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THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Andrew Nils Bryans for the Master of Arts in History were presented June 11, 2002, and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Andrew Nils Bryans for the Master of Arts in History presented June 11, 2002.

Title: The Response to Left-wing Radicalism in Portland, Oregon, from 1917 to 1941.

In the early twentieth century industrial, political, and social conflicts occurred throughout the United States during a period of rapid industrialization and modernization. Examples of these disputes, such as labor strikes and political struggles, have frequently been the subjects of scholarly investigations. Yet certain aspects of these conflicts remain relatively unknown, particularly on the community and local levels. The purpose of the present study was to explore and provide the context for a better understanding of the motives behind the responses of antiradicals to left-wing radicalism. What were some of the social, cultural, and economic motivations of local antiradicals in the city of Portland from 1917 to 1941?

In addition to the exploration of the motives of antiradicals, another purpose of the study was to determine whether this type of conflict remained unique to Portland and Oregon, or if local developments paralleled trends found in other areas of the United States. The work includes an examination of the political repression of radical organizations during World War I, the great Red Scare of 1919-1920, certain

economic and political responses to the Great Depression, and local red scares that occurred from 1917 to 1941.

The study reveals that the struggle between radicals and antiradicals in the city of Portland did reflect other conflicts that occurred in the United States during the period in question. Many individuals who took part in the antiradical crusade had various reasons for doing so, including complex cultural, political, and economic motivations. A popular conviction that left-wing radicalism represented a threat to American traditions and values also formed the basis of the response of many antiradicals to radical activities. Although left-wing radicals never gained enough power to seriously threaten the nation's economic and cultural institutions, they frequently experienced severe forms of repression from antiradical elements in Portland and Oregon, as well as throughout other areas of the United States.

THE RESPONSE TO LEFT-WING RADICALISM IN
PORTLAND, OREGON, FROM 1917 TO 1941

by

ANDREW NILS BRYANS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
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2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	The Development of Left-wing Radical Beliefs and Antiradical Opposition	1
Chapter I	World War I and One Hundred Percent Americanism	21
Chapter II	The Great Depression and Red Scare of the Early 1930s	71
Chapter III	The Response to the Revival of Organized Labor and the Radical Resurgence of the Popular Front Era	97
Conclusion	Antiradicalism in Portland and Oregon	128
Bibliography		136
Appendix A	Text of the Oregon Criminal Syndicalism Statute of 1919	141
Appendix B	Text of the Oregon Criminal Syndicalism Statute of 1921	143
Appendix C	Text of the Oregon Criminal Syndicalism Statute of 1933	145

Introduction

The Development of Left-wing Radical Beliefs and Antiradical Opposition

Twentieth century antiradicalism in the United States was tied to the wrenching changes wrought by industrialization and modernization as the century opened. At the beginning of the twentieth century American society underwent a major transformation tied to industrialization and modernization. These rapid changes increased social tensions, particularly in regard to animosities toward racial minority groups and immigrants. Nativists increasingly feared that the large numbers of new immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe would contribute to the breakdown of morality through the introduction of “alien” customs. Many Americans also distrusted the ideologies and religions of the new immigrants. The fear of Catholicism among members of the established Protestant religions as well as the Anglo-Saxon elite expanded as more immigrants arrived. Native-born Americans worried that the largely Catholic immigrant population was dedicated to the Papacy and out to subvert the Constitution. But the fear of Catholicism was not the only reason that immigrants were so distrusted and ostracized.¹

After the failed European revolutions of 1830 and especially 1848, radical left-wing theories and ideas began to gain a foothold in the United States. As German revolutionary exiles settled in America before the Civil War, they publicized Karl Marx’s theories about class warfare, and socialist groups began to congregate in large cities such as Chicago. Marx’s theories centered around the concept of communism

and were largely defined by his statements in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

In theory, communism would function around the concept of communalism, or socialism, in which a workers' paradise would be created. Economic and social classes would not exist in the workers' world of pure communism, and every conceivable human need would be addressed by the collective. But the road to this just and perfect society would be brutal and bloody, as Marx and Frederick Engels stated in the

Manifesto:

In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things. The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution.

Marx and Engels believed that the working classes would have to rise up in violent rebellion against their capitalist masters and destroy the oppressive system in order to establish a socialist state. This theoretical concept of working-class violence, potentially against the U.S. government and affluent members of society, later became a foundation of the antiradical response to left-wing and socialist groups.²

Most native-born Americans at first generally tolerated these European ideologies, in part because the country had traditionally been receptive to social experimentation and new ideas. Socialist groups, such as the German Communist Clubs, functioned with little harassment in northern cities through the 1850s and the Civil War years. After the war, however, as the number of radical organizations and the flow of European immigrants increased, many native-born Americans began to take greater notice of and even begin to fear revolutionary ideas. Increasingly, anarchists and socialists were painted as un-American and as European imports by

many newspapers, whose commentary suggested that “alien” philosophies did not have a place in the democratic traditions of the country.³

The bloody Paris Commune of 1871 shook the fabric of American society like no event had since the Civil War. The revolution proved to many respectable individuals that socialistic movements would lead to nothing but brutal insurrections and the confiscation of private property. Radical left-wing theories, the polar opposites of American capitalism, had no place within the political and economic order of the United States. For the first time some critics began to call for the deportation of radical immigrants back to Europe. Yet the rapidly growing nation needed the labor provided by European immigrants, radical or not, and the upper and middle classes remained secure enough not to push for repressive measures against left-wing radicals.⁴

The first major post-Civil War example of governmental repression of left-wing radical organizations and individuals occurred during the violent railway strikes of 1877, the greatest labor disturbance up to that time in American history. Most of the nation’s railroads and many cities and communities experienced disruptions during the conflict. These serious disturbances frightened the upper classes to such an extent that armories began to be constructed, state militias reorganized, and local police forces strengthened to provide a potent support system in the event of another wave of widespread disorders. In May 1886 the infamous Haymarket Affair took place in Chicago, a disaster that severely tarnished the cause of left-wing radicalism. When a bomb killed several Chicago policemen during the incident, blame was immediately placed on the local anarchist movement. Fearing a bloody radical uprising, law enforcement targeted all known anarchists. Ultimately, eight local anarchists were

found guilty of conspiracy during a flawed trial, and four were later hanged. Many citizens hailed the verdict as justice, thus attesting to the level of fear and hatred of the anarchists which had emerged in Chicago after the bombing.⁵

The events of 1886 constituted the first major red scare in American history. Yet the nation also was disrupted by the Homestead Strike of 1892 and the Pullman Strike of 1894. As a result, labor unions increasingly became associated in the public mind with the image of left-wing radicalism. As the strikes of the 1890s raised the level of class consciousness among various segments of the working-class population and sometimes took on the characteristics of class warfare, public fears mounted about the perceived power of working-class radicals.⁶

The assassination of President William McKinley in Buffalo in 1901 by a deranged individual who claimed to be an anarchist produced the first modern legislation directed at a specific radical group. The 1902 criminal anarchy law of New York imposed severe prison sentences and financial penalties against individual anarchists. But this law and those of other states were rarely utilized by authorities in the years leading up to World War I. At this point the governmental forces at the local and state levels felt secure enough not to invoke this repressive and possibly unconstitutional legislation. The federal government, moreover, was at this time too weak and without the will to intervene in what were generally considered state or local matters. But the anti-anarchist laws became the precursors to the criminal syndicalism statutes implemented in many states during and after World War I.⁷

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) proved to be the most odious left-wing radical organization for many Americans during the prewar period. The IWW

had been founded in Chicago in 1905 as an umbrella industrial union combining the Socialist party, Socialist Labor party, the Western Federation of Miners, and other organizations. The first objective of the IWW was to challenge the supremacy of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in the labor movement by organizing industrial unions. According to historian M. J. Heale, the group eventually advocated a French version of anarcho-syndicalism which “emphasized complete control by the workers, organized by industry, and the use of the general strike, sabotage, and other forms of direct action to effect this end.” Industrial employees had been ignored historically by the crafts-based AFL unions, and the founders of the IWW believed that if enough workers could be organized the union would supplant the AFL as the dominant labor group in the United States. From this point it would not be long until all workers were unified into the “One Big Union,” take control of the means of production, and finally establish a workers’ paradise. But during its formative years the IWW was almost torn apart by internal struggles, and most of the founding organizations eventually left. Nevertheless, the hard-line syndicalists who remained were determined to turn the theory of the One Big Union into a reality.⁸

Although the IWW proved to be attractive to western migrants, including agricultural and lumber workers, the union received a hostile reception in many cities and towns where it attempted to gain new recruits. Recruitment drives frequently ended up as “free speech” fights. Local authorities and chambers of commerce were sometimes hostile to the IWW element within their communities because the union’s theory of syndicalism was repugnant to the capitalist system of private property. When authorities banned street speaking in an attempt to halt recruitment drives, IWW

members would continue to speak and be arrested, one after the other. Soon the city jail would be filled with “Wobblies” who often displayed a great degree of solidarity while incarcerated. In some instances, such as in Spokane and Fresno, the entire community was disrupted, city coffers jeopardized, and some sympathy displayed for the prisoners. On several occasions the pressure became too great, and the authorities once again permitted street speaking. As the IWW continued to be a thorn in the side of numerous local and state governments during the 1910s, several western cities, including Portland, San Diego, and Seattle, experienced union-related disorders and free speech fights. Many citizens became disgusted with the direct action tactics of the IWW, and the radical group gained a negative reputation throughout much of the West. Yet local and state laws did not directly target organizations like the IWW, and Wobblies often returned to cause more trouble for authorities.⁹

The disruptive economic and social trends that occurred throughout the nation during the late nineteenth century inspired groups of middle- and upper-class reformers to initiate the Progressive movement of reform. These forward-thinking individuals realized that without major economic and social innovations the growing disparity of wealth would eventually produce such misery among the poor that a revolution was likely to occur. By the early 1890s, Progressive innovators, such as Jane Addams, initiated programs designed to mitigate some of the worse excesses of poverty in American cities. Humanitarian compassion frequently motivated these individuals to provide educational and employment opportunities for poor citizens and immigrants. Other Progressive efforts included the campaign to clean and beautify the cities and to rationalize local government. Professional middle-class organizations also

coalesced by the early twentieth century, resulting in the formation of groups such as the American Medical Association and the American Historical Association.

Professional values and training began to be emphasized in schools and workplaces, and this resulted in great advances in such fields as medicine and sociology. The reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries signified the development of institutions that would enable the populace to better survive the wrenching changes that the shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy produced in America. Most importantly for Progressives, the public generally supported these reforms because they frequently improved the lives of average Americans.¹⁰

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Progressive movement attempted to provide an alternative to the growing popularity of left-wing organizations, including the Socialist party and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Progressive reformers realized that problems resulting from industrialization and the uncontrolled growth of cities were the greatest threats to the nation's democratic traditions and capitalist economy. The legitimacy of labor unions expanded during the Progressive Era, although no law would emerge until the 1930s which actually defined them as legal entities. Radical organizations, such as the Socialist party, wanted to go beyond the reforms of the Progressives and remake American society along working-class lines. Union-related struggles between employer and employee occurred frequently, and industrial violence resulted in many injuries and deaths. Employers regularly used court injunctions to bust strikes and called in national guard troops, state police, and professional strikebreakers to destroy the unions. The level of violence that occurred in conflicts between the Western Federation of Miners (WFM)

and authorities from the 1890s through the 1910s became legendary. But several developments occurred during the Progressive Era that reduced some tensions and increased cooperation between certain factions on opposing sides of the issue.¹¹

In 1900 representatives of employers, labor unions, and the general public created the National Civic Federation (NCF). The organization's goals included the promotion of industrial peace through the acceptance of trade unionism and mediation between employer and labor representatives. NCF businessmen and conservative labor leaders also attempted to strengthen trade unionism to counteract increasing socialistic influences. In 1902 President Theodore Roosevelt refused to honor the demands of mine owners for court injunctions during the United Mine Workers (UMW) strike in Pennsylvania. He threatened to use federal troops to seize the mines unless the employers agreed to strike negotiations. During this process the UMW gained much popular support and avoided suppression by the government. President William Howard Taft established the federal Commission on Industrial Relations, which investigated some of the worst incidents of industrial violence that occurred during the 1910s, including several bloody IWW strikes and the Ludlow Massacre of 1914. Another labor success occurred with the organization of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) in New York City and Chicago.¹²

When the Progressive party of Theodore Roosevelt emerged in 1912 with a broad agenda that endorsed the right to collective bargaining, triumphant Democrat Woodrow Wilson adopted many of the reformers' proposals. Wilson's early successes included a graduated income tax, a reduced tariff, the Federal Reserve Act, the Clayton Act and the Federal Trade Commission to supervise corporations. Yet U.S.

involvement in World War I in 1917 significantly altered the culture and institutions of American society and led to expansion of the federal government's power. Significant left-wing political organizations such as the Socialist party became suspect as the nation moved toward direct involvement in the European war. As dubious imports from Europe, the antiwar Socialists and IWW were portrayed as subversive agents undermining the war effort. Government calls for preparedness intensified the issue of national loyalty, particularly among aliens and radicals. Propaganda through the government's Committee on Public Information (CPI) often vilified German aliens and members of the Socialist party and the IWW as enemies of the state and as threats to the war effort. In June 1917, Congress passed the Espionage Act, by which an individual could be fined and imprisoned for up to twenty years if convicted of obstructing the war effort. With this new weapon the federal government could now suppress organizations and individuals that it previously did not have the legal power to reach.¹³

After becoming a federal target, the Socialist party defended itself against a series of repressive measures. The Socialists opposed the nation's involvement in the war on the grounds that it was a capitalist and imperialist conflict that would devastate the working classes of many nations. The U.S. Post Office responded by restricting or banning from the mails many Socialist publications. Local units of the party frequently collapsed after their main avenue of communication with central policymakers through the mails was severed. The imprisonment of several key Socialist leaders occurred for Espionage Act violations, and some remained there, including Eugene V. Debs, long after the war had ended. By the end of the conflict the traditional base of

the Socialist party had been largely destroyed, and the organization never regained its prewar political strength or popularity.¹⁴

The wartime Industrial Workers of the World suffered even more extreme repression from federal, state, and local governments. As part of a nationwide propaganda campaign, newspapers issued sensational and exaggerated reports concerning IWW activities, which included allegations that its members sabotaged the war effort, acted as agents of the Kaiser, received secret funding from the German government, and advocated immoral behavior. In September 1917, federal agents raided IWW halls nationwide for evidence and soon after arrested virtually the entire leadership of the organization for Espionage Act violations. During a mass trial of Wobblies in Chicago the next year, most of the defendants were convicted and sentenced to long federal prison terms, thereby terminating the union as an effective organization.¹⁵

As the war progressed many state and local governments followed the example of the federal Espionage Act and passed their own laws against radical organizations like the IWW. Most western states, including Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and California, enacted sedition laws, red flag laws, and criminal syndicalism laws. Red flag laws barred the display of the symbolically “radical” red flag, usually at marches or street meetings. Criminal syndicalist laws defined “syndicalism” as the doctrine that advocated the overthrow of the U.S. or state governments by force or violence in order to achieve revolutionary aims. The penalties faced by those convicted of spreading the principle of syndicalism by word of mouth or in print usually consisted of large fines or long prison terms. Many local governments, such as that of Portland, Oregon,

severely restricted the rights of free speech and association in public, often with the support of federal agents. Federal officials helped to organize the American Protective League (APL) in March 1917. The APL functioned as a quasi-independent local vigilante organization and kept track of potentially unpatriotic or treasonous groups. Like most voluntary organizations in the United States, the APL and other patriotic groups derived a majority of their membership from the middle and upper classes.¹⁶

Although hostilities with the Central Powers ceased following the Armistice of November 11, 1918, the federal government continued to enforce the Espionage and Sedition Acts, and federal agents continued to aid state and local governments with the repression of radicals. Most state and local war emergency statutes remained on the books and were frequently enforced, and several states, including Oregon, quickly passed new antiradical laws. Postwar antiradicalism was fed by fears arising from the Bolshevik Revolution that brought the Communist party to state power in Russia in November 1917. The Bolshevik coup was a disaster for the allies during World War I because the new government withdrew Russia from the conflict and allowed the Germans a victory on the eastern front. After the end of the war it appeared that Bolshevism might sweep through all of Europe, and this developing menace caused feelings of panic and anger among many Americans. Communist successes threatened the foundations of American culture and democracy, such as religious freedom, private property, and respect for individual rights. Communists did away with private property, established a collective society, and brutally suppressed Christianity and other religions after they took power. The newspapers frequently reported the Russian Revolution in such a way as to place Communism in an extremely evil light. Fear

gripped the country that what had happened in Europe could also very well happen in the United States. Although such anxiety appears unfounded from hindsight, for several months in 1919 the Communists appeared to be on the verge of a victory in Eastern Europe. "One Hundred Percent Americanism," a rejection of the perceived alien threat, quickly became the secular national faith of such groups as the American Legion, founded in 1919.¹⁷

Economic unrest and a series of bitter labor disputes in 1919 compounded the anxieties over the spread of communism, and the country experienced a severe Red Scare. Beginning in the last months of 1919, Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer supervised a series of deportations of suspected and known radical aliens such as Emma Goldman to eliminate their perceived threat to national security. Massive civil rights violations occurred well into the early months of 1920, at which time the Red Scare burned itself out as the nation's economy slowly recovered from the postwar depression. During the first major government raids in November 1919, about one thousand suspected radicals were arrested, and the mass deportation of 249 aliens to Europe occurred that December. During the major raids of January 1920, approximately six thousand individuals were arrested, and the deportations of 591 aliens eventually took place. Yet, antiradicalism seriously threatened the efforts of labor unions, who found that the ideal of Americanism became tied in with the open shop and "American Plan" movements developed by employers after the war. After the great steel strike of 1919 collapsed in failure, the AFL lost millions of members. Membership in labor unions declined from over five million in 1920 to just over three million by 1929. Businesses of the postwar era succeeded in using the taint of left-

wing radicalism to paint labor organizations, even the conservative AFL, as un-American forces bent on the destruction of capitalism.¹⁸

This thesis explores the antiradical crusade of World War I, the early 1920s, and the 1930s in Portland, Oregon. Although somewhat provincial in its attitudes, during the Progressive Era Portland became a national leader in the governmental reform movement. The city experienced a significant period of growth between 1900 and 1910, with a population increase from 90,000 to just over 200,000. Women gained statewide suffrage in 1912, and in 1913 Portland voters adopted the commission form of government in an effort to root out the corruption of the old council system and to increase administrative efficiency. Yet local Progressives saw labor radicals such as the Industrial Workers of the World as a menace to the orderly society they hoped to create and organized against prewar IWW strikes and free speech fights. During World War I, Portland authorities cooperated in the persecution of local Wobblies and Socialists.¹⁹

Scholars have frequently investigated the activities of left-wing labor and political radicals and the responses of government authorities and antiradicals to them from political, economic, and cultural perspectives. Robert K. Murray, in *Red Scare: A Study of National Hysteria*, provided a critical examination of administrative actions leading up to the raids of 1919-1920. Murray also described the backgrounds of several officials, such as A. Mitchell Palmer, who helped plan the antiradical campaign. William Preston, Jr., explored changes in immigration laws in *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals*. In his study, which primarily focused on events leading up to the Red Scare of 1919-1920, Preston emphasized the injustices

that radical aliens suffered at the hands of the federal government. Robert Justin Goldstein produced a detailed study that illustrated the major trends and events that surrounded the repression of left-wing labor and political radicals throughout modern American history. In *Political Repression in Modern America: From 1870 to the Present*, he demonstrated that repressive measures created by governmental organizations and employers were not societal aberrations, but instead have been invoked almost continuously against radical dissenters. Goldstein also examined the events surrounding the many red scares of the twentieth century. M. J. Heale, in *American Anticommunism*, presented a survey history about the responses of the authorities and antiradical groups to the perceived menace. Heale maintained a fairly neutral attitude in his study, whereas Murray, Preston, and Goldstein were far more critical of the actions of antiradicals. John E. Haynes produced a critical historical survey of the radical movement, with a particular focus on Communism, partially from a cultural perspective. Haynes wrote *Red Scare or Red Menace?* during the mid-1990s, shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the revelations about the treasonous activities of certain members of the Communist Party, USA. Haynes defended many, although not all, of the actions taken by anticommunist forces. Richard Gid Powers went even further with his defense of anticommunists in *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism*, also written after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Powers examined, from a largely cultural perspective, the activities of political, religious, and business groups, such as the Socialists, Catholics, and National Civic Federation, in their fight against what they correctly perceived to be a foreign despotism bent on undermining the government and

democratic values of the United States. Both Powers and Haynes provided counter-arguments in support of the anticommunist movement, as opposed to the critical inquiries of antiradical actions by Preston and Murray.²⁰

