an utter failure, just as it should not be heralded as a revolution. The sentiments surrounding the general strike were articulated in a post-strike exchange between Olivereau and Parkhurst:

"Your letter of the 9th received on the 18th, with a section amputated. The mail clerk said it referred to the strike, and instructed me to ask you to confine yourself strictly to personal and business matters in your future letters to me. So I must wait till my release to

⁵⁶ Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 25 February 1919.

agents were thorough in their expropriation: a framed map of the state of Washington was among the material seized.; Arriving at the IWW-office the next day, Olivereau found that her desk had also been cleaned out in the raid.

Among the material confiscated were ten copies of the book, *The Backwash of War*, and several hundred copies of a pamphlet entitled "Shambles." Olivereau ordered this anti-war literature from New York City, and because the material had just arrived a few days before the raid, she had not had a chance to read it. On 7 September she decided to call on Howard P. Wright, special agent for the Department of Justice in Seattle, to request the return of her books. She later said at her trial that the material was "entirely my private property, having no connection whatever with any organization," referring to the IWW.¹³ Olivereau never did elaborate on what she had expected from her visit to Wright's office, but when she arrived, Wright showed her one of the circulars and asked her if it had been typed and mimeographed at the IWW office on First Avenue.

Olivereau replied that, as far as she knew, the only matters produced at the office were those pertaining to the business of the IWW. Wright suggested that they go to the District Attorney's office to retrieve her books.¹⁴

At District Attorney Clay Allen's office, Olivereau was introduced to C.M. Perkins, Seattle's postal inspector.

Perkins brought out a bundle of the circulars and began to read from one of them. He asked her if she had written the circular, and she said no, she had not. Perkins went on to read a letter Olivereau had written in August to a man named Leech in Bellingham, asking him if he would be interested in distributing her circulars in

dustrial Workers of the World (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), Preface; Seattle Star, 5 September 1917.

¹³ Anna Louise Strong Papers, Mss, University of Washington, Box #22, "The Louise Olivereau Case," Minnie Parkhurst, publisher, 1919, pp. 13–15. Hereafter: Strong Papers.

¹⁴ Strong Papers, "Olivereau Case."

that area. When Perkins put the letter down, Olivereau admitted she had written and mailed the circulars.¹⁵ The men questioned her extensively about her job and the production of the circulars.

Olivereau maintained that she did not write and mimeograph the circulars at the IWW office. The men told her they had been aware of the mailings some weeks before the raid. Later, during her trial, Olivereau would tell the jury to draw their own conclusions about why the authorities did not arrest her until after the raid. Apparently they had wanted to confirm a connection between the circulars and the IWW, and Clay Allen told the Star after Olivereau's arrest that "we had been on her trail for some weeks."¹⁶

During the interrogation concerning her financial and political backing, Olivereau insisted that she had acted alone. When asked about being financed by "German money," she replied that if she had had any considerable sum to work with German or otherwise—she would have been able to do more than just distribute her own written message. Her interrogators apparently had difficulty believing that Olivereau would spend her own time and money on the circulars. When they asked her what kinds of results she had expected from the mailings, Olivereau replied that if only five men reconsidered their stand on the war because of her message, then she would consider her work a success.

Upon that reply Clay Allen said, "I don't know whether this woman is a harmless sentimentalist or a dangerous person."¹⁷

Whether harmless or dangerous, for some reason Olivereau was at least accommodating to the men that afternoon. Wright asked her if she had more circulars at home, and Olivereau invited the men to accompany her to her home on Second Avenue Northeast. She and the three men took the Wallingford streetcar to her house, where she showed them the remaining cache of pamphlets. After

¹⁵ Parkhurst, #2-33, p. 129.

¹⁶ Parkhurst, #2-33, p. 129; Seattle Star, 7 September 1917.

¹⁷ Parkhurst, #2-33, pp. 129-130.

As for the rallying point of the general strike, the shipyard strike dragged on until mid-March, and the strikers never did win their demand for peacetime wage adjustments. The government-sponsored wartime shipbuilding boom bottomed out by April, when the Emergency Fleet Corporation canceled contracts for the construction of 25 vessels in Seattle.⁵⁴ Within months the number of shipyard workers dropped by the thousands when layoffs occurred. The rapid and severe shrinkage of the shipyard working force weakened the Metal Trades Council drastically. This decline can obviously be attributed to the changing industrial output of a country making peacetime adjustments; it cannot be traced to the collapse of the general strike.

Although clearly not an attempt at revolution, the Seattle general strike can be seen as a rebellion born of post-war turbulence. A general distrust and alienation prevailed among Seattle workers following the Armistice, when the cost of living soared and the government/business complicity in union-busting was illustrated by the shipyard strike. That strike was directed against federal policies; the city-wide sympathy strike which ensued was a lashing out at all policies which appeared to undermine the gains of organized labor. Robert Friedheim wrote in his conclusion to *The Seattle General Strike* that the strike "was a revolt against everything and therefore a revolt against nothing."⁵⁵ It is difficult to see the logic in such a conclusion; despite the irrational motives behind the city's work stoppage, the general strike was, indeed, a strike against everything.

Because of the blunders which abounded in the execution of the strike, the Seattle situation took on tragic dimensions. A limited strike would have been much more effective—especially since 60,000 workers stayed home on the first day of the strike. The dramatic show of solidarity for a fixed period of time would have strength-

⁵⁴ Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, pp. 163-164.

⁵⁵ Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, p. 180.

on the unions' decision not to strike during wartime—a decision based on a sense of patriotism and loyalty.

The post-war period was a time of frustration for many Americans, and events in Seattle immediately prior to the strike heightened the union members' feelings of alienation.

Organized labor also drew on the “Americanism” theme during this period of post-war adjustment, but their approach spoke to the anger and resentment felt among the rank and file.

Two days before the general strike declaration, the *Union Record* said in an editorial:

“The Stars and Stripes is our flag, but it waves over a lot of things that we are ashamed of and want to see changed. Our allegiance is to the flag and not to every skunk and stinking cause that seeks cover by waving it.”⁵²

The AFL saw the Seattle locals as renegade unionists.

The March 1919 edition of the *American Federationist* chastised the Seattle strikers for their “undertaking in violation of the rules and regulations of the American Federation of Labor... [B]orn in a spirit of insubordination... this strike was bound from its inception to die an early death.” After declaring that the strike “may have been prompted by motives foreign to American trade unionism,” the *Federationist* concluded that

“It was the advice and counsel and fearless attitude of the trade union leaders of the American international trade unions and not the United States troops, or the edicts of a mayor, which ended this brief industrial disturbance of the northwest.”⁵³

Both Mayor Hanson and the AFL international tried to claim credit in stopping the strike; in actuality the workers themselves—lacking the guidance of firm leadership—simply decided to return to their jobs.

⁵² *Seattle Union Record*, 1 February 1919.

⁵³ *American Federationist*, vol. 26, March 1919, pp. 242–44.

the house was searched and more questions were asked, Olivereau was arrested for violation of the Espionage Act. She was taken to the Pierce County jail in Tacoma, where most federal prisoners were housed at the time, because, according to Harvey O'Connor, “the King County jail in Seattle was apparently too close to the Wobbly (IWW) hall.”¹⁸ Bail was set at \$7500.

The arrest made the front pages of most Seattle newspapers the following day. Both the *Times* and the *Post-Intelligencer* carried lengthy articles detailing the crime.

The socialist *Daily Call* wrote, “she declared that she ‘expected to pay the price,’ and was happy having done as her convictions directed.”¹⁹ From her jail cell in Tacoma Olivereau corresponded with Minnie Parkhurst. Her spirits were buoyant at this time, and she wrote:

“I never expected to feel this way in jail—I guess it’s the way I have heard men say it is about getting drunk—it all depends on how you feel when you start. Now I felt fine when I started and I still feel that way.”²⁰

At her arraignment on 12 November, she entered a plea of not guilty and waived the assistance of a court-appointed attorney.

The trial of the United States versus Louise Olivereau was slated for 28 November 1917. On that day Olivereau again refused counsel, choosing instead to represent herself in court. She told the *Daily Call* that she had no money for an attorney, “and besides, he would worry more over getting me a light sentence than over the preservation of ideals I care for more than for my own liberty.” When asked outside the courthouse what her reasons for sending the circulars were, she replied, “to make men think, because that is the first and chief duty they owe to their country and the world.”²¹

¹⁸ O'Connor, *Revolution*, p. 99.

¹⁹ *Seattle Daily Call*, 30 September 1917.

²⁰ Parkhurst, #2–12, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 16 October 1917.

²¹ *Seattle Daily Call*, 30 November 1917.

The courtroom was almost full on that Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving. Most of the day was spent choosing the twelve jurors. Presiding over the court was Federal District Judge Jeremiah Neterer, with Ben Moore acting as prosecuting attorney. The charges against Olivereau were read: distribution of 2,000 to 2,500 circulars which urged or caused persons to “fail, neglect, and refuse to enlist or be recruited in military and naval service of the United States.”²² In all, there were nine counts of violating the Espionage Act three counts for each of the August mailings.

Olivereau began her questioning with a request that she might ask one question of all twelve men. The judge granted this request, and she asked the men if they might possibly have formed prejudiced of preconceived notions about her, because the newspapers had referred to her as an anarchist “who respects right rather than law.”²³ She told the prospective jurors that the essence of her question was to determine from the start whether anyone was prejudiced against a declared anarchist. Juror number six exclaimed, “I certainly have a prejudice against a declared anarchist.”²⁴ According to the trial transcript, Olivereau told the judge that juror number six should withdraw, and the man rose from the jury box. The judge told the man to be seated, and he told the court that anarchism was not an issue in the case. Prosecutor Moore rose and asked Olivereau whether she meant that she had been declared an anarchist by the newspapers, or whether she wished to admit that she was an anarchist. When she replied, “Both,” the prospective jurors all rose to leave the jury box. Judge Neterer quickly told them to resume their seats, and the men did. Although this unusual occurrence was not noted in the court transcript, the *Post-Intelligencer* reported the incident in its trial account, and Olivereau would later refer to it in a letter to Minnie Parkhurst.²⁵

²² Parkhurst, #2-32, indictment.

²³ Parkhurst, #2-33, pp. 3-4.

²⁴ Parkhurst, #2-33, p. 4.

²⁵ *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 28 November 1917; Parkhurst, Olivereau to

of Seattle,” Hanson launched an ambitious nationwide public relations campaign. Six months after the general strike, Hanson resigned his position as mayor in order to tour the country and lecture for the Redpath Lecture Bureau on the strike. He told his heroic rendition of the strike for \$500.00 per lecture. Hanson realized that he had tapped a vein in the press and in public opinion, and he spotlighted the “strike-as-revolution” theme, calling it a timely contest of “Americanism versus Bolshevism”—the phrase which would also grace the title page of his 1920 book.⁵⁰

During 1919 the “Americanism” theme prevailed in the popular press. This was a time when the United States had succeeded in getting the Allies “over the top” to victory in the long and bloody European war, and patriotism became inflamed to a frightful degree. The success of the Bolsheviks in Russia came as a threat to many Americans, and the notion that radicalism was foreign-born endured. The Seattle press hammered away at this theme during the days following the general strike. In its Monday edition, the *Star* commented that

“Seattle labor is awakening to the fact that this Bolshevik attack was not only an assault on American principles of government, but it was an attack on the very principles of American organized labor. It would substitute for the American Federation of Labor something akin to the Bolshevik reign of terror in Russia.”⁵¹

Opponents of the general strike had reduced the actions of the local unions to the simple act of disloyalty a propensity which had been widespread ever since the United States entered the European war. The strikers’ patriotism had been repeatedly impugned by the press, the business interests and the authorities; many workers bristled at this insult because the origin of the shipyard dispute centered

⁵⁰ Ole Hanson, *Americanism Versus Bolshevism* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1920). Unfortunately, some historians have credited Hanson with crushing the strike; see for instance, Joan M. Jenson, *The Price of Vigilance* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968), p. 259.

