

4-26-2020

The Turn from Radicalism: Self-Regulation of the American Labor Movement, 1909-1919

Ryan Harrison Reed
University of Dayton

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/uhp_theses

eCommons Citation

Reed, Ryan Harrison, "The Turn from Radicalism: Self-Regulation of the American Labor Movement, 1909-1919" (2020). *Honors Theses*. 275.

https://ecommons.udayton.edu/uhp_theses/275

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the University Honors Program at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlengen1@udayton.edu.

The Turn from Radicalism: Self-Regulation of the American Labor Movement, 1909-1919



Honors Thesis

Ryan Harrison Reed

Department: History

Advisor: William V. Trollinger, Ph.D.

April 2020

The Turn from Radicalism: Self-Regulation of the American Labor Movement, 1909-1919

Honors Thesis

Ryan Harrison Reed

Department: History

Advisor: William V. Trollinger, Ph.D.

April 2020

Abstract

The American Labor Movement of the first decade of the twentieth century was a host to radical labor union organizers and diverse schools of radical thought. By 1919, however, the Movement had shifted away from radicalism toward more pragmatic cooperation between owners and workers. This thesis uses the national organ of the American Flint Glass Workers' Union to recount this same radicalism and traces its disappearance from the Labor Movement during and after American involvement in the First World War. Using events recorded in "The American Flint," it argues that the workers themselves, motivated by patriotic zeal or self-preservation, purged their own ranks of radical elements. This thesis takes a step toward providing a more nuanced understanding of the American Labor Movement as it entered a crucial moment in its history, one that is described as the "lean years" or the "collapse of organized labor" in America.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank Dale L. Lamb for guiding me toward this project and helping me to locate the archives of the American Flint Glass Workers' Union. Secondly, I want to thank archivist Tom Felt from the American Museum of Glass in West Virginia for his generous giving of his time. Lastly, and most ardently, I want to thank Dr. William Trollinger for his patience, sage advice, and genuine encouragement. Thank you for guiding me through this daunting process while providing me the independence to grow as an historian.



**University of
Dayton**

Table of Contents

Abstract	Title Page
The Turn from Radicalism	1
Bibliography	34
Primary Source List	36

The momentum organized labor accrued in the last decades of the 19th century and early in 20th century halted by the beginning of the 1920s. In 1920, mainstream presses heralded the “Collapse of Organized Labor.”¹ Traditionally, historians have deemed this period the “lean years,” defining it as period of decline in labor participation and a loss in legislative momentum between the Progressive age and the resurgence of labor in the 1930s. During this period following the Great War, labor activists conceded their utopian ambitions, radical members of labor organizations were deported or arrested, and laissez faire policies removed labor regulations that promoted a hike in high-wage earner’s incomes.² Labor union participation declined from 5,034,000 in 1920 to 3,632,000 in 1930.³ Historians have remained largely in consensus around Irving Bernstein’s characterization of the “lean years.”⁴

Many historians, including David Brody and Irving Bernstein, have pointed to the aftermath of the widespread and unsuccessful strikes of 1919.⁵ Brody also highlighted the shifting nature of workers’ rights during the war due to intervention of the federal government. Expounding upon the work of Brody and Bernstein, historians Foster Rhea Dulles and Melvyn Dubofsky considered cultural and social phenomena like the first Red Scare as a factor contributing to an association between Bolshevism and unionism.⁶ This association would result in the governmental suppression of labor activists, radical or otherwise. Uniting most of the traditional historiography of the “lean years” is the agency of national business, political, and labor leaders. This historiography gives the utmost

¹ Mark W. Robbins, “Transitioning Labor to the ‘Lean Years’: the Middle Class and Employer Repression of Organized Labor in Post- World War I Chicago,” *Labor History* 54, no. 3 (2013): 321.

² Robbins, 321-322.

³ Robbins, 322.

⁴ Irving Bernstein, *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960).

⁵ David Brody, *Labor in Crisis: The Steel Strike of 1919*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

⁶ Melvyn Dubofsky and Foster Rhea Dulles, *Labor in America: a History* 8th ed. (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, 2010).

influence to important men who influence events from the top-down. For the most part, the “rank-and-file” workers’ agency is absent.

More recent historians like Mark Robbins have conceded a “multicausal” approach, contributing further nuance by introducing the politically-active, white-collar middle class as an agent of labor’s demise.⁷ However, as of yet, no history has put forward an example of the ways in which the “blue-collar” members of Labor worked to self-regulate and purge its ranks of radical or utopian ideology. This thesis will provide such an example through an analysis of the labor press. It does not intend to completely eliminate the agency of government, labor leaders, and other professionals in the narrative. Instead, the purpose is simply to shed light and give agency to an historical group often not considered in this crucial moment in labor history. The labor press then provides insight into the thoughts and actions of this group, which other types of primary sources cannot.

The presses of labor have provided countless historians with sources for their analyses of various aspects of labor history, especially in understanding the “collapse” of labor in the 1920s. Printing regularly from as early as 1828, the amount of material is overwhelming but it’s value cannot be calculated. Even with innumerable citations, the utilization of the labor press as a subject is a vastly under-researched topic for the great value it could provide to study of labor history. Despite a noticeable dearth in recent years, the groundwork scholarship does exist, namely in the form of Joseph R. Conlin’s two volume compilation on the American radical press.⁸ Conlin synthesized a narrative on the American radical and labor press from 1880 until 1960. His volumes illustrated

⁷ Robbins, 336.

⁸ Joseph Conlin, *The American Radical Press, 1880-1960* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1974).

the vast diversity of thought within late 19th and early 20th century labor movement. It was not then until 1988 that journalism and labor historian Jon Bekken noted there had been noticeable gaps and even blatant errors in Conlin's work. Bekken appealed to his colleagues for help rebuilding the study of the labor press, stressing its great potential value. However, 31 years later, Bekken's call for researchers has largely gone unanswered. Bekken did answer himself in 1997, contributing an article in which he examined the press in post-war Chicago. He saw the Labor Movement struggling to build consensus among itself in the tumultuous political climate of post-war America.⁹ A year later Rodger Streitmatter produced an exploration on the earliest stirrings of the labor press, but no historian since has produced a monograph on the topic.¹⁰

In 2001, the University of Washington produced the most comprehensive study since Conlin in 1960, despite its regional focus on the Pacific Northwest. The University of Washington's Labor Press Project compiled and analyzed 16 labor newspapers and 17 radical newspapers.¹¹ The contributors to the project dissected each newspaper, providing publication dates and advertisement information, contextualizing important stories and uses of propaganda, and synthesizing the main themes. Historian Karla Kelling Sclater unified the project with a synthesis essay on the labor press. She categorized the narrative into three distinct periods with their own themes. Covering the birth of labor journalism, its high-tide, and "uncharted territory" of the press since 1940, Sclater traced the rise of the labor press, highlighting its diversity of thought, then

⁹ Jon Bekken, "A Paper for Those Who Toil: The Chicago Labor Press in Transition," *Journalism History* 31, no.1 (Spring 1997).

¹⁰ Rodger Streitmatter, "Origins of the American Labor Press," *Journalism History* 25, no. 3 (Fall 1999).

¹¹ University of Washington Labor Press Project, *University of Washington*, 2001.
<https://depts.washington.edu/labhist/laborpress/Kelling.shtml>.

arguing that radical presses gave way to labor union papers because of the sedition acts during World War One.¹²

After nearly 20 years of silence from journalism and labor historians, the labor press finally entered the narrative again with Kim Moody's piece in *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*. Her article compared the Gilded-Age Labor Press to a "Social Media" for the wage-earning class. She highlighted the influence of journalists John Swinton and Joseph Buchanan and their abilities to serve as "critical nodes in the labor press networks."¹³ Moody argued the importance of studying the labor press, pointing to historians like E.P. Thompson and Benedict Anderson. Thompson argued that the labor press was essential for the development of class consciousness. Labor historian John R. Commons, Moody explained, remarked that "the rise and fall of a labor movement is marked by the rise and fall of the labor press."¹⁴ Notable historians have lauded the importance of the presses, and yet little recent scholarship has paid attention to it.