In contrast to the studies of left-wing radicalism and the antiradical movement written from national perspectives, examinations of these movements in Portland and Oregon have rarely been undertaken. Albert F. Gunns, in his 1971 dissertation "Civil Liberties and Crisis: The Status of Civil Liberties in the Pacific Northwest, 1917-1940," produced one of the earliest and most detailed explorations of the campaign against left-wing radicals, conscientious objectors, and religious dissenters. With a particular focus on the origins and growth of the American Civil Liberties Union in the region, Gunns examined antiradical activities in Seattle, Portland, and other towns around the Northwest. In her 1932 bachelor's thesis for Reed College, Mildred Cline described the enforcement of the Oregon criminal syndicalism statute during the postwar period and the early 1930s. Cline's "A Study of Criminal Syndicalism in Oregon" provided an early critical assessment of the impact of the syndicalism law and the repression of radicals in Oregon. Harry W. Stone, Jr., in "Oregon Criminal Syndicalism Laws and the Suppression of Radicalism by State and Local Officials," covered many of the same topics as Cline with his 1933 University of Oregon thesis. In 1939 Harry A. Whitten produced "Subversive Activities: Their Extent and Meaning in Portland," another Reed College thesis. Whitten interviewed individuals on both sides of the conflict and created a study critical of the Communist and antiradical movements in the city.²¹

Later work included E. Kimbark MacColl's 1979 study, *The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915 to 1950*, in which he described the conditions that surrounded the conflicts between Portland labor radicals and antiradicals during the World War I and Depression periods. Michael Munk, in his 1998 paper "Portland's 'Silk Stocking Mob': The Citizens Emergency League in the 1934 Maritime Strike," expanded upon MacColl's earlier research. Munk focused on members of the Chamber of Commerce and the actions they took to end the 1934 Maritime Strike in Portland, as well as their conflict with local radicals. Gary Murrell produced a critical biography of a conservative former general who served as governor from 1935 to 1939. In *Iron Pants: Oregon's Anti-New Deal Governor, Charles Henry Martin*, Murrell described the interactions between Martin, state police, federal agencies, and the Portland Red Squad in their campaign against labor and political radicals.²²

This study will investigate the actions of various antiradicals in Portland and Oregon to better understand the motives behind their responses to left-wing radicalism, and a variety of primary sources will be utilized in its development. The records of the Portland Police Bureau's "Red Squad" will be analyzed to explore the history of a unit permanently designated to investigate and combat labor and political radicalism, and also to provide information about some of the radical groups, particularly the Communist party, that functioned in the region. The "reserve squad" was originally created in 1914 to enforce the vagrancy and vice statutes of Portland, but by World War I its scope had been expanded to include antiradical activities. Articles from local newspapers such as the *Oregonian*, *Oregon Journal* and *Portland*

Telegram will be examined for background information on labor and political conflicts, and also to provide insight into the biases of their editors on issues related to radicalism. Several Oregon Supreme Court decisions concerning the criminal syndicalism statute will be used to present perspectives on the legal conflicts that involved followers of radical doctrines during the 1920s and 1930s. The records of the Portland Chamber of Commerce will be scrutinized to determine how different factions within the local business community viewed the involvement of radicals in labor conflicts and to examine the methods that originated within the Chamber to combat communism. The personal documents of Portland attorneys Irvin Goodman and Burl A. Green, who supported the cause of labor and defended radicals, and John H. Hall, Sr., who fiercely denounced Bolshevism and drafted antiradical legislation, will be utilized to provide examples of the contentious viewpoints on these issues.

This thesis will principally examine how local authorities and business owners in a western city responded to the perceived threat of labor and political radicals, particularly the IWW and Communist party, from 1917 to 1941. A central question to be addressed concerns the political, cultural and economic motivations of those involved in the antiradical crusade. Did the reasons behind antiradicalism include a genuine fear of subversion or political revolution on their own terms, or did business opportunism, political opportunism, or economic incentives play a role in the antiradical activities of various members of the community? The question as to whether this type of conflict remained unique to Portland and Oregon, or if it paralleled developments that occurred in other areas of the nation, will also be explored. The political repression of certain organizations during World War I, the

great Red Scare of 1919-1920, certain economic and political responses to the Great Depression, and local red scares will be examined in detail.

Arranged in chronological order, the work is divided into an Introduction, three substantive chapters, and a Conclusion. It also contains a bibliography and three appendices. Chapter I describes the World War I and Red Scare periods, with a detailed examination of the opposition that developed in response to the activities of the Industrial Workers of the World and the newly formed Communist parties. Chapter II focuses on the resurgence of radicalism during the early years of the Depression and the Portland Red Scare of 1930-1931. The chapter also investigates the case of Ben Boloff, a member of the Communist party who was tried for criminal syndicalism. Chapter III explores the revival of organized labor as a result of New Deal reforms, reviews the De Jonge criminal syndicalism case, and examines the activities of antiradicals during the Popular Front Era of the late 1930s. The Conclusion provides insight into motives behind the responses of antiradicals to left-wing radicalism that occurred in the city of Portland during the period under study.

Notes to Introduction

¹ M. J. Heale, *American Anticommunism: Combating the Enemy Within, 1830-1970* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 10-11.

² Heale, *American Anticommunism*, xi-xiv; Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1970), 76.

³ Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 6-9, 19, 21-23.

⁴ Robert Justin Goldstein, *Political Repression in Modern America: From 1870 to the Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1978), 24-27.

⁵ Goldstein, *Political Repression*, 30-34; Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 29-33.

⁶ Goldstein, *Political Repression*, 44-57.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 66-70.

⁸ Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 48.

⁹ Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 173-175, 193-197.

¹⁰ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 111-113, 115-116, 121-123, 127-132, 149-150.

¹¹ Goldstein, *Political Repression*, 63-66.

¹² Goldstein, *Political Repression*, 63-66, 74-75, 79-80, 90, 96; Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 44.

¹³ Goldstein, *Political Repression*, 105-108; Wiebe, *Search for Order*, 218-223.

¹⁴ Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 54, 59.

¹⁵ Goldstein, *Political Repression*, 116-119; Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 56-58.

¹⁶ Goldstein, *Political Repression*, 128; Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 52-53; Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 231-235.

¹⁷ John Earl Haynes, *Red Scare or Red Menace?: American Communism and Anticommunism in the Cold War Era* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 6-8; Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 65-67; David A. Horowitz, *Beyond Left and Right: Insurgency and the Establishment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 31-32.

¹⁸ Goldstein, *Political Repression*, 154-163, 184-185; Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 82-83; Murray, *Red Scare*, 196-197, 207-209, 210-213, 251.

¹⁹ Adam J. Hodges, "The Industrial Workers of the World and the Oregon Packing Company Strike of July 1913" (master's thesis, Portland State University, 1996), 47; E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of*

a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915 to 1950 (Portland: The Georgian Press, 1979), 143-145, 170-171.

²⁰ Goldstein, *Political Repression*; Haynes, *Red Scare or Red Menace?*; Heale, *American Anticommunism*; Murray, *Red Scare*; Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism* (New York: The Free Press, 1995); William Preston, Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933*, 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

²¹ Mildred Cline, "A Study of Criminal Syndicalism in Oregon" (bachelor's thesis, Reed College, 1932); Albert Francis Gunns, "Civil Liberties and Crisis: The Status of Civil Liberties in the Pacific Northwest, 1917-1940" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1971); Harry W. Stone, Jr., "Oregon Criminal Syndicalism Laws and the Suppression of Radicalism by State and Local Officials" (master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1933); Harry Arthur Whitten, "Subversive Activities: Their Extent and Meaning in Portland" (bachelor's thesis, Reed College, 1939).

²² MacColl, *Growth of a City*; Michael Munk, "Portland's 'Silk Stocking Mob': The Citizens Emergency League in the 1934 Maritime Strike," paper presented at the 30th Annual Conference of the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association, Portland, Oregon, 17 May 1998; Gary Murrell, *Iron Pants: Oregon's Anti-New Deal Governor, Charles Henry Martin* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2000).

Chapter I

World War I and One Hundred Percent Americanism

Although the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) entered the war years with the largest membership in its history, the activities of the union since its foundation and subsequently during the conflict ensured the destruction of its effectiveness by 1919. Traditional labor organizations, such as the American Federation of Labor (AFL), refused to accommodate the syndicalist Wobblies, whom they perceived as a threat to the existence of trade unionism and American working-class values. The largely middle-class Progressives of the prewar period frequently became disgusted with the activities of the IWW members. Free speech fights, suspected acts of sabotage, and disruptive strikes did not create a positive impression with many reform-minded Progressives, whose objectives remained at odds with those of the anarchistic Wobblies. The general public in small-town America also had little reason to welcome the union into their communities. The burdens and tensions that could be produced with the arrival of the IWW had the potential to create unwelcome disruptions. Both Adam J. Hodges and John C. Townsend, in their respective works, documented and described the great cultural divide between conventional Americans and the IWW. Both writers also explored the popular perception of Wobblies as “alien invaders,” “tramps” and traitors. This view became especially dangerous to the radical union because of the threat its activities posed to the wartime goals of the federal government.¹

In 1917, units of the IWW conducted disruptive strikes at the centers of extraction for vital war materials, including the copper regions around Bisbee, Arizona, and Butte, Montana, and throughout lumber producing regions of the Pacific Northwest. These strikes reinforced the opinions of many Americans that Wobblies supported the Kaiser and acted as agents for the enemies of democracy. The demand for workers created by the conflict increased the IWW's bargaining power in some regions, but it also enabled local, state and federal authorities to effectively target its members. A massive federal propaganda campaign, launched at the beginning of the war, also served to enflame segments of an already agitated population against the perceived Wobbly menace. The cultural divide between Wobblies and middle-class Progressives now served to lead the group toward destruction. Economic dislocation, inflation, and a severe depression in part created by the return of millions of veterans at the end of the war also triggered repressive measures that targeted the IWW and other left-wing radical groups. American society remained in economic and cultural upheaval, with Wobblies the frequent targets of public anger caused by these wrenching changes.²

Portland, Oregon, played a vital role in America's military effort during World War I. The city's proximity to the great forests of the Northwest fixed it as an important source of war-related raw materials, such as Sitka spruce lumber, a critical ingredient of airplane wings. The administration of President Woodrow Wilson understood the economic potential of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest, and sought to prevent any interruptions in the supply of raw materials. But upon American entry into the war on April 6, 1917, the Industrial Workers of the World determined to take

advantage of the wartime economic boom and swelling of its own membership to extract, through work slowdowns and strikes, benefits from employers in the Northwest's lumber industry. The war-induced labor shortage gave the IWW increased power in the lumber mills and camps, and growing worker discontent resulted in a Wobbly-led strike beginning in the spring of 1917. Yet the timber action led directly to the unanticipated destruction of the union's power in the region, despite the fact that its national membership at the time approached or exceeded one-hundred thousand.³

Almost as soon as the IWW announced its strike in the spring of 1917 workers began to walk off their jobs in the forests and the lumber mills, thereby crippling much of the Northwest lumber industry. The Wilson Administration promptly sent Lieutenant Colonel Brice P. Disque to the Pacific Northwest to investigate the protest and develop a remedy for the situation. At the beginning of the project Disque displayed the Progressive attitudes of a social reformer. Influenced by Samuel Gompers and somewhat sympathetic to the aims of the AFL, he believed that granting basic concessions to workers would dislodge the Wobblies and remove the threat to the industry. Upon his arrival in the Northwest Disque began to uncover the roots of the conflict between management and the workers. Employers refused to meet the IWW's major demand by cutting regular working hours from ten to eight, declined to raise wages, and resisted the call to clean up and improve the living conditions in their lumber camps. Disque detested the direct action methods of the IWW, but he realized that the union played an important role in the lives of many timber employees. But he also became more sympathetic to the situation of the employers and quickly adopted

their bias against an organized workforce, which included the AFL as well as the IWW. Based on his research of conditions in the Northwest, Disque developed a program to get the workers back on the job, force the owners into line, and drive the IWW from the forests and mills for good.⁴

Disque created a company union called the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen (4L). He also incorporated regular army troops, designated the Spruce Division, into the Sitka timber harvesting process to replace some of the lost manpower in the forests. These troops also acted as a police force in and around the lumber camps, and as a result they helped to break the back of the IWW strike. The presence of soldiers in the camps prevented the Wobblies from effectively recruiting or keeping workers out of the forests. The 4L encouraged a mind-set of unquestioning patriotism, and workers had to join the company union and take an oath if they wanted to work in the woods or mills. The union issued a membership card and placed the worker's name on an industry-wide list. If an IWW member wanted to work he surrendered his membership card in the organization and pledged not to rejoin, or he faced the serious consequences of the 4L blacklist. When the 4L program began in earnest under Disque's direction during the fall of 1917, the tactics of the company union decimated the IWW in the forests and mills.⁵

Although the wartime 4L movement devastated the IWW in the Pacific Northwest lumber industry, it also led to a general improvement of living and working conditions for most of the employees in the region. Many workers originally became Wobblies because the union served as an outlet for their anger over the primitive living and working conditions in the camps. When the federal government stepped in

to reorganize and rationalize the lumber industry for the war effort, many employees dropped their complaints and became patriotic citizens under the guidance and reform efforts of the 4L. The troops affiliated with the 4L created positive results in the daily living and working experiences for thousands of people because the primitive lumber camps now had to be upgraded to military standards. Many timber workers experienced twentieth century amenities in their camps for the first time. The 4L forced the owners and managers of the lumber industry to compromise on some of the important worker demands. Increases in wages occurred and the industry-wide eight-hour workday became the norm. It took much pressure from the government to force the lumbermen to capitulate on the eight hour day, but they finally relented in early 1918. The program of the 4L addressed many of the IWW's original complaints and demands and undermined the reasons behind the lumber strike. Over a period of about six months Disque's program virtually eliminated the radical Wobblies as a powerful movement from the Northwest lumber industry. The Wilson Administration now had achieved its key wartime objectives: increased timber production and the destruction of the troublesome IWW. Mostly through the process of co-optation Disque had convinced the majority of workers and owners to work together and maintain a semblance of labor peace, at least for the duration of the war.⁶

Congress also acted to promote labor stability by passing the Espionage Act in June 1917. The Wilson Administration expected the measure to prevent interference with the war effort from seemingly disloyal and unpatriotic groups, from German enemy aliens to Wobblies. Section 3 of the law punished those who made "false reports or false statements with intent to interfere with the operation or success of the

military...forces of the United States,” and those who “shall willfully cause or attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty, in the military or naval forces,” during the conflict. Seditious talk could be punished as a felony, resulting in a fine of ten thousand dollars or a term in a federal penitentiary of up to twenty years, or both. The loyalties of the entire left-wing radical movement became suspect, and these organizations faced serious consequences from this law. The Espionage Act, and its amendment the Sedition Act, passed in May 1918, sought to curb some of the dialogue about the war effort in cities and towns across the nation. Revisions to Section 3 increased the offenses under the law and allowed the Postmaster General to ban delivery of incoming mail to individuals or organizations suspected of disloyalty. The authorities closely watched speakers at street meetings who criticized the war effort, while local police and federal agents broke up antiwar or radical meetings as a matter of course or persuaded local interests to refrain from renting out halls or public meeting places to dubious groups.⁷

Clarence L. Reames, the U.S. District Attorney in Oregon, carefully watched and reported on the activities of the local German alien population throughout the war years. New wartime federal laws required Germans to obtain a pass in order to work on the Portland waterfront or to come within a half-mile of the city armory. Local and federal authorities arrested and interrogated hundreds of German-American citizens and enemy aliens. Most Germans were issued passes and given leave to go about their daily lives. But aliens with suspect backgrounds, including those with Socialist party or IWW memberships, potentially faced internment for the duration of the war in remote inland concentration camps. The authorities maintained their surveillance of

hundreds of individuals with German backgrounds for the length of the American involvement in the war. The local branch of the American Protective League (APL) also brought in suspect German aliens for investigation. Yet by the end of the war reports indicated that not one incident of sabotage had been caused by German activity in the Portland area.⁸

The case of Dr. Marie Equi provided an example of the extreme nature of antiradicalism that existed during the war. Equi maintained a successful medical practice and was well known in Portland as a radical supporter of the IWW. During the first decade of the twentieth century she remained dedicated to Progressive causes and provided medical care to working-class women and children, frequently free of charge. President Theodore Roosevelt recognized Equi for her professional services during the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake. But it was common knowledge that Equi ran an abortion clinic as part of her practice and openly supported unpopular radical causes. Nancy Krieger, in her article about Equi's activities, claimed that the doctor was "among the most feared and hated women in the Northwest," in part because of her "outspoken criticisms of establishment figures." According to Hodges and Krieger, Equi apparently became radicalized during the 1913 cannery workers strike in East Portland. During the course of that strike Equi abandoned the reform efforts of the Progressive party for the more immediate gains of a socialist revolution. A witness to the violence suffered by the mostly women workers during the cannery strike, Equi came to the conclusion that only by direct action would the working class achieve its goals. She also had her first confrontations with the Portland police during the strike, in which she denounced the American flag in street speeches. Equi even stabbed a

policeman with a hatpin she asserted had been contaminated with a virus, a claim that turned out to be false. She focused on combating evils of capitalism, and from mid-1913 through World War I worked closely with the IWW and Socialist party.⁹

Equi came close to causing a riot during the June 1916 Preparedness Parade in Portland. She displayed a banner that said "Prepare to Die for J. P. Morgan and Profits," and then trampled on an American flag. The police quickly arrested Equi, but the authorities did not pursue the case any further. During 1917 and 1918 she frequently spoke at antiwar IWW and Socialist rallies and became one of the most visible radicals of Portland and the Northwest. An ardent opponent of the war effort and proponent of a worker revolution, Equi on many occasions lashed out against President Wilson and what she considered to be the disaster of American involvement in World War I. Her activities and speeches attracted the attention of William R. Bryon, a special agent for the Bureau of Investigation, who placed Equi under surveillance by members of the APL, local police, veterans groups, federal agents, and military intelligence operatives.¹⁰

On June 27, 1918, several patriotic individuals and members of military intelligence units surveilled Dr. Equi as she made an antiwar speech at the IWW hall in Portland. As a result of their reports an indictment was issued by Bert E. Haney, U.S. Attorney, on June 29, 1918, and Equi was arrested on eight counts for violations of the newly enacted Sedition Act. She apparently had made many inflammatory statements against the government of the United States and its allies in the war effort. According to the transcript of her trial, one witness claimed that during a street meeting in Portland on October 14, 1917, Equi had made the following comments:

We have got to get busy and do our little bit to bring about democracy. That's why I am out here. And now they call you unpatriotic. For what? For daring to strike during the war; for daring to have the courage of your convictions in asking for a living wage and better working conditions. The capitalistic class has forced good women to sell their bodies, but their tools, the editors of the papers and the lawyers, they sell their brains and that is a damn sight worse....