⁵¹ *Seattle Star*, 10 February 1919.

Apparently Parkhurst opened her letter with news of the strike situation. Olivereau, all too aware of the censors' presence, wrote Parkhurst the following day that "[T]he Seattle situation as set forth in the papers is very interesting. I wish I could be there during this adjustment period."⁴⁶

The elation of Thursday and Friday had been punctured almost overnight, and many rank and filers planned to return to work the next morning. The word circulated that the wagon and jitney drivers, barbers and school janitors definitely were going back Monday morning. Members of the smaller unions worried over losing their jobs to scabs if they stayed out. Just about the only union members who were sure they would not return on Monday were the shipyard workers.

The Monday morning gathering of the general strike committee lasted only an hour or so, with the members this time accepting the executive committee's resolution to officially end the strike on Tuesday, 11 February, at noon.⁴⁷ In that resolution was a call to those workers who had already gone back to work to walk out again and stay out until Tuesday noon, so that the "successful termination" of the strike would be one of unity.⁴⁸ Few union members complied with this request, primarily because they felt under pressure from the leaders of their internationals. Ault later felt that this failure to orchestrate a unified finale to the strike illustrated that "the strike committee was about the last to wake up to the fact that the strike was lost."⁴⁹

The general strike may have caved in on itself, but to hear Ole Hanson tell it, the strike ended because he had crushed an attempted revolution. In order to create the image of the "saviour

⁴⁶ Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 10 February 1919.

⁴⁷ Strong, *Seattle General Strike*, p. 39; Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, pp. 144–45.

⁴⁸ Strong, *Seattle General Strike*, p. 39.

⁴⁹ Harry Ault, "The Seattle Union Record," unpublished mss. in Northwest Collection, University of Washington, p. 17.

During the selection of the jury, Olivereau asked each man three questions: whether he believed in freedom of speech and of the press in wartime as in peace; if he thought an individual had a right to criticize the government and its laws; and if he understood the difference between explaining a situation, expressing a personal opinion and advocating a line of action. When her questions concerned political ideology or the understanding of anarchism, the judge interrupted Olivereau, declaring that those topics were not issues in the case.

Judge Neterer occasionally exhibited a certain resentment that Olivereau did not have an attorney, and he often dismissed her questions as "immaterial" or "not an issue here." When she asked one man if he believed that conscription was a democratic measure, the judge quickly told Olivereau that the inquiry was not a proper one. She answered that she was compelled to ask such a question in order to "get at the real state of these gentlemen's minds."

The judge replied, "that is why I suggested that you should be represented by counsel because they would know."²⁶ Olivereau returned to one of her three usual questions.

When the jury was finally chosen, it included a retired banker, a real estate broker, a wealthy hardware merchant, and a man who had seven sons, all of whom were serving in the army. The *Daily Call* commented bitterly on the jury as "among the most reactionary of the hangers-on of the Chamber of Commerce."²⁷ Following the swearing in of the jurors, Prosecutor Moore outlined the Espionage Act. On the witness stand Postal Inspector Perkins described how he had first become aware of the circulars. A clerk at the University Post Office had found a half-opened circular on his sorting table and had turned it over to his supervisor. The letter to the man Leech

Parkhurst, 23 August 1919.

²⁶ Parkhurst., #2–33, p. 8.

²⁷ *Seattle Daily Call*, 30 November 1917.

in Bellingham had been delivered to the wrong Leech: that man promptly turned it over to the postmaster in his city.

That first day in court was covered by most Seattle newspapers. In what seemed an absurd label for a Seattle stenographer, Olivereau was described as “one of the most widely known anarchistic leaders in the United States” by the Seattle Times. The Times also noted that Dr. Anna Louise Strong had sat by Olivereau in the courtroom, and that “at noon recess they locked arms and left the courtroom together.”²⁸ Anna Louise Strong had been elected to the Seattle School board in 1916, but her popularity among the middle class diminished as her political leanings towards the local socialists became more apparent. She too had spoken against the war, and her appearance at the Olivereau trial added force to the recall movement which had begun against her. Strong later wrote:

“My own fault revived the recall. I had ‘befriended’ an anarchist...she asked me to sit beside her in court... so that she might have a friendly word to relieve the soul-crushing atmosphere of American justice... I was neither prepared nor unprepared for the eight-column headlines which greeted the fact that the woman school director, already under attack for recall, had befriended an anarchist.”²⁹

The alarm in the community was so great that Strong issued a statement to the Times a week after the trial. Strong justified her support for Olivereau by calling her “courageously true,” and emphasized that “Louise Olivereau meant no harm to any living soul.”³⁰ But the school director supported a woman whom the Times called “an enemy of the government” in the pages of that same issue. The move to recall Strong from her school board position was successful.

²⁸ Seattle Times, 28 November 1917.

²⁹ Anna Louise Strong, *I Change Worlds: The Remaking of An American* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), p. 64.

³⁰ Seattle Times, 4 December 1917.

Slowly the city began to reopen, with some restaurants, shops and barbershops back in operation that afternoon. The stereotypers had been ordered back to work by their international, and so preparations for Sunday newspaper editions were in full swing by Saturday evening. The Committee of Fifteen called a meeting of all of the delegates of the strike committee, a meeting which would last more than twelve hours. The executive committee presented a resolution to end the strike at midnight Saturday. Discussion and voting on that resolution eclipsed the proposed hour, however; even at 4:00 a.m. Sunday the delegates rejected the proposal. The meeting adjourned upon the agreement to meet again on Monday.⁴³

Sunday saw the return of the daily newspapers, and they unleashed their wrath upon the strike committee, claiming that the radicals held sway over the governing body of 300.

A Times editorial breathed a sigh of relief over the breakdown of the strike, commenting that “the general public was interring the memory of the city’s dark days days of which every sane unionist in Seattle is ashamed...”⁴⁴ That Sunday also brought another day of clear, mild weather to Seattle. It was a good day to get an early start on a backyard garden or take care of household repairs; it was also a good day to think about the purpose of continuing the strike and to talk about it over the back fence with neighbors.

Sunday was the day for Minnie Parkhurst to write her weekly letters to Louise Olivereau in prison, but the prison censors at Canon City cut her letter of 9 February before delivering it to Olivereau. Parkhurst closed that letter with:

“I stopped writing before I had finished this letter to go to town because I had a chance to ride in an Auto and now that I am back I can’t think of anything to write. Oh, yes I saw quite a lot to write about only it is not writable news I fear.”⁴⁵

⁴³ Literary Digest, 12 April 1919, p. 92.

⁴⁴ Seattle Times, 9 February 1919. A3 Strong, Seattle General Strike, p. 37.

⁴⁵ Parkhurst, Parkhurst to Olivereau, 9 February 1919, censored letter.

went to Hanson's office to cheer him on. Some called for martial law, while others urged the mayor to use the scores of "emergency patrolmen" to break the strike. Hanson told the gathering to "run EVERYTHING this thing has gone far enough. This is the end."⁴¹

The new turn of events circulated quickly through the ranks of the strikers, many of whom attended a benefit dance at the Dreamland Dance Pavilion that Friday evening. An estimated 5,000 people went to the Dreamland, located at Seventh and Union, to raise funds for the shipyard workers.

Organizers collected approximately \$750.00 which they turned over to the Metal Trades Council strike fund. Local (striking) businesses contributed to the cost of hosting the dance, which one striker called "the biggest dance ever held there, and the most orderly."⁴² Such a social event must have provided some relief from the tensions of Friday's events, allowing the strikers relaxation, entertainment and a chance to share opinions on what the next step in the strike should be.

The strikers did not comply with Hanson's order to end the strike on Saturday morning, but the show of solidarity of the first two days began to weaken on the third day.

They knew that their strike had been tagged a "revolution" and that federal troops were standing ready, and that international officers of the American Federation of Labor had flooded the Labor Temple with calls and telegrams demanding that members of the Seattle locals give up the strike. The strikers were also all too aware of the personal cost of going out. After two days without pay and little results in sight, many workers began to doubt the strike's efficacy.

The first crack in the resolve to stay out appeared with the resumption of seven streetcars by noon Saturday.

⁴¹ Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, p. 137.

⁴² *Seattle Union Record*, 8 February 1919

The day after Thanksgiving the courtroom was packed with people who had read of the "declared anarchist" serving as her own lawyer in a sedition trial. The trial resumed with witnesses for the prosecution. Young men were called forward to testify about their receipt of the circular.

Olivereau asked each man if the circular had changed his attitude about serving in the military. Each said no, it had not. In presenting her case, Olivereau explained to the jury why she chose to represent herself. "I am by principle a direct actionist," she told the men, "if there are points of procedure on which I err, his Honor will doubtless set me straight before any serious damage of any sort is done."³¹ When she attempted to state motives for mailing the circulars, Moore rose to object and Judge Neterer sustained that objection, telling Olivereau that "the law does not make motive any excuse...motive does not enter into the matter."³²

In Prosecutor Moore's closing speech he told the jury that their duties were simplified. He stressed the point that Olivereau had attempted to cause disloyalty, and that the attempt was just as severe a violation as actually causing disloyalty. Acts such as Olivereau's distribution of anti-draft circulars would "sow the seeds of mutiny and disloyalty to law and order, the evil fruit of such disregards which we know would be similar to those terrible acts now transpiring in Russia." Moore emphasized that this case was an important one because it was a government concern "if the minds of the public were to be poisoned by a lot of maudlin sophistry and misplaced phrases." He appealed to the men to act for "the very life of the nation," claiming that people like Olivereau "strike at the very foundation of the Government and outrage the feelings of true Americans..."³³

³¹ Parkhurst, #2-33, p. 127.

³² Parkhurst, #2-33, p. 133.

³³ Parkhurst, #2-33, pp. 135-137.

Oliveriau began her closing oratory by saying that the prosecution had not established that she had advocated forcible resistance to the draft law in writing and mailing the circulars. The suggestions of violence and force in the writings were not her words, but instead those of Elihu Root, whose speech was “largely quoted and which was perfectly mailable... and urged men to violent, unconsidered and unthought-out action.”³⁴ The rest of the material in the circulars could be found in any public library, she said. She picked up a manuscript she had prepared and read to the jury her philosophy as an anarchist.