This thesis will enter this historiographical context and attempt to utilize one specific labor publication, *The American Flint*, to examine the ideological realities of the early 20th century American labor movement and explain the move away from radicalism as Labor entered its "lean years." Scholars have argued that labor publications in the late 1800s and early 1900s remained a bastion for left-leaning and diverse socialist thought. However, this thesis argues that these commitments were not just a product of labor's

¹² Karla Kelling Sclater, "The Labor and Radical Press, 1820-Present," University of Washington Labor Press Project, *University of Washington*, 2001.

<https://depts.washington.edu/labhist/laborpress/Kelling.shtml>.

¹³ Kim Moody, "A Gilded-Age Social Media: John Swinton, Joseph Buchanan, and the Late Nineteenth-Century Labor Press," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 15, no. 1 (March 2018).

¹⁴ Moody, 12.

leaders, but were held among “average” workers who were given a platform for expression in editorials, think-pieces, and correspondence sections. Through a commitment to freedom of expression and speech, *The American Flint* fostered thriving intellectual discourse for a decade until its various sources of socialism and shades of radical thought disappeared. What once was a haven for radicalism became a forum for employee-management cooperation and simple trade unionism. Labor turned in on itself as radicals were removed as the movement entered its “lean years.” During a period of national hysteria and “hyper-patriotism,” Labor cooperated with the federal government to “cleanse” elements of the movement that were insufficiently patriotic. It was not just leadership that took up the crusade against radicalism. In most cases, persecution of radicals required the cooperation of shop-floor workers. Moreover, the marked rise in mob lynching and murders of labor organizers suggests that workers themselves took up the mission of the federal government to curb the tide of radicalism sweeping through the Labor Movement. The history of *The American Flint* and the American Flint Glass Workers’ Union mirrors this narrative. In the decade prior to the Great War, union members demonstrated their radicalism publicly. The First World War shifted the tone of the magazine, removed all opposition to America’s involvement in the war, and began the shift away from utopian thought toward the pragmatic unionism of Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor. *The American Flint* illustrated that it was both the labor leaders and common union members that eliminated the influence of radicalism in the American political landscape.

In November of 1909, the American Flint Glass Workers’ Union (AFGWU) published its first “official organ” for the purpose of organizing and communicating to

the workingmen of the glass industry.¹⁵ Despite the Union having existed since 1878, it had yet to create a reliable method to communicate and agitate among its rank-and-file members. Prior to the founding of *The American Flint*, national officers relied on circulars given to the executive of each local union. The responsibility then fell to the local officers to communicate essential information to regular members. Often this was the point at which communication between national headquarters and the rank-and-file broke down. Likewise, communication from the rank-and-file to national headquarters was forced through the channel of local executives, an often-unreliable pathway for communication. Miscommunications, according to national headquarters, caused a spirit of “non-cooperation”, an invitation of “suspicion and distrust” of the national officers, and a reduction in each individual’s confidence in the union and their own judgement.¹⁶ In the view of the national officers, a national organ for communication was essential for the proper functioning of the union-especially for achieving success in strikes and other grievances.

In addition to these practical effects, the national officers identified the publication’s role in entering the Flint Glass Workers’ Union into the larger labor movement. By the time the AFGWU decided to introduce their own labor journal, 85% of the 109 organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL) regularly published a periodical with the direct purpose of education, agitation, and organization of the working class.¹⁷ President of the AFL Samuel Gompers, a major force in the American labor movement, highlighted the growth and importance of the labor

¹⁵ W.P. Clarke, “Our Official Organ,” *The American Flint* 1, no.1 (November 1909): 1-4.

¹⁶ F.H. Shane, “Our Magazine,” *The American Flint* 1, no.1 (November 1909): 4-5.

¹⁷ American Flint Glass Workers’ Union, Circular No. 3 (August 17, 1909).

press, describing it as a “splendid service rendered our movement.”¹⁸ *The American Flint* arose during what Karla Kelling Sclater of the University of Washington’s Pacific Northwest Labor and Civil Rights Project described as the “High Tide” of the labor press.¹⁹ The Socialist press grew rapidly during this moment as well, acting as the main vehicle for propaganda and education for the Socialist party. Between 1912 and 1913 alone, 323 Socialist periodicals were published. By the end of this period around the mid-1920s there would be 311 more labor periodicals as the socialist press gave way to the trade-union press.²⁰ Early on in its development, however, the line between socialist and labor press was not easily delineated.

To the American Flint Glass Workers’ Union National Headquarters, the publishing of *The American Flint* signaled their entry into the burgeoning intellectual debate contained within the American Labor Movement. The first article of the constitutional amendment granting the national officers authority to create a labor magazine was explicit in the role it would play in both the AFGWU and for all of labor. The amendment articulated that the new magazine would be used to “make official announcements, to agitate for Union Labels and in every way to promote the interest of this Union, and the trade union movement in general.”²¹ The union press was first and foremost a tool to be wielded by national officers for the betterment of the movement. The secondary function of the magazine (and in fact, some of the national officers would argue as the primary function) was to educate its union members, “to bring out the views,

¹⁸ T.W. Rowe, “Editorial,” *The American Flint* 1, no. 3 (January 1910): 62.

¹⁹ Karla Kelling Sclater, “The Labor and Radical Press, 1820-Present.”

²⁰ Jon Bekken, “‘No Weapon So Powerful’: The Working-Class Newspaper in the United States,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 12, no. 2 (July 1988): 104-119.

²¹ T.W. Rowe, “Origin of Magazine,” *The American Flint* 1, no.1 (November 1909): 8.

ideas, and facts relating to industry...” while providing arguments against anti-unionism, illustrating the benefits of the labor union to the working class.²² To accomplish this more abstract objective, the magazine allowed itself to become a platform for discussion of political, social, and economic theories of the American Left. This very function was written into its constitutional article, describing the magazine’s role in protecting a “free and untrammelled Press,” allowing for the columns of *The American Flint* to “be open to all shades of thought, on Political, Social, and Economic questions.”²³

The American Flint quickly became a fixture of the AFGWU. Barely a year after its creation, union president and editor-in-chief, T.W. Rowe described it as “one of the most progressive and beneficial steps taken by our Association [.]”²⁴ He attested to *The American Flint*’s capability to foster an “enlightened glass trade” and more informed labor movement.²⁵ The magazine’s creation and subsequent first year, however, were not without challenge. It faced the initial administrative challenge of creating a new publication and funding its initial editions. However, the magazine also faced a serious external challenge from the federal courts and the Department of Justice.

Attorney General George W. Wickersham’s Department of Justice 1910 interpretation of first-class postage law meant that local unions could not pay for a subscription to a labor journal with money from a treasury maintained by the same parties who received the paper. Wickersham argued the law prevented both advertising and treasury funding of first-class publications. Under this new law, union dues and

²² Rowe, 9.

²³ American Flint Glass Workers’ Union, Circular No. 7 (October 13, 1909).

²⁴ Annual Conference Proceedings of The American Flint Glass Workers’ Union, “President’s Remarks,” (July 1910): 34.

²⁵ Annual Conference Proceedings of The American Flint Glass Workers’ Union, “President’s Remarks.” 34-35.

subscription fees had to be distinct from one another.²⁶ These publications, like *The American Flint* were typically funded by both labor union fees and advertising revenue. Thus, in order to maintain advertising revenue, the workingmen of the AFGWU would need to pay additional money to a separate fund. Another option would be to sacrifice its advertisement funding, shifting the magazine into second-class status. Such a trivial shift in the law caused both advertisement revenue and subscription payment of the entire labor press to become uncertain.