Equi supposedly declared during the same speech that the workers wanted internationalism, and that they would come back from France and never again take up arms against their brothers. Witnesses attributed several statements to Equi during her speech at the IWW hall on June 27, 1918, including the following account noted in the indictment: "That it was against the I.W.W. platform...to injure or kill another fellow worker but if it was necessary to do this, to gain their rights that she for one and every man or woman packing a red card...would be willing to sacrifice all they had, their life if need be, for the cause of industrial freedom."¹¹

Equi's trial began on November 12, 1918, one day after the armistice ended the war, and by November 21, 1918, she had been found guilty on five counts of Espionage Act violations of the original eight-count indictment. On December 31, 1918, Equi received a sentence to three years in prison and a five hundred dollar fine. Several appeals followed the verdict, but on October 27, 1919, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld her conviction. On October 19, 1920, Equi began to serve her sentence, which had already been commuted to eighteen months, at San Quentin State Prison near San Francisco, California. She remained at San Quentin for eleven months and received an early release on September 10, 1921. As a direct result of the repressive efforts of the federal government and local authorities in Portland, one of

the most radical and vocal opponents of the war effort, Dr. Marie Equi, was incarcerated and silenced even after the conflict had ended.¹²

The Espionage and Sedition acts gave United States District Attorneys such as Clarence Reames and Bert Haney the legal authority they needed to investigate, arrest, prosecute, and ultimately repress radical individuals and organizations. The successful program of wartime repression would be utilized to demolish groups such as the Socialist party and the IWW. Local authorities also played a major role in the antiradical offensive. George L. Baker of Portland had barely beaten Will Daly, a candidate with Socialist connections, in the non-partisan mayoral election of 1917. But Baker quickly proved himself to be a popular leader, as evidenced by the fact that he was elected to the office a total of four times. According to historian E. Kimbark MacColl, he “provided just the touch of drama and authority that Portlanders relished.” Baker had been an established figure in Portland for years by virtue of his ownership of several area theaters. In order to increase his political standing he joined many fraternal orders, including the Elks and Masons. Baker strongly promoted the war effort and provided great sendoffs for Oregon troops being sent overseas. His patriotic attitude reflected the general sentiment of the region; during the third Liberty Bond drive which began in April 1918, Oregon received national honors for being the first state to reach its quota. Baker was disturbed and offended by what he perceived to be treasonous and unpatriotic radical activities in the city. He detested the Wobblies, the Socialists, and any other group that might disrupt the war effort. In Mayor Baker, federal officials found a strong ally in their anti-radical campaign.¹³

After the American entry into the war Mayor Baker enlisted the Portland Police Bureau to keep a close eye on suspected and known radicals in and around the city. Raids on IWW meetings and harassment of individual members became a common occurrence in Portland in 1917 and 1918. Authorities used municipal vagrancy laws against agitators throughout the war. A squad of policemen swept a location and rounded up radical suspects, arrested them for vagrancy, and sent them to the city jail. Releases occurred after interrogations proved that certain individuals presented no threat, but alleged radicals could be roughed up, jailed for days without seeing a lawyer, and sometimes sentenced to the county rockpile for months.¹⁴

The Portland Police Bureau's Red Squad played a key role in the program against radicals during and after World War I. The Red Squad consisted of several officers permanently assigned to investigate radical activities in the city and around the state. The unit originated around 1914 as a special police detail designed to combat the disruptive vagrant and vice elements in Portland. But during World War I the Red Squad's efforts focused on the investigation of radical elements. Surveillance of individuals and organizations took place, and files containing index cards that listed information about 'Red' activities began to fill the Squad's office.¹⁵

Bureau of Investigation agents worked closely with the Red Squad in the effort to curb the actions of radical groups. One of the most important wartime antiradical campaigns occurred nationwide in early September 1917. The federal government initiated a series of raids against IWW offices and halls in an attempt to secure evidence to destroy the effectiveness of the organization. By mid-1917 the government began to respond to calls from several groups, including mine and lumber

company owners and the governors of several western states, that IWW activities must be curtailed because of the organization's disruptive and un-American policies. In his description of the union's stance towards the war effort, M. J. Heale stated, "To the IWW the war was a capitalist plot, and it saw no reason to refrain from strikes during mobilization, an attitude that patriots could not easily distinguish from treason." Many western employers believed that the union revealed its subversive nature through its antiwar activities and by its members' conduct during the lumber strike of 1917. Yet federal officials also expressed concern over the activities of the IWW for their own reasons. In order to successfully wage a modern war, the Wilson Administration had to mobilize the civilian population of the country on many levels, such as in the sale of war bonds. The establishment of a pro-war consensus among labor organizations proved to be of great importance, especially in the production of war materials. The administration had already reached an accord, which included a no-strike policy, with traditional AFL unions whom the government could not afford to alienate. During this process of co-optation the leader of the AFL, Samuel Gompers, joined the antiradical offensive in order to better protect the wartime gains of traditional crafts-based unions. Relegated to the margins of society by their own actions and business and governmental measures, the Wobblies became victims of wartime imperatives.¹⁶

As tensions continued to build in the Northwest during the timber strike of 1917, the army was utilized by the lumbermen to help quell the labor dispute. The troops stabilized the situation and also served to reassure the general public that the federal government protected their interests. The military defended threatened

industries and communities while the government developed methods to legally disrupt the IWW. Unsubstantiated claims that the Wobblies acted as agents of foreign powers and received funds from Germany to be used in the disruption of U.S. industries frequently appeared in the press. An editorial in the Portland *Oregonian* from September 6, 1917, illustrated the paper's attitude toward the IWW:

They have preached revolution at all times, and fomented open treason at various times, and have contributed whatever they could to industrial and political unrest...It has opposed conscription and has incited resistance to the draft. It has served the cause of Germany...The proverbial patience of the President has been exhausted at last, and he has undertaken to break up the various I.W.W. headquarters, seize their literature and disperse the members.

Similar editorials and stories hostile to the IWW appeared in magazines and newspapers over the course of several months. In September 1917, the government prepared to take decisive legal action against the union. In Portland federal agents, local police, and special Red Squad operatives raided the city's IWW hall on September 5, 1917. Few actual arrests occurred, although what seemed to be incriminating evidence was taken from the hall and would later be used in the prosecution of the union's leaders and organizers in Chicago.¹⁷

The September raids actually signified the beginning of the end for the IWW as a viable and active left-wing radical organization. On September 28, 1917, a Chicago federal grand jury indicted 166 union members on five counts that related to the union's alleged interference with the war effort. Funds designated for organizing and recruiting efforts had to be redirected to the legal defense of indicted members of the IWW. Federal and local authorities in Portland did their part by sending several Wobblies east to Chicago for the trial, which began on April 1, 1918. Five months

later the jury found the majority of the defendants guilty, and many IWW leaders received long prison sentences. The Chicago trial and concurrent local repression destroyed the effectiveness of the union in Portland and Oregon. The Wobblies experienced a brief recovery during the early 1920s, but at Chicago the federal government achieved its victory over the union.¹⁸

After the Armistice of November 11, 1918, many Americans expected that the clock could be turned back to 1914. But too much economic and social disruption had already occurred on the home front, and it would prove to be impossible to recreate the culture and society of the prewar era. A patriotic fervor still gripped many middle-class Americans, and with the Germans vanquished some pursued the destruction of internal enemies. The fear and paranoia of the middle class and elements of the Progressive political establishment towards left-wing factions in America persisted after the end of World War I, and radical groups suffered continued repression as the nation struggled toward normality.¹⁹

The Bolsheviks had caused much fear and even panic among numerous Americans since their seizure of power in Russia in November 1917. By the beginning of 1919 the threat of Bolshevism frightened many individuals into an unreasonable state of mind concerning all radical groups. Repeating the role they had played during the war, newspapers overstated the threat of the new Communist parties in the United States. Many citizens detested the Soviet regime because of its alleged threat to traditional American values. The Bolsheviks eliminated private property, emphasized the collective over individual rights and free will, created a one-party dictatorship, and eradicated dissent, frequently by murder. By enforcing state atheism they also

attempted to destroy religious belief and worship in Russia. After decades of conflict and turmoil involving radical groups, many Americans found the Communist incarnation of left-wing ideology to be completely evil, a plague that needed to be destroyed for the good of mankind. These developments would eventually lead to a national Red Scare, but that event was still several months off in late 1919.²⁰

The armistice caused abrupt changes to the U.S. economy as cancellations of war orders cost companies millions of dollars and workers thousands of jobs. A post-war recession triggered unemployment difficulties for returning veterans throughout the country. Tensions also increased as runaway inflation caused price increases of ninety-nine percent above their 1914 levels, and real wages declined by more than ten percent in 1919. The great flu pandemic of late 1918 and early 1919 swept through the nation, causing many deaths and further alarming the population. As the recession grew worse during the first months of 1919 the antiradical campaign also grew in intensity. Federal prosecutions for violations of the Espionage Act continued, such as the high-profile Equi case. Although the fighting was over, the war emergency had actually not ended. The signing of the November armistice had halted hostilities, but the Allies and Central Powers were still officially at war until the approval of a peace treaty. The United States District Attorney for Oregon, Bert Haney, continued to enforce federal espionage legislation, which remained on the books until the repeal of the Sedition Act in March 1921. The Espionage Act ceased to function when the United States signed a peace treaty with Germany in July 1921. Yet, while espionage laws remained a theoretical threat to radicals, other legal tools came to be developed

and utilized by local authorities in Portland and Oregon during the early months of 1919.²¹

The Portland Red Scare that took place in February 1919 did not occur in a vacuum. The Seattle General Strike, which lasted from February 6 to February 11, stirred up intense antiradical feelings of fear and hatred, especially among the middle class, the political establishment, and conservative AFL unions. Even before the strike began evidence pointed to the involvement of Communists in its formation. The general strike had evolved out of a major shipyard industrial action that began in late January 1919. During this period labor radicals dominated the Seattle Central Labor Council, and Secretary James A. Duncan openly supported Soviet Russia and opposed the conservative crafts-based unionism of the AFL. He, along with other council members of like mind, decided to call a general strike in an attempt to aid the shipyard workers. The council approved the call for a general strike, and on February 6 the walkout of 60,000 workers effectively shut down the economy of the city. Seattle Mayor Ole Hanson claimed that the stoppage had been orchestrated and led by Communists and Wobblies determined to replicate the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia. Many newspapers reprinted the antiradical allegations of the conservative Seattle press, and for a week the public received reports that a Bolshevik revolution had occurred in the city. Frank Phelps, a Seattle resident at the time of the general strike, denounced Bolshevism in a broadside:

Movements of this character are diametrically opposed to everything that is right and good that America has stood for...It breeds class hatred, undermines respect for property and personal rights, puts a premium upon arrogance of opinion, teaches men to break practically all the commandments upon which our civilization is based and lowers our National ideals.²²

Federal enforcement of the Espionage and Sedition Acts diminished in early 1919 as the government began to curtail its antiradical campaign. Yet the state legislature of Oregon stepped in to fill this apparent gap by enacting legislation to define and punish criminal syndicalism. Oregon lawmakers were not alone in their efforts to draft a state sedition law. Similar regulations were being prepared or had already been enacted in most of the western states. Thirty-four states and two territories had either criminal syndicalism or sedition laws by 1923. John H. Hall, Sr., a prominent Portland attorney, became one of the most active supporters of this effort. Hall had previously been the U.S. Attorney for Oregon, but in 1905 he had been implicated in the infamous federal timber sale case and removed from that position. He managed to avoid prison through the appeals process and eventually received a pardon from President William H. Taft. At the annual convention of the Oregon State Bar Association in December 1918, Hall introduced a resolution that called for a committee of five members of the bar to prepare bills “that will tend to check and stamp out Bolshevism, Anarchism, I.W.W. “ism”, and all other “isms” that are subversive of a sound and stable government,” and to prevent the public display of red or black flags, which symbolized the IWW and anarchy, respectively. Concerning the flag issue, he stated that “I do not want to have to submit to seeing the red flag or any other emblem of disloyalty carried in this state.” Hall became chairman of the committee, which began to draft legislation in January 1919. Other members of the group included Bert Haney, U.S. Attorney, and Walter M. Evans, District Attorney for Portland.²³

In January 1919, state Representative K. K. Kubli presented new legislation designed to combat radicalism to the Oregon House. House Bill No. 1 was drafted from the Washington State criminal syndicalism law that had been adopted during the war, itself based on the anti-anarchist laws of New York from as far back as 1902. The Kubli criminal syndicalism statute was designed to suppress individual members of the IWW and other radical organizations, including the Socialist party. The Communist parties had not yet been established, but a Bolshevik menace began to be perceived in the Portland Council of Workmen, Soldiers and Sailors, a group allegedly inspired by the Soviet councils in Russia. The proposed legislation made speech or writing that advocated the overthrow of the government of the United States by force and violence, or membership in a radical organization, a felony. Convicted individuals faced a possible one thousand dollar fine and up to ten years in the state penitentiary under the act. State Senator Walter A. Dimick introduced similar legislation, Senate Bill No. 2, at about the same time. These measures became known as the Dimick-Kubli criminal syndicalism bill, and the conference measure came up for a vote in late January 1919.²⁴

The roll-call vote was twenty-nine to one in the state senate, with only future governor Walter M. Pierce voting against the measure. In the house four representatives, after trying to make the bill more favorable toward labor unions, voted in the negative. Senator Pierce defended his opposition to the statute in the following statement reported by the *Oregon Journal* on January 16, 1919:

There is a cause of this Bolshevism, this turmoil which is spreading over the world...and perhaps society must reorganize itself. Perhaps the industrial world must reorganize so every man can earn a living for himself and his

family. This bill may only add fuel to the flames, and instead let us attempt to remove the cause and not wave a red flag in the face of those who are protesting against existing conditions.

However, Senator Dimick successfully argued for the passage of the measure, largely based on the perceived threat of the Bolshevik movement. As recounted by the *Oregonian* on January 17, 1919, Dimick declared “that there shall be no I.W.W.ism, no Bolshevism and no other “ism” which advocates violence or crime...to preserve our true Americanism we must...stamp out this movement...” The four Oregon House members who voted against the criminal syndicalism bill represented largely union districts in Multnomah and Coos Counties, and they feared that the law would be used as a tool by employers and local authorities to destroy labor union organizations and persecute their members. Representative Eugene E. Smith of Portland, in an attempt to counteract the syndicalism statute, introduced a measure that would punish employers for disruption of labor organizations, a “criminal commercialism” bill. Smith, a former president of the Portland Central Labor Council and one of four representatives who had voted against the syndicalism act, later withdrew the criminal commercialism measure after the Dimick-Kubli bill passed the legislature and was signed into law by the governor on February 3, 1919. State and local authorities now had a seemingly potent legal weapon to use against radical individuals.²⁵

The Oregon criminal syndicalism statute turned out to have been broadly written and open to wide interpretation by courts and officials. Its implementation remained haphazard throughout the state, and in some regions enforcement never occurred. Even in Portland, where the use of the measure occurred most frequently,

the law against criminal syndicalism proved difficult to impose in many cases. The act prohibited seditious speech and meetings where such speech occurred along with the distribution of pamphlets or the sale of books containing radical propaganda. Even an owner or manager renting out a hall to groups whose members engaged in radical activities faced a possible prison sentence of up to one year and a five hundred dollar fine under the syndicalism statute.²⁶

The framers of the Oregon criminal syndicalism law originally designed it to target the IWW because of the perception that the union represented the major threat to the safety and security of America and its war effort. Yet the Wobblies remained active in Portland, where they continued to sell literature and conduct street meetings. At the time of the syndicalism bill's passage, moreover, other radical groups, such as the Bolshevik-oriented Council of Workmen, Soldiers and Sailors, had emerged and presented potential new targets for law enforcers. During the early postwar period Mayor Baker railed in patriotic speeches against left-wing radical groups, particularly the IWW, and the alleged Bolshevik presence in Portland. At the beginning of February 1919 he shepherded a red flag bill through city council which made it unlawful to display or possess red or black flags, or any flag considered antagonistic towards the U.S. government. Upon conviction the statute provided for penalties of up to six months imprisonment or a five-hundred dollar fine, or both. "It is not the time for the waving of the red flag," Baker declared. "If they don't like Old Glory...we'll make them like it...it will not be tramped upon by any disgruntled element in this city."²⁷

On February 11, 1919, the mayor met with U.S. Attorney Bert Haney, District Attorney Walter Evans, and City Attorney W. P. LaRoche to discuss the radical threat in Portland. These authorities came up with a three-pronged strategy to rid the city of Communist elements and destroy their organizations within a matter of months. Suspected and known radicals would be arrested on vagrancy charges during police sweeps preferably directed by Red Squad members. After those arrested had been interrogated at the city jail they might be brought up on criminal syndicalism charges under the newly passed state law. Or, if those arrested were aliens, they might be turned over to the immigration officer for deportation proceedings.²⁸

Under the U.S. Immigration Act of October 1918, federal officials were given increased authority to deport alien members of the IWW. A memorandum written by an official in the Bureau of Immigration stated that “Membership in the I.W.W. together with evidence of knowledge on the part of the alien as to the nature of the propaganda and aims of the organization...shall be considered good grounds for deportation....” However, the new legislation did not specifically name the IWW in its provisions, and enforcement varied widely. The deportations of few Wobblies occurred under the 1918 legislation, but the threat of expulsion remained a weapon that federal immigration officials sporadically utilized against alien radicals. Nevertheless, in Portland, district immigration director Rapheal P. Bonham worked closely with Mayor Baker, District Attorney Evans, and the Red Squad in a local campaign to oversee IWW and Communist agitators.²⁹

At the height of the Red Scare Portland Mayor Baker took measures to avoid an emulation of the Seattle General Strike by thwarting any suspected revolutionary

activities by Bolsheviks and Wobblies. Enforcement of the state criminal syndicalism act began on February 9, 1919, with the arrests of five men subsequently charged with distributing revolutionary literature, including Harlin Talbert, secretary of the Oregon Socialist party. The police claimed that some of these prisoners were connected with the Bolshevik element in Seattle and had been attempting to instigate a general strike in Portland. The *Oregon Journal* encouraged citizens to do their “patriotic duty” by contacting the police if they encountered circulators selling seditious literature so that quick arrests could be made. On February 9 the police arrested a man for carrying a banner advertising a meeting for the Workers’ International Industrial Union. The authorities later raided the headquarters of this organization and confiscated a significant amount of alleged seditious literature. After a conference with Mayor Baker, Police Chief N. F. Johnson issued an order to the police department to ban persons from carrying banners which promoted strikes and radical meetings. Yet, not long after the launch of the antiradical dragnet, problems began to occur with the implementation of the criminal syndicalism act.³⁰

On February 10, 1919, the municipal court released eight men who had been arrested on suspicion of criminal syndicalism for lack of evidence. The *Oregonian* reported that Judge George Rossman “decided he could not hold the prisoners because there was nothing of a violent nature, that is inciting to riot and the destruction of property in the pamphlets and books.” Harlin Talbert of the Socialist party was among those released. Several days later the Socialists held a mass meeting in Portland at which they repudiated any connection of their party with the IWW. H. M. Wicks, a local Socialist leader, declared that the syndicalism law did not present a danger to

their organization but would affect the Wobblies. On February 25, 1919, a joint force of federal, county and city authorities raided the IWW hall at 109 Second Avenue. The authorities arrested twenty-two men, confiscated literature, and wrecked office furniture. Police charged citizens with vagrancy and held aliens for deportation proceedings. Reginald Bender, a Wobbly, was convicted of vagrancy and given a ninety-day jail sentence. At this point, according to Burl A. Green and MacColl, the IWW wrote letters to the city authorities and other leading figures informing them “where all of the speakeasies and bootleg joints were located.” The Wobblies then began to picket thirteen establishments with banners denouncing the liquor trade. Within twenty-four hours harassment and persecution of the IWW in Portland stopped, and this effectively marked the end of the local Red Scare.³¹

As Red Scare hysteria faded a certain calm settled over the city of Portland. Antiradical repression ebbed somewhat as the local economy began to recover and returning veterans settled in to their civilian lives. But members of radical groups like the IWW and Socialist party had been given an idea of the treatment that they could expect in the future from authorities. Depending on the motivations of such officials as the mayor, district attorney, or immigration director, a crackdown on radicals remained a serious threat. The Oregon criminal syndicalism statute would remain on the books until 1937, and it continued to menace radical organizations and individuals, to be invoked whenever the authorities felt threatened, deemed it necessary for a radical clean-up, or sought to win approval from voters.³²

The Red Scare that occurred in Portland, Oregon, during the early months of 1919 would reemerge towards the end of the year. But in April and May of 1919 the

impetus to repress radical groups, such as the Industrial Workers of the World and the emergent Bolsheviks, seemed to have decreased considerably among the federal and local authorities of the city. The suspension in enforcement of the Espionage Act limited the powers of federal agents and attorneys to pursue indictments against radicals under suspicion of seditious speechmaking, pamphleteering, and other activities. Nevertheless, federal agents, such as William R. Bryon, did not end their assistance to local authorities in Portland involved in their own prosecutions of subversive radical behavior, and the withdrawal of the national government from the antiradical crusade proved to be only temporary in 1919.³³

Although curtailment of the legal reach of the federal government impacted the anti-subversive campaign, authorities in Portland maintained their offensive against the apparent radical threat, but to a lesser extent than during the early months of 1919. The Red Squad expanded its file system covering left-wing radicals and organizations, and local newspapers reported occasional police run-ins with these kinds of groups. The effectiveness of the new Oregon criminal syndicalism law remained a concern of the legal and political establishment. The statute's impact probably fell more within the psychological rather than the legal sphere, because it potentially created a mood of self-censorship over radical individuals in Portland and around the state. The Red Scare of early 1919 may have encouraged some radicals to suspend their activities and lie low while authorities made their rounds throughout the community. In addition to the campaign against left-wing groups in Portland, many AFL-affiliated unions both locally and nationally also suffered major setbacks during the postwar period.³⁴

During World War I the Wilson Administration forced many business owners to grant the AFL generous concessions in order to boost productivity in the nation's armaments and supplies factories. The AFL's member unions gained wage increases and extended benefits from the employers while the war emergency lasted. The organization, under the conservative leadership of Samuel Gompers, also demonstrated its patriotism by denouncing groups like the IWW and driving radicals from its ranks. But the employers did not plan to let the unions keep their newly won advantages after the end of the war, and the concept of the "American Plan" emerged during the early postwar reconstruction period. The American Plan came to reflect the war-inspired patriotism of the times, and the nationalistic concept of "One Hundred Percent Americanism" played an important role in its successful implementation. The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), along with several other business associations, initiated the anti-union drive in 1919, and this program lasted into the early 1920s. Small businessmen who supported republican principles had organized the NAM in the early 1900s, largely to counter the growth of unions in manufacturing plants and to promote the "open shop" drive. In the open shop workplace, labor unions were restricted and individual workers had to negotiate directly with management, while in a "closed shop" a union represented the employees under a collective bargaining agreement which usually included compulsory membership in the labor organization. According to historian M. J. Heale, "Bodies like the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Metal Trades Association worked with the patriotic societies in propagating open shop ideas, insisting that unionism 'ranked with Bolshevism.'" In the anxious and patriotic atmosphere of the postwar period the

connection of unions and the closed shop with radicalism and sedition made sense to many Americans. Since many citizens considered socialism and bolshevism to be un-American, American Plan propagandists tied these radical ideologies to unionism, which they characterized as an “alien” import. As quoted by Heale, a member of the NAM stated in 1920, “You can hardly conceive of a more un-American, a more anti-American institution than the closed shop.” According to historian Robert K. Murray, in 1919 every issue of *Open Shop Review* emphasized “that there were at least 3,000,000 union men in the country who believed in the ‘insidious and radical’ closed-shop principle.” American Plan propaganda helped accelerate the decline and collapse of many AFL unions during the early 1920s.³⁵