“Anarchism is the working philosophy of those who desire to bring about a condition of society in which force and violence will have no place... I am convinced that violence breeds violence, war breeds hatreds and fears and, revengeful desires which lead to other wars...”³⁵

She said that constitutional freedoms including free speech have “always been limited to ‘freedom within the law,’ which is not freedom at all.” She declared that patriotic duty involved placing the good of the country above obedience to its laws, and she went on to give her views on organized labor, conscientious objection, and Wilson’s war policy. In proclaiming the love she had for her country—“the Brotherland”—she pointed out that the autocracy of the U.S. government was comparable to “the militaristic system of Germany we are fighting.” Her speech lasted for over an hour using this forum to proclaim her beliefs was one reason she had chosen to represent herself in court. The Post-Intelligencer reported that “her voice is deep, clear and her words are chosen for effect.”³⁶

When Oliveriau had finished speaking, Ben Moore rose again to remind the jury that philosophy was not a concern in the case, and Judge Neterer then had his chance to speak to the twelve men. His

³⁴ Parkhurst, #2-33, p. 138.

³⁵ Strong Papers, “Oliveriau Case,” pp. 23-24.

³⁶ Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 1 December 1917.

brief...Our people have come to the conclusion that this is a revolution, that we cannot have any dealings with revolutionists.”³⁸

The labor delegation saw that there had never been a chance for conciliatory action with the major or with the representatives of Seattle business; they had come to negotiate and had been rebuffed as “revolutionists.” When the rest of Seattle’s striking community heard of the outcome of that meeting in the mayor’s office, it only made them more obdurate in their determination to carry on the strike. Hanson’s ultimatum would not be heeded, the strikers vowed on Friday evening, and those who had advocated a limited strike saw that they no longer had any arguments to offer in support of their position.

Ole Hanson realized that he had the backing of the community of businessmen, churches and middle class citizens for any move he might make next to break the strike. Consolidating his position was the appearance of a message he had written earlier, which appeared on the front page of the Star. Billed as Hanson’s “declaration of independence” to the strikers, the mayor wrote that “the time has come for the people in Seattle to show their Americanism. Go about your daily duties without fear...the anarchists in this community shall not rule its affairs.”³⁹ Hanson had waited for the opportune moment to assert his position. Friday’s events made the appearance of the Star article a stroke of perfect timing. That evening the mayor sent a written ultimatum to the Labor Temple, instructing the executive committee to call off the sympathy strike by eight o’clock the next morning, or Hanson would “take advantage of the protection offered this city by the national government and operate all the essential enterprises.”⁴⁰

News of the mayor’s demands reached the business community through members of the Citizens’ Committee, and many people

³⁸ Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, p. 135. Spangler was president of Seattle National Bank and vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce.

³⁹ Seattle Star, 7 February 1919.

⁴⁰ Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, p. 136.

James Duncan knew he had to take concrete action when, on Friday morning, he finally heard from the mayor. “Jim, this strike has got to be called off by noon,” said Hanson over the telephone.³⁷ Duncan replied that he had no authority to call off the strike, and that it couldn’t be done in just a few hours. The two men agreed to meet at City Hall later that morning, and Duncan took five other men with him—delegates elected by the executive committee.

At that meeting tempers flared, with Hanson accusing the labor delegation of holding “red cards” and following the radical element of local labor. Hanson then set a new deadline eight o’clock Saturday morning and he offered to help in negotiations for the shipyard strike. In almost the next breath, he threatened martial law and said he was assured that the soldiers stationed in Seattle would help break the strike. The meeting was reduced to taunting and angry words from both sides. But Duncan knew that Seattle Labor was gaining hostility from most of the rest of Seattle, and he then asked Hanson to arrange a meeting with the Citizens’ Committee for later that afternoon. Comprised of representatives from religious groups, women’s organizations, fraternal lodges and business clubs including the Chamber of Commerce, the Citizens’ Committee had been formed just a few days earlier by citizens who had hoped to avoid the general strike by reaching some sort of reconciliation over the shipyard strike issue.

The labor delegation, the Citizens’ Committee and the mayor met later that day, but they could not reach a settlement. They agreed to meet again that evening, and at that meeting, J.W. Spangler, spokesman for the citizens group, told the gathering,

“well, gentlemen, I do not think it is necessary for us to sit down and make ourselves comfortable in any way. Our stay will be very

members voiced opposition, and the suggestion was dropped.

³⁷ Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, p. 132.

words had a familiar ring; they were reminiscent of Elihu Root’s speech which had motivated Olivereau to protest. He told the jury that

“the time for a discussion of the merits of the war is past. There are only two sides to the war. One side is in favor of the United States; the other side is in favor of the enemies of this country.”³⁷

Neterer instructed the jury that Olivereau had not obstructed recruiting and enlistment by the distribution of the circulars; therefore he dropped three of the counts against her.

The trial was over; it took the jury less than thirty minutes to find Olivereau guilty of the remaining six counts. Three counts were for “attempting to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny and refusal of duty in the military,” and three for “unlawfully using the mails and postal service of the United States for transmission of unmailable matter.”³⁸ Sentencing was scheduled for Monday, 3 December.

The newspapers reacted according to the community viewpoints they represented. The *Daily Call* was alone in its angry account that dwelled on the absence of first amendment rights in the case. Convicting Olivereau was an act which would have made “the German Kaiser jump with glee.”³⁹ The *Industrial Worker* simply remarked on an “ungrudging admiration for the brave stand she has made in defense of the principles which she holds dear.”⁴⁰ The *Times* and the *Post-Intelligencer* both ran front page articles headed “Woman Anarchist Convicted,” and both papers stressed the “intimacy” between Olivereau and Anna Louise Strong.⁴¹

If the newspaper coverage of the trial was inflammatory, Olivereau too was inflammatory in her manner.

³⁷ Parkhurst, #2–33, p. 141.

³⁸ Federal Archives and Record Center, Seattle, FRC #77089, case file in *United States vs Louise Olivereau*.

³⁹ *Seattle Daily Call*, 19 December 1917.

⁴⁰ *Industrial Worker*, 8 December 1917.

⁴¹ *Seattle Times and Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 1 December 1917.

Twice during the trial she said she had no use for government, an obviously dangerous remark to make in a court of law during wartime, especially during a sedition trial.

The judge had stressed that motive and ideology were not issues in the case, but for Louise Olivereau they were the only important issues.

On the morning of 3 December, she was sentenced to ten years at the Colorado State Penitentiary in Canon City, the nearest federal prison with facilities for women. At the sentencing Judge Neterer told Olivereau that she was “a woman of more than ordinary intelligence” and that he hoped she would change her views toward organized government.⁴² The judge added that every circular she had mailed constituted an offense punishable by imprisonment for five years, and on that basis he could send her to the penitentiary for 10,000 years.

That she would be found guilty was almost beyond debate, and Olivereau knew this from the start. Her supporters thought she was unwise in choosing to represent herself, and Strong later wrote that she could not dissuade Olivereau from her decision, and so “she rushed on jail as a moth on a flame.”⁴³ Portland attorney Charles Erskine Scott Wood, a man sympathetic to radical causes and anti-war sentiment, followed Olivereau’s case with interest. In early 1918 he wrote to Minnie Parkhurst:

“The war must go on and all who speak against it must be shut up, legally or illegally. I greatly admired Miss Olivereau’s presentation of her case to the jury. That is to say I admired it as an essay: fine, clear, logical. As an appeal to the jury it was well calculated to bring in a verdict of guilty.”⁴⁴

Olivereau spent twenty-eight months in prison at Canon City. The letters she and Parkhurst exchanged during that time change

⁴² Seattle Times, 4 December 1917.

⁴³ Strong, *I Change Worlds*, p. 64.

⁴⁴ Parkhurst, #1–19, letter of 4 February 1918.

so, as Harry Ault remembered it, “strikers and everyone else bought Oregonians to find out what was going on in their own city.”³⁵

Despite the lack of news, the strikers were encouraged that the strike had begun with a strong showing of the unions’ support for the shipyard strikers, and without loss of life or property, as the business interests had predicted. The city was strangely quiet and so, too, was City Hall. Mayor Hanson had only raised his voice of authority over the City Light dispute. No other statement had emerged from the mayor’s office thus far, and the extra deputized citizens had been given no reason to brandish their newly acquired guns.

But some strike leaders were worried about the direction of the strike, and its length, which had from the start been uncertain. Editor Ault and James Duncan, secretary of the Central Labor Council, were at the fore of those who felt that a limited strike would be the most effective. Two days before the walkout the executive committee discussed this aspect, and many members favored the idea of a limited strike which displayed unity for the plight of the shipyard workers, a strike which could later be repeated if the shipyard owners did not offer a settlement in favor of the strikers. That evening— Tuesday, 4 February the recommendation of a limited strike was set before a meeting of the Metal Trades Council—the primary instigators of the shipyard strike—and it was vociferously rejected.³⁶ Ault and Duncan backed off on their proposal and attended to the countless other details involved in implementing the city’s shutdown. Both men wanted to avoid the strike being coined the “no-one-knows- where-strike,” but at a time so crucial to labor solidarity they decided to wait and see just where it indeed would lead .

³⁵ Harry Ault, “The Seattle Union Record,” unpublished mss. in Northwest Collection, University of Washington, p. 16.

³⁶ Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, p. 107. When Bert Swain, secretary of the Metal Trades Council, began to explain the recommendation to set a time limit, Frank Turco jumped up and shouted, “Who the hell sold out here?” Other

The Post-Intelligencer, a morning paper, appeared Thursday at an early hour, but suspended publication for Friday and Saturday. The evening Times quietly closed down for three days, and the evening Star printed a small edition on Thursday which newsboys found impossible to sell. When the newsboys announced the arrival of that Star edition on the downtown streets, a hostile crowd gathered, and Labor Guards quickly told the boys to take the papers back to the plants.³³ The stereotypers had struck all of the newspaper plants, while the International Typographer's Union (ITU), on order from its international, resisted going out.

Without the stereotypers to make the printing plates, producing a newspaper larger than the size of a broadsheet was impossible. The Star later distributed its editions in outlying districts for free, with the help of armed guards riding in the backs of trucks.

Strikers could be found hanging around the front of the Union Record office to get news of various aspects of the strike, but the Union Record published only brief "strike bulletins" sporadically throughout the weekend. Suspending the Union Record would later be cited as another blunder by the strike leaders; the availability of some source of sound news coverage could have quelled the rumors and the growing uneasiness among Seattleites.

Ironically, the one newspaper which was available in great quantities, and with detailed news of the Seattle strike, was the Portland Oregonian. The background of the shipyard strike received balanced coverage in the Oregonian's 6 February edition, but such headlines as "Fear Grips the Minds of Seattle Folk" did not help to put Seattleites at ease. According to the Oregonian, the "radical leaders" were to blame for the city-wide walkout, and Friday's edition described the general strike as a "Red Revolt."³⁴ Without their own press to read, the idle citizens hungered for news of some kind, and

³³ Harry Ault, "The Seattle Union Record," unpublished mss. in Northwest Collection, University of Washington, p. 16.

³⁴ Portland Oregonian, 6 and 7 February 1919.

the picture of Louise Olivereau, at least the portrait sketched from the trial proceedings. The strident approach seems to have given way to a warmer, gentler side which emerged during her prison sentence. Her letters are calm and thoughtful, carefully written in order to say as much as she could on the one-page prison stationery she was allowed for each letter. Of course, she had plenty of time to think and write in prison.