Wickersham, usually remembered by historians fondly as a trust-busting attorney general who took on the entrenched moneyed elite, was a firm proponent of government intervention into Capitalist affairs. While taking stock of his long career in law and his dealings with American business, Wickersham reflected on the changes in business he had experienced and the challenges he had faced in curbing the downsides of rapid economic growth. He lamented:

[I have] Shame at the birth and growth of a system of underhanded, concealed, and unfair dealing, whereby competition was stifled, industry monopolized, equality of opportunity denied, and charters of incorporation... made instruments for the enrichment of the few at the expense of all others.”²⁷

The attorney general, full of contempt of the enormous inequality he saw before him, endeavored through federal intervention to create a system he thought would be fairer to the common person. The Sherman Act of 1890, which effectively outlawed monopolies in the American markets, was among Wickersham’s proudest moments. The goal of limiting corporate power, as he saw it, could only be achieved through Federal legislation.²⁸ It was the government’s role to “effectively prevent the occurrence of evil

²⁶ American Flint Glass Workers’ Union, Circular No. 23, (June 1910).

²⁷ George W. Wickersham, “Business and the Law,” in *Changing Order: Essays on Government, Monopoly, and Education*, (New York: Putnam Inc. 1914): 62-63.

²⁸ George Wickersham, 68-69.

and introduce that certainty into the law of the conduct of business... which is so requisite to wholesome national trade conditions.”²⁹ His willingness to adjudicate second and first class postage law at the federal level and reinterpret a law on the book since 1894 spoke to his desire to regulate corporations wherever and whenever he saw fit.

Wickersham, however, did not leave room for any other method for the regulation of corporations. He stated that “no right-minded man begrudges to superior intelligence the fruits of honest ingenuity and industry; but no patriot would be willing to see Americans become servants of great corporate organizations.”³⁰ A student of history, Wickersham lamented the failures of early British guilds, arguing they were superseded by unions after they were corrupted by monopolistic tendencies. These unions fell prey to those same corruptive forces, and thus, according to Wickersham, required “direct legislative action...to protect the individual tyrannous power of these organizations.”³¹ He claimed then that trade union organizations, radical thought, and worker empowerment were not legitimate strategies to “retain in American political life a spirit of continued sober and moderate freedom,” but rather “direct legislative action,” was necessary for a fair and functioning economy.³² While his goals and those of trade unions would at first glance appear similar, Wickersham did not think they could be effective and did not actively support their causes.

In response to Wickersham’s attitudes toward Labor and its presses, the National officers for the first time utilized *The American Flint* and other avenues of communication to urge its members into political action. Members were encouraged to

²⁹ George Wickersham, 69-70.

³⁰ George Wickersham, 70.

³¹ George Wickersham, 57.

³² George Wickersham, 57,70.

reach out to their state representatives in a spirit of “fraternal co-operation” to express concern over Wickersham’s interpretation.³³ National officers urged each local union to form a committee for the purpose drafting an “emphatic” petition to their respective senators.³⁴ Headquarters also enlisted the help of US lawmakers to enter *The American Flint* as second-class postage, effectively eliminating all advertising revenue that offset the costs of the magazine, but allowing it to be funded from the pool of union dues.³⁵ Through effective political agitation, national officers implored legislators to recognize *The American Flint* as second-class postage while pressuring Representative Dodds of Michigan to introduce H.R. 22239 to annul Attorney General Wickersham’s decision.³⁶ Dodds’ bill reset postage law back to the standard interpretation of 1879 that would provide for fixed rights for labor and other fraternal publications and allow for advertisement in their publications. Both Dodds and the American Flint Glass Workers’ Union wished for consistency from the Attorney General. Their efforts did in fact pay off. Dodds’ bill was passed by the end of the 1910 session of Congress. American Flint Glass Union and other fraternal organizations were successful in using their presses to mobilize political support at the federal level.

By the end of 1910, *The American Flint* had weathered its first major challenges and emerged well-appreciated and financially stable as well as a popular fixture among both shop-floor workers and national officers. The official organ had proven itself a useful tool for political agitation against threats to the union. The magazine would continue to grow into its intended role, as the next number of volumes saw *The American*

³³ American Flint Glass Workers’ Union, Circular No. 23, (June 1910).

³⁴ Circular No. 23, 1.

³⁵ American Flint Glass Workers’ Union, Circular No. 17, (March 1910).

³⁶ Circular No. 23, 2

Flint become a platform for the spread of socialism, Marxism, Georgism, trade-unionism, feminism, and nearly every shade of political, economic, and social theory aligned with the interests of workers. The magazine reflected the diversity of thought and lack of cohesiveness of the American Left in the early 20th century. Not favoring any particular sectarian theory, the magazine strove to present the widest breadth of American radical thought. This resulted in numerous ideological disputes among *The Flint*'s contributors. However, the next two years of the magazine would fulfill its promise to promote pro-labor ideas and provide challenges to anti-union positions.

The American Flint, under the guidance of its editor-in-chief and union president T. W. Rowe, would publish the insights of both rank-and-file members as well as some of the most widely known Progressive and Socialist figures of the early 20th century. Between 1911 and 1913 alone, the magazine featured articles by the founder of the Socialist Party of America and famous labor organizer Eugene V. Debs, Knights of Labor founder Terence Powderly, and AFL president Samuel Gompers. At the same time it published a multi-issue, front-page debate between shop-floor glass workers over the relative merits of Marxian versus Georgian economic theories.

Georgian contributors lauded The Single Tax of Henry George and decried the dangers of collectivism and Marx's economic theories, describing them as both "inadequate and fallacious and, therefore, unsafe guides for the political labor movement."³⁷ Professor of Mining Engineering from West Virginia University, Robert Brinsmade, the primary advocate for George's ideas in *The American Flint*, called into question Marx's definition of "value," as being determined by the quantity of labor

³⁷ Robert B. Brinsmade, "Karl Marx or Henry George, Which?" *The American Flint* 2, no.4 (February 1911): 3.

necessary for its production. He then critiqued this definition by pointing out that “value” as defined by Marx, ignores Ricardo’s “Law of Rent”, which Brinsmade regarded as the “basis of modern economic science.”³⁸ Brinsmade was hinting at the differences in yield of labor due to the variance in quality and abundance of natural resources in a particular location. To George and his adherents, this land was the common inheritance of all, and thus a Single Tax on land would serve as “rent” while all other taxes could be eliminated. All profit, interest from capital, or any product created from the land ought to be owned exclusively by individuals or firms paying rent on the land. While clearly not a socialist, Brinsmade touted Henry George as the “true prophet for the emancipation of labor.”³⁹

Responding a month later in the next edition of *The American Flint*, John Mayo provided the counter-argument to Brinsmade’s critique of Marx. He began by taking issue with Brinsmade’s quotation of Marx’s definition of “value,” accusing Brinsmade of purposefully misquoting Marx. According to Mayo, the actual definition from Marx’s *Das Kapital* read as follows: “The *average* amount of *socially* necessary labor or time required to produce those commodities.”(Emphasis is the author’s)⁴⁰ By withholding these two words, Mayo argued Brinsmade was mischaracterizing Marx’s theory, and in turn entirely misunderstanding his definition of value, thus putting forth an ill-informed conception of value espoused by George. Mayo corrected Brinsmade’s mistake saying, “(Marx) didn’t mean the amount of time expended by any certain group of workers...he didn’t mean the amount of time expended by the miners who dig coal from a mine...but what he did mean, was the *average, socially* necessary labor time of that part of society

³⁸ Brinsmade, 4.

³⁹ Brinsmade, 3.