Although the American Plan caused major setbacks for organized labor in 1919 and the early 1920s, it was not the only factor in the overall decline of the union movement. The Seattle General Strike, which the AFL-controlled Central Labor Council in that city had called, marked the beginning of a “strike wave” that persisted for much of 1919. Hundreds of AFL-supported strikes occurred, and many succeeded in winning some concessions from employers, such as increased wages. But, in line with the principles of the American Plan, owners rarely gave in to their workers’ demands for collective bargaining rights. In September 1919, most of the Boston police force went on strike in an attempt to win support to affiliate with the AFL, an action that endangered public safety and generated much negative publicity for the labor movement. September also marked the beginning of a major AFL-backed steel strike, and in November 1919 a massive coal strike occurred. The police strike was crushed by city and state authorities, and the steel strike failed as a result of employer

and governmental repression and union disorganization. Only the workers in the coal industry won a partial victory with an increase in wages. These events resulted in a loss of public confidence in the labor union movement as a whole. Coupled with open-shop propaganda, to some minds all unionists came to be equated with followers of “foreign” ideologies like bolshevism and socialism. By early 1920 the strike wave had ended and the AFL’s position had been seriously weakened. In addition to the loss of public confidence the labor movement lost much of its membership, dropping from approximately 4.5 million members in 1919 to 3.5 million members by 1923. The fortunes of organized labor also declined in Portland, Oregon, and to some extent reflected these national trends.³⁶

In Portland the Central Labor Council (CLC) represented the local interests of the AFL-affiliated unions. CLC minutes from 1926 alleged that an anti-union organization called “The League to Establish Industrial Democracy” had been created by certain unnamed employers in the city by 1919 or 1920. According to the minutes the league represented the Portland branch of the American Plan movement. The report also referred at length to the growing problem of labor espionage during the postwar period in Portland. Labor espionage encompassed the methods that employers and authorities used to disrupt employee organizations. In practice this might involve the hiring of labor spies by managers to infiltrate unions, usually for purposes of gathering intelligence, creating internal dissension, or acting as agents provocateurs. The CLC minutes from 1926 documented a case of labor espionage allegedly perpetrated by Elton Watkins. Watkins, a Portland attorney since 1904, served as a special agent in the Department of Justice for six years and as a deputy U.S. Attorney

in 1919. According to the records, at the beginning of 1920 he resigned his position as deputy attorney in order to assume the leadership of the League to Establish Industrial Democracy. The CLC charged that Watkins had intervened in the activities of two labor unions:

Watkins went about his task vigorously, and his recent connections with the federal government made him an influential hired man for the anti-unionists. He succeeded to a large degree in disrupting and destroying the Tailors Union and the Bakery Workers Union. In one of these cases a number of the strikers who were foreign born believed that Watkins still represented the federal government. Hints of deportation for foreign-born...caused a break in the ranks of the strikers.

The battle with the Tailors Union and the Bakery Workers Union apparently depleted the resources of the local American Plan movement, and its anti-labor actions ceased. Yet, the CLC alleged that Watkins continued as the local director of the league for approximately two years with a salary of \$7,500 per year. In 1922, with the backing of the Ku Klux Klan, he defeated Republican Clifton N. McArthur in the Third Congressional District to become the first Oregon Democrat to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives since 1879. After being defeated for reelection Watkins returned to Portland, and the CLC records indicate that during the mid-1920s he pursued his anti-union efforts by acting as a defense attorney for indicted company spies and detectives.³⁷

The activities of Elton Watkins concerning aliens and labor unions, if accurately recorded by the CLC, reflected the upsurge of nativism that occurred in Oregon and the nation. Concern over the influence of foreign-born in unions and the loyalty of organized labor became important issues in the propaganda campaign of the open shop movement. Anti-immigrant feeling had been growing since the 1890s, and

World War I and the problems of the postwar period simply exasperated an already vexing issue. The suspicions of many Americans toward potential “radical” immigrants from Eastern Europe contributed to the nationwide Red Scare of 1919-1920. Yet the majority of the immigrant population reflected the generally conservative peasant values of their native cultures. The few aliens who advocated left-wing radical theories and worker-led revolutions gave many recent immigrants a revolutionary image and stirred up nativist fears. In Oregon, the upsurge in nativism took several forms, most notably in the growth of the Ku Klux Klan’s membership and political power between 1921 and 1924, the successful passage in 1922 of the compulsory school bill, which required all students to attend public schools, and the Alien Land Act of 1923, designed to restrict Japanese ownership of farmland.³⁸

In Portland a campaign against radical aliens emerged under the direction of Raphael Bonham, local director of the Bureau of Immigration. The threat of deportation remained the only effective legal weapon of the federal government against foreign-born radicals after the suspension of enforcement of the Espionage Act. Federal authorities expected states and localities to prosecute American-born radicals with their own antiradical legislation after the war. Bonham detested radicalism and strictly enforced the federal immigration codes against alien members of groups such as the IWW. If charged, foreign-born radicals suffered the possibility of deportation under amendments made to the immigration statutes in 1918 and 1920. The Immigration Act of 1918 made membership in and knowledge of the objectives of “radical” organizations grounds for deportation. The Immigration Act of 1920 went even further, according to Preston in *Aliens and Dissenters*, penalizing aliens for

“possessing (seditious) literature...and for showing sympathy and support (apart from membership) by financial contributions,” to subversive groups. The roundup and eventual deportation of hundreds of aliens from across the nation occurred in 1919 and 1920 as a result of their alleged radical beliefs.³⁹

The situation involving the radical Finnish element in Astoria, Oregon, during the spring and summer of 1919 presented particular challenges for the federal authorities. For decades large numbers of Finnish immigrants had settled in Astoria, and by World War I the town contained the largest population of Finns west of the Mississippi River. The community was divided by a conflict between traditional, or Church Finns, and Socialists. Since 1907 the Socialists had published a radical newspaper in Finnish called the *Toveri*, and this periodical frequently generated local controversy. At the beginning of the war federal authorities began to search the paper for seditious articles and recruited local Church Finns to handle the translations. In November 1918 authorities arrested four employees of the *Toveri* for Espionage Act violations. An important part of the case against the defendants included the allegation that subversive *Toveri* articles convinced young Finns to disobey the Selective Service Act, therefore hindering the war effort. The trial in the U.S. District Court in Portland of William N. Reivo, editor of the paper, and A. J. Partan, its business manager, began in April 1919. In May the men were found guilty and sentenced to two years at McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary in Puget Sound. After the failure of their appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, Partan and Reivo began their sentences the following March. In his article about the *Toveri*, historian P. G. Hummasti noted that the “arrests occurred at a time of heightened middle-class sensitivity to activities of Finnish

Socialists in Astoria,” and that a Red Scare atmosphere developed after the trial which disrupted the community for months.⁴⁰

In April 1919, antiradical hysteria intensified in many areas of the nation with the discovery of several mail bombs addressed to leading public officials. On May Day major riots occurred in Boston, Cleveland, and Los Angeles in which bystanders and police attacked radicals celebrating the labor holiday. Several bombings occurred in early June 1919, including one which damaged the home of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer. Robert Goldstein, in *Political Repression in Modern America*, maintained that after the bombings Palmer began to plan a nationwide federal campaign against radicals. The Red Scare intensified as a result of the Boston police strike and the steel strike of September 1919. Federal authorities by late 1919 had developed a strategy to sweep the nation’s cities clean of radical aliens through a massive program of arrests and quick deportations. On November 7, 1919, the first major arrests of aliens took place during raids on the halls and offices of the Union of Russian Workers (URW) in cities around the nation. Other raids soon followed, and on December 21, 1919, 249 “radical” aliens, including anarchist Emma Goldman, were deported to Europe. Goldstein stated that, “By late 1919, not only workers, but liberals in all areas of life – education, the clergy, even the government itself, were coming under attack from superpatriots for alleged radical leanings.” The Pacific Northwest did not escape this antiradical hysteria, and by the fall of 1919 a renewed Red Scare enveloped the region.⁴¹

The American Legion played an important role in the second stage of the antiradical campaign that developed in the Pacific Northwest during the fall and

winter of 1919-1920. The Legion emerged in May 1919 at a St. Louis convention as an organization devoted to advancing the interests of American veterans who had just returned from the world war. The group expanded rapidly, and by the end of 1919 over one million members had enrolled. The veterans of the Legion came primarily from the middle class, many having joined the group because of its firm stance on veterans' benefits and its resolute support of "One Hundred Percent Americanism." The middle-class members of the organization tended to be well-connected economically and politically within their communities. Legionnaires played important roles in shaping the policies of law enforcement agencies, the courts, and business associations like Chambers of Commerce. Historian William Pencak has maintained that the postwar turmoil deeply concerned many veterans, especially the un-American activities of radical groups like the IWW. According to Pencak the "newly created Legion capitalized on the Red Scare to emerge as America's leading anti-radical organization," and the group "successfully appointed itself America's leading anti-Bolshevik organization." The Legion's antiradical stance reflected the Progressive standards of many middle-class Americans, and the organization attempted to reintroduce order into a chaotic postwar society. In Portland the American Legion maintained close ties with Mayor Baker, the police department, and the local immigration office.⁴²

The Red Scare of 1919-1920 in the Pacific Northwest centered around the Centralia, Washington, Armistice Day tragedy of November 11, 1919. The disaster originated with the presence of the IWW in town and the desire of elements within the community to drive the Wobblies out. During World War I the union's hall had been

wrecked and its members driven off, but the IWW returned in March 1919 and reestablished its presence. It became common knowledge in October 1919 that some local businessmen had gathered to plan a raid on the hall, and the Wobblies prepared to defend themselves. On November 11, the first anniversary of the armistice, several Legion members physically attacked the front of the IWW hall while on a march through town. The Wobblies fired on the assailants, and at the end of the confrontation four Legionnaires had been killed. The authorities rounded up the IWW members, and that evening local vigilantes took Wesley Everest, a Wobbly who had been involved in the confrontation, from the jail to the outskirts of town where they lynched him. The Centralia tragedy provoked an immediate reaction that effectively destroyed the IWW in the state of Washington. Many citizens lost all objectivity, and the Legion effectively declared martial law after the incident. Legionnaires and vigilantes rounded up all the Wobblies they could find and wrecked IWW halls while the authorities looked the other way. Throughout the rest of the West the organization suffered from violent reprisals and other forms of retaliation. The local press actively supported the campaign to eliminate the IWW, a stance reflected in an *Oregonian* editorial from November 13, 1919:

Every member of any revolutionary society, I.W.W., Union of Russian Workers or whatever it may be, should be arrested and punished according to the measure of his guilt...Even if this should involve imprisonment of 100,000 persons, it should not cause hesitation...They have declared a class war; let them have it – not a war between labor and capital as they falsely call it but a war between American democracy and red communism.

Although the most intense reprisals against the IWW occurred north of the Columbia River, pressures which had been building for months erupted in Portland and Oregon after the calamity at Centralia.⁴³

On the night of the Centralia disaster local police and federal agents in Portland raided the hall of the Council of Workmen, Soldiers and Sailors during an open meeting. Mayor Baker ordered the raid because speakers had allegedly condemned the Legion and blamed its members for the unrest at Centralia. The authorities arrested fifty-seven men and seized evidence for later use against the radicals. Over the next several days Municipal Court Judge George Rossman tried many of these defendants for vagrancy, and he sentenced them to varying prison terms and imposed fines. Charles Stewart received a 180-day sentence for vagrancy, and the *Oregonian* quoted him as saying: "I am sorry I was born where the upper class have all the rights." Local Bureau of Immigration Director Raphael Bonham and his assistants interviewed foreign-born prisoners to determine if they were members of the IWW and hence candidates for deportation. In late November Deputy District Attorney Joseph L. Hammersly invoked the state criminal syndicalism act and indicted twenty-two alleged members of the IWW. They would be the first individuals to be prosecuted under the statute approved in February 1919. The case of Joseph Laundry, one of the IWW members charged with criminal syndicalism, would prove to be of vital importance in future campaigns against radicals in Oregon. As a full-blown Red Scare gripped Portland and the rest of the nation, many newspapers painted an exaggerated picture of the strength of the groups targeted for repression. After the

events in Centralia, much of the Northwest's citizenry seemed to be in no mood to tolerate radical organizations, especially the IWW.⁴⁴

In several smaller communities of Oregon anti-IWW activities also took place. The arrests of twenty suspected Wobblies occurred in Tillamook, Oregon, a logging and dairy center, on November 16, 1919, during a raid conducted by the county sheriff, leading businessmen, and local Legionnaires. In early December six of these men pleaded guilty to the charge of criminal syndicalism. The judge sentenced three men to ten years in the state penitentiary but later reduced all of the sentences to major fines and time served. A member of the American Legion apparently did not approve of the light sentences and brought the matter to the attention of Governor Ben W. Olcott. In defense of the court's decision District Attorney T. H. Goyne explained that the men had never advocated violence or crime to achieve political change and had renounced the IWW. After some grumbling the Legion dropped the matter, and the Tillamook criminal syndicalism cases quietly faded from view. Yet, as the antiradical campaign in some Oregon communities made fitful progress, new raids in Portland in early January 1920 revitalized the Red Scare.⁴⁵

On January 2, 1920, local police and federal agents raided the offices of the Communist Labor party in Portland and made twenty-eight arrests. This raid occurred because U.S. Attorney General Palmer had ordered a nationwide roundup of radicals, mainly members of the new Communist parties. Two Communist parties had been established in the United States in September 1919: the Communist party and the Communist Labor party. The Communist party (CP) emerged when the majority of the left-wing foreign-language federations left the Socialist party to join the more radical

Communist movement. In turn, Portland native John Reed had been one of the principal founders of the Communist Labor party (CLP), a smaller group composed of mostly native-born radicals. At the end of 1919 the CP had approximately thirty thousand members, while the CLP had about ten thousand adherents. During the January raids against these organizations the arrests of between four thousand and six thousand suspected radicals occurred in thirty-three cities as a result of the nationwide dragnet. The federal government had hoped to deport three thousand foreign-born members of the Communist parties. But court decisions, changes in immigration procedures, and the actions of sympathetic federal officials stymied this offensive, although the deportations of 591 aliens eventually occurred in 1920 and 1921.⁴⁶

After the successful raid on the CLP headquarters on January 2, 1919, local and federal authorities arrested eight more alleged party members over the next several days. The antiradical offensive also forced the closure of the CLP's local newspaper, the *Portland Labor News*. William Bryon, special agent of the U.S. Department of Justice, collected evidence against suspected radical aliens for potential use in deportation proceedings. The Multnomah County Grand Jury began an investigation of the CLP members and eventually indicted six men on charges of criminal syndicalism. From these six indictments three individuals, Karl W. Oster, Claude Hurst, and Fred W. Fry, went to trial at the beginning of March 1920, and William S. U'Ren served as their defense attorney. U'Ren, a well-known Progressive, had created the "Oregon System" amendments to the state constitution which had been approved by voters in 1902. He worked to change the constitution in an attempt to circumvent the corruption of Oregon's political parties. These changes gave the

electorate more say in state government by allowing a public vote on initiatives and referendums. During the syndicalist trial the literature of the CLP and other radical groups turned out to be the only effective evidence that District Attorney Walter H. Evans produced against the defendants. U'Ren argued that the three men did not represent a threat to government or society and, as reported by the *Oregonian*, he stated that, "The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' to my mind is the rankest nonsense...and all history proves it. But these men are entitled to their dream." However, the arguments of U'Ren did not sway the jury, which found Oster, Hurst and Fry guilty. After the successful CLP trial, District Attorney Evans turned his attention to the prosecution of Joseph Laundry on the charge of criminal syndicalism.⁴⁷

Laundry had been arrested on November 11, 1919, at the evening meeting of the Council of Workmen, Soldiers and Sailors, and his indictment for criminal syndicalism followed later that month. Well known to the authorities of the city as a radical agitator, he held a membership in the IWW as well as a seat on the Portland Central Labor Council (CLC). During a street demonstration in October 1919 he had been detained and investigated by the police, and at a meeting Laundry openly stated that Special Agent William Bryon should be taken out to the Morrison Bridge and hanged. The *Oregonian* linked him to the local CLP and the publication of the *Portland Labor News*. At the time of his arrest he had been the leading candidate for the presidency of the CLC during an attempted radical takeover of that body. In January 1920 another arrest of Laundry occurred during the local campaign against the CLP. Still under indictment for a violation of the criminal syndicalism statute, his case came before Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge Harry H. Belt on April 1, 1920.⁴⁸

George F. Vanderveer served as defense attorney for Joseph Laundry during the trial, while District Attorney Evans prosecuted the case. Vanderveer had unsuccessfully defended the Wobbly leaders and organizers during the Chicago trial in 1918. By late 1919 and early 1920 he had taken on several local IWW cases in Oregon and Washington, most notably the murder trial of the Centralia IWW defendants. Vanderveer came to Portland to defend the Wobblies indicted under Oregon's criminal syndicalism law. Using the same tactic that had proven successful during the CLP trial, Evans again based much of his case on the "radical" statements found in IWW literature. In the opening statement for the state, as reported by the *Oregonian*, Deputy District Attorney Earl F. Bernard emphasized that "there is more at issue than one man's liberty. An organization which has attacked and is attacking every tradition of America and all its institutions which we cherish is on trial." According to the *Oregonian*, Vanderveer conducted his defense of Laundry by describing the history of the labor movement, the misery of the workers, and the horrors of war. He even referred to the Wobblies as "the pacifists of the world." After a deliberation of eighteen hours the jury returned with a verdict of guilty against Laundry. On April 19, 1920, Judge Belt sentenced him to a two-year term in the state penitentiary. Apparently dismayed by the outcome of the trial, Vanderveer said he would not return to Portland to defend twenty-five additional Wobblies under indictment for criminal syndicalism. Laundry appealed the verdict through to the Oregon Supreme Court, and he remained out on bail during this process.⁴⁹

On February 28, 1922, the Oregon Supreme Court voided Laundry's conviction on the grounds that the Circuit Court of Multnomah County had tried him on two

charges at the same time. He had been prosecuted for joining the IWW on April 26, 1919, as well as assembling with the Council of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors on November 11, 1919, a case of double jeopardy. But the court upheld the criminal syndicalism law in the version passed by the Oregon legislature in 1921. The legislature had redrafted the law to close a major loophole that became apparent in the 1919 version. The 1919 law had punished individuals for joining organizations that advocated criminal syndicalism; the 1921 version also punished existing members of organizations at the time of the law's passage. Most importantly, the Oregon Supreme Court held that the criminal syndicalism law did not violate the freedom of speech or the right of free assembly and that it acted as a defensive measure against radicals who threatened to overthrow the governments of Oregon and the United States. The statute remained on the books until 1937, a long-term threat to radicals in Oregon.⁵⁰

Although the Red Scare continued through late 1919 and into early 1920, by spring the antiradical hysteria once again had diminished significantly. In Portland federal officials and local police raided labor union offices in the Governor Building on April 29, 1920. In their search for Wobblies and other "Reds" authorities arrested thirty unionists and took them over to police headquarters for questioning. Yet this time the government's action caused an uproar in the city. When organized labor demanded the release of the prisoners and a public apology from authorities, the police now released those who had been arrested. This incident seemed to be last major episode of the 1919-1920 Red Scare that occurred in Portland, and by mid-1920 the campaign had run its course. Prosecutions for criminal syndicalism ended in Portland, possibly because authorities believed they had sent a strong message to radicals of the

city and state. District attorneys perhaps feared that if the criminal syndicalism statute came up for review before the Oregon Supreme Court, it might be declared unconstitutional. The court did not uphold the statute in the Laundry case until 1922, by which time enforcement of the criminal syndicalism law had effectively ended.⁵¹

By mid-1921 the American economy had started to recover from a severe postwar depression, although the agricultural downturn extended through the entire decade. The great industrial conflicts of 1919 mostly ended in significant defeats for organized labor, and the National Association of Manufacturers, along with other business groups, continued the open-shop campaign into the early twenties. As the nation began to return to a modicum of normality the fear of subversion by left-wing radicals also decreased. Republican presidential candidate Warren G. Harding maintained that the number of domestic radicals had been exaggerated, and in August 1920 he stated that "too much has been said about Bolshevism in America." In another sign of easing tensions, Harding pardoned Eugene V. Debs on Christmas Eve in 1921. Debs, the leader of the Socialist party, had been convicted of an Espionage Act violation in 1918 and sentenced to ten years in the Atlanta penitentiary. The American republic survived the challenges of World War I, and dangerous internal threats had seemingly been overcome with the suppression of disloyal radical elements.⁵²