The letters portray Parkhurst as a hard-working fundraiser; she worked fourteen hours a day writing to various labor and pacifist organizations around the country, describing the trial and asking for funds to publish the courtroom proceedings. In early December, the same week Olivereau was taken to prison in Colorado, Parkhurst began her efforts for an appeal. For two months Olivereau hoped her stay in prison would be brief, but any chance for appeal was impossible because of legal errors following the trial.

Olivereau did not file a demurrer at the close of her case, and Parkhurst was informed by C.E.S. Wood that, as he saw the case, an appeal was not possible.⁴⁵

With the chance for an appeal lost, Parkhurst turned her efforts towards publishing a pamphlet describing Olivereau's crime, with excerpts from the trial transcript and her closing speech. Parkhurst placed a call for funds in the Daily Call, the Liberator magazine, and the Mother Earth Bulletin. The advertisement said that Parkhurst was writing a "pamphlet-record of the trial of a woman found guilty of thinking."⁴⁶

In late December Emma Goldman, editor and founder of the Mother Earth Bulletin featured a story on the Olivereau case titled "Woman Martyr." In the article Goldman quoted Parkhurst: "I am trying to get the court transcript of Louise's case it is mighty good stuff."⁴⁷ Goldman urged her readers to send money to Parkhurst. In

⁴⁵ Parkhurst, Kitty Beck to Parkhurst, 26 December 1917 (Beck was Wood's personal secretary); Parkhurst to Olivereau, 2 January 1918.

⁴⁶ Parkhurst, #2-34, typed draft for printer.

⁴⁷ Mother Earth Bulletin, December 1917.

the next three issues of Goldman's newsletter the case was briefly described, and the March 1918 edition carried a reprint of a letter Olivereau had written to Goldman from prison.

In just a few months Parkhurst had raised over \$300, and she spent her evenings copying the trial transcript and responding to inquiries about Olivereau. Parkhurst worried about being skillful enough to write an introduction to the pamphlet, and she often asked Olivereau what she might prefer. Olivereau suggested that she ask Strong to write the introduction, but Parkhurst replied that Strong had declined the offer: "after all, Anna Louise Strong has political aspirations," Parkhurst wrote.⁴⁸ She wanted Goldman or Alexander Berkman to do the introduction, but both were about to enter federal prison to serve sentences stemming from their own anti-war speeches and articles, actions which were in violation of the Espionage Act.

Parkhurst decided to go ahead and write it herself.

However, local printing houses were hesitant to print Parkhurst's manuscript when they learned it concerned the sedition trial of Olivereau, the woman anarchist. The Piggott printing plant had been raided and smashed in January, 1918, and other local printing houses began to turn down any work which involved anti-war material. Parkhurst angrily wrote Olivereau of her thwarted efforts in getting the pamphlet printed, and the two women agreed that publishing attempts should be postponed until the local climate had cooled down. The pamphlet was finally published more than a year after Olivereau had entered prison, and notices heralding its completion read, "Child Born After Being Carried Eighteen Months!"⁴⁹

Olivereau grew frustrated as she read of Parkhurst's efforts on her behalf. Upon the new year of 1918, she wrote Parkhurst that she wished she "could do my own work," and that she approved of everything Parkhurst was doing. Often in her letters she would

⁴⁸ Parkhurst, Parkhurst to Olivereau, 2 January 1918.

⁴⁹ Parkhurst, #2-34, typed draft for printer.

with the request for National Guard assistance. University of Washington President Henry Suzzallo (and head of the State Council of Defense during the war), in Olympia to assist Governor Ernest Lister during his illness, then telephoned Secretary of War Newton Baker for federal troops. An element of the First Infantry, Thirteenth Division, at Camp Lewis set out for Seattle on Thursday, arriving late that night. The troops were quartered at the downtown Armory and at nearby Fort Lawton. Brigadier General John L. Hayden ordered that the men stay inside and be prepared to act. Hayden then dispatched some of his men to guard the Navy pier, the Ballard Locks and several electric power stations surrounding the city. In all, Hayden commanded more than 1,000 soldiers, sailors and marines during his Seattle assignment.³⁰ The soldiers may have been kept out of sight, but most Seattleites were aware of their arrival.³¹ Those citizens who were hostile to the general strike probably applauded the arrival of the troops, but with the apparent calm of the first day, many strikers felt that the army's arrival was entirely unnecessary.

Although the army, navy and marines were prepared to mobilize in Seattle, and the Labor Guard ensured peace in the streets, stories of disaster began to circulate throughout the city. As a Times editorial cartoon suggested in the Sunday edition, "Dame Rumor Was on the Job" during the general strike.³² Buzzing around the city were tales of Mayor Hanson's assassination, bombing of City Light's generators, and contamination of the water supply. The Labor Guard and the publicity committee did their best to squelch such hearsay and drastic talk, but every time a new piece of gossip toured Seattle no one could be entirely sure of its veracity. A vital component of urban life was missing due to the strike—the newspapers.

³⁰ Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, pp. 122, 128-129.

³¹ Harry Ault, "The Seattle Union Record," unpublished mss. in Northwest Collection, University of Washington, p. 15.

³² *Seattle Times*, 9 February 1919.

need a Department of Public Safety with men who are accustomed to reason, not brawn.²⁶

The peacefulness of the general strike instilled enormous pride among Seattle laborites, and later many were quick to point out that there were no strike-related arrests, and that the overall average of arrests was much lower during the strike. Even members of the IWW pledged to behave, promising the strike committee that if any of their fellow Wobblies became unruly, then they themselves would order the belligerents out of town.²⁷ Mayor Hanson was not convinced that the strike would continue to be non-violent, however. On the first day Hanson armed and swore in 600 “emergency patrolmen,” paying them six dollars per day for their services. The men ended up having little to do; many stayed at police headquarters playing poker or shooting craps while others loitered in nearby pool halls, waiting for the call to arms that never came.²⁸ Over two thousand “volunteer watchmen” also received weapons from City Hall, and they were assigned to patrol businesses and property. With this legion of newly-deputized and armed authority, the contrast of the unarmed Labor Guard must have been startling to the Seattle citizen.

As the strike committee was proud to point out, one outside observer commented that “while the business men and the authorities prepared for-riots, labor organized for peace.”²⁹ Even the swearing-in of extra patrolmen did not assure Mayor Hanson enough—late Wednesday night he telephoned the governor’s office in Olympia

²⁶ Literary Digest, 12 April 1919, p. 92.

²⁷ Strong, Seattle General Strike, p. 28.

²⁸ City Council appropriated \$50,000 from the General Fund to pay the “emergency patrolmen,” Ordinance Number 39158; Journal of the Proceedings of the City Council of Seattle, 10 February 1919, p. 498, Municipal Archives, City of Seattle; the City Council Minutes include a letter from Hanson deeming an emergency; for notations on poker and pool halls, see Harry Ault, “The Seattle Union Record,” unpublished mss. in Northwest Collection, University of Washington, p. 15; Literary Digest, 12 April 1919, p. 92.

²⁹ Strong, Seattle General Strike, p. 46.

extend thanks to the “faithful few” who remembered her with letters and small donations. She spent her days in prison teaching a small shorthand class and tutoring other women prisoners in English grammar. The prisoners were allowed a small garden plot, and she often wrote that her afternoons outdoors eased the confines of prison life. In the evenings she kept herself busy with “fancy work,” sewing small articles of clothing which she would send to Parkhurst to be raffled off, the funds from which would go to the pamphlet project, or for items Olivereau might need in prison. She did not mix with the other prisoners very often during the evening social hour, but she told Parkhurst that the inmates were “either, ... “friendly or neutral, and so there is no unpleasantness there.”⁵⁰

Olivereau fed her appetite for news with the Denver Post and the Christian Science Monitor and later on she received the Post-Intelligencer and the Seattle Union Record. But her efforts to exchange ideas on current events with Parkhurst were halted by the prison censors. She often reminded Parkhurst that she was forbidden to discuss other Espionage Act cases, or controversial issues such as the Russian revolution or labor strikes. In one early letter Parkhurst wrote, “do you get to read the daily papers? If you do I guess you have seen that the international horizon looks brighter.”⁵¹ This reference to the “international horizon” was probably an allusion to the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, and Parkhurst knew that she could not carry her comment any further. Pieces of Parkhurst’s letters appear to have been cut, and occasional lines from Olivereau’s letters are blacked out. Censorship was the worst aspect of prison life, Olivereau wrote, and she told Parkhurst that “prisonitis” was the only disease from which she suffered.⁵²

While at the onset of her imprisonment Olivereau conveyed a positive outlook, as the months dragged on the tone of her letters

⁵⁰ Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 19 December 1917.

⁵¹ Parkhurst, Parkhurst to Olivereau, 2 January 1918.

⁵² Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 15 February 1919.

changed. Parkhurst's regular letters became a lifeline for Olivereau, especially after she received a letter from her sister, Jennie Pollard, in their hometown of Douglas, Wyoming, in which her sister asked her to stop writing to her. Apparently Pollard felt that Olivereau's incarceration was too much of an embarrassment for the family still remaining in the small town. Perhaps the lowest point of her stay in Colorado came when she received an unexpected visit from an old friend and fellow Seattle activist, Kate Sadler. After the brief visit she wrote to Parkhurst:

"It was dear of them to come, but Minnie, if you love me, don't urge others to come. It's torture to spend a few minutes with friends under an officer's eye, and afterward all the things you want to say, and could have said, fill your days and haunt your nights."⁵³

Although the isolation of her prison experience fed her struggle with "prisonitis," even at her lowest point Louise Olivereau clung to the belief that what she had done in writing and mailing the anti-war circulars was true to her convictions and sense of personal duty. She had no regrets for her actions; as she told Parkhurst in a letter from prison:

"the flat monotony and lack of any big interest or motive of any kind is hard to bear but I'm not complaining, because of course I knew what the price was before I incurred the debt."⁵⁴

⁵³ Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 15 February 1919.

⁵⁴ Parkhurst, #2-35, letter fragment, no date.

"Let the city be calm. Avoid exciting discussions, especially in groups. Our mayor and police chief declare that the regular police force will handle all 'policing.' They know that no extra 'force' is needed. And their efforts will be supplemented, not by force, but by words of reason from men who have seen service in the army..."²²

Armed with "moral suasion alone," the Labor Guards wore white armbands and patrolled downtown and the neighborhoods, dispersing crowds and telling men to go home and enjoy their time away from work.²³ The veterans were proud to do their jobs unarmed and one vet later told a reporter that "I would go in and just say: 'Brother workingmen, this is for your own benefit. We mustn't have crowds that the police can use as an excuse to start anything.' And they would answer:

'You're right, brother,' and begin to scatter."²⁴ For their efforts the Labor Guards received two free meals a day at the public kitchens, and they earned the respect of many Seattleites, including several uniformed policemen.²⁵

The Labor Guard was even able to convince local bootleggers to stop selling liquor during the strike, which undoubtedly helped to keep the peace. The union people in Seattle probably welcomed policing from their own kind because of their long-standing hostility towards the armed and uniformed policemen. The clubbing of audience members by police at an outdoor labor meeting in mid-January was still fresh in many people's minds. As one Labor Vet said after the strike, "they (the police) have...created a wrong feeling among the public. They couldn't get the right psychology. We

14-15.

²² Seattle Union Record, 5 February 1919.