⁴⁰ John Mayo, “Georgian or Marxian Economics, Which? An Answer to Prof. Robert B. Brinsmade,” *The American Flint* 2, no. 5 (March 1911): 3. Mayo emphasized the missing words.

or persons actively engaged in production...would determine its value.”⁴¹ Mayo then attacked the “basis of modern economic science,” namely academia, as a “subsidized and capitalistic institution of learning...”⁴² As a Marxist, Mayo made it obvious that he would not trust the outcome of George’s Single Tax to be a world without exploitation as privately owned capital, profit, and interest would remain in George’s vision. After considering the absence of the concept of class struggle in George’s theory, Mayo concluded with a refutation of one of George’s main claims- the idea of increasing poverty associated with industrialization. George pinned the increase in poverty on exploitation of land, not capital or labor. Mayo wholeheartedly disagreed, using the example of how machinery in the industrializing world provides for increased production and diminishing share of profit. Mayo concluded by stating that Socialism and its “analysis of machine industry,” had succeeded where the Single Tax fell short.

In the same edition of the magazine, George Kunkle of Niles, Ohio piled onto Brinsmade’s argument, accusing him of “setting up a straw man, then turning round and giving him an awful drubbing.”⁴³ In addition to calling attention to Brinsmade’s ill-defined theory of “value”, Kunkle pulled from history to find Marx’s own rejection to the theory of the single tax put forth by Proudhon in 1847. A month later, Edward Moore of Philadelphia took Brinsmade to task for his interpretation of Marx, in the process discussing Marx’s interpretations on land use and wage theory, and quoting directly from *Das Kapital* on the difference between land and capital.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Mayo, 4.

⁴² Mayo, 4

⁴³ George Kunkle, “Reply to Brinsmade,” *The American Flint* 2, no.5 (March 1911): 17.

⁴⁴ Edward Moore, “Facts or Fiction, Which?” *The American Flint* 2, no.6 (April 1911): 4-5.

This entire months-long discussion not only reflected the diversity in thought of members of AFGWU, but also demonstrates how shop-floor workers of the union were provided a platform to engage in the intellectual side of the labor movement. Under Editor Rowe, who was a founding member of the AFGWU and National President, the more radical impulses of his contributors were provided room for safe expression that would not have been provided in the mainstream press of the moment. Contributors prescribed the writings of Marx to their readers and created visions of communist utopias, urged working class solidarity against the capitalist class, and provided monthly updates on advances and struggles in the fight for labor rights.⁴⁵ From Christian Socialists to followers of Debs, every “source of radicalism” listed by labor press historian Richard Conlin was present in *The American Flint*.

Even after T.W. Rowe relinquished his role of editor-in-chief in 1912 to vice president Croke, and then from Croke to vice president Gilooly in 1914, *The American Flint* consistently published the explicitly Socialist, Marxist, and Georgian viewpoints of its members, living up to its role as a home for the “untrammelled Press” and all shades of thought.⁴⁶ From 1909 through 1918, the AFGWU invested \$32,969.25 to bring this magazine into the houses of each of its members.⁴⁷ The magazine demonstrated that it was highly committed to all ideas and all organizations that fought for the working class, including international communist and socialist parties, the International Workers of the World, and all trade unions across the globe. Despite this commitment, after April of

⁴⁵ “Beware of Variety,” and “Proclamation of Peace,” *The American Flint* 4, no. 4 (February 1913) and “Capital and Labor” *The American Flint* 4, no. 6 (April 1913).

⁴⁶ Volume 4 (1912-1913) of *The American Flint* reflected nearly all shades of Progressive thought, featuring speeches by the pragmatic Samuel Gompers, labor organizer Debs, feminist poems and sections devoted to the women’s auxiliary of the AFGWU, as well as reprinted articles lifted directly from the radical IWW official organ, *The Industrial Worker*.

⁴⁷ Annual Conference Proceedings of The American Flint Glass Workers’ Union, (July 1918): 156.

1917 the various shades of progressivism would rapidly become one single tone of pragmatism, conservatism, and patriotic anti-socialism. The best and clearest illustration of this transformation is the story of an itinerant glass cutter, union member, and radical socialist John A. Gahan.

John Gahan first appeared in *The American Flint* in March of 1913 with a polemic entitled “A Few Facts” against a “Mr. Capitalist”.⁴⁸ In this article, he constructed an eternal struggle between the “moneyed class” and the “working class,” echoing Marx’s material dialectic. The “moneyed class” worshipped the “God of Greed” and utilized religion as a tool to declare Socialists unfit for heaven, and thus “consigned the Socialist’s soul to hell.”⁴⁹ Gahan concluded by calling for the eradication of the social evils caused by the materialism of a Capitalist society.⁵⁰ Gahan continued publishing in the magazine in both essay and personal letter format. The young socialist worker wrote for the magazine six times in 1913, with four full essays and two instances of correspondence. The following year Gahan was published by the editor-in-chief another six instances, including a three-part exposé of the struggles of the average American worker. He suggested Marxian solutions to end the plight of the impoverished and unemployed.⁵¹ In 1915, Gahan was featured another five times, making him the second-most, non-national officer featured in *The American Flint* during this three- and half-year period, second only to Samuel Gompers himself in number of submissions. Always on the move, the journeyman Gahan addressed the national organ of the AFGWU from

⁴⁸ John A. Gahan, “A Few Facts,” *The American Flint* 4, no. 5 (March 1913): 9-10.

⁴⁹ Gahan, 9.

⁵⁰ Gahan, 10.

⁵¹ It is worth noting here that Gahan mentioned the backlash he has received from his own co-workers for espousing Socialism and illustrating “class-consciousness”. He does not, however, receive admonitions from the editor-in-chief who will continue to publish his essays for another two years.

Ohio, New York, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Kansas; after his final submission in 1915, Gahan disappeared from the record only to appear in Oklahoma a final time in a dramatic showdown against the changing culture and leadership of the AFGWU.

As Europe was consumed by conflagration of war, American labor asserted its value in any potential war effort. Unlike any previous war, wage-earners were proving to be essential elements in the industrial production needed to support total war. As America teetered on the precipice of war, the AFL declared that, “Modern warfare includes contests between workshops, factories, the land, financial and transportation resources of the countries involved; and necessarily applies to the relations between employers and employees (sic).”⁵² The AFL, assuming the voice of all organized labor, asserted the right to maintain its status as defender of the wage earner, “with the same forces...” as before in both peace and war.⁵³ After the turn of the century, the labor movement had begun the slow process of dividing itself into two major “wings” of reform, but organized labor as a whole stood united in its distrust and disdain for militarism. They recognized the necessity for the government to cooperate with them in the new context of industrial warfare.

The American Flint was slow to respond to news of war in Europe. The union may have been distracted by their own internal affairs. The annual convention had taken place just three weeks prior and dominated the magazine in August. In addition, editor-in-chief and vice-president Croke had passed away unexpectedly, leaving the National Headquarters in mourning and in search of a new editor. *The Flint* did have time, however, to publish the “official” stance of labor on war, as recorded at the AFL 33rd

⁵² William P. Clarke, “American Labor’s Position in Peace or in War,” *The American Flint* 8, no. 6 (April 1917): 2.

⁵³ William P. Clarke, 2.

Conference in November of 1913. The AFL had declared a policy of peace, claiming that workers the nation over “love their fatherland, home, and justice but they are unwilling to be exploited or killed for the promotion of private or selfish ends.”⁵⁴

A month later, *The Flint* and its contributors demonstrably voiced their opinion on the war. John Gahan proclaimed with his own dramatic flair that, “though Europe suffers now from a war-stab, her soil, drenched with working-class blood, shall yet become verdant.”⁵⁵ E.W. Zimpfer of Columbus, Ohio lamented that, “such warfare as we read about in the papers at the present is hard on the poor working man.”⁵⁶ In the same issue, Thurlow D. Lung of Marion, Indiana opened his letter writing, “War! What For? Profits.”⁵⁷ Lung continued to highlight the imperialist aims of the war and remarked on the cost of the war to the workingman. Most of the anti-war protest in *The American Flint* echoed this theme of cost to workingman. A published letter by Ben Tillet stressed that history would be written with “the cremated bodies” of working men. The progress made by such working men, according to Tillet, was vulnerable to a setback of a “quarter of a century.”⁵⁸

There quickly developed two different camps of protest in *The Flint*. While both were virulently anti-war, they disagreed about the causes of such a deadly war in Europe. On one side were the anti-war “forces of capitalism” that blamed monarchy and militarism. These were largely trade-unionists that reflected the AFL’s willingness to work within the capitalist system on behalf of workers. On the other were anti-war

⁵⁴ “Extracts from Report of Delegates to the American Federation of Labor Convention,” *The American Flint* 5, no. 10 (August 1914): 17.