The last significant incident of antiradical repression of the early 1920s in Portland occurred in October 1922 and involved the Wobblies. The IWW in Oregon survived the postwar hysteria, but the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen (4L) effectively barred its organizers from recruiting in the forests. Although much reduced in strength after the war, the 4L remained an influential company union which aided

the employers in maintaining a blacklist of IWW members. Excluded from the forests and mills, the Wobblies began to organize among the longshoremen and other workers along the Portland waterfront. By 1922 the IWW had organized its own union, the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union (MTWIU). The organization quickly grew to become a competitor of the established AFL-affiliated union, the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA). In May 1922, ILA members went on strike against the stevedoring companies represented in Portland by the Waterfront Employers Association. The *Portland Telegram*, in an October 20, 1922, article, claimed that the Waterfront Employers Association had used MTWIU longshoremen as scabs in an effort to break the strike. Even after an agreement to end the strike was reached on June 22, 1922, tensions remained high and labor conditions volatile on the waterfront.⁵³

The most important longshoremen's strike of the 1920s in Portland began on October 13, 1922, when both the ILA and the MTWIU went out together in an effort to regain some control over working conditions along the waterfront. Approximately 675 men from the ILA and 275 men from the MTWIU began to picket the docks; one of their main demands was for a union controlled hiring hall. For a few days the walkout progressed without much incident, but on October 17, according to *The Nation*, Mayor Baker "issued a statement branding the strike as a revolution and declaring that the city was in the throes of a revolution." Baker also stated "that an army of 25,000 I.W.W.'s, fully armed, was marching upon Portland," ostensibly to seize control of the city. The city police immediately went into action and arrested

approximately five hundred men in a sweep of the picket lines near the docks, including almost every member of the MTWIU.⁵⁴

Baker's announcement of the Wobbly menace to Portland and the sweeping arrests on the waterfront triggered another local Red Scare. Although the authorities did not invoke the criminal syndicalism law, they charged every man connected with the IWW with vagrancy. On October 20, 1922, the police deported sixteen alleged "Wobblies" by transporting them on a bus to the outskirts of town and forcing them to leave, and three other "Wobblies" followed a day later. As tensions increased the city council set aside ten thousand dollars and hired about one hundred special police officers in an effort to defend Portland against the IWW's "revolution." The authorities raided the IWW hall at 109 Second Street several times in order to make arrests and to seize union records. Burl A. Green, local labor attorney for the Wobblies, prepared to file an injunction against city officials, but on October 25, 1922, Mayor Baker called off the police and stopped the conflict. When he wrote about these events for the *Nation*, Green stated, "Thus ended the 'revolution,' conceived in subserviency to the Waterfront Employers Association, born in stupidity, and nurtured in abysmal ignorance." The waterfront strike lasted for several more months and ended with the destruction of both the ILA and MTWIU. Walkouts did not occur on the Portland waterfront again until the reemergence of the ILA during the early 1930s.⁵⁵

By the early 1920s radical organizations throughout America seemed to be in a state of permanent decay. The Socialist party had declined from approximately forty thousand members in 1919 to eleven thousand by 1922. The Communist and

Communist Labor parties also suffered major losses in membership. In October 1919 the Communist party had a membership of over twenty-seven thousand; by April 1920 the membership had fallen to about eight thousand. The Communist parties also went underground during the Red Scare and did not resurface until 1923, when they followed orders from Moscow, joined together, and began to run candidates for political office. Meanwhile, many Wobblies languished in jail or had just been released from federal prisons, and the IWW never regained its prewar influence or membership.⁵⁶

During the 1920s many Americans desired the normality that they ascribed to the prewar years, not the worker-led revolutions called for by radicals. The messages of left-wing groups seemed to get lost in the rush to prosperity during the New Era, and in many quarters radicals were not seriously viewed as a threat by the mid-1920s. In Portland very little appeared in the newspapers about the activities of such groups as the IWW and the Socialist party for the remainder of the decade. As long as economic stability and prosperity existed for the majority of the American working class during the 1920s, radicals did not have much of an audience for their beliefs. It would take the Great Depression to trigger a revival of the left-wing radical movement at the beginning of the 1930s, and this time the Communist party would become the center of attention for the antiradical authorities of Portland.

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⁵² Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 76, 79; David A. Horowitz, *Beyond Left and Right: Insurgency and the Establishment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 44-46; Sherman Rogers, "Senator Harding on Labor," *Outlook* CXXV (1920): 670, as quoted by Murray in *Red Scare*, 261.

⁵³ "16 Wobblies Deported by City's Police," *Portland Telegram*, 20 October 1922; Burl A. Green, "Portland's Mayor-Made Revolution," *The Nation* 115 (1922): 605-606.

⁵⁴ "Waterfront Violence is Anticipated," *Portland Telegram*, 14 October 1922; "I.W.W. Pickets Busy on Docks," *Portland Telegram*, 16 October 1922; Green, "Mayor-Made Revolution," 605.

⁵⁵ "Radicals Are Banished from City by Court," *Portland Telegram*, 19 October 1922; " 'Wobblies' Deported by Police," *Oregon Journal*, 20 October 1922; "16 Wobblies Deported by City's Police," *Portland Telegram*, 20 October 1922; "City Alert in Face of I.W.W. Move," *Portland Telegram*, 21 October 1922; "City's Fight on I.W.W. to be Kept Up," *Portland Telegram*, 24 October 1922; "Police Return I.W.W. Papers," *Portland Telegram*, 26 October 1922; Green, "Mayor-Made Revolution," 605-606; MacColl, *Growth of a City*, 170-172.

⁵⁶ Goldstein, *Political Repression*, 161-162, 172-173.

Chapter II

The Great Depression and Red Scare of the Early 1930s

Left-wing radical organizations in America suffered reversals and stagnation during the decade of the 1920s. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the Socialist party became mere shells of their former selves, their organizations having suffered through both federal and local repression during World War I and in the postwar period. Divided at first into two factions, the Communist Labor party and the Communist party faced suppression during the postwar Red Scare and through the early years of the 1920s. It would not be until 1923 that the newly united Communists reemerged, on order of the Comintern, to form the Workers party. By 1928 the Workers party had renamed itself the Communist Party, USA (CP) and ran a slate of national candidates, but the votes for their presidential contender totaled a meager twenty-one thousand. In a period of prosperity, the CP attracted little notice from the media. According to M. J. Heale in *American Anticommunism*, “Active repression was all but superfluous when the pervasive conservative ethos of the 1920s – and the relative prosperity of many citizens – denied radicals a popular following and confined them to a few scattered retreats.” By October 1929, however, the long economic boom had collapsed and the Great Depression of the 1930s set in. The Communists quickly took advantage of these conditions to propagandize workers and the newly unemployed, and their expanded activities precipitated a reaction from state and local authorities across the nation.¹

The Great Depression disastrously impacted the economy of Portland, Oregon, although instabilities in some local industries had been several years in the making. Lumber and wheat production formed a vital portion of Portland's and the entire Pacific Northwest's economic base, and demand for these products slumped once the national economy collapsed. The regional timber industry had been involved in a downturn for several years because of a decline in construction of new homes that began in 1927. Historian William H. Mullins maintained the local economy might have peaked before 1925, with a slowdown in the lumber business beginning that year. With the collapse of timber and other industries thousands of individuals found themselves unemployed, and they began to walk the streets of cities and towns in search of work. In 1930 Portland had a population of 302,000; a federal census of unemployment taken that year revealed over thirteen thousand jobless individuals in the city, 4.4 percent of gainful workers. Although this figure reflected a modest rate of unemployment, fears that the Depression would intensify became widespread. By the first months of 1930, in the midst of winter, many of the newly unemployed were accosted, and even attracted in some cases, by the propaganda campaign of the CP in Portland.²

The dues-paying membership of Portland's Communist party remained extremely low during the late 1920s, probably around three hundred individuals at most. But although the party continued to be numerically weak, its impact on the workers and unemployed of Portland went far beyond its small numbers. The Communists held street meetings and distributed thousands of pamphlets to bystanders four to five times a week. The frequent inflammatory nature of such speeches and

pamphlets soon attracted the attention of local newspapers, including the *Oregonian* and *Oregon Journal*, and reporters increasingly focused upon the party and its membership in stories and editorials. The local press served as an effective distributor of information and even propaganda for the CP, and this remained one reason why the local organization, which continued to be numerically weak through the 1930s, attracted so much attention from authorities and other elements in Portland.³

Playing upon economic anxieties, the Portland Communist party increased its activities. After receiving directives from the national headquarters in New York City, the local CP began to advertise for and organize unemployed councils throughout the city in 1930. The Communists generally coordinated these ad-hoc councils around neighborhoods and city blocks; there was usually no membership fee which the unemployed could ill afford. In theory, the councils welcomed all who wanted to be involved in helping themselves and their neighbors. Discussions focused on government relief efforts, aid to workers in need, methods to combat the eviction of renters, and ways to delay the shutdown of utilities for nonpayment. Such activities served a genuine need for segments of the population in lieu of the limited government relief efforts during the early years of the Depression. The Portland groups challenged Mayor George Baker and the city council to halt evictions for the duration of the economic emergency and to improve existing relief services for the jobless and poor.⁴

The CP used the unemployed councils as vehicles for propagandizing the general public. From its earliest days the party had been organized along strictly hierarchical lines: the Portland branch received its directives from the regional Seattle branch, which in turn took its orders from the national headquarters in New York City.

The leadership of the American CP took its orders directly from the Moscow-based Comintern, and it remains doubtful that Portland Communists had much leeway in regard to their policies concerning the local unemployed councils. Evidence suggests that some members of the councils greatly resented the inclusion of Communist propaganda in their meetings and in their publicly stated demands. Although unemployed councils achieved public relations successes at the outset of the Depression and attracted many members, control by the Communist party became tenuous as memberships became further diversified. More often than not the councils were also unstable and disorganized, and after only a few meetings many neighborhood groups frequently fell apart.⁵

In order to spread their message of worker-led world revolution among the masses the leadership of the CP decided to sponsor and lead demonstrations of the unemployed through the nation's cities on March 6, 1930. These protests on "International Unemployed Day" would highlight the problems and suffering caused by the Depression and serve as a Communist propaganda medium. The marches on March 6th turned out to be successful, with over a million and a quarter workers and jobless across the nation turning out to appeal for "Work or Wages." Labor historian Daniel J. Leab has asserted that the events of March 6th represented "the first successful Communist attempt to coordinate activities among the unemployed on a national scale," and that the demonstrations also signified the "first concerted, large-scale protest in this country against the downward economic trend." In Portland, according to the *Oregonian*, about thirty Communists and 1,500 spectators gathered at the Park Blocks near City Hall and listened to speakers harangue the local

government's relief efforts while extolling the objectives of the Communist party.

This sizable contingent eventually marched from the Park Blocks to City Hall, where they petitioned Mayor Baker for a redress of their grievances. The Communists demanded that rents be suspended for the jobless and evictions halted, that all vagrancy laws be abolished and employment provided in the form of a seven-hour, five-day work week, and that the U.S. government recognize the Soviet Union. Baker emerged to engage the marchers in a discussion and stated that he understood the problems the unemployed faced and offered to provide organized assistance in obtaining more work and better working conditions. But he also attacked the motives of the Communists in organizing the march. Baker reprised the role he had played during World War I and the Red Scare, when he had promoted Americanism and condemned the Wobblies as treasonous enemies. During his speech to the Communists and unemployed, the *Oregonian* reported that Baker said the malcontents should "go on a boat and go back to Russia," if they did not like the government of the United States.⁶

The Portland newspapers extensively covered the March 6th demonstration, and some Communist speakers at the event, such as Fred Walker, an officer in the district bureau and regional organizer for the Young Communist League, became locally known figures. Although the party successfully raised its profile as a result of the protests, Mayor Baker also emerged as a patriotic hero and defender of American government and traditions. The Portland Communists may have alienated more people than they converted by their actions, and following the March event their demonstrations received less media coverage and were ineffective from a propaganda

standpoint. Furthermore, non-Communist unemployed councils began to emerge in the city and around the nation during 1930 and 1931 that placed far more emphasis on democratic procedure, expressions of patriotism, and practical aid to the unemployed and poor. By the mid-1930s, Portland's non-Communist jobless councils had evolved into a respectable voice for the unemployed, and the CP abandoned its efforts to propagandize the masses in this fashion. The majority of the nation's unemployed appeared to be more interested in where their next meal was coming from than in the overthrow of the capitalist system.⁷

Despite the failure of Communist propaganda to take hold among Portland's working class, local authorities decided to target individual members of the party for prosecution. After the Communist-led demonstrations of 1930, antiradicals became nervous over the perceived revolutionary threat, particularly its potential for triggering disturbances such as rioting and property crimes. Officials realized that the majority of the jobless did not represent a menace to public safety, and they did not directly target unemployed councils as part of their antiradical campaign. The role and influence of the Communists in the councils had already started to decline by early 1931. However, as the economic downturn showed little sign of reversal, Depression-related issues, including the growing failure of public and private welfare agencies to provide relief for the unemployed, might be worsened by the revolutionary activities and propaganda of the CP. In a pamphlet circulated in Portland entitled "The Attack Upon the Foreign Born Workers," the party made a direct appeal to the jobless:

The unemployed workers in the United States are more and more turning towards the Communist Party because they find everybody else, and especially the government and its departments, persistently lying about the extent of their

problem, persistently holding out false promises of relief that never materialize, filling the newspapers with fake publicity about relief measures that never reached the unemployed, constantly prophesying the “return of prosperity within 60 days,” while the crisis continues to deepen.

The violent aspect of some of the CP’s propaganda also attracted attention, including the following message from a circular reprinted in an *Oregon Journal* editorial from July 21, 1933:

Fellow Workers – We have pointed out many times...that the only solution to this whole mess is for you to take, by force of arms, the mines, the mills, the factories, the farms, railroad, steamship lines – in short, all means of production and distribution – and run these things in the interest of the workers, just the same as the workers are doing in Soviet Russia.

In some minds the CP represented a “clear and present danger” to public safety, especially considering its openly stated preference for subversion and violence.

Accordingly, authorities in Portland and Oregon decided to take the offensive against the supposed radical menace.⁸

Several days after the March 6, 1930 demonstration Mayor Baker called a meeting of local and federal officials to determine a course of action against the CP. Those in attendance included Walter B. Odale, leader of the Portland Police Bureau’s Red Squad; Raphael P. Bonham, District Director of the federal government’s Immigration Service; and city Police Chief Leon V. Jenkins. These officials decided to place a spy within the party to collect evidence to be used later in prosecutions of individual members. The Oregon criminal syndicalism statute, which had lain dormant for almost a decade, was to be invoked once again by the state district attorney to convict and imprison members of the CP. Bonham would use his authority to enforce the existing federal immigration laws, which held that any alien proven to be a

member of a party that advocated violence to achieve political change could be subjected to deportation as an undesirable.⁹

The anticommunist offensive began when a police recruit named Merrill R. Bacon became an operative of the Red Squad after only four days on the force and infiltrated the local Communist organization. Bacon proved to be a valuable informant and a resource of information for the Red Squad and city authorities. The undercover agent joined the CP in March 1930 and quickly rose to a position of responsibility; he even served as a delegate to conventions in Seattle and San Francisco over the following summer. Throughout the approximately six-month period of his involvement with the party, Bacon supplied the Red Squad with membership lists, meeting minutes, and financial documents, information which later made it possible for the authorities to effectively plan their next moves against the newly vulnerable organization. This information also enabled Raphael Bonham to target the aliens who would make the most effective subjects for deportation proceedings.¹⁰

The first concrete results of Bacon's clandestine activities occurred with the arrests of Lambo Mitseff and another man in downtown Portland on September 4, 1930. The authorities and newspapers alleged that Mitseff, an alien, was the secretary and organizer of the local CP in the city, and Bonham held the two men on immigration violations. On September 10, 1930, the police arrested sixteen men during a raid on an evening meeting held at the Communist hall in the Worcester Building at Third and Oak Streets. Authorities held aliens on immigration charges and booked citizens for vagrancy. On September 12, 1930, the Multnomah County Grand Jury investigated four men from this group for violations of the criminal syndicalism

statute, while Bonham began deportation proceedings against nine others. The syndicalism law once again emerged as a potential weapon against native-born members of the Communist party.¹¹

The arrests marked the first major attack on left-wing radicals in almost a decade. Party members represented the only viable targets for prosecution, as other left-wing organizations, such as the Socialist party, were too weak to be considered a serious threat. The *Oregonian*, in a September 13, 1930, article, justified the new offensive on the basis of the CP's allegedly violent nature. The paper reported testimony from Merrill Bacon, in which he declared that, "Any means, violent or otherwise, are recognized by the party as justifiable in their war against the present organization of government, and they particularly desire to overthrow the government of the United States and hope to have a revolution here." By September 1930, a new Red Scare had emerged in Portland, and like the previous local and national Red Scares, the antiradical crusade immediately claimed some victims.¹²

Shortly after the arrests of sixteen suspected "Reds," the Committee to Investigate Soviet Propaganda in the United States made an appearance in Portland. Led by New York Republican Hamilton Fish, Jr., the five-person panel had been authorized by the House of Representatives in May 1930, partly in response to the unemployed demonstrations of March 6, 1930, to investigate the impact of Communist propaganda. The "Fish Committee" also examined charges related to the "dumping" of certain Soviet products, such as lumber, in order to further undermine the American economy. The panel worked its way west through the summer and fall of 1930, visiting several cities and collecting reams of information about the alleged political

and economic threats of the Soviet Union and communism. The Fish Committee's hearings in Seattle on October 3, 1930, proved to be somewhat rushed and uneventful, but the committee's visit to Portland the next day, although also rushed, proved to be one of the highlights of the trip.¹³

Among the local witnesses to testify was Raphael Bonham, the individual most responsible for bringing the Fish Committee to Portland in the first place. Irvin Goodman, lawyer for the International Labor Defense (ILD) and defender of radical aliens and citizens, asserted in a speech that Bonham and local newspapers had instigated the Red Scare in order to attract the committee to Portland. As evidence, Goodman cited an *Oregonian* headline from October 2, 1930: "Communist Inquiry Will be Held Here. Fish Committee Will Investigate Conditions. Arrests Made Here Recently Lead to Acceptance to Hold Hearings." Goodman claimed that Bonham helped to plan the September 1930 arrests and arranged what witnesses would appear before the Fish Committee. Eldridge Dowell described the events at the CP hall in September as "Inspector Bonham's Raids," and in a letter probably written to Walter Odale on September 3, 1930, Bonham thanked him for his "anticipated cooperation in ridding the country of aliens who enter in violation of its laws."¹⁴

During his testimony before the committee, Bonham stated that while on assignment in New York City he had spent several months studying the literature of the CP. He concluded from these materials that the party supported the overthrow of the U.S. government by illegal means of force and violence. In order to support his deposition Bonham presented a large number of CP books and pamphlets to the committee as evidence. He also detailed the difficulties of the Immigration Service in

attempting to deport alien Communists to the Soviet Union because that country had not been recognized by the United States. Bonham suggested one possible solution to this problem to the committee:

I have often thought it might be possible to load up an American transport and proceed to Vladivostok and stop about 4 miles out...and load the aliens aboard some good rowboats, provide them with ample food, and bid them farewell...That is rather direct action, but the communists could not complain about direct action.