²³ Harry Ault, "The Seattle Union Record," unpublished mss. in Northwest Collection, University of Washington, p. 14

²⁴ Literary Digest, 12 April 1919, p. 92.

²⁵ Literary Digest, 12 April 1919, p. 92.

The first day of the strike, the problems of logistics and transportation of food caused a delay in the opening of the kitchens, and meals did not get underway until 5:00 p.m.

Grumbling of “when do we eat” was common until the food lines opened, but strikers were then urged to come back for seconds if they wished. Striking cooks and waitresses worked at the kitchens, doubling as dishwashers and scrambling to find extra plates and utensils. The hungry strikers in line had been asked to provide forks, cups and plates of their own, but few did, and so this shortage also hindered serving up the food on time. By the second day—Friday—the provisions committee estimated that they were feeding 30,000 people, and the kitchens ran smoothly throughout the weekend. The Metal Trades Council had guaranteed the cost of running the kitchens, and by Sunday the Council estimated that it had spent \$6,000 in the venture. Transportation of volunteers and food, spoilage and miscalculation of supplies all contributed to the monetary loss of the kitchens, but strikers with no facilities at home purchased cheap, hot meals and the cooks and waitresses were praised for their “zeal and sacrifice under difficulties.”²¹

Along with the task of feeding strikers who could not cook at home, the problem of keeping the peace during the strike demanded attention from the strike leaders. The law and order subcommittee of three men tackled the issue by establishing a volunteer group, dubbed the Labor War Veteran Guard. Three hundred union men who had served overseas responded to an ad in the Union Record early in the week.

Under the supervision of Frank Rust, head of the Labor Temple Association, the Labor Vets effectively preserved order during the strike. On the eve of the general strike the Union Record ran a front-page editorial headed, “Law and Order,” which stressed the importance of keeping tempers in check during the strike.

²¹ Strong, Seattle General Strike, pp. 43–45; Harry Ault, “The Seattle Union-Record,” unpublished mss. in Northwest Collection, University of Washington, pp.

Chapter 4: “this after-the-war period”: Post-War Turmoil And The Prelude To The 1919 Seattle General Strike

“I wish you could have seen the Peace celebration that took place in Seattle last Monday when the news of the Armistice was received. In fact it started from the University in the night. Everybody forgot about the flu ban, which was officially lifted the next day. There was never such a celebration in Seattle before. It was such a joyous, hilarious thing to look at and laugh at. I watched awhile, mixed with the crowd a little just to see if I could get out again and then came home...”

– Minnie Parkhurst to Louise Olivereau 17 November 1918¹

Every Sunday Minnie Parkhurst wrote her friend Louise Olivereau, who was serving a sentence stemming from an Espionage Act conviction in the federal penitentiary at Canon City, Colorado. After more than four years of fighting and 37 million casualties, the ghastly European war ended at 11:00 a.m. on 11 November, 1918.² On the following day, Seattle officials lifted the six-week ban on

¹ Minnie Parkhurst Papers, M s s., University of Washington, Parkhurst to Olivereau, 17 November 1918.

² James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of World War One* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1981), p. 310. Casualties include killed or died in service, died from disease, wounded, prisoners and missing. Figure includes Allied and Central Powers.

gathering in public places implemented due to the virulence of the Spanish influenza epidemic, which had raged across the country that autumn. The joy and hilarity that Parkhurst witnessed at the peace celebration would be short-lived, however, when the anxiety and frustration engendered by the wartime experience would emerge on the homefront. 1919 brought a year of labor unrest, public anti-radical hysteria and repression, and high unemployment matched by escalated living costs. The American people faced the disillusionment and cynicism brought about by the war in Europe; and so, when considering these symptoms of post-war malaise, we can include 1919 with the war years of 1917 through 1918.³

The United States mobilized over four million men for military action during its nineteen months of fighting the Central Powers, and 364,000 Americans were either killed, wounded, imprisoned by the enemy, or reported missing in action. On the homefront, industry mobilized to meet the needs of the war effort, and the Wilson Administration established the War Industries Board, in order to keep the manufacturing of war materiel flowing smoothly. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) membership exceeded three million by late 1918, and wages had risen 20 percent over 1914 figures.⁴ However, the domestic average of prices also rose steadily, resulting in 1919 in a 124 percent rise over price figures of 1913.⁵ American citizens accepted the rise in living costs as a part of wartime; however, as inflation continued to soar and unemployment increased in early 1919, alarm and frustration over the cost of living escalated as well.⁶

³ See Nancy Rockafellar, "In Gauze We Trust: The Spanish Influenza Epidemic in Wartime Seattle," unpublished mss., University of Washington Department of Bio-Medical History, 1984.

⁴ David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 258.

⁵ John D. Hicks, "Labor and the Postwar Reaction," in Keith L. Nelson, ed., *The Impact of War on American Life* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), p. 26.

⁶ Kennedy, *Over Here*, p. 251.

Seattle was on strike, but organizers tried to assure citizens that it was in no way an unsafe or unhealthy town in which to remain. Anna Louise Strong's editorial had announced that "LABOR WILL FEED THE PEOPLE LABOR WILL CARE FOR THE BABIES AND THE SICK," and the executive committee had taken every measure to keep that promise. In an account of the strike which was published months later by the strike committee (with Strong acting as historian), the strike was said to have brought its participants "face to face with the way in which the whole community, including

"their own families, is inextricably tied together. If life was not to be made unbearable for the strikers themselves, problems of management, of selection and exemption had to take the place of the much simpler problem of keeping everyone out of work."¹⁹

The babies and the ill were taken care of through hospital services exemptions and the establishment of milk depots.

The Milk Wagon Drivers, Creamery and Dairy Workers' union provided 25 stations throughout the city where fresh milk from local farms could be purchased. The dairy union asked only that customers try to bring their own quart bottles to the stations.

Labor did feed the people, but not as promptly as some strikers had hoped. The provisions subcommittee established 21 "feeding stations" across the city, where cafeteria-style meals of mulligan stew or spaghetti, bread and coffee could be purchased for 35 cents. Union card holders paid 25 cents for their meals and after a dispute over IWW "red cards" was settled, Wobblies also could get meals at a discount.

Apparently the red cards were not honored at the commissaries, until several angry IWW members went to the Labor Temple to register their complaints. The executive committee voted that all union cards would be accepted at the food stations, "regardless of affiliation."²⁰

¹⁹ Strong, *Seattle General Strike*, p. 15.

²⁰ Strong, *Seattle General Strike*, p. 30.

ing, it appears that food prices remained stable during that week, except in the case of eggs, when prices rose as the supply of fresh eggs diminished.¹⁷

While most Seattleites were fortifying their larders, some of the wealthier residents decided that it would be best simply to leave town. Portland hotels became the destination for many Seattle citizens; the downtown railroad depot was packed with people who had decided not to stay in town during the strike. Others who could afford to travel decided that this was an excellent time to pay a visit to relatives or friends in Everett, Wenatchee or Walla Walla.¹⁸

On Thursday at 10:00 a.m., streetcars returned to their barns, and taxis and jitneys disappeared from the streets.

Shops and restaurants darkened and schoolhouses were empty.

Laundries and barbershops closed up, and newsboys carried their unsold papers back to the plants. The large department stores remained open, and signs appeared in their windows indicating "This Store Open as Usual." Drugstores kept their pharmacy counters open, but prescriptions were all that could be purchased. That morning an estimated 60,000 union workers either walked off the job or didn't even bother to go in. With "Together We Win" as the adopted slogan of the strike, at the very start it appeared to the strike organizers that perhaps a victory would come from such a show of labor solidarity.

Those who remained at work were the unorganized, which included all civil service employees, who had faced the threat of jail if they walked out. There were enough nonunion telephone workers to provide the city limited service, and telegraph service was available for emergencies only. Most important of all services and the issue of alarm earlier in the week—the City Light plants ran without interruption. The citizens were not denied their electricity and gas for cooking, heating or lighting the streets.

¹⁷ Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 9 February 1919.

¹⁸ Portland Oregonian, 6 February 1919.

Within weeks after the Armistice the government cancelled thousands of contracts worth four billion dollars in still undelivered goods, and the War Industries Board ceased its supervisory function. Job dismissals in war-related industries reached three million by February 1919, just as soldiers returning from Europe by the thousands were anxious to get back to work.⁷ The demise of the War Labor Board pleased many employers; they saw the chance to eliminate unions and return to an "open shop" policy of employment. 1919 saw 2,665 strikes involving over four million employees, as organized workers sought to maintain the gains they had achieved during the war.⁸

"Do you see the Christian Science Monitor? I am glad to see the stand taken by Walsh—for this after-the-war period is going to be one of more or less difficult adjustment on the labor field."

Louise Olivereau to Minnie Parkhurst, 14 November 1918⁹

Post-war reconstruction became a public issue even before peace had been realized. At an All national meeting in Chicago in early November, Frank P. Walsh—co-chairman of the War Labor Board spoke on the role of organized labor during peacetime. "Autocracy has seen its day and passed away in government and in industry," Walsh told the Chicago gathering. He supported the "unqualified right of workers to organize and deal collectively through such unions as they may choose," and urged "democratic control of industry."¹⁰ Walsh favored a shorter work day, complete equality of men and women in industry including equal pay for equal work, and he suggested that post-war reconstruction efforts involve representatives from workers in industry. Most employers did not share Walsh's point of view regarding organized labor, and the post-war period would indeed be one of "more or less difficult adjustment."

⁷ Hicks, in Impact, p. 26.

⁸ Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 14 November 1918.

⁹ Hicks, in Impact, p. 28.

¹⁰ Christian Science Monitor, 9 November 1918.

“Peace seems to be an accomplished fact at last...What of the movement to ask a general amnesty for political? Of course I’m hoping, but always remembering that ‘blessed are they who expect nothing,’ and not building anything on my hopes.”

Louise Olivereau to Minnie Parkhurst, 14 November 1918¹¹

On 30 November 1918, thousands of stickers suddenly appeared at Camp Lewis, Washington, saying “We demand the immediate release of all political prisoners.”¹² The campaign for amnesty for political prisoners—including conscientious objectors jailed for refusal of military service and those persons convicted under the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918—had been launched during the war. Within a month after the Armistice, amnesty committees mobilized in various cities, the most vocal being the New York-based League for Amnesty of Political Prisoners. The League requested a general amnesty, which President Wilson rejected; he instead ordered that each case be reviewed separately. In February 1919, Attorney General Thomas Gregory sent a letter to all federal attorneys, stating that the Department of Justice did not recognize any class of persons as “political offenders” and that the department did not favor any “general amnesty.” Gregory requested that the federal attorneys send a “frank and informal expression of your views upon the justice of the verdict and sentence in each case of conviction under this section where the term of the sentence remains unexpired.”¹³

Gregory wanted the attorneys to review unduly severe sentences, and cases with inadequate evidence for conviction, and he later recommended to Wilson that some sentences under the Espionage Act be commuted.

Public speakers in favor of the amnesty pointed out that European political prisoners had been freed, and that because the war

¹¹ Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 14 November 1918.

¹² H.C. Peterson and Gilbert C. Fite, *Opponents of War 1917-18* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957), p. 267.