⁵⁵ John Gahan, “Correspondence,” *The American Flint* 5, no. 11 (September 1914): 29.

⁵⁶ E. W. Zimpfer, “Correspondence,” *The American Flint* 5, no. 11 (September 1914): 33.

⁵⁷ Thurlow D. Lung, “Correspondence,” *The American Flint* 5, no. 11 (September 1914): 38.

⁵⁸ Ben Tillet, “We Write History with Cremated Bodies, Says Ben Tillet in Letter,” *The American Flint* 5, no.12 (October 1914): 12.

socialists who, according to O. Lackall, “occupy themselves in the work of abolishing the *cause* of wars- the exploitation of men by men.”⁵⁹ The Socialists of the AFGWU saw Capitalism itself as the cause of war, but the union’s more pragmatic members, like editor-in-chief Gilooly or Samuel Gompers, viewed the European war as a means to “bolster up tottering thrones and policies of self-aggrandizement...” In other words, the war was caused by European empires and their monarchs, not global Capitalism. In doing so, “European monarchs have sacrificed social and economic welfare to the ominous waste involved in militarism [.]”⁶⁰ No matter which side of the argument a flint worker was on, his protest against joining the war was equally virulent in the press. The fear of the workingman in 1914 was, as Fred Waitz explained, that “[if] capitalists in Europe have dragged their people into a war- the American Capitalists will do the same.”⁶¹ The paramount objective was to prevent America from joining the European affair.

Protest continued into the second and third year of the war, but strayed away from polemics against monarchism and Capitalism. Instead, they voiced aspirations of perpetual world peace through international labor organization.⁶² Occasional screeds against the Capitalist system or the horrors of war were published, however. One in particular, a speech by Milton L. Clawson, reflected the passionate belief in peace and anti-interventionism. Clawson wove together a message of international class solidarity and zealous pacifism, proclaiming to the “toiling masses” that “NO HUMAN SOUL WAS EVER BORN SO CHEAP AS TO BE GIVEN AS A SACRIFICE TO THE GODS

⁵⁹ O.N.E. Lackall, “Be Not Deceived,” *The American Flint* 5, no. 12 (October 1914): 6.

⁶⁰ Samuel Gompers, “European Cataclysm or Democracy-Which?” *The American Flint* 6, no. 1 (November 1914): 1.

⁶¹ Fred Waitz, “Must We, Too, Go to War?” *The American Flint* 6, no. 2 (December 1914): 1.

⁶² “Permanent World Peace,” *The American Flint* 6, no. 5 (March 1915): 6.

OF WAR.”⁶³ (Emphasis is the author’s) Clawson would go on to repeat this phrase with slight variations, emphasizing that the aristocracies of the world wished to sacrifice working people, and that only class loyalty instead of patriotism could bring about a lasting peace.

Anti-war poetry was also a popular form of dissent in *The Flint*. Even rank-and-file workers submitted their work. Glass worker William Court of local union 97 put forth his dissent in the form of a song for the European continent:

“Sing a song of Europe,
Highly Civilized.
Four-and-twenty nations,
Wholly hypnotized.
When the battles open
The bullets start to sing.
Isn’t that a silly way
To act for any king?
These kings are in the background,
Issuing commands.
The queens are in the parlor,
Per etiquette’s demands.
And bankers in the counting house,
Are busy multiplying.
The common people at the front
Are doing all the dying.”⁶⁴

Vocal opposition to joining the war was prevalent in *The Flint* through both 1915 and 1916. However, when America did finally join the war, the AFL and the AFGWU quickly shifted. Recognizing the new industrial nature of the Great War, Gompers knew working men would become more important than in any previous war. The AFL soon declared its position, “in Peace or in War.” It reflected a steadfast defense of workers’ rights, but also a willingness to cooperate with the Federal Government not included in previous months. America’s labor forces demanded “representation on all agencies

⁶³ Milton L. Clawson, “Labor Memorial Address,” *The American Flint* 6 no. 9 (July 1915): 2.

⁶⁴ William Court, “Sing a Song of Europe,” *The American Flint* 6, no. 9 (July 1915): 46.

determining and administering policies for national defense.”⁶⁵ If labor was to support a war it had once rebuked, concessions would need to be made. President Wilson was forced to reckon with labor’s new-found leverage. In May, just a month after America declared war, he chose to meet with the Labor Committee of the Advisory Commission of the Council of National Defense, which consisted of both men and women labor leaders, including Samuel Gompers. Wilson lauded “spontaneous cooperation” of ordinary workers in rising to meet the emergency the nation was experiencing.⁶⁶ In this meeting, Wilson urged cooperation, realizing his war effort would be useless without the full commitment of industry. He tried to build common ground with the committee, stressing that both the United States government and organized labor were “trying to fight in a cause which means the lifting of the standards of life, and we can fight in that cause best by voluntary cooperation.”⁶⁷ Anticipating the inevitable, Wilson encouraged the leaders to show spirit and national unity in the face of the coming bloodshed. The editors of *The American Flint* and the union’s national leaders would heed these words of Wilson.

The American Flint’s previous polemics against imperial wars and militarism were replaced by various speeches given at “Patriotic Rallies” and essays by the president William P. Clarke defending America’s role in war. The tone of the magazine shifted to support for Wilson’s decision to “make the world safe for democracy.” Arguments were reversed, the merits of war were considered, and pages were filled with patriotic poems, hymns, and memorials. Editor Clarke published a speech by Grant Hamilton, a

⁶⁵ William P. Clarke, “American Labor’s Position in Peace or in War,” *The American Flint* 8, no. 6 (April 1917): 1-4.

⁶⁶ “President Wilson and Labor,” *The American Flint* 8, no. 9 (July 1917): 13.

⁶⁷ “President Wilson and Labor,” 13-14.

Legislative Committee member of the AFL, who claimed that it was time that “Labor must sacrifice its freedom and do and die, and it musn’t even speak or ask the reason why.”⁶⁸ Members of locals across the nation also wrote to the *The Flint* to demonstrate their loyalty. After a flag raising ceremony at his plant in Toronto, Ohio, Charles Bailey claimed that the men of the plant were to collectively purchase the flag, “as an expression of their loyalty and patriotism.” Past views of the union were not lost on Bailey and his comrades: “This is how it should be, [no] matter what our feelings of the past may have been or how ardently we have desired peace. That time has now passed...”⁶⁹

There still remained some divide in the labor movement between those willing to cooperate with the federal government and those still resistant or actively anti-war. A smaller minority of organizers like Robert LaFollete and Eugene Debs would remain opposed. H.E. DeVault of Dunkirk, Indiana decried the opposition to war within his own local union. He expressed disgust that these men would sacrifice America’s “preparedness,” for an ill-defined “vision.”⁷⁰ However, Wilson had made inroads with the labor movement by conceding political leverage to Labor in exchange for cooperation. The President made allies with Gompers to secure relative peace between labor and management until the end of World War One.

While Labor-Management tensions cooled in the interest of the war effort, the late spring, summer, and fall of 1917 witnessed a boiling over of mob violence against labor leaders (both radical and not), pacifists, German immigrants, German-Americans, African Americans, and socialists. The perpetrators of this vigilante violence were most often working-class men who had joined patriotic societies after the start of the war.

⁶⁸ Grant Hamilton, “Democracy vs. Militarism,” *The American Flint* 8, no. 8 (June 1917): 8.

⁶⁹ Charles Bailey, “Correspondence,” *The American Flint* 8, no. 7 (May 1917): 44.