During his testimony Bonham called for Congress to pass stricter immigration laws and regulation of Communist activities in order to combat the radical menace.¹⁵

Walter Odale, leader of the Police Bureau's Red Squad, proved to be another important witness at the Fish Committee hearing. Odale did not speak at great length, but he presented himself as an expert on communism and the alleged menace it represented. He stated that the party currently had approximately one hundred dues-paying members and about four hundred sympathizers in Portland. He then claimed that Russian and Finnish immigrants represented the most active groups within the local CP. Committee member Carl G. Bachmann asked about the circumstances surrounding the arrest of the Communists at their hall in September 1930, and Odale replied, "Well, they were becoming too violent in their language for one thing, and stuff that should not be heard on the street, or in the halls, or anywhere else. They were advocating trying to precipitate riots, and so on, and we did not want anything of that kind to happen; that is all." Bachmann then asked if the CP had made advances in industrial plants of the region or caused any strikes in the city, and the witness declared that the party remained unsuccessful in these areas. Odale also submitted

evidence in the form of speeches and literature, but some of the material was from the early 1920s and apparently of little use.¹⁶

Following Odale's short stint before the committee, Merrill Bacon, the Red Squad's most important witness, began to testify. Bacon described his activities as a spy for the police department within the local CP during the previous six months. This marked the first time that his cover had been exposed. With the recent arrests of several suspected Communists in the background, Bacon became the chief witness before the Fish Committee because he had participated in the internal activities of the party. Bacon's lengthy testimony impressed the committee members as he explained what he had discovered about the local Portland organization and the CP as a whole. He began by describing the revolutionary theories of the party and values of party members:

A real communist does not believe anyone has a right to any money, or any property that is acquired by profit in any way. They also feel that they have a perfect right to any property acquired, if they are able to obtain it, regardless of the means involved. They also feel that all workers should join the Communist Party, or support it for the purpose of the revolution and to change the ideology of the people, society as a whole, so that each individual, instead of working for personal gain...he only works and only strives for the benefit of the whole...Anyone who is not in accord with that belief...would be suppressed; or, if dangerous to those ideals, or counter-revolutionary...they would be eliminated.¹⁷

Bacon also described several discussions between party members about the possibility of holding up banks in order to acquire much needed funds. Although he did not know if the story was factual, a party member told him "that the comrades in San Francisco, a short time ago, held up a bank messenger and got \$40,000 to carry on the party work." Bacon then stated that the Soviet Union covered any deficits when

party fundraising fell short. After the witness finished his deposition several local business owners testified about the issue of the Soviet Union's suspected "dumping" of raw materials, especially timber, in the United States, but their information turned out to be somewhat general and uninteresting. The next day the headline "America Declared Endangered by Reds" appeared on the front page of the *Oregonian*, and the reporter, Alexander G. Brown, praised Bacon's efforts in exposing the intentions of the CP:

His testimony, members of the committee said, while cumulative, was first-hand and...was the most illuminative of all the hundreds of witnesses who have appeared and told the committee that communism in this country is more than a temporary unrest or the irresponsible utterances or activities of callow youth.¹⁸

The Fish Committee's visit to Portland served to extend the Red Scare through the fall of 1930 and into the winter of 1931, as did preparation for the trials of twelve alleged Communists indicted under the Oregon criminal syndicalism law. In November 1930 police arrested an unemployed man named Ben Boloff in downtown Portland on a vagrancy charge. A resident of the U.S. for nineteen years and a ditch digger by trade, Boloff had arrived in Portland several days earlier looking for work but had been unsuccessful. After a night in jail Boloff was released, but while he had been incarcerated the police discovered a membership card for the CP in his belongings. The next day he was re-arrested and on November 28, 1930, indicted for a violation of the state criminal syndicalism statute. Irvin Goodman, Portland attorney for the International Labor Defense (ILD), agreed to take the case. Goodman was locally known for his representation of radicals and workers, many of whom were unable to pay him for his services. Although he worked closely with the ILD, a CP

front and legal defense organization, it remains unclear whether Goodman actually joined the party. He seemed to have a sincere interest in helping the underdog and remained a strong supporter of civil liberties causes throughout his career. According to historian Albert Gunns, Goodman came close to receiving the fame and respect in the legal profession earlier enjoyed by George F. Vanderveer. But the case of Ben Boloff proved to be a challenge, and the litigation turned out to be the most pivotal test of the criminal syndicalist statute since the Laundry decision of the early 1920s.¹⁹

Irvin Goodman later claimed that the district attorney decided to prosecute Ben Boloff as a test case because of his Russian-sounding last name. The Russian-born Boloff had never been naturalized and remained under threat of deportation under federal immigration law because of his membership in a group that purportedly advocated the overthrow of the government by force or violence. The defendant never had a day of schooling in his life and had never learned to write or converse in English; he supported himself by digging sewers and engaging in other forms of hard labor. Boloff admitted he joined the CP in 1924 because he considered it to be a party of the workingman. The authorities decided to pursue their case against Boloff and scheduled his trial to begin in February 1931. District Attorney Lotus L. Langley based the indictment on Boloff's membership in the CP, since the defendant had not engaged in any revolutionary or illegal activities to overthrow the government. Although the existence of the party remained legal, the criminal syndicalism statute outlawed membership in the organization. Boloff was the first of thirteen indicted individuals whom authorities planned to try for violations of the syndicalist act.²⁰

Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge William A. Ekwall presided over Boloff's trial, which began on February 16, 1931. An active member of the American Legion, Ekwall had no sympathy for those he considered to be un-American radicals. District Attorney Langley relied on the testimony of three witnesses in his prosecution of the case: Raphael Bonham, Walter Odale, and Merrill Bacon. The *Oregonian* reported that Bacon, the leading witness for the state, testified about the growing influence of CP propaganda in local schools, hearsay concerning a potential Communist plot to rob Portland banks, and the planned destruction of "capitalistic" governments by the use of force and violence. Odale maintained he had attended lectures "where communist speakers promoted their organizations as 'the only militant organization for the working man.'" The *Portland News* reported Bonham's assertion that "whenever a strike occurs in the country...the communists gather and lead the dissension...In this way they believe that some day they may be able to start a revolution which will overthrow the state." Langley supported his case by introducing the membership books of Boloff and Bacon, and Communist literature, as evidence. The testimony of the state's witnesses presented the Communists as a subversive threat to American institutions and traditions, as enemies of religion, and as opponents of private property. Langley endeavored to convince the jury of Boloff's guilt by association with the CP.²¹

The *Oregonian* reported that Irvin Goodman challenged the legitimacy of the criminal syndicalism statute by attacking its membership provision. He questioned why Bacon had not been indicted as well as Boloff, and declared that membership alone should not be sufficient to find his client guilty. Yetta Stromberg, Northwest

organizer for the ILD, also appeared as a witness. Stromberg had recently been convicted of violating the California red flag law and sentenced to ten years in San Quentin prison. She remained out on bail while her case was being appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. When questioned about her beliefs by the defense, Stromberg stated in court “that it was the mission of the communist party in the event of an uprising of workers to ‘bring the revolution to a victorious end’ and ‘prevent the betrayal of the revolution.’” After her questionable testimony for the defense, the state did not make an effort to cross-examine Stromberg.²²

On February 24, 1931, the jury began deliberations, and after four hours it returned with a verdict of guilty with the recommendation that leniency be shown the defendant because of his lack of education. On March 2, 1931, Judge Ekwall sentenced Boloff to the maximum term of ten years in the state penitentiary. Ekwall took the charge of criminal syndicalism and the testimony of Bacon, Bonham, and Odale with great seriousness. After handing down the sentence, the *Oregonian* reported that he declared: “The communist idea of revolution means revolution...and that word means murder, violence and bloodshed. There can be no compromise...between preserving a democratic form of government or turning the country over to the communists.” With Boloff’s conviction the authorities won their first major victory over the Communists and demonstrated the effectiveness of the criminal syndicalism law against radicals.²³

Irvin Goodman appealed the Boloff decision to the Oregon Supreme Court, while the hapless defendant prepared to begin his long sentence at the state penitentiary in Salem. On October 20, 1931, the Court ruled, in a 4-3 decision, that the

criminal syndicalism law had been properly applied in the Boloff case. In his majority opinion Justice George Rossman stated “that the conviction of the defendant has been sustained by reason of proof which showed that the organization of which he was an active member, the Communist party, threatened immediate danger, through violence, to our industrial and governmental status.” Nevertheless, Justice Harry H. Belt wrote a scathing dissent in which he criticized some of Judge Ekwall’s decisions concerning the admission of hearsay testimony by state witnesses during Boloff’s trial. Ironically, Belt had been the municipal court judge under whom Joseph Laundry had been convicted of criminal syndicalism in 1920. Belt ended his dissent with the following statement:

The Criminal Syndicalism Act was enacted during the late World war as a sort of emergency measure. To extend its application to a poor, ignorant sewer digger who entertains erroneous ideas concerning governmental affairs and to imprison him in the penitentiary for a period of ten years is, in my opinion, not in keeping with the proper administration of justice. Throughout the centuries, jails have never been able to kill ideas. It is doubtful if they can do so in this modern and turbulent age.

Belt’s dissent fell on mostly deaf ears, however, as the court majority reasoned that the “clear and present danger” doctrine overruled the rights of free speech and assembly in the Boloff case. In early 1932 the Oregon Supreme Court rejected two more petitions made by Goodman for a rehearing.²⁴

After Boloff started to serve his sentence in March 1931, District Attorney Langley began to prepare the twelve other indicted Communist suspects for their separate days in court. The trial of Fred Walker, presided over by Circuit Judge Corkins, began in March 1931. Mildred Cline, in her study of criminal syndicalism, claimed that Corkins appeared to be more liberal than Judge Ekwall, and that the

defense produced better witnesses for Walker's trial. Merrill Bacon continued in his role as the state's leading witness, but the disclosure of his alleged former career as a bootlegger occurred during the proceedings. On March 20, 1931, the jury found Walker not guilty of criminal syndicalism, and in May 1931 a jury exonerated John Moore, the third suspected Communist to be placed on trial. After the acquittal of Moore the drive to prosecute the remaining ten defendants lost momentum. Both the *Oregonian* and *Oregon Journal* devoted less attention to the Walker and Moore trials than they had to Boloff's case. Cline asserted that public opinion towards the criminal syndicalism law and trials also began to shift after Boloff's conviction. The district attorney could try the remaining cases, but it remained dubious whether the state would get any convictions, especially after Boloff's situation began to generate some sympathy in the local press. Accordingly, on November 15, 1931, the state dropped the remaining ten cases, leaving open the option that the criminal syndicalism statute might be enforced in the future. The end of the criminal syndicalism prosecutions in late 1931 also signified the decline of Red Scare hysteria in Portland and Oregon.²⁵

As Boloff continued to serve out his sentence in the state penitentiary through 1931, the editors of several newspapers began to express discomfort over his imprisonment. At the height of the Red Scare in February 1931, the *Oregonian* had supported the criminal syndicalism trials and denounced communism. An editorial on February 28, 1931, stated that the "purpose of that theory has been declared to be (the) overthrow of the government of the United States by force and violence, this being the judgement, first of the department of labor, then of a federal judge and last of a judge and jury in an Oregon court." But after the conviction and imprisonment of Ben Boloff

cracks began to appear in the anticommunist consensus and the *Oregonian* began to question the court's decision. An editorial from November 18, 1931, supported Justice Belt's dissent against the supreme court's verdict upholding Boloff's conviction and asked for the release of the prisoner on the following grounds:

Our belief that Boloff should be freed is based partly on the fact that society should shrink from making an example of one man at the same time that it turns his fellows loose, but also it is based on the conviction that the wartime syndicalism act should not be used to suppress political theories in time of peace.²⁶

The *Salem Capital Journal* went even further in an editorial on January 16, 1932, declaring that the syndicalist law should be repealed and that the "courts have made a martyr of Boloff, thereby stimulating communism." The *Oregon Journal*, although usually more zealous in its denunciations of communism than the *Oregonian*, on November 19, 1931, attacked the law because of its threat to the rights of free speech and assembly. By late 1931, the majority of Portland's newspapers were behind the movement to grant Boloff executive clemency or a suspended sentence. In January 1932, District Attorney Lotus Langley claimed he had discussed the possibility of clemency for the inmate with Goodman, but that Boloff's attorney had decided not to accept his offer. Langley asserted that Goodman's main goal was to destroy the criminal syndicalism statute. Meanwhile, reports had come from Salem that the prisoner had been mistreated because he was a Communist and that he was not receiving proper medical care. While incarcerated in the Multnomah County jail during Goodman's appeal to the state supreme court, authorities discovered that Boloff had contracted tuberculosis. On March 11, 1932, Judge Ekwall suspended

Boloff's sentence, but on October 13, 1932, the unfortunate former ditch digger died at the county tuberculosis hospital.²⁷

The Portland Red Scare of the early 1930s effectively ended with the collapse of the syndicalism prosecutions. Nevertheless, foreign-born radicals remained vulnerable to the threat of deportation by federal immigration authorities if determined to be Communists. Raphael Bonham, district director of the U.S. Immigration Service, had started deportation proceedings against nine aliens arrested during the raid on the Communist hall in September 1930. Bonham recommended deportation for the group after a hearing the following month, but the ILD sued out writs of habeas corpus for the men. In June 1931, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco upheld the decision of the Immigration Service, and allowed deportation of the nine, including Lambo Mitseff, former secretary of the CP in Portland. Bonham and his assistants also targeted the editors and workers of Astoria's Finnish language newspaper, *Toveri*. The paper had been the focus of a federal investigation during World War I, when its editor and business manager had been imprisoned for Espionage Act violations. In 1921 the *Toveri* became a CP newspaper, and for more than a decade it continued to serve the local Finnish population.²⁸

Immigration authorities raided the offices of the *Toveri* on February 16 and 17, 1931, and arrested six alien Finns on suspicion of membership in the CP. Bonham heard their cases in Portland in June 1931. Irvin Goodman served as the primary defense counsel, but the Immigration Department remained firm in regard to suspected radical aliens. The deportations of four employees of the paper occurred in January 1932, but the case of the *Toveri*'s linotype operator, Oscar Mannisto, received special

attention. Mannisto's circumstances generated some sympathy because his removal from the country would leave a wife and three American-born children behind, but eventually the federal appeals process ended and his deportation occurred in 1935. The CP shut down the *Toveri* in February 1931, and publication never resumed. According to Roy Norene, assistant to Bonham, the Immigration Department deported about twenty-five aliens from Oregon during the early 1930s. However, as the Red Scare of the early Depression years appeared to wane, labor radicals and Communists found themselves on the verge of new popularity and relevance to the nation's social struggles.²⁹

Notes to Chapter Two

¹ "Seattle Man Held in Communist Drive," *Oregonian*, 14 September 1930; "Nine Communists Ordered Deported to Native Lands; Contest Probable," *Oregonian*, 14 December 1930; "Army of Jobless Ask for City Aid," *Oregon Journal*, 10 February 1931; "Army of 600 Goes to City Hall for Aid," *Oregonian*, 11 February 1931; "Soviet School Conducted," *Oregonian*, 18 February 1931; "America's 30-Year War Against Communism," Peter Edson, Article No. 3, "U.S. Reds Have Chameleon Quality Hard to Combat," *Oregon Journal*, 30 November 1949, Article No. 4, "Wall Street Bust Inspired Reds' Big Plunge in U.S.," *Oregon Journal*, 1 December 1949; John Dos Passos, "Back to Red Hysteria!," *The New Republic* 63 (1930): 168-169; Robert Justin Goldstein, *Political Repression in Modern America: From 1870 to the Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., Inc., 1978), 172-173; M. J. Heale, *American Anticommunism: Combating the Enemy Within, 1830-1970* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 90.

² "The Attack Upon the Foreign Born Workers," pamphlet, n.d., Box 1, Folder 24, Police Historical Records, Red Squad, PCA, 8000-06; "Jobless Men to Gather," *Oregonian*, 6 March 1930; "Mayor Baker at Communist Rally Gives Americanization 'Pep' Talk," *Oregonian*, 7 March 1930; "Army of 600 Goes to City Hall for Aid," *Oregonian*, 11 February 1931; "America's 30-Year War Against Communism," Edson, Article No. 4, "Wall Street Bust Inspired Reds' Big Plunge in U.S.," *Oregon Journal*, 1 December 1949; E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915 to 1950* (Portland: The Georgian Press, 1979), 365, 368-369; William H. Mullins, "'I'll Wreck the Town if it Will Give Employment': Portland in the Hoover Years of the Depression," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (1988): 109.

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⁴ "Unemployed Endorse I.L.D.," document, n.d., Box 1, Folder 21, Police Historical Records, Red Squad, PCA, 8000-06; "Mayor Baker at Communist Rally Gives Americanization 'Pep' Talk," *Oregonian*, 7 March 1930; "Army of 600 Goes to City Hall for Aid," *Oregonian*, 11 February 1931; "Army of Jobless Ask for City Aid," *Oregon Journal*, 10 February 1931; "1000 Jobless Parade; Defy Council Bans," *Oregon Journal*, 4 February 1932; "America's 30-Year War Against Communism," Edson, Article No. 4, "Wall Street Bust Inspired Reds' Big Plunge in U.S.," *Oregon Journal*, 1 December 1949; Daniel J. Leab, "'United We Eat': The Creation and Organization of the Unemployed Councils in 1930," *Labor History* 8, no. 3 (1967): 303-307, 312; Mullins, "I'll Wreck the Town," 110; Roy Rosenzweig, "Organizing the Unemployed: The Early Years of the Great Depression, 1929-1933," *Radical America* 10, no. 4 (1976): 39-45.

⁵ "Unemployed Endorse I.L.D.," document, n.d., Box 1, Folder 21, Police Historical Records, Red Squad, PCA, 8000-06; "The Attack Upon the Foreign Born Workers," pamphlet, n.d., Box 1, Folder 24, Police Historical Records, Red Squad, PCA, 8000-06; "Army of Jobless Ask for City Aid," *Oregon Journal*, 10 February 1931; "Army of 600 Goes to City Hall for Aid," *Oregonian*, 11 February 1931; "Mayor Spurns Plea from Communists," *Oregonian*, 26 February 1931; "Jobless Men Raid Relief Quarters," *Oregonian*, 30 November 1933; Leab, "United We Eat," 302-305, 310-315; Rosenzweig, "Organizing the Unemployed," 43-47.

⁶ "The Attack Upon the Foreign Born Workers," pamphlet, n.d., Box 1, Folder 24, Police Historical Records, Red Squad, PCA, 8000-06; "Jobless Men to Gather," *Oregonian*, 6 March 1930; "Mayor Baker at Communist Rally Gives Americanization 'Pep' Talk," *Oregonian*, 7 March 1930; "'Red Scare' Protest Issued by Liberals-100 Writers, Educators and Artists Warn of Dangers in 'Hysteria' and 'Persecution'," *New York Times*, 19 May 1930; "Nine Communists Ordered Deported to Native Lands; Contest Probable," *Oregonian*, 14 December 1930; Dos Passos, "Back to Red Hysteria!," 168-169; Leab, "United We Eat," 305-308; Mullins, "I'll Wreck the Town," 110; Rosenzweig, "Organizing the Unemployed," 40-41.

⁷ "Unemployed Endorse I.L.D.," document, n.d., Box 1, Folder 21, Police Historical Records, Red Squad, PCA, 8000-06; "Jobless Men to Gather," *Oregonian*, 6 March 1930; "Mayor Baker at Communist Rally Gives Americanization 'Pep' Talk," *Oregonian*, 7 March 1930; "Defense Witness Lauds Communism," *Oregonian*, 14 October 1930; "Army of Jobless Ask for City Aid," *Oregon Journal*, 10 February 1931; "Army of 600 Goes to City Hall for Aid," *Oregonian*, 11 February 1931; "Mayor Spurns Plea from Communists," *Oregonian*, 26 February 1931; Leab, "United We Eat," 313-315; Rosenzweig, "Organizing the Unemployed," 43-47, 50-55.

⁸ "Red Hysteria and the Oregon Press," speech, n.d., pp. 1-19, Box 1, Folder 1, Irvin Goodman Papers, OHS, MSS 1811; "They Were Called Reds: A Story of Fascist Methods in the Pacific Northwest," manuscript, n.d., pp. 1-23, Box 1, Folder 8, Irvin Goodman Papers, OHS, MSS 1811; "The Attack Upon the Foreign Born Workers," pamphlet, n.d., Box 1, Folder 24, Police Historical Records, Red Squad, PCA, 8000-06; "'Red Scare' Protest Issued by Liberals-100 Writers, Educators and Artists Warn of Dangers in 'Hysteria' and 'Persecution'," *New York Times*, 19 May 1930; "Elihu Root Urges New Federal Police to Curb Red Intrigue," *New York Times*, 14 July 1930; "16 Purported Reds Grilled by Bonham," *Oregonian*, 12 September 1930; Editorial, "I Do, Said Walker," *Oregon Journal*, 21 July 1933; Dos Passos, "Back to Red Hysteria!," 168-169.

⁹ "Policeman Bares Party Secrets at Trial," *Oregon Journal*, 18 February 1931, "Boloff Guilty, Jury Announces," *Oregonian*, 25 February 1931, scrapbook, Box 5, Irvin Goodman Papers, OHS, MSS 1811; "They Were Called Reds: A Story of Fascist Methods in the Pacific Northwest," manuscript, n.d., pp. 1-23, Box 1, Folder 8, Irvin Goodman Papers, OHS, MSS 1811; Raphael P. Bonham to Walter B. Odale?, 3 September 1930, Box 1, Folder 15, Police Historical Records, Red Squad, PCA, 8000-06; "Nine Communists Ordered Deported to Native Lands; Contest Probable," *Oregonian*, 14 December 1930; Eldridge Foster Dowell, *A History of Criminal Syndicalism Legislation in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1939), 119.

¹⁰ "Policeman Bares Party Secrets at Trial," *Oregon Journal*, 18 February 1931, scrapbook, Box 5, Irvin Goodman Papers, OHS, MSS 1811; "Criminal Syndicalism," speech, n.d., pp. 1-19, "Red Hysteria and the Oregon Press," speech, n.d., pp. 1-19, Box 1, Folder 1, Irvin Goodman Papers, OHS, MSS 1811; Communist party meeting minutes, 27 July 1930, Box 1, Folder 9, Police Historical Records, Red Squad, PCA, 8000-06; Friends of the Soviet Union to Merrill R. Bacon, 15 July 1930, Box 1, Folder 24, Seattle Police Report #1, 21 July 1930, Box 2, Folder 1, Seattle Police Report #2, 21 July 1930, Box 2, Folder 1, Bonham to Odale?, 3 September 1930, Box 1, Folder 15, PCA, 8000-06; "Nine Communists Ordered Deported to Native Lands; Contest Probable," *Oregonian*, 14 December 1930; "'Reds' in Schools, Witness Asserts," *Oregonian*, 19 February 1931; "Policeman Merrill Bacon, Foe of Reds, Passes at 54," *Oregonian*, 28 July 1952; Albert Francis Gunns, "Civil Liberties and Crisis: The Status of Civil Liberties in the Pacific Northwest, 1917-1940" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1971), 131.