¹³ Peterson and Fite, *Opponents*, p. 269.

worked overtime on that Wednesday before the strike, delivering groceries and coal to homes throughout the city. People inventoried their cellars, stocked their pantries and made one more trip downtown by streetcar. Children pulled their wagons loaded with groceries home from the markets; women hauled out old tubs and washboards since the laundries would be closed; some filled every large household receptacle with water, lest there be some disaster with the city’s Cedar River water supply. Kerosene lamps and portable coal stoves suddenly were valuable items in electrified households. The strike seemed unavoidable, and it was the foremost topic of conversation and attention for Seattle citizens.¹³

Merchants advertised that they had plenty in stock for the impending emergency; in fact, advertisements suddenly had a new angle that of encouraging Seattle consumers to stock up before it was too late. The Kaufer Company at Third and Seneca, a “Catholic Supply House,” found a new market for its wares, and the store ran an ad with bold-faced type saying, “Don’t Grope in the Dark We Have The Largest Supply of CANDLES.”¹⁴ Sherman’s Fish Market, with two locations downtown, encouraged the shopper to “Buy Your Fish Early Today...and don’t overlook the fact that smoked and salted fish are not perishable. Include them in the stock of provisions you are now buying.”¹⁵ The Retail Grocer’s Association ran a half-page ad in the *Post-Intelligencer* to assure the readers that its member stores were well-stocked for the “possibility of a changed industrial condition.” Some stores would remain open during the strike, the ad said, but phone orders and deliveries would be impossible. “You will be taken care of by your grocer during a strike, should one occur...(the grocers) ask only that patrons co-operate with the dealer and that they treat their grocer in the same square manner as he has treated them.”¹⁶ Despite the sudden frenzy for food buy-

¹³ Local newspaper coverage examined for February 2–11, 1919.

¹⁴ *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 6 February 1919.

¹⁵ *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 5 February 1919.

¹⁶ *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 1 February 1919.

the post-war press perhaps this turbulence was about to arrive on the Seattle homefront. In 1919 the Bolshevik triumph in Russia had inspired some people in the United States, but for most Americans it was frightening. For those who feared that the worst would come to Seattle, the confirming evidence appeared in a Union Record editorial on 4 February titled,

“On Thursday at 10 A.M.” Written by Anna Louise Strong, the piece ended with, “... we are starting on a road that leads– NO ONE KNOWS WHERE!” (See appendix)

The impassioned editorial was intended to uplift and encourage Seattle citizens to have confidence in the capabilities of organized labor. Instead, it tended to convince the skeptics that no one really did know what was going to happen on Thursday morning. Many strike leaders were angry that the editorial appeared at all; the last thing they wanted was the idea circulated that they didn't know what results the strike would bring. What they wanted was a settlement of the shipyard dispute that would be favorable to the unions. This was the point of the sympathy strike which they were working towards organizing. But Strong's editorial brought wrath and accusations that Seattle had a Red Labor Movement. Harry Ault, editor of the Union Record, later wrote that

“the highly exhalted (sic) vagueness of the editorial's atmosphere gave ample opportunity for misinterpretation ... this motif was an underlying factor which later was generally regarded as the fatal blunder in connection with the conduct of the sympathetic strike.”¹²

If no one knew where the strike would lead the city, still no one wanted to be caught unprepared if the city were to shut down indefinitely. As the Committee of Fifteen and its subcommittees reviewed exemption proposals and arranged for emergency services, Seattleites stocked their homes with food and fuel. Wagon drivers

¹² Harry Ault, “The Seattle Union Record,” unpublished mss. in Northwest Collection, University of Washington, pp. 13–14.

was over, the prisoners should not be held under wartime legislation convictions. In January 1919, 112 conscientious objectors were released from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, after Board of Inquiry members had reviewed the men's records and concluded that the men were indeed “sincere objectors.”¹⁴ Persons convicted under the Espionage and Sedition Acts were not as fortunate, however, since Wilson refused to grant any pardons. It was not until Warren G. Harding entered office that several prisoners serving terms originating during the war years were released.

“New York seems to have difficulty adjusting to peace conditions. Am glad to see Mayor Hylan insists that soldiers and sailors have no more right to create riots than civilians.”

Louise Olivereau to Minnie Parkhurst, 2 December 1918¹⁵

Wartime intolerance toward unpopular opinions did not cease when the European guns fell silent, in fact, a new wave of hysteria shook the nation following the war's end.

In wartime the enemy was the Hun; during peace it was the Bolshevik. Many citizens believed that disgruntled organized workers were influenced by radicals, and returning soldiers sometimes aimed their wrath at politically radical groups. Upon arrival in New York City many soldiers found no jobs available to them. Just weeks after the victory in Europe, hundreds of soldiers, sailors and marines stormed a Socialist party meeting at Madison Square Garden. The Christian Science Monitor reported that several people in attendance “were severely beaten.” Police finally dispersed the mob of servicemen, and made no arrests. One police officer said he broke up the crowd of angry soldiers as gently as possible, because “their hearts were in the right place.”¹⁶

The following evening brought yet another scene of rioting soldiers, this time outside a lecture hall where the Woman's Inter-

¹⁴ Peterson and Fite, *Opponents*, p. 267.

¹⁵ Parkhurst, Olivereau to Parkhurst, 2 December 1918.

¹⁶ Christian Science Monitor, 27 November 1918.

national League, a peace organization, discussed Wilson's peace plan. The League, "composed of a number of well-to-do women," had their meeting disrupted by the angry servicemen when "one of the speakers praised Bolshevism."¹⁷ After this second melee, New York Mayor John F. Hylan issued a statement to Secretary of War Newton D. Baker and Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels that said, in part, "it has now become necessary for me to issue orders to police to accord the same treatment to the men in uniform as to citizens when they become disorderly and incite riots."¹⁸ A memo from the New York police commissioner to Mayor Hylan written after these disturbances advised that "demobilization [of troops] in this vicinity presents serious problems," and that police would use measures "that are demanded in dealing with the lawless and riotous elements, whatever their character."¹⁹

The city of Seattle faced the problems of returning troops as well, although not to the violent degree which New York City suffered. An editorial in the Union Record in early January declared, "our nearness to Camp Lewis is apt to furnish us with some weighty unemployment troubles before the winter is over."²⁰ The editorial commented on the destitute soldiers and sailors wandering Seattle streets, discharged from military service with hardly enough money on which to subsist. One Seattle man "announced that he had been approached by fifteen soldiers in one night for bed and board," the editorial said. The Union Record concluded with, "it looks as if that move for a six-hour day, or even a four-hour day, in order to pass the jobs around, may be needed in a hurry, right here in Seattle. And Seattle is certainly better organized to do the job than any other city in the land."²¹

¹⁷ Christian Science Monitor, 28 November 1918. This organization is now known as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

¹⁸ Christian Science Monitor, 28 November 1918.

¹⁹ Christian Science Monitor, 27 November 1918.

²⁰ Seattle Union Record, 4 January 1919.

²¹ Seattle Union Record, 4 January 1919. This edition also reports on the high

lips. Keep your homes clean, that will keep you busy; keeping busy means keeping off the blues. Practice economy; don't relax; don't become careless. Nothing disheartens a man more than a despondent rag of a woman. And nothing heartens one more than a brave, reliant, resourceful one."⁹

The Union Record was the only Seattle newspaper to express such encouragement and support for the shipyard strikers and indeed for the impending general strike.

The three other Seattle dailies saw the move to "shut down the city" as an act of Bolshevism in an American city. Many union members must have been surprised to see the hostile stance that the Seattle Star adopted towards the strike.

The Star had long claimed to be a friend to organized labor, but during the days preceding the general strike the paper published front-page editorials imploring union members to use "common sense," calling the general strike a "dangerous weapon," one that would encourage the "agitators and babblers of Bolshevism." With such headlines as, "Under Which Flag?" and "Stop, Before it's Too Late" the Star railed against the strike leaders and predicted disaster and bloodshed.¹⁰ The conservative Business Chronicle also jumped on the "Bolsheviki" bandwagon, blaming Russian agents for manipulating Seattle Labor. Both the Times and the Post-Intelligencer reprinted the Star's and the Chronicle's diatribes as advertisements just days before the strike.¹¹

The Seattle business community certainly saw the strike mobilization as an impending revolution, but it is unclear how the citizenry in general initially viewed Labor's drastic move. The shipyard strike had gained much sympathy from many Seattleites; however, the prospect of a city-wide shutdown was another matter entirely. News from abroad of rebellions, violence and social upheaval filled

⁹ Seattle Union Record, 3 February 1919.

¹⁰ Seattle Star, 4 and 5 February 1919. The Seattle Star was a traditional labor paper, often applauding the policies of the All.

¹¹ Seattle Times, 5 February 1919; Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 6 February 1919.

the move to shut down City Light, and the electrical workers voted not to go out.

In the meantime, however, Hanson had conferred with the executive committee in a three-hour meeting, and he had even visited the Seattle Union Record office to sound out the staff members' stand on City Light.

The Labor-owned and operated Union Record became the mouthpiece for the general strike committee, and the paper featured a "Win the Strike Page" in its daily editions.

International and local labor news appeared alongside articles discussing the high cost of living and the use of recently discharged soldiers as scabs in labor disputes.

The Union Record declared Monday and Tuesday before the strike as "tag days" in Seattle, urging readers to show their support for the striking shipyard workers by buying lapel tags for 25 cents from the strikers' families. Wives and children would sell the tags on the downtown streets during those days, and the Union Record prompted "every man and woman who feels that their interest is with the worker in this struggle [to] help win the day for every woman and child in this city."⁸

Evidence of such solidarity with the shipyard strikers and their families was abundant in the Union Record's pages during the days preceding the general strike, and an appeal to women written by the wife of a striker spoke to the fact that labor unity was indeed a family affair. "Spartan Courage and Smiles Will Win" was the sub-head of the message from Mrs. Eric Lindquist of Bell Street, as she addressed the

"mother, wife, daughter, sister, sweetheart of the man of Seattle who aligns in this battle for the right to live... To my sisters of Seattle I say: Go about your duties with a smiling face and singing

son said over lunch, "Jim, Jim, won't you please give me my light" several times for nearly an hour .

⁸ Seattle Union Record. 1 February 1919.

Organized labor's concern over unemployment among the newly-released servicemen was increased by the fact that many of those veterans were hired as strikebreakers during labor disputes. The Employers' Association, an anti-union group of business owners, hired soldiers and sailors to work as strikebreakers, as in the case of the strike at the Pacific Car and Foundry Company in Renton. That strike lasted several weeks during January, and the Union Record featured an article concerning three ex-servicemen who had turned down offers to work as scabs in the Renton plant.

The three men visited the Metal Trades Council in Seattle with their stories of destitution—each said he was given about twelve dollars upon discharge, and that the desperation for jobs was so severe among veterans that many would do any kind of work, even under unfair conditions such as a strike situation.²²

Approximately one week later, the Metal Trades Council announced the founding of the Soldiers', Sailors' and Workingmen's Council, which intended to draw veterans into the unions and admit them without an initiation fee. The Union Record, in its approval of the new council, exclaimed that "once again the Metal Trades Council has taken the bull by the horns... surely nothing could be more likely to teach the soldier where his real interest lies."²³ However, not all of organized labor shared that enthusiasm. Founding the association was the first time that the AFL-affiliated Metal Trades Council had worked directly with the IWW, and many of the more conservative unionists felt that the Soldiers', Sailors' and Workingmen's Council was much too similar to the councils of the Bolshevik Soviet. Indeed, the Metal Trades Council spokesmen said, they had fashioned it after the Russian example. Such councils for

cost of living in Seattle, and features an editorial on the "Millionaire Crop"—those who made fortunes during the war.