⁷⁰ H.E. DeVault, “Correspondence,” *The American Flint* 8, no. 7 (May 1917): 47-48.

While sedition laws laid the legal framework for the persecution of anti-war protestors and radical organizers, the enforcement of the law was seized upon by everyday people, caught up in the patriotic battle against Kaiserism. Anti-German nativism quickly grew around fraternal organizations like the Knights of Liberty and a “quasi-official” auxiliary of the Justice Department, the American Protective League.⁷¹ The United States Army’s Military Intelligence Division also received reports from everyday people concerned about not just their German-American neighbors, but anyone outspoken in their distaste or resistance of the war effort. In the opinion of workers’ vigilance groups like the Knights of Liberty, the Socialist Party and the I.W.W. in their agitation and organizing efforts, cast doubt upon the American way of life and called for revolutionary change. Thus, they were natural targets of anti-radical action across the nation. By June of 1917, the Espionage Act gave the legal pretext for a massive wave of governmental raids as well as vigilante “justice” to be brought down on all those accused of “anti-American” or “obstruction of the war effort.”

In every geographic location of America, with anxieties built up by nativist legislation including the Immigration Act of 1917, and “afire with war passions,” vigilante groups launched a spree of violence and arrests.⁷² Miners from the town of Bisbee, Arizona, under the leadership of a local sheriff, extra-judiciously captured and forcibly removed more than 1,000 members of the I.W.W. In Kentucky, Socialist and pacifist preacher Reverend Herbert Bigelow was stolen away and flogged before a mob. In early November, sixteen I.W.W. members were whipped, tarred, and feathered by a working-class vigilante organization in Oklahoma. Later that same month, a young

⁷¹ David H. Bennet, *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988): 185.

⁷² David Bennet, 186.

radical named Mike Jzlik was “shotgunned for ‘cursing the government,’” in Modoc, Ohio.⁷³ Vigilantes of the same ilk had already committed the famous lynching of Frank Little, an I.W.W. organizer in Montana in early August of 1917.⁷⁴

Rebuking working-class solidarity in the name of self-preservation, union members of local 81 of the AFGWU in Pittsburgh protested against support for the radical elements of the labor movement. Members in Pittsburg penned a complaint to the president protesting a \$10 donation pledged in solidarity for victims of lynching. This particular donation was in support of I.W.W. members massacred before a “Free Speech Rally” in the state of Washington. These I.W.W. members had been sailing into a port town when a large group of vigilantes and local deputies opened fire upon their boat. Fourteen were killed and 250 were rounded up and detained by the local government.⁷⁵ Local 81 argued that “their membership in the American Flint Glass Workers Union” did not entail giving money to “a revolutionary organization.”⁷⁶ The matter was voted upon and a compromised was reached. The AFGWU would no longer require donations in solidarity to the I.W.W. and instead would allow donations on a volunteer basis. These instances of internal rebuke of the more radical elements in the labor movement would reverberate through *The American Flint*. Throughout the rest of 1917 and 1918, *The American Flint* consistently reported on the menace of the I.W.W. Concerns brought forth by locals over labor loyalty and cleansing the labor movement of radical elements

⁷³ DJ Alperovitz, “IWW Members Killed year by year, 1907-1974.” The IWW History Project from the University of Washington, https://depts.washington.edu/iww/map_killed.shtml.

⁷⁴ William H. Thomas Jr. *Unsafe for Democracy: World War I and the U.S. Justice Department's Covert Campaign to Suppress Dissent* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2008):151.

⁷⁵ American Flint Glass Workers' Union, Circular No. 15, (April 28, 1917).

⁷⁶ Circular No. 15.

led Clarke to move in the summer of 1919 to make the first official purge of the AFGWU ranks.

With tremendous violence at home, the news of the first American casualties made it back to the States in November of 1917. Meanwhile, *The American Flint* declared that there was “not one valid reason why any working man or woman be disloyal (to the nation).”⁷⁷ According to *The Flint*, it was “cold fact” that the war represented a struggle against autocracy and therefore there was “every reason why every American should exert every ounce of energy to the end that America and America’s cause should be completely and triumphantly victorious.”⁷⁸ As the war effort finished its first year and moved into its second, a more emotionally invested civilian public would continue to take out its frustration on war-time dissenters. Renewed raids resulted in the arrests of Wobbly spokesman William Haygood and Socialist Party leader Eugene Debs. Socialist Party national executive committee member Victor Berger was sentenced to 20 years, though judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis wished for him to be “lined up against a wall and shot.”⁷⁹

Amidst the violence, raids, and stress of wartime, President Wilson again addressed organized labor, presenting an address in person at the 37th annual conference of the AFL in December of 1917. As a moment of great importance to the whole of labor, *The American Flint* dedicated its front page to the speech. Wilson used the address to build an air of familiarity with the working-class, urging them not to take his words as “authority” but rather “counsel,” asking them to forget for a moment that he was

⁷⁷ Chester M. Wright, “American Alliance for Labor and Democracy,” *The American Flint* 9, no. 1 (November 1917): 1

⁷⁸ Chester M. Wright, 1.

⁷⁹ David Bennet, 186.

President of the United States.⁸⁰ Wilson then provided justifications for the war against Germany, and reassured the AFL that working conditions would not deteriorate, but rather improve in wartime. In turn, he urged the AFL to proceed with uninterrupted production, declaring that “nobody has the right to stop the processes of labor until all the methods of conciliation and settlement have been exhausted.”⁸¹ Wilson struck a conciliatory and cooperative tone, reassuring workers that the war facing America was in the interest of labor.

He then turned to the domestic issues, specifically the rash of vigilante violence taken up by working-class members against radicals, German-Americans, and African-Americans. While putting up a veneer of distaste, arguing that any man who joins mob is “not worthy of the free institutions of the United States,” Wilson blamed both the perpetrators and the victims of the violence. He expressed his distress over the “spirit of lawlessness anywhere or in any cause,” referring to vigilante violence as well as the revolutionary agitation among radical labor organizers. He went on stating that he, “despise[s] and hate[s] their (radicals’) purpose as much as any man, but I respect the ancient processes of justice [...] So I want to utter my earnest protest against any manifestation of the spirit of lawlessness[.]”⁸² Despite feeling the need to address vigilantism in front of the AFL convention, Wilson did not take a particularly strong stance against the violence. He remained ambiguous about which type of lawlessness he despised, and even expressed an air of empathy for those perpetrating the violence.

⁸⁰ “Address Delivered by the Hon. Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States,” *The American Flint* 9, no. 2 (December 1917): 1-6.

⁸¹ “Address Delivered by the Hon. Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States,” 4-5.

⁸² “Address Delivered by the Hon. Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States,” 5.

Beyond mere words, this address was followed by President Wilson conceding political power to American labor in the concrete form of the War Labor Association (WLA). The most important function of the WLA was to mediate unresolved labor concerns through a board made up of equal parts accomplished members of industry and organized labor and headed by the Secretary of Labor, William B. Wilson (no relation to the President).⁸³ Samuel Gompers of the AFL praised the act creating the WLA as the “Magna Carta” of labor.⁸⁴ Hoping to secure labor’s cooperation for another year of wartime production, Wilson was compelled to concede more political power. The WLA, however, put the Secretary of Labor, in charge of most disputes in wartime. The board itself mostly followed suggestions made by a “mediation committee” also headed by William Wilson. Despite the profound happiness expressed by organized labor, the power President Wilson conceded was ultimately hedged by his own Secretary of Labor. In a deft political move, the former president of Princeton surrendered nominal concessions to labor while securing the full loyalty of the most powerful union leaders.