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¹⁶ *Investigation of Communist Propaganda*, 140-145; "America Declared Endangered by Reds," *Oregonian*, 5 October 1930.

¹⁷ *Investigation of Communist Propaganda*, 145-147; "America Declared Endangered by Reds," *Oregonian*, 5 October 1930.

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²⁰ *Oregon Code, 1930, Containing the General Laws of Oregon*, Vol. 1, pp. 1304-1306, Multnomah County Central Library; "Policeman Bares Party Secrets at Trial," *Oregon Journal*, 18 February 1931, scrapbook, Box 5, Irvin Goodman Papers, OHS, MSS 1811; "Alleged Red in Court," *Oregonian*, 17 February 1931; "Boloff Guilty, Jury Announces," *Oregonian*, 25 February 1931; Editorial, "The Case of Ben Boloff," *Oregon Journal*, 16 January 1932; Mildred Cline, "A Study of Criminal Syndicalism in Oregon" (bachelor's thesis, Reed College, 1932), 24; Gunns, "Civil Liberties and Crisis," 133-134; MacColl, *Growth of a City*, 394.

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²² "Boloff Testifies He is Communist," *Oregonian*, 22 February 1931; "Boloff Guilty, Jury Announces," *Oregonian*, 25 February 1931.

²³ "Portland's Own Fight Against Communism," Roy Beadle, Article No. 2, "Supreme Court Outlaws Oregon Syndicalism Act," *Oregon Journal*, 13 December 1949, Box 1, Folder 13, Thomas J. Burns Papers, OHS, MSS 1101-1; "Policeman Bares Party Secrets at Trial," *Oregon Journal*, 18 February 1931, scrapbook, Box 5, Irvin Goodman Papers, OHS, MSS 1811; "Boloff Guilty, Jury Announces," *Oregonian*, 25 February 1931; "Boloff Sentenced to 10-Year Term," *Oregonian*, 3 March 1931; "Boloff Free Until Appeal Ruling Made," *Oregon Journal*, 20 January 1932; MacColl, *Growth of a City*, 394.

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²⁶ Editorial, "Communist Purpose Unveiled," *Oregonian*, 28 February 1931; Editorial, "Putting Ideas on Trial," *Oregonian*, 31 October 1931; Editorial, "Set Boloff Free," *Oregonian*, 18 November 1931.

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Chapter III

The Response to the Revival of Organized Labor and the Radical Resurgence of the Popular Front Era

As the effects of the Great Depression worsened nationwide during the first months of 1933, economic conditions in Portland continued to deteriorate. Approximately nineteen percent of the city's residents, equivalent to forty thousand people, received some form of assistance during this period. Timber and wheat, two of Oregon's most important industries, had been in decline since before the beginning of the Depression in 1929. Labor union activity at the start of 1933 remained low around the city and region, although it began to show some signs of revival as the year progressed, and existing local relief efforts barely held their own against the rising tide of poverty. The local Communist organization had been damaged during the Red Scare of 1930-1931, and by early 1933 the CP, although still agitating and propagandizing through unemployed advocacy groups and street meetings, barely had over three hundred dues-paying members in Portland. Local authorities remained occupied with other issues instead of the antiradical campaign, although Walter Odale, head of the Police Bureau's Red Squad, continued to monitor the activities of radicals and unemployed councils throughout the area.¹

The inauguration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in March 1933 changed the direction of the country, and over the next one hundred days Congress passed the administration's far-reaching legislation to combat the worst effects of the Depression. The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) included section 7(a), which guaranteed

the right of collective bargaining to employees, the first time in American history that union activity had been legitimized by an act of the federal government. Section 7(a) became the key to the revival of the labor movement during the mid-1930s. In Portland several moribund unions would reconstitute themselves under the protection of this new law, including the West Coast branch of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Yet, many business owners viewed this New Deal legislation as the opening wedge of a "gigantic Marxist plot." According to E. Kimbark MacColl: "For the employers, in Portland's case the ship owners, the implications were horrendous...There was no alternative but to resist and fight back, in defense of the traditional rights of private property and private ownership. The scene was set for a bitter struggle."²

In addition to the revival of organized labor in Portland, local unemployed councils continued to call for more work and greater relief efforts for the jobless. Most of the councils also moved beyond Communist party control. By 1932 the Socialist party, several veterans' organizations, and some neighborhoods had organized their own unemployed councils, a process that gradually legitimized associations of the jobless and poor in Portland and around the nation. However, as the effects of the Depression became more extreme in 1933, and local relief efforts continued to fall short, anger increased and the unemployed occasionally protested their situation. In early 1933, jobless men working at a Community Chest wood yard demanded wages instead of food and lodging and went on strike for a week. On November 29, 1933, police arrested about a dozen men after they had stormed the office of the Multnomah County relief committee. Representatives from four local unemployed councils

demonstrated in front of the city jail and called for their release. Many of Portland's jobless would only begin to see an improvement in conditions after New Deal programs began to take effect.³

As the New Deal began to make an impact in Portland and Oregon by mid-1933, local labor union activity rapidly expanded. The reorganization of the ILA was perhaps the most spectacular revival of a local union that resulted from the passage of the NIRA. In mid-1933 longshoremen reorganized as one union along the West Coast, Local 38, in an effort to gain concessions from waterfront employers in Portland and other cities. Since the ILA had been crushed in 1922, longshoremen had endured abuses in the form of poor pay scales, blacklists, and work shifts that sometimes lasted for thirty-six hours. By 1933 dock workers realized that with the passage of the NIRA they might be able to force concessions from employers, particularly the recognition of collective bargaining and a union hiring hall. At the depths of the Depression, ILA membership quickly reached 1,100 men, including veterans from 1922 as well as former members of the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union (MTWIU), the radical IWW organization which had been ruthlessly destroyed by city authorities during the 1922 waterfront strike.⁴

Throughout the latter half of 1933 the ILA continued organizing drives along the Portland waterfront in order to sign up new members for the collective cause of the longshoremen. These successful campaigns attracted the attention of waterfront employers. Company and police spies, some under the direction of the Red Squad, attended local ILA meetings in order to determine the strength of the organization and also to discover if any Communists had influenced the longshoremen. Some local

Communist party (CP) members, such as Fred Walker, spoke at ILA meetings, but the Communists remained unable to attract a sizable following or much sympathy for their revolutionary ideas. Although the CP openly supported efforts of the longshoremen to organize, Communist endorsement remained suspect and offensive to much of the ILA membership. The majority of Portland dock workers were of a conservative mindset, and many remembered the troubles that the dual unionism of the radical MTWIU had caused in 1922. The local ILA leadership firmly believed that radicalism of any kind must be avoided by the longshoremen in order to better ensure their union's survival.⁵

In April 1934, the ILA scheduled its long-awaited nationwide maritime strike, but an appeal from the Roosevelt administration forestalled the protest until the following month. The strike began in Portland on May 9, 1934, and within the first week, virtually the entire labor force of the West Coast maritime industry walked off their jobs and almost no products moved in or out of port. The early success of the strike convinced the CP to step up the membership drive for its own longshoremen's organization, the Marine Workers Industrial Union (MWIU), and to spread revolutionary propaganda among the striking workers through street meetings and city-wide pamphleteering. Party involvement in the maritime strike served to increase the audience for and potential number of converts to its ideology. The ILA generally tolerated the Communists at the beginning of the strike because they supported the demands of the longshoremen and proved to be effective union organizers. Yet the heightened activity of the CP caused apprehension within the Portland business establishment and community and alerted the Red Squad to the emerging radical threat

along the waterfront. The lapse in the repression of left-wing radicals that had occurred in Portland in 1932 and 1933 ended with the advent of the ILA-led maritime strike and the increased activities of the Communists.⁶

The Maritime Strike of 1934 lasted for eighty-two days and cost the Oregon economy millions of dollars. According to historians Gordon DeMarco and E. Kimbark MacColl, employers initially welcomed the strike because they believed that the ILA would be crushed, as it had been in 1922. But the solidarity of the longshoremen and the successful methods they used to carry out the strike disturbed many business owners. Unemployed men could no longer be used as strikebreakers because the ILA and CP sent organizers throughout Portland and to many Northwest towns to convince the jobless that worker solidarity remained vital to their interests. Longshoremen developed an alliance with local unemployed councils, and very few jobless in the region worked the Portland waterfront during the walkout. The ILA scored another success with effective use of the picket line. Union pickets virtually shut off access to the terminals and docks and prevented products from moving through the port. From the outset of the strike waterfront employers continually called upon the city, state, and federal governments to intervene with more police and troops to break the picket lines and open the port. But local businessmen had to rely upon a city police force that suffered from low morale and one of the lowest pay scales in the nation. As police generally gave ILA pickets wide latitude during the first weeks of the strike, employers demanded direct governmental intervention and pressured Governor Julius Meier to call out the National Guard for strikebreaking duty on the Portland waterfront.⁷

During the Maritime Strike stories circulated concerning the ILA's alleged use of vicious "beat-up gangs," groups of pickets who roamed the waterfront to enforce discipline and to drive away strikebreakers. In a press release the Citizens Emergency Committee (CEC), a Chamber of Commerce front organization, asserted that, "The strike would be over but for those who do not want it to end on any terms. Let the public that is suffering from this senseless continuance of unnecessary and unwarranted radical agitation unite and end the travesty on justice, law and order." The worst incident of violence transpired on July 11, 1934, at Terminal 4 near the St. Johns neighborhood. City authorities, under pressure from the Chamber of Commerce and Waterfront Employers Association, ordered that the isolated terminal be reopened, by force if necessary, and that ILA pickets be dispersed. City police tried to force their way into Terminal 4 with a locomotive and accompanying gunfire, resulting in injuries to four union members, one critically. Police tactics, however, only served to enrage the city's entire organized labor movement. Some members of the Central Labor Council called for a general strike, and although cooler heads eventually prevailed and tensions subsided over the next several days, Portland seemed to be on the verge of a civil war.⁸

As the 1934 Maritime Strike stretched from weeks into months the Portland Chamber of Commerce took on an increasingly active role in combating its negative effects on the local business community. The Chamber originally presented itself as a neutral party in the waterfront conflict and also as a potential meeting place where opposing groups might work out their differences. But individual members of the Chamber soon began to call for a more active role for their organization to bring about

an end to labor disturbances. Many businessmen were unequivocal in their hatred of the union movement and advocated the use of repression and violence to crush the strike and ensure the destruction of radical organizations in the city. In early June 1934, a committee within the Chamber of Commerce organized to deal specifically with the Maritime Strike. The Citizens Emergency Committee (CEC) originally was conceived as a means to fund anti-strike activities, such as the dissemination of employer propaganda, since public sympathy at the beginning of the walkout had sided mainly with the longshoremen. The committee placed advertisements in local newspapers that alleged the longshoremen had been duped by the propaganda of radicals within the ILA. The CEC declared in a press release that the "Portland Chamber of Commerce stands for law and order and justice for all," and appealed "to organized labor to throw off the yoke of Communistic dominance which cannot be denied, and to hold the gains it has made." More important, the advertisements emphasized how the economic damage of the strike would impact the people of Portland and Oregon. The effectiveness of such propaganda remained difficult to determine, but members of the Chamber of Commerce spent thousands of dollars to finance the activities of the CEC. According to radical historian Michael Munk, elements within the Chamber used the CEC as a front organization to challenge the striking longshoremen.⁹

Soon after the establishment of the CEC some Chamber members began to question the committee's effectiveness in combating the Maritime Strike and called for more direct measures to be taken. W. D. B. Dodson, the Chamber's lobbyist in

Washington, D.C., made a frank statement to Walter W. R. May, manager of the organization, on June 6, 1934:

I assume that unless the officially constituted authors take possession in due course that it will be necessary for deputized volunteers to act. Should this be undertaken, it would doubtless lead to bloodshed and perhaps loss of life with intemperate and far reaching criticism flying in every direction. However, unless the authorities act ultimately, the coast cities will have to take some course to preserve their very lifeblood.

In late June 1934, several Chamber members secretly formed the Citizens Emergency League (CEL), an organization which claimed to be completely separate from the Chamber of Commerce. The CEL maintained that it was a militia-type organization created to keep order in Portland during city-wide “emergencies.” A former World War I officer commanded the CEL, and younger businessmen directed its local units. Although the CEL claimed that its sole purpose was to protect the population as a supplement to the existing police force, its directors planned for the militia to serve as a vigilante check on union-related or radical activities in the city in the event of a general strike or revolutionary crisis. Drawing up a plan which divided Portland into operational zones, the CEL claimed that it could call upon three thousand volunteers if necessary in an emergency. In the following months the organization’s spokesmen professed to have up to ten thousand members ready for action.¹⁰

By late July 1934, with economic losses now in the tens of millions of dollars, the waterfront employers surrendered and agreed to arbitration, and the longshoremen returned to work. The highlight of the accord was the elimination of the employer hiring hall and its replacement by a union-controlled facility, a critical labor demand from the beginning. The pay scale was also increased and the ILA recognized as the

bargaining agent for longshoremen. With this historic victory the union reestablished itself as a major force along the entire West Coast for the first time since 1922, and the morale of organized labor increased. But the rapid revival of union activity in 1933 and 1934 disturbed many employers in Portland and elsewhere, and some individuals professed to see the hand of communism at work behind the resurgence of organized labor.¹¹ The stage was now set in Portland for another Red Scare.

During the Maritime Strike of 1934 the CEC and Red Squad sought to tie the CP and its affiliated unions to the ILA. Rumors circulated that the Communists secretly led and dominated the ILA, especially in the case of Harry Bridges, the Australian-born longshore leader based in San Francisco. In 1978, the *Oregonian* quoted Bridges's statements about the 1934 strike and his suspected radical connections: "We'd take money from anywhere we could get it, including Communists....But one thing I didn't do, I didn't happen to be affiliated with the Communist Party." In the 1990s information emerged that revealed that Bridges actually had been a concealed member of the CP. Although Communists made up a portion of the ILA's leadership and organizers, the party apparently did not completely dominate the organization; to the rank-and-file longshoremen overt Communist control over their union remained unacceptable.¹² But antiradical propaganda generated by the CEC and from other quarters in Portland did have its intended affect on one target: the Communist party.

Although the Communist party in Portland had a membership of a mere five hundred or so by mid-1934, its influence far outweighed its numbers. Communists

were extremely vocal in street demonstrations and in their attacks upon the government and capitalism. The party's activities, especially during the Maritime Strike, brought down the wrath of the Chamber of Commerce and local government. For many economic leaders and political authorities the Communists represented what they most hated and feared about the working class. In August 1934, members of the Chamber organized the Civics Protection Committee to investigate Communist activities in the region, lobby for reforms in court procedure to more effectively "combat" radicalism, and promote the values of Americanism. Meanwhile, a new Red Scare emerged in Portland towards the end of the Maritime Strike.¹³ This scare served the purposes of authorities by creating a scapegoat for the strike situation and by tarnishing the ILA effort as being inspired and secretly led by Communists. The CEL and Red Squad would play important roles during this period, as legal tactics would be utilized to isolate the Communists of the city and then prosecute them under Oregon's criminal syndicalism statute.

The anticommunist offensive began during the tense final days of the Maritime Strike. On July 16, 1934, a squad of about twenty unknown men raided and wrecked the office of the Portland branch of the CP-affiliated Marine Workers Industrial Union (MWIU) at 217 Northwest Davis Street. The raiders may have been members of the ILA or even operatives of the CEL. After the operation the city police arrived to investigate, but the officers themselves then raided the MWIU office and did even more damage, and two days later, police invaded the local headquarters of the CP on a hunt for communist literature. Police justified their raids because of suspicions that local Communists represented a threat to Portland during the strike. The authorities

circulated some of the literature confiscated during the raids to the newspapers and claimed that a revolutionary Communist plot to disrupt the city had been exposed. The arrests of thirty-six men occurred during the raid on CP headquarters, and twenty eventually faced a grand jury on charges of criminal syndicalism. During a hearing for these men, District Judge Hendrickson revealed the reason that Communists had been targeted, as reported by the *Oregon Journal* on July 21, 1934:

We have to consider conditions in Portland at this time....They have gone beyond the stage of academic theory. Losses are running up into millions of dollars and a general strike has been threatened. Persons in authority have stated that a general strike is the equivalent of industrial revolution. The court feels it is unjust to put all the blame on the Communists, but Communism is an inciting and aggravating force which has engendered bitterness and extended the duration of the strike.

On July 27, 1934, the CP held a meeting in a hall at 68 Southwest Alder Street to protest the recent police raids, the activities of the Red Squad, and the actions of the CEL during the strike. Members of the Red Squad and the CEL attended this meeting, and just as the last speaker finished his presentation police raided the hall and arrested eight men, including Dirk De Jonge.¹⁴

Dirk De Jonge had spoken at the protest meeting about the attacks on "working class organizations," such as the MWIU, and had encouraged those in attendance to join the CP. These actions prompted authorities to prosecute De Jonge, a World War I veteran and former Socialist, under the criminal syndicalism law. Before his arrest the activist had played a minor role on the Portland political scene for several years. De Jonge had apparently joined the CP in the early 1930s and organized an unemployed council. In 1932, he ran as the Communist candidate for mayor of the city, and during 1933 and 1934 he made frequent street speeches critical of the existing economic and

political systems. De Jonge's radical activities attracted the attention of the Red Squad, and when the anticommunist campaign began in July 1934, he may have presented a tempting target for city authorities. De Jonge's arrest, along with those of other Communists, created a major stir in the city. Even though the Maritime Strike had just ended, Portland once again was in the middle of another Red Scare.¹⁵

As a result of the police raids of late July 1934, authorities had thirty suspects who could potentially be indicted under the recently revised criminal syndicalism law. Following the bad press that had surrounded the case of Ben Boloff in 1931, the state legislature revised the statute during its 1933 session in an attempt to better protect "dupes" of the CP from prosecution. The act no longer penalized individuals for being members of organizations that advocated the overthrow of government by force and violence, in theory protecting persons like Boloff. But another 1933 revision to the law punished those "who shall preside at or conduct or assist in conducting any assemblage of persons, or any organization, or any society, or any group which teaches or advocates the doctrine of criminal syndicalism...." The indictments of seven suspected Communists, including Dirk De Jonge, were forwarded in September 1934. As had been the case with the thirteen men arrested and charged with criminal syndicalism in 1930, these alleged radicals would be tried individually in Multnomah County Circuit Court. City authorities were attempting to repeat, this time with greater success, their legal offensive against the Communists of 1930-1931.¹⁶

In November 1934, Don Cluster became the first defendant to face trial on the charge of criminal syndicalism, and Irvin Goodman and Harry L. Gross, working through the International Labor Defense (ILD), served as defense attorneys. Through

his involvement in these new trials, Goodman essentially repeated the role he had played in the Boloff case of 1931. After a short trial, a jury found the twenty-year-old guilty of criminal syndicalism, but because of his relative youth Circuit Judge Robert Tucker issued a suspended sentence and paroled Cluster to Goodman. The subsequent trial of Dirk De Jonge proved to be much more significant. In his description of the trial, MacColl said that “De Jonge experienced judicial treatment tantamount to a kangaroo court.” The actions of special prosecutor Stanley Doyle proved to be particularly dubious. Harry Gross criticized Doyle, a former national official of the American Legion, in an article for *The Nation*:

He blustered and stormed at defense witnesses, questioned them concerning their war records, and otherwise conducted himself in a typical flag-waving manner. His utterances before the jury were highly prejudicial, but the judge, despite repeated requests, refused to admonish him....Time after time, during arguments upon objections and in the presence of the jury, Doyle referred to the defendant as a “rat,” a dangerous radical, and a liar, without challenge by the judge.

Doyle even admitted in court that he had attempted to bribe a witness into altering his testimony during the course of the trial. It was later revealed that the witness, Lawrence A. Milner, was involved in undercover work on radical activities for the National Guard. The state utilized Merrill Bacon as its star witness because of his presumed expertise on the subject of communism. After a trial that lasted three weeks the jury found De Jonge guilty but recommended leniency. Judge Jacob Kanzler, an active member of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, sentenced De Jonge to seven years in the state penitentiary on November 26, 1934. Goodman appealed De Jonge’s conviction to the Oregon Supreme Court, which in a 5-2 decision

upheld the ruling and the validity of the state criminal syndicalism statute on November 26, 1935.¹⁷

Following De Jonge's conviction, Edward Denny was tried and found guilty of criminal syndicalism on January 29, 1935, and sentenced to two years in the penitentiary. Irvin Goodman appealed Denny's conviction to the Oregon Supreme Court, and on January 21, 1936, the court upheld the verdict. Yet, in spite of their successful record of prosecutions for criminal syndicalism, the authorities did not attempt to bring the four remaining defendants to trial, and the state eventually dropped the indictments.¹⁸ One possible reason for the halt in prosecutions concerned the expense of individual trials in a period of public retrenchment as city authorities began to face the prospect of diminishing returns for their efforts. Another explanation might be found in the *Oregonian's* criticism of the criminal syndicalism trials and attacks on the statute, perhaps influencing public opinion about the controversial nature of the law and undermining support for the prosecutions.