²² Seattle Union Record, 31 December 1918.

²³ Seattle Union Record. 4 January 1919.

ex-servicemen also sprang up in Butte, Montana, and Portland, Oregon.²⁴

Although severely weakened by wartime raids and arrests, the IWW was still a thorn in the side of the Seattle authorities in early 1919. Mayor Ole Hanson had made a campaign promise to close every IWW hall in Seattle, and he aimed to keep that promise. Police arrested IWW members (Wobblies) and booked them on “open charges” – meaning no specific charges at all. When Wobblies were arrested for selling IWW broadsheets on the streets, E.I. Chamberlain, the Seattle general secretary of the IWW, phoned Hanson at home on Christmas Eve to inquire about the mayor’s “attitude regarding the matter.” When Hanson told Chamberlain that he aimed to “stop the preaching of sedition and treason in Seattle,” Chamberlain angrily said, “All right then, do you want your jails filled with IWWs?” Mayor Hanson replied that “our jail is a little crowded, but we will surely find sufficient quarters for all lawbreakers. “ “Well, the battle is on, and we’ll show you!” The IWW secretary shouted before he hung up on the mayor.²⁵ Hanson and his bodyguard immediately went to police headquarters and the Union Record reported that “there they waited throughout the evening in eager expectation while the whole force of police reserves were lined up ready to repel the attack that no one but themselves had ever dreamed of.”²⁶

There was no IWW attack on police headquarters on that Christmas Eve, but police arrested Chamberlain within hours after his phone conversation with Mayor Hanson. When he was booked for “threatening the mayor,” Chamberlain asked to see a warrant and was told that there was no need for one.²⁷ The following day, police

²⁴ Robert L. Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), p. 12.

²⁵ Seattle Union Record, 4 January 1919. The full exchange between Hanson and Chamberlain is recounted.

²⁶ Seattle Union Record, 4 January 1919.

²⁷ Seattle Union Record, 4 January 1919.

or even revolution.³ Newspaper headlines such as “Seattle Streets to be Dark, Says Union” and “Seattle Folk Making Preparations for Lightless and Heatless Days”⁴ fed those fears, and the uproar over City Light was the first of many incidents which buttressed the argument that Seattle Labor was trying to destroy the city by revolutionary upheaval.

Prior to the flap over City Light, Mayor Ole Hanson had said little publicly about the general strike, but with the threat to shut down the city’s electric power, Hanson told the Seattle Star that Green “was not running the city light department.”⁵

Municipal department heads began to apply pressure on Hanson to take firm action in the matter, but Hanson apparently decided that remaining friendly with the strike organizers was to his best advantage.⁶ In an attempt to appease both sides, two days before the strike Hanson arranged a lunch meeting which included James Duncan and Charles Doyle of the Central Labor Council; Thomas Murfin, head of the public utilities department; and city council member C.B. Fitzgerald. –Over lunch, Hanson reportedly pleaded with Duncan to use his influence with the electrical workers, but Duncan told the mayor that he couldn’t do much in the matter, and that Hanson should speak with the executive committee.⁷ The issue was resolved when the Metal Trades Council voiced opposition to

³ Robert L. Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), pp. 116–120; Harry Ault, “The Seattle Union Record,” unpublished mss. in Northwest Collection, University of Washington, p. 12. Friedheim notes the possibility that Leon Green acted as an agent provocateur for business interests during the strike, pp. 150–151.

⁴ Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 5 February 1919; Seattle Times, 4 February 1919.

⁵ Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, p. 117.

⁶ Anna Louise Strong, *I Change Worlds; The Remaking of An American* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), pp. 80–81. Strong wrote that Hanson complimented her on the fabric of her dress on one pre-strike visit to the Union Record office; she called Hanson “a small town politician, all things to all comers, a weather-cock in the wind.”

⁷ Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, p. 118; Duncan reported that Han-

announcements and to aid in squelching rumors; the committee on public welfare and safety addressed issues of keeping the peace.

Determining exemptions brought about a flurry of activity for the executive committee, and it met several times both day and night to hear requests for exemptions.

The Firemen's Local 27 was the first exempted union, followed by the garbage wagon drivers and those Teamsters whose job was to deliver oil to Swedish Hospital.² The executive committee received hundreds of requests, which were delegated to the appropriate subcommittee, reviewed and then granted or denied. Exemption reviews continued throughout the week, with decisions being delivered even through Thursday, the targeted day.

Just as Minnie Parkhurst suspected, during the strike the streetcars would be halted and jitney buses from outlying areas would carry no passengers downtown. In regards to burning electric lights, this issue was the first to cause a clash between City Hall and the Committee of Fifteen. Plunging the city into darkness was not the intent of the strike organizers, but the conflict erupted when Leon Green, business agent of the Electrical Workers' Local 77, issued a statement that he would pull all union workers out of the City Light plant. "No Exemptions," Green declared, not for hospitals, streetlights nor food storage facilities.

J.D. Ross, head of the municipally-owned City Light, countered Green's assertion with a call to all engineers to help run the electric plant, if indeed the organized workers were to walk out.

Leon Green's threat in actuality had no force behind it, because it was not in his power to order the workers of Local 46, who worked inside the plant, to walk off their jobs. However, Green's "No Exemptions" declaration caused a stir among Seattle citizens, inflaming fears that the general strike would result in lawlessness, anarchy

² Anna Louise Strong, *The Seattle General Strike* (Seattle: Union Record Publishing Co., n.d.), pp. 18–21. Issued by the History Committee of the General Strike Committee, A.L. Strong, historian.

raided the IWW Defense Committee headquarters on Yesler Way, expropriating all of the organization's records and materials. In an editorial headed "Our Worthy Chief," the *Union Record* said:

"Again our worthy Chief Warren shows his rather crude conception of what he considers law and order by raiding the office of the IWW Defense Committee and confiscating everything in the place. We have no doubt the chief was greatly tried. Whenever we have anything to do with IWW's we find them exceedingly trying ourselves. But so far we have succeeded in restraining our tempers, and in overcoming the temptation to smash things."²⁸

The editorial denounced the "open charges" arrest policy of the police force, and closed with a request to Chief Warren for "some self control and even a little intelligence and also for a real faith in Democracy. And we know we are asking a good deal of a police chief when we suggest these things."²⁹

The open charges policy had become a point of contention among Seattle's organized labor, because Wobblies and other members of the radical labor element knew that Chief Warren's men carried out the practice selectively.

One week after Chamberlain's Christmas Eve arrest, the Metal Trades Council passed a resolution which called upon Mayor Hanson to curb the "abuse of power" by police. The Council demanded that the open charges tactic be stopped. "Men are being arrested by the city authorities for selling papers of which these authorities do not approve," the resolution said, and that those arrests resulted in suppression of free speech and press and "ideas distasteful" to the authorities.³⁰

The animosity between the police and organized labor exploded into open hostility on a Sunday afternoon in mid-January. Police broke up a mass meeting sponsored by the Hope Lodge of Machin-

²⁸ *Seattle Union Record*, 6 January 1919.

²⁹ *Seattle Union Record*, 6 January 1919.

³⁰ *Seattle Union Record*, 31 December 1918.

ists and the Socialist party, where the topic was “hands off Russia.” Newspaper accounts claimed that the crowd which gathered in the rain at Fourth Avenue and Virginia Street was an orderly one, but apparently the police moved in to stop the meeting after a Russian speaker addressed the crowd as “Comrades.” When citizens began swinging their fists at police, the officers used their clubs in return. The Union Record reported that “several policemen used their clubs freely, a number of persons receiving wounds which bled profusely. The police did not escape unscathed, and Capt. Searing was considerably pummeled, returning to the police station with a bleeding nose.”³¹

With banner headlines screaming, “POLICE BREAK UP ORDERLY MEETING” and “WORKERS CLUBBED,” the Union Record fumed over the police action which resulted in thirteen arrests, including one young “honorably discharged soldier still in uniform, who held his hat in his hand during the meeting and seemed to be interested.” After the fracas, a union member demanded the recall of Ole Hanson, exclaiming that “the riot was caused by Mayor Hanson and his Cossack police.”³² The incident confirmed the division between organized labor and the Seattle authorities. Three days after the Sunday afternoon melee, the Union Record ran a scathing front page editorial headed, “Let Reason Prevail,” which pointed out these two camps. The editorial said that one side consisted of “opponents of democracy” who would “discredit the organized labor movement and bring disgrace to our city,” while the other side was composed of those “who truly believe in democracy free speech, peaceful assemblage and equality before the law.” The editorial closed with,

³¹ Seattle Union Record, 13 January 1919. The next day’s edition carried a front-page illustration of Captain Searing holding a bloody handkerchief to his face, with the caption, “our own captain of police, W.H. Searing, started a riot the other day and came out of it with colors flying. The color was red.”

³² Seattle Union Record. 13 January 1919.

Chapter 5: “No One Knows Where!” The Seattle General Strike

“I presume that you see by the papers that things are moving along quite lively in Seattle? In fact we may not be able from the way things appear now to either burn electric lights or ride on streetcars in a few days.”

– Minnie Parkhurst to Louise Olivereau 2 February 1919¹

Things were indeed quite lively in Seattle on that first Sunday in February, when delegates from 110 unions gathered at the Labor Temple and voted in favor of a city- wide strike in sympathy with the shipyard workers, who were striking against the federal policies of the Macy Board.

The delegates elected an executive committee—the “Committee of Fifteen” to oversee and direct the conduct of the general strike, slated for 10 a.m. Thursday, 6 February. The committee had a tremendous task to carry out in just a few days, and exemptions of essential city services headed the long list of preparations for the strike.

The executive committee immediately set up subcommittees for dealing with almost all facets of a bustling city of 300,000. These included subcommittees on transportation, construction and provisions. A publicity committee was to function as the disseminator of

¹ Minnie Parkhurst Papers, Mss., University of Washington, Parkhurst to Olivereau, 2 February 1919. Hereafter: Parkhurst.

brought on by many factors. Organized labor suspected complicity between government and business in union-busting, and workers were indignant that both national and state laws functioned to silence their discontent. Citizens resented the local police force which appeared to act arbitrarily in its arrest policy. Astronomical prices and soaring unemployment had a tremendous impact on nearly every Seattle household. And Russia, for many in 1919 symbolizing the hope of the new world order, appeared to be terribly vulnerable to the threat of interference from other nations. All of these factors contributed to an explosive situation, an uneasy peace which followed one of the grisliest wars in history.

Chapter Seven. Between January and May 1919, the Western Hemisphere saw at least four major general strikes in Buenos Aires, Argentina; Lima, Peru; Seattle, Washington; and Winnipeg, Manitoba.

“the marshalling of these two forces and their separation into two hostile camps bodes ill for the community.”³³

The Seattle police had overreacted on that rainy Sunday; however, because of a new state law which was passed in Olympia the following day—January 14—the arrests could be considered as technically within legal boundaries.