Notable after the December 1917 address, with regard to *The American Flint*, is the disappearance of any and all anti-war sentiment in any of the essays. In the years leading up to America’s mobilization into the Great War, *The American Flint* had consistently presented anti-war essays, poems, and editorials. *The Flint* in past years had played host to the anti-war writings produced by outspoken organizations like the Industrial Workers of the World as well as the Socialist Party of America. These same Socialists and radical I.W.W. members were among those targeted in the spree of killings and arrests in the prior months. Often suspected of harboring German sympathies because

⁸³ U.S. Department of Labor, “Startup of the Department and World War One, 1913-1921.” <https://www.dol.gov/general/aboutdol/history/dolchp01>.

⁸⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, <https://www.dol.gov/general/aboutdol/history/dolchp01>.

of their prominent immigrant membership, Socialists and I.W.W.s attracted hostility, leading one Illinois newspaper to exclaim that “every socialist who still clings to the socialist party is a Hun within the gates.”⁸⁵ The AFGWU’s own members such as George Kunkle and John Gahan had been the most boisterous in their protest of American intervention in the European war, and now were effectively silenced.

In this setting of general suspicion and local mob violence, John A. Gahan reappeared in Ada, Oklahoma embroiled in a battle with a regional AFGWU agent and the national president of the entire union. He and fellow union member John Sullivan levied charges of incompetence and falsehoods against a travelling union agent without consulting the rest of their local union. When the agent involved the president in the dispute, Gahan responded by personally attacking the president, arguing that the reason for the antagonism between him and the president was because he had “learned to teach working class economics successfully.”⁸⁶ In a circular announcement, president Clarke documented this incident with an unusual use of all bolded characters, warning the union at large to “BEWARE OF I.W.W.’S AND ANARCHISTS.” Clarke argued Gahan was likely responsible for a major failure of the union in a six month strike in Brooklyn, and that Gahan was almost surely receiving funding from “radical elements” bent on sowing discord in the glass industry.⁸⁷ After a physical altercation between Gahan and the regional agent where the agent resorted to “drastic-measures in self-defense,” he was forcibly expelled from the union.⁸⁸ John A. Gahan had transformed from a popular and

⁸⁵ William H. Thomas Jr., 5.

⁸⁶ American Flint Glass Workers’ Union, Circular No. 30, (April 27, 1918).

⁸⁷ Circular No. 30.

⁸⁸ Circular No. 30.

prolific contributor of socialist and virulent anti-war campaigner to an enemy of not only all of trade unionism, but America itself.

Despite being expelled and exiled from glasswork in the region, Gahan could consider himself lucky that he was not arrested or killed. Just a month prior, local union 77 of Morgantown, West Virginia had expelled Paul Bosco, a Russian glass cutter, for “treasonable utterances” toward officers of the local union and against the government of the United States. For these “utterances,” Bosco was reported by his fellow workers and arrested. He was then brought before a federal court and found guilty on those same charges. Bosco was sentenced to 10 years in a federal prison.⁸⁹ His fate was not uncommon among those arrested for such offenses. Of around 2,000 cases heard between May of 1917 and December of 1920 over half resulted in convictions and sentences up to 20 years and fines of \$10,000.⁹⁰

At the next annual conference, President Clarke moved to legislate against the I.W.W. specifically. The annual convention in 1919 held in Bellaire, Ohio voted overwhelmingly to expel members of the union who could be proven to be members of the I.W.W.⁹¹ This marked the official turn for the entire union against all socialist political, social, or economic theory. It only legislated the sentiment that had prevailed among the majority of the American Flint Glass Workers’ Union since America had joined the war. Providing a comment on the nature of those workers who had been expelled, contributor A.M. Simons stated, “They call themselves Socialists, communists,

⁸⁹ American Flint Glass Workers’ Union, Circular No. 29, (March 28, 1918).

⁹⁰ Christina L. Boyd, “Sedition Act of 1918,” *The Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University*, <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1239/sedition-act-of-1918>.

⁹¹ American Flint Glass Workers’ Union, Circular No. 48 (August 1919).

bolshevists by turn, but always terrible revolutionary workers.”⁹² After serving as a platform for all shades of the American Left for nearly a decade, *The American Flint*'s contributors and editors lumped all shades left of pure and simple pragmatic trade unionism into one bright red box.

The mood within the rank and file matched that of the rest of the nation following the First World War. With the spread of revolutionary movements in Europe after the war, particularly the Bolshevik Revolution and ensuing Russian Civil War, Americans were left with residual war-time fears of sabotage and sedition.⁹³ Historian Robert Murray characterized the period in his pioneering study of the Red Scare as possessing “[a] continued insistence upon ideological conformity, suspicion of organized labor, and a hatred for Soviet Russia[.]”⁹⁴ The supposed global aims of the new Bolshevik government meant that even the slightest action from the Communist Party of the United States or any other suspected “anti-American” organizations could provoke a crackdown on the federal, state, or local level. The nascent FBI also began systemic surveillance on political activities in 1919 and started conducting raids on the homes of Communist Party members in 1920.⁹⁵ The Justice Department, however, found itself “in competition with the older tradition of extralegal violence.”⁹⁶

Extralegal policing and vigilantism, according to historian Christopher Capozzola, is a recurrent theme in American history. Historian Arnold Madison described vigilantism as “indigenous” to America, “having sprouted almost with the Pilgrim’s first

⁹²A.M. Simons, “Planning a Labor Revolt,” *The American Flint* 10, no.12 (October 1919): 14.

⁹³ Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955).

⁹⁴ Robert Murray, 263.

⁹⁵ Regin Schmidt, *Red Scare: FBI and the Origins of Anticommunism in the United States, 1919-1943*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2004): 19.

⁹⁶ William H. Thomas Jr. 146.

corn crop.”⁹⁷ From 1767 to 1951, more than 5,400 killings by unorganized or organized mobs have brought the historian’s focus on vigilantism to one specific type of extralegal action- violent lynchings or mob killings.⁹⁸ However, Capozzola posited that vigilantism does not necessitate political violence, but rather it is “fundamentally about law, and political arguments about it articulate relationships between citizens and the system of law in which they operate.”⁹⁹ This relationship between the American citizen and the American system of laws reveals a complex history of Anglo-American “common law” that obligates (mostly male) members of the community not to vigilantism, but to vigilance. American common law allowed for individuals to make citizen’s arrests, compelled a response to cries for help, the ability of a sheriff to deputize local volunteers, and for the maintenance of militias. This obligation to vigilance was reflected in the progressive era reforms of the 1910s and illustrated a common responsibility for the guardianship of the “moral welfare of their fellow citizen.”¹⁰⁰

In a social environment like the waning years of the progressive era, the understanding of guardianship of the fellow citizen blended with the fear and paranoia of nativism, fervent patriotism, anti-Bolshevism to give vigilantism a patina of legitimacy. As America joined the Great War, traditions of community vigilance expanded and gained authority. Hundreds of thousands of everyday men and women across the nation joined voluntary vigilance associations like American Protective League and Knights of Liberty. They did so out concern for their own communities and the state of American democracy at home. Many, like Sheriff Harry E. Wheeler of Bisbee, Arizona, took the

⁹⁷ Arnold Madison, *Vigilantism in America* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973): 13.

⁹⁸ Christopher Joseph Nicodemus Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War One and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 119.

⁹⁹ Christopher Capozzola, 119-120.

¹⁰⁰ Christopher Capozzola, 121.

law into their own hands “to defend the law, not to violate it.”¹⁰¹ Wheeler’s concern was to “protect the law-abiding citizens of the community,” in the face of the disorder and chaos posed by the I.W.W. strikers of a copper mine in his hometown of Bisbee.¹⁰²

Others, were motivated less so by concerns for their community, but rather out of a desire to perpetuate a racial order. The same spirit and relation to the law authorized members of Southern communities to form lynch mobs and, ultimately, the second iteration of the Ku Klux Klan. It is little surprise that the nation’s most infamous vigilante group experienced a massive resurgence as America entered World War One. Many of America’s expressed enemies- Germans, Socialists, and Communists- also were the expressed enemies of the Ku Klux Klan.