By a vote of 85 to 6, the state legislature approved the Criminal Syndicalism Act shortly after the Sixteenth Session convened. The law decreed that

“Criminal syndicalism is the doctrine which advocates crime, sabotage, violence or other unlawful methods of terrorism as a means of accomplishing industrial or political reform. The advocacy of such doctrine, whether by word of mouth or writing, is a felony...”³⁴

The six lawmakers who opposed the measure did so because of its “sweeping features.”³⁵ The new year of 1919 brought a nationwide flurry of state-level anti-syndicalism laws, and by early 1920, twenty-eight states had sedition, syndicalism or “red flag” laws on their statute books.³⁶ Federal wartime legislation had set the standard for such state-level legal action, and Washington residents knew that this bill specifically targeted the IWW.³⁷ That legislative session also passed two similar bills in March, 1919, making “industrial sabotage” and the “display of flags or insignia of groups hostile to government” felonies. Harvey O’Connor, a teenage acolyte of radical labor during the war years, later wrote that “under such laws hundreds, if not thousands,

³³ Seattle Union Record, 16 January 1919.

³⁴ Session Laws of the State of Washington Sixteenth Session (Olympia: Frank M. Lamborn, Public Printer, 1919), p. 2.

³⁵ Seattle Union Record, 14 January 1919.

³⁶ Peterson and Fite, *Opponents*, p. 228.

³⁷ Seattle Union Record, 14 January 1919. Representative Connor of King County is quoted, “This bill is aimed at the IWW. I would shoot my own brother if he carried the red flag. It would show that he is against my country.”

“of radicals were to be jailed the length and breadth of the land during the post-war years of the ‘Red hysteria.’ In Seattle radicals knew they had not long to wait to feel the effects of such laws.”³⁸

“I expect really big things to come of the Labor Congress that is to be held in Chicago, January 14, 1919. I think the amnesty of political may be taken up there.”

Minnie Parkhurst to Louise Oliverreau, 15 December 1918³⁹

In Chicago, January 14 saw the opening of a four-day congress of organized labor delegates from across the country, gathered to discuss and adopt a unified stand on the Tom Mooney case. Mooney and Warren K. Billings, both California union men, had been convicted of bombing a “Preparedness Day” parade in San Francisco in 1916, where ten people were killed. In a California Superior Court Mooney was sentenced to death, but after protests over the conduct and perjured evidence in the case aroused national attention, Governor William D. Stephens commuted Mooney’s sentence to life imprisonment.

Chicago labor leaders issued a call for a convention of national delegates, and the proposed stand was to demand a new trial for Mooney and Billings. The response in Seattle was immediate—the case had long been of great concern to union members up and down the west coast. The Union Record reported that approximately 50 delegates from Washington would go to Chicago, and that the “sentiment here in Mooney’s favor has been very strong.” A Union Record editorial which appeared when the congress was first announced commented that

“the radical element in the movement being the most active and the most concerned that justice be done Tom Mooney, will be largely in the majority in the meeting and because of that, inclined to take

³⁸ Harvey O’Connor, *Revolution in Seattle, A Memoir* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964), p. 122.

³⁹ Parkhurst, Parkhurst to Oliverreau, 15 December 1918.

During the months following the Armistice, American proponents of organized labor held a certain fascination for the idea of the general strike. During the week of 10 January, 1919, the Union Record carried several front page articles on the Buenos Aires general strike, running such headlines as, “South American Strike May Grow World Wide.”⁴⁸ Those who hoped for a world revolution imagined it might come about by a kind of chain reaction, precipitated by any one general strike. And there were those who thought—like Minnie Parkhurst—that the prelude to revolution was the “spontaneous and free expression of the workers.”

At the Chicago labor congress, delegates had found few issues on which they could all agree; however they did pass the national general strike resolution in support of Mooney, which initially only the radicals had wanted. The idea of the general strike contained possibilities for sweeping changes, a welding of solidarity, and an elevation of workers’ status. But it existed only in the workers’ imaginations during the dawning of 1919; many workers feared the prospect while others delighted in it.

The Seattle general strike was the first of its kind in the United States, and it is now tightly woven into the fabric of local folklore. Still surrounded by myth, the Seattle general strike has been interpreted in many ways:

it was an utter failure; it was a show of labor solidarity; it was a revolution. The planning and execution of the general strike will be covered in the next chapter.

By examining the pre-strike climate we can see clearly how it was possible that the rank and file workers—the majority AFL members—approved such a drastic measure as a city-wide strike. The strike can be seen as a direct product of post-war frustration and anger

(New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), pp. 72–73.

⁴⁸ Union Record, 11 January 1919. The Buenos Aires strike resulted in a bloody pogrom against Eastern-European immigrants in that city; it is known as *Semana Tragica*—Tragic Week. See David Rock, *Politics in Argentina 1890-1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975),

a city-wide general strike in sympathy with the shipyard strike. At the regular meeting of the Central Labor Council on 22 January, delegates representing 110 Seattle locals agreed to poll their members on the proposal for a general strike. Twenty-five delegates were absent from that meeting, however; leaders of various Seattle locals were still in Chicago at the Mooney congress.

The Seattle delegates were about to board a train west when the news of the proposal for a general strike reached Chicago. Anna Louise Strong, a member of that group in Chicago, later wrote that “they were terrified when they

“heard that a general strike had been voted. They discussed it on the train on the way back to Seattle. Ten days earlier they had left an energetic, progressive but properly constitutional labor movement. To what were they returning?”⁴⁶

“I have seen the past week the beginning of the thing that I have longed to see all my life; spontaneous and free expression of the workers. While our so-called leaders are in Chicago, Oh, the splendid spontaneity and strength of the new born!”

Minnie Parkhurst to Louise Olivereau, 19 January 1919 (postscript)⁴⁷

During the next ten days union locals held meetings to discuss and vote on the question of a city-wide strike.”

Workers aired their grievances over wages, hours and working conditions, while Wobblies argued in favor of splitting from the AFL and establishing industry-based unions. On the morning of 2 February, 300 delegates from 110 unions met at the Labor Temple to discuss the prospect of a general strike. After thirteen hours of debate which often erupted into argument, the exhausted union representatives left for home. They had voted in favor of a general strike, and slated it for 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, 6 February just four days away.

⁴⁶ Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, p. 78.

⁴⁷ Anna Louise Strong, *I Change Worlds; The Remaking of An American*

some action that will tend to split the movement again as they have done at least once in every decade during the past fifty years.”⁴⁰

The “radical element” was not in the majority at the Chicago congress, but the 1,000 delegates did become divided over issues right from the start. Two days of the four-day meeting were devoted to arguing whether IWW members and Socialists should be recognized, as many AFL members felt that both groups were too politically motivated, and not solely concerned with labor unions. As the congress chairman banged his gavel and shouted for silence, Wobblies and Socialists hooted and sang from the galleries. The more conservative delegates wanted to draft a demand to President Wilson to grant Mooney a new trial, while the radicals called for a nationwide general strike on the Fourth of July, if Mooney had not been given a retrial by then. The prospect of a general strike made most AFL delegates uneasy; however, Wobblies and Socialists claimed it was the only way to show support for Mooney and get results from the government.

Although the congress was intended primarily for discussion of action on the Mooney case, many other issues arose each of them hotly debated. Amnesty for political prisoners, repeal of the Espionage Act, recognition of the Russian Soviet, and withdrawal of Allied troops from Russia were all brought up and argued over. The only resolution which passed unanimously was support for the Federal Suffrage Amendment. At the close of the congress, the delegates passed a resolution favoring a nationwide general strike on July fourth, if Mooney had not received a new trial by then. The delegates also approved resolutions which demanded that all political prisoners be released immediately, and that the German and Russian people “be allowed to determine their own destiny” without the interference of Allied troops.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Seattle Union Record, 6 January 1919.

⁴¹ Seattle Union Record, 28 December 1918.

“Things are moving along at a pretty lively pace here. I guess you have seen that the shipyard workers are out? Today’s paper says that they have been ordered back by the Government.”

Minnie Parkhurst to Louise Oliverreau, 26 January 1919⁴²

The wartime demand for ships resulted in an economic boom for Seattle. By 1918, the shipyards were Seattle’s largest employers. Seattle shipbuilding contributed 96 ships to the war effort a feat of which citizens were proud. The need for ships prompted the federal government to establish the United States Shipping Board, with its subsidiary, the Emergency Fleet Corporation, in charge of overseeing all building of shipyards and production of ships. The government-sponsored Shipbuilding Labor Adjustment Board—commonly called the Macy Board after Chairman V. Everit Macy—handled wages and labor disputes in the shipbuilding industry. That industry during wartime was a lucrative one; government funding enabled stepped-up production, and many entrepreneurs entered the shipbuilding business.

Workers in the Seattle shipyards were among the highest paid in the nation. When the Macy Board stepped in and told the owners of the Skinner and Eddy Corporation (Seattle’s largest shipyard) that their wages were too high, the Metal Trades Council feared that the federal government was attempting to interfere with its wartime wage gains.⁴³ The Metal Trades Council, largest component of the Seattle Central Labor Council and representing a consortium of allied shipyards unions, had been required to mediate wages and hours with the Macy Board during the war.

Two weeks after the Armistice, the Metal Trades Council began to bargain directly with the shipyard owners, demanding a raise in wages for all skilled, semi-skilled and manual labor employees. Skinner and Eddy offered wage hikes for only the skilled workers, a

⁴² Coverage of the congress examined in Seattle Union Record, 15 18 January 1919; Christian Science Monitor, 15 18 January 1919.

⁴³ Parkhurst, Parkhurst to Oliverreau, 26 January 1919.

proposal which the Metal Trades Council immediately rejected. On 10 December 1918, members of the Council voted to go on strike if their demands were not met. The unions claimed that patriotism had prevented them from striking during the war.

Negotiations with the shipyard owners continued into the new year, but no gains or compromises could be agreed upon. The incident which cinched the decision to strike came on 17 January, when a telegram from the Macy Board to the Metal Trades Association—the employers organization was delivered to the Metal Trades Council by mistake. The telegram instructed the employers to stand firm before the union demands, or risk the loss of their government-regulated steel allotment.⁴⁴ Receipt of the telegram at the union hall drew a quick and hostile response. The sentiment was that the government had once again attempted to quash labor in Seattle and interfere in collective bargaining.

The following day strike notices circulated throughout the shipyard, and on 21 January the men walked out—35,000 in all.

Initially the strikers enjoyed public sympathy for their walkout, until rumors circulated that the majority of the shipyard workers had been against going out. This was emphasized in the conservative press, and a telegram from David Skinner to the Macy Board reiterated this claim, attributing the strike decision to “radical leaders whose real desire was to disrupt the whole organization of society.”⁴⁵ To refute these rumors, the Metal Trades Council held a mass meeting of union members to vote again on the strike action. The members voted unanimously in favor of the move.

The suspicion that the employers (in tacit agreement with the Macy Board) would wait the strike out and possibly use returned soldiers as strikebreakers prompted the Metal Trades Council to go to the Seattle Central Labor Council and request a resolution for

⁴⁴ See Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, pp. 55–69. Friedheim covers the shipyard strike in great detail.

⁴⁵ Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, p. 70.