The turn from radicalism, while informed by government leaders and encouraged by mainstream labor organizers, took place within the masses of American workers. The AFGWU, once a bastion for Leftist debate and radical utopian ideas, turned in upon itself under pressure wrought by America’s entrance into the First World War. Reflected in the changes to *The American Flint* between the years 1909 and 1919, the AFGWU shed its radical elements in an attempt to make the union “safe for democracy.” By the end 1917, as the AFL joined hands with Woodrow Wilson, the union’s desire to purge “anti-Americans,” “pacifists,” or “Bolsheviks” gained a patina of governmental legitimacy. If the ultimate goal of the union and the federal government were the same, union members could empower themselves to carry out their duty to community and country. Motivated by a distinct combination of latent nativism, wartime patriotic fervor, and ultimately obligation to vigilance, Americans across the country identified, targeted, and eliminated

¹⁰¹ Christopher Capozzola, 128.

¹⁰² Christopher Capozzola, 126.

the radical elements of the labor movement. In doing so, they blunted potential gains for the working class and forfeited the utopian dreams represented in *The American Flint* in the years prior to 1917. The loss of the radical voice also forced labor to negotiate from within the system, putting the leverage firmly in the hands of management after the war. By 1920, the mainstream presses heralded the end of organized labor. While the radical edge of labor would return later during the depression, another World War and the Cold War would extinguish the flame of radicalism in American labor and politics for the next 70 years.

Bibliography

- Alperovitz, DJ. "IWW Members Killed year by year, 1907-1974." The IWW History Project. *University of Washington*.
https://depts.washington.edu/iww/map_killed.shtml.
- Bekken, Jon. "A Paper for Those Who Toil: The Chicago Labor Press in Transition." *Journalism History* 31, no.1 (Spring 1997).
- Bekken, Jon. "'No Weapon So Powerful': The Working-Class Newspaper in the United States." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 12, no. 2 (July 1988).
- Bennet, David H. *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Bernstein, Irving. *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960.
- Boyd, Christina L. "Sedition Act of 1918." *The Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University*. <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1239/sedition-act-of-1918>.
- Brody, David. *Labor in Crisis: The Steel Strike of 1919* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.
- Capozzola, Christopher Joseph Nicodemus. *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War One and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Conlin, Joseph. *The American Radical Press, 1880-1960* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1974.
- Dubofsky, Melvyn and Foster Rhea Dulles. *Labor in America: a History* 8th ed. Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, 2010.
- Madison, Arnold. *Vigilantism in America* New York: Seabury Press, 1973.
- Moody, Kim. "A Gilded-Age Social Media: John Swinton, Joseph Buchanan, and the Late Nineteenth-Century Labor Press." *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 15, no. 1 (March 2018).
- Murray, Robert K. *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955.

- Robbins, Mark W. "Transitioning Labor to the 'Lean Years': the Middle Class and Employer Repression of Organized Labor in Post- World War I Chicago." *Labor History* 54, no. 3 (2013).
- Schmidt, Regin. *Red Scare: FBI and the Origins of Anticommunism in the United States, 1919-1943* Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2004.
- Slater, Karla Kelling. "The Labor and Radical Press, 1820-Present." University of Washington Labor Press Project. *University of Washington*, 2001.
<https://depts.washington.edu/labhist/laborpress/Kelling.shtml>.
- Streitmatter, Rodger. "Origins of the American Labor Press." *Journalism History* 25, no. 3 (Fall 1999).
- William H. Thomas Jr., William H. *Unsafe for Democracy: World War I and the U.S. Justice Department's Covert Campaign to Suppress Dissent* Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2008.
- U.S. Department of Labor. "Startup of the Department and World War One, 1913-1921." <https://www.dol.gov/general/aboutdol/history/dolchp01>.

Primary Sources

- “Address Delivered by the Hon. Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States.” *The American Flint* 9, no. 2 (December 1917).
- American Flint Glass Workers’ Union. Circular No. 3 (August 17, 1909).
- American Flint Glass Workers’ Union. Circular No. 7 (October 13, 1909).
- American Flint Glass Workers’ Union. Circular No. 15 (April 28, 1917).
- American Flint Glass Workers’ Union. Circular No. 17 (March 1910).
- American Flint Glass Workers’ Union. Circular No. 23 (June 1910).
- American Flint Glass Workers’ Union. Circular No. 29 (March 28, 1918).
- American Flint Glass Workers’ Union. Circular No. 30 (April 27, 1918).
- American Flint Glass Workers’ Union. Circular No. 48 (August 1919).
- Annual Conference Proceedings of The American Flint Glass Workers’ Union.
“President’s Remarks.” (July 1910).
- Annual Conference Proceedings of The American Flint Glass Workers’ Union. (July 1918).
- Bailey, Charles. “Correspondence.” *The American Flint* 8, no. 7 (May 1917).
- “Beware of Variety.” *The American Flint* 4, no. 4 (February 1913).
- Brinsmade, Robert B. “Karl Marx or Henry George, Which?” *The American Flint* 2, no.4 (February 1911).
- “Capital and Labor.” *The American Flint* 4, No. 6 (April 1913).
- Clarke, William P. “American Labor’s Position in Peace or in War.” *The American Flint* 8, no. 6 (April 1917).
- Clarke, William. P. “Our Official Organ.” *The American Flint* 1, no.1 (November 1909).
- Clawson, Milton L. “Labor Memorial Address.” *The American Flint* 6 no. 9 (July 1915).
- Court, William. “Sing a Song of Europe.” *The American Flint* 6, no. 9 (July 1915).
- DeVault, H.E. “Correspondence.” *The American Flint* 8, no. 7 (May 1917).
- “Extracts from Report of Delegates to the American Federation of Labor Convention.”
The American Flint 5, no. 10 (August 1914).
- Gahan, John A. “A Few Facts.” *The American Flint* 4, no. 5 (March 1913).
- Gahan, John A. “Correspondence.” *The American Flint* 5, no. 11 (September 1914).

- Gompers, Samuel. "European Cataclysm or Democracy-Which?" *The American Flint* 6, no. 1 (November 1914).
- Hamilton, Grant. "Democracy vs. Militarism." *The American Flint* 8, no. 8 (June 1917).
- Kunkle, George. "Reply to Brinsmade." *The American Flint* 2, no.5 (March 1911).
- Lackall, O.N.E. "Be Not Deceived." *The American Flint* 5, no. 12 (October 1914).
- Lung, Thurlow D. "Correspondence." *The American Flint* 5, no. 11 (September 1914).
- Mayo, John. "Georgian or Marxian Economics, Which? An Answer to Prof. Robert B. Brinsmade." *The American Flint* 2, no. 5 (March 1911).
- Moore, Edward. "Facts or Fiction, Which?" *The American Flint* 2, no.6 (April 1911).
- "Permanent World Peace." *The American Flint* 6, no. 5 (March 1915).
- "President Wilson and Labor." *The American Flint* 8, no. 9 (July 1917).
- "Proclamation of Peace." *The American Flint* 4, no. 4 (February 1913).
- Rowe, T.W. "Editorial." *The American Flint* 1, no. 3 (January 1910).
- Rowe, T.W. "Origin of Magazine." *The American Flint* 1, no.1 (November 1909).
- Shane, F.H. "Our Magazine." *The American Flint* 1, no.1 (November 1909).
- Simons, A.M. "Planning a Labor Revolt." *The American Flint* 10, no.12 (October 1919).
- Tillet, Ben. "We Write History with Cremated Bodies, Says Ben Tillet in Letter." *The American Flint* 5, no.12 (October 1914).
- Waitz, Fred. "Must We, Too, Go to War?" *The American Flint* 6, no. 2 (December 1914).
- Wickersham, George W. "Business and the Law." in *Changing Order: Essays on Government, Monopoly, and Education* New York: Putnam Incorporated, 1914.
- Wright, Chester M. "American Alliance for Labor and Democracy." *The American Flint* 9, no. 1 (November 1917).
- Zimpfer, E. W. "Correspondence." *The American Flint* 5, no. 11 (September 1914).