After the excitement surrounding the criminal syndicalism trials had diminished by the end of 1934, several local organizations, including the Red Squad and the Commanders' Council, attempted to maintain the momentum of the Red Scare. Walter Odale published a booklet entitled *Does America Want Communism?* in early 1934 that described the alleged Communist threat to American traditions and values. In the conclusion to the publication, Odale expressed his views about Communism:

Communism does not seek to build up and improve, but to destroy. Instead of peace and harmony it seeks to create endless strife between employer and employee. It would enlist the American working man under a foreign banner to

fight its battles. It capitalizes upon the economic depression, upon personal misfortune, and upon every unpleasant incident to deceive people into thinking it is a cure-all for their ills.

The Citizens' Educational Service of Portland issued Odale's booklet and distributed it to veterans' groups, such as the American Legion, and to members of the Chamber of Commerce. Odale also gave lectures about the evils of communism to different groups in Portland and around the state. The Commanders' Council, composed of the leaders of many fraternal and auxiliary groups from the region, held a meeting on December 28, 1934, for the express purpose of addressing the perceived subversive threat. The membership voted to stage a demonstration at City Hall to oppose the granting of a permit for a noted Communist theorist, Scott Nearing, to speak at the city auditorium. Although this protest failed and, as one of its members admitted, probably increased the publicity for the speaker in question, the actions of the Commanders' Council showed that the Red Scare extended into the early months of 1935.¹⁹

Membership in the local CP continued to remain static through the disruptive period of the Red Scare in 1934-1935, its numbers hovering between three hundred and five hundred dues-paying members, with perhaps several thousand fellow travelers throughout the region. By early 1935, however, the opinions of business and political interests in Portland became divided over the ongoing antiradical crusade. The editors of the *Oregonian*, as they had previously done in 1931, came out solidly against the criminal syndicalism statute when it was invoked again in late 1934. The editors had no love for communism or individual Communists, and they frequently printed editorials comparing the superior American system with the destructive Soviet system. But even though communism was roundly despised, the *Oregonian* editors

underscored the threat that the criminal syndicalism law represented to the First Amendment rights of Americans. An editorial from January 21, 1935, reflected this position:

Communism is an abhorrent thing from the viewpoint of free Americans. Because of that very fact it is not and is not likely to become a menace here. Yet the bogey of communism is continually kept at the forefront by those who advocate and defend the criminal syndicalism act....But for that anomaly the people of Oregon would not tolerate the criminal syndicalism act and its repeal would ensue....It is a law that sets at naught the fundamental right of free speech guaranteed by the federal constitution.

Beginning in late 1934, *Oregonian* editorials began to call for the repeal of the law, and these appeals became more adamant as abuses by the Police Bureau's Red Squad began to come to light. The editors of the more populist *Oregon Journal*, on the other hand, remained staunch supporters of the criminal syndicalism law and wholeheartedly supported the efforts of the city authorities to prosecute the Communists.²⁰

The local Red Scare faded out during the early months of 1935, but labor and political conditions in Portland and Oregon remained volatile for several years. In the election of November 1934, Democrat Charles H. Martin had been chosen governor. Martin, a retired major general, largely rode the coattails of Roosevelt's popular New Deal programs into office. But he quickly proved to be a reactionary figure for many Oregonians and took a hard line against what he considered to be "radical" labor activities such as picketing. As Martin took office union activity expanded across Oregon and much of the nation, in part because of the passage of the National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act) in 1935. The Wagner Act succeeded the NIRA, which had been declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1935. The statute

protected the right of employees to organize unions for collective bargaining purposes and established the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to implement its provisions. The position of the CP also changed dramatically in 1935 when the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International established the “Popular Front” to protect the Soviet Union against the growing menace of fascism. With the change in the party line Communists abandoned their dual unions and joined AFL unions and liberal political groups. The Popular Front program eventually gave the Communists some respectability and power in certain labor, progressive, and governmental organizations. While these changes occurred on the political front a major lumber strike took place in the Pacific Northwest during the summer of 1935 that badly damaged the local economy. Police and community leaders turned away from antiradical repression and directed their attention toward the perceived threat of organized labor to the business establishment. After the lumber strike of 1935 more disruptive strikes occurred throughout Portland and Oregon in 1936 and 1937 as the industrial unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) began to wield influence. A major turf war between the CIO and the AFL disrupted the timber industry in 1937, causing further harm to the economy.²¹

Despite increasing labor tension, sentiment began to build for repeal of the state criminal syndicalism law. Oregon Supreme Court Justice Harry Belt had dissented from the panel’s 5-2 decision upholding De Jonge’s conviction by criticizing some of the blunders made by special counsel Stanley Doyle during the trial. Irvin Goodman, Harry Gross, and future U.S. District Judge Gus J. Solomon, with the help of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the ILD, prepared to petition the

U.S. Supreme Court for a review of De Jonge's case. In late 1936, the Court agreed to evaluate the constitutionality of the De Jonge decision, and oral arguments occurred on December 9, 1936. In the Court's unanimous verdict, handed down on January 4, 1937, Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes concluded that aspects of the Oregon criminal syndicalism statute were "repugnant to the due process clause of the 14th amendment." As reported by the *Oregonian* on January 5, 1937, Hughes further affirmed that, "Peaceable assembly for lawful discussion can not be made a crime. The holding of meetings for peaceable political action can not be proscribed. Those who assist in the conduct of such meetings can not be branded as criminals on that score." This momentous decision voided De Jonge's conviction and parts of the state criminal syndicalism law. Although the Court did not invalidate the entire act, its enforcement became doubtful. After De Jonge's release from nine months of prison he apparently did not resume his activities in the Communist party, and after his moment of notoriety, quickly dropped from sight.²²

In early 1937, the Oregon criminal syndicalism law came under renewed attack within the state. A grass-roots movement for repeal had existed since 1932, but the petitioners had not been able to gather enough signatures to place an initiative on the ballot. Peter Zimmerman, a state Senator from Yamhill County and member of the Grange, introduced measures to repeal the criminal syndicalism act during the 1933 and 1935 legislative sessions, but each time his bills went down to defeat. In the 1934 general election he ran as an independent candidate for governor against Charles Martin, and although Zimmerman lost by approximately twenty thousand votes, he endorsed the repeal of the law during his campaign. Zimmerman aligned himself with

both organized labor and the Grange in opposition to the statute. According to Monroe Sweetland, former executive secretary of the progressive Oregon Commonwealth Federation, the Grange was “highly political” during the 1930s and frequently backed progressive causes, such as public power. After the ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court nullified a portion of the statute in January 1937, opponents of the syndicalism law, including the *Oregonian*, pressured the legislature for action. On February 20, 1937, Oregon legislators repealed the act and replaced it with a conspiracy law. Conservative Democratic Governor Martin signed the bill, and the Oregon criminal syndicalism statute became history. Strong statewide opposition and embarrassment over the De Jonge decision of the U.S. Supreme Court probably contributed to the successful effort to repeal the law. Yet, even with the loss of the syndicalist act, the Portland Red Squad continued its investigations of radical activities in the city, the state, and occasionally along the West Coast.²³

During the fall of 1937, members of the Red Squad faced investigations of their activities by the *Oregonian* and the National Lawyers Guild, and the resulting negative publicity almost brought about the dissolution of the unit. Harry A. Whitten described some of the activities of the Squad in his 1939 Reed College thesis, “Subversive Activities: Their Extent and Meaning in Portland.” Whitten stated that, “For a period of three years the Red Squad maintained an office outside the police station, from which it directed its work and kept its elaborate files of subversive literature and card index system of alleged radicals.” The Squad’s files purportedly contained “records concerning over 10,000 persons alleged to be Communists, Communist sympathizers, or radicals.” Walter Odale and other members of the unit

influenced political campaigns by distributing reports that linked particular candidates to the CP. Examples of this practice occurred during the campaign leading up to the June 1937 school board election. Members of the Squad spread rumors by word of mouth and distributed propaganda that tarnished the reputations of candidates Jessie M. Short and Richard M. Steiner. Short, a Reed College professor and public housing advocate for over twenty years, and Steiner, pastor of the First Unitarian Church, were viewed as liberal activists and well known in the local community. One possible reason for the Squad's campaign against Short involved her drive for improved public housing, which represented a threat to the real estate interests of the city. Steiner eventually withdrew his candidacy and Short lost the election for the Portland School Board. As a result of these setbacks Short, Steiner, and other individuals began to openly question the tactics of the Red Squad and its connections with groups such as the American Legion. The *Oregonian* began to pick up these stories in mid-1937, and a full-scale investigation of the unit occurred towards the end of the year.²⁴

As critical and damaging information began to emerge about the activities of the Red Squad the editors of the *Oregonian* took the position that the section had far overstepped its investigative bounds and had become a corrupt and secretive organization with the power to wreck havoc upon the lives of innocent citizens. In a series of articles published in November and December of 1937, the newspaper exposed the practices of the Squad through interviews with its victims, and used editorials to heap criticism upon the unit. While many readers wrote in to commend the *Oregonian* for its expose, the editors of the *Oregon Journal* remained mainly silent

during the controversy and seemed unwilling to join the fray when public opinion turned against the Squad. Police Chief Harry Niles closed the private office of the Red Squad in the Railway Exchange Building and moved the operation back to police headquarters as a result of the turmoil. Odale was placed under the supervision of Captain of Detectives John J. Keegan, and the Squad's files were supposedly restricted to the use of law enforcement agencies. In spite of the controversy, the city council and Chief Niles did not disband the Red Squad because it continued to be a valuable resource for many local interests.²⁵

As progressive organizations such as the Oregon Commonwealth Federation (OCF) and the Oregon Workers Alliance joined prominent Portland liberals and organized labor in registering complaints against the Red Squad, the Oregon Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild began its own investigation in November 1937. According to historian Richard Gid Powers the Lawyers Guild operated as a front for the CP. A letter to the editor of *The Daily Worker*, a Communist newspaper, described the motive behind the revelations surrounding the Red Squad. This letter, from "A Worker Correspondent" dated December 9, 1937, revealed that, "Through a correct application of the united front tactics of the Communist Party in Portland, a large number of prominent organizations and individuals have become active in a campaign to try once and for all to abolish the vicious anti-progressive-labor-liberal activities of this arm of the local police department." Even though Odale and other members of the Squad maintained that the CP controlled the Guild and therefore the investigation, some citizens probably did not take these claims seriously after the *Oregonian* disclosures of late 1937. The Oregon Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild released

its findings to the general public in May 1938, and the report included evidence of a web of corruption within the Portland Red Squad.²⁶

Besides slandering local liberals for alleged sympathies to communism with little or no evidence to back his claims, Odale was described by the report as directing an employer-financed blacklist operation from the Red Squad's office in the Railway Exchange Building. If a manager suspected an employee of being a Communist, he could contact the Squad for information as to whether the individual was on Odale's list of ten thousand suspected radicals. If a worker's name had been placed on the list in error, a common occurrence, the individual in question was forced to visit the Squad's office and provide proof that he or she was not a Communist in order to be "cleared" for employment. The report claimed that Odale, Governor Martin, and the Radical Activities Research Committee of the American Legion in Oregon regularly exchanged information that concerned the activities of organized labor and radicals. The investigation also discovered that some of the Squad's antiradical operations had occurred in California, far outside the legal jurisdiction of the Portland Police Bureau.²⁷

Following the disclosures and bad press of 1937 and 1938, members of the Red Squad continued to engage in their investigations of radical activities. One member of the Squad, Captain John Keegan, traveled to Washington, D.C., in December 1938 to testify before the newly formed House Committee on Un-American activities, led by Texas Democrat Martin Dies. Keegan and Merrill Bacon traveled to San Francisco in mid-1939 to give evidence in the Harry Bridges deportation hearing at Angel Island. The Squad also identified several progressive organizations in Oregon

as CP fronts, including the Oregon Commonwealth Federation (OCF). The OCF had been founded in April 1937 at a convention in Portland, and Monroe Sweetland had been elected as its executive secretary. Sweetland stated that the organization had been established largely to capitalize on the latent political power of the growing labor movement in Oregon. The International Woodworkers of America (IWA), a CIO affiliate, had been organizing in the forests and mills of the state, bringing many workers into the union movement for the first time. The OCF attempted to utilize the strength of this electorate to establish a new labor party in Oregon, or to take control of the Democratic party and reshape it into a progressive party. The Commonwealth Federation also supported the development of public power and backed progressive candidates for office. But the main goal of the organization, according to Sweetland, was to defeat the reactionary and anti-labor Governor Charles Martin in the May 1938 Democratic primary. The OCF, along with many other liberal and labor elements within the state, campaigned against the governor for months. The efforts of the Commonwealth Federation and other groups succeeded when Martin lost the primary to Henry Hess, a liberal state senator from La Grande. But this victory proved to be the OCF's political high point. The organization did not make much headway in succeeding years and was dissolved during World War II.²⁸

By late 1938, another Red Scare had developed, but this time it was national in scope and largely centered around the findings of the Dies Committee. In addition to the investigation of Communist activities, the committee also examined the growing influence of Nazism and fascism in the United States. With the nations of Europe edging closer to war, China and Japan already engaged in a brutal conflict, and fears

that American traditions and values were being undermined by those loyal to totalitarian dictatorships, the Dies Committee hearings attracted a great deal of attention. In 1938 the membership of the CP reached about 75,000, and thousands of fellow travelers in front organizations greatly enhanced its network of control. But the late 1930s Red Scare did little damage to the Communists in comparison to the fallout from the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939. The pact destroyed the Popular Front and made the Communists pariahs once again. When the United States and the Soviet Union became wartime allies two years later some of the damage was repaired, but the CP was not able to recreate another Popular Front in America. The Portland Red Squad continued under Odale's direction into World War II, when the officers of the unit worked closely with the FBI and other intelligence services in anti-espionage activities. With the rise of anticommunism and the next Red Scare that began in the late 1940s, the Red Squad continued on after Odale's retirement in 1949 under the leadership of Captain William Browne. The old-style antiradical department of the Portland Police Bureau finally went out of existence during the mid-1960s.²⁹

Throughout the decade of the 1930s members of the Communist party in Portland experienced harassment by the Red Squad, labor organizations faced the anti-union activities of the Chamber of Commerce, and local newspapers sometimes took conflicting sides on these controversial issues. Although the core CP membership in the city remained very small, and while the party ran candidates in several elections, its members suffered abuses at the hands of the authorities. Even the De Jonge Supreme Court decision in January 1937 and the repeal of the Oregon criminal syndicalism law did little to stop the harassment that Communists continued to endure.

But certain factors existed within the community that tended to mitigate the forces of repression. The *Oregonian* newspaper, principally through its editorials, probably helped to reduce some of the suspicions toward the perceived radical threat. The Popular Front initiated by the CP also proved to be a fairly successful moderating influence on the anticommunist movement from 1935 to 1939. Yet, despite a good deal of ambivalence over the matter by officials and liberal activists, the machinery of antiradical repression remained alive in Portland into the 1940s and, even more importantly, the will remained to use severe methods against Communist or radical elements of the city.

Notes to Chapter Three

¹ Louis E. Starr to Walter B. Odale, 13 October 1933, Box 3, Folder 10, Police Historical Records, Red Squad, PCA, 8000-06; "Portland Section. C.P.U.S.A.," report, 22 October 1933, Box 3, Folder 4, Police Historical Records, Red Squad, PCA, 8000-06; "City Denies Permit for Parade by Reds," *Oregonian*, 20 July 1933; "Jobless Men Raid Relief Quarters," *Oregonian*, 30 November 1933; "Jobless Make Demand-Unemployment Insurance Urged by 2000 Men," *Oregonian*, 16 January 1934; E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915 to 1950* (Portland: The Georgian Press, 1979), 453; William H. Mullins, "'I'll Wreck the Town if it Will Give Employment': Portland in the Hoover Years of the Depression," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (1988): 117-118.

² Scrapbook, Vol. 1, part 2, n.d., pp. 34-49, Burl A. Green Papers, OHS, MSS 2828; ILA meeting reports, 5 April 1934, 12 April 1934, Box 3, Folder 7, Police Historical Records, Red Squad, PCA, 8000-06; M. J. Heale, *American Anticommunism: Combating the Enemy Within, 1830-1970* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 110; Robert Justin Goldstein, *Political Repression in Modern America: From 1870 to the Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., Inc., 1978), 211; MacColl, *Growth of a City*, 467-468.

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⁴ Scrapbook, Vol. 1, part 2, n.d., pp. 34-49, Burl A. Green Papers, OHS, MSS 2828; "Dockmen's Aversion to Company Unions Touched Off Strike," paper unknown, 17 July 1934, scrapbook, Vol. 3, p. 2, Burl A. Green Papers, OHS, MSS 2828; Radio address, 5 July 1934, scrapbook, Vol. 3, p. 73, Burl A. Green Papers, OHS, MSS 2828; ILA meeting report, 5 April 1934, Box 3, Folder 7, Police Historical Records, Red Squad, PCA, 8000-06; William Bigelow and Norman Diamond, "Agitate, Educate, Organize: Portland, 1934," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 89, no. 1 (1988): 5-7.

⁵ "Dockmen's Aversion to Company Unions Touched Off Strike," paper unknown, 17 July 1934, scrapbook, Vol. 3, p. 2, Burl A. Green Papers, OHS, MSS 2828; ILA meeting reports, 5 April 1934, 12 April 1934, Box 3, Folder 7, Police Historical Records, Red Squad, PCA, 8000-06; "Red Menace Seen by Head of Union," *Oregonian*, 7 September 1935; MacColl, *Growth of a City*, 472, 474.

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Conclusion

Antiradicalism in Portland and Oregon

The history of antiradicalism in Portland and Oregon during the early decades of the twentieth century did not simply consist of the continuous repression of left-wing radicals by reactionary forces bent on the destruction of civil liberties. Many individuals who took part in the antiradical crusade had various motives for doing so, including reasons related to economic and political self-interest. Cultural factors also played an important role in the development of responses to left-wing radicalism, and as social conditions changed the motives of antiradicals sometimes shifted to reflect the times. An examination of the likely motives and responses of several important participants in the antiradical campaign reveal the complexities surrounding these issues and provide context for an improved understanding of the cultural, political, and economic forces at work. Portland Mayor George L. Baker will be profiled as the first antiradical example.

George Baker, a savvy politician and businessman, stands as one of the most important figures of early twentieth century Portland history. First elected to city council in 1898, the theater impresario became an important political ally of business interests in the city. Despite the close mayoral election of 1917, Baker immediately proved to be a strong and popular public figure, the type of leader that many citizens may have believed the city to need during the tense and disruptive years of World War I. The patriotic Baker energetically supported the war effort and undoubtedly reflected popular sentiment on the issue in Portland and Oregon. He denounced the Industrial

Workers of the World because of the radical union's opposition to the war, its alleged interference in the war effort, and the apparent threat Wobblies posed to the traditions and democratic values of the United States. Baker sometimes used the prevailing antiradical sentiment to his political advantage and also to aid his local allies.¹

As Mayor Baker continued his verbal attacks on the Wobblies and Communists after the war ended, his actions contributed to the uneasy atmosphere of the Red Scare period. For example, even though the antiradical atmosphere had dissipated and radicals presented little revolutionary threat by 1922, Baker encouraged the Police Bureau's Red Squad to continue its investigations. During the maritime strike in October of that year, Baker declared, in a blatantly cynical move to benefit the waterfront employers and increase his own political standing, that an army of Wobblies was marching on Portland to start a "revolution." Gordon DeMarco claimed that Baker's "revolution" not only helped to break the waterfront strike, but that it also increased public fears of radicalism and facilitated the passage of the compulsory school bill in November. Baker also assisted the Ku Klux Klan by his actions, and Klan-backed candidates and measures did well in the November 1922 election. In 1924, Baker ran for the U.S. Senate against incumbent Charles L. McNary but suffered a sound defeat in the Republican primary. He remained Portland's mayor until 1933, and during the early Depression years strongly denounced the developing Communist movement in the city. George Baker displayed the sometimes complex motives behind the responses of antiradicals to radical activities during periods of heightened economic and social pressures.²

John H. Hall, Sr., proved to be another staunch opponent of left-wing radicalism. By early 1919, the Portland attorney, along with many other Americans, had come to detest the new Bolshevik regime in Russia and homegrown radicals like the Wobblies. Hall helped author Oregon's red flag law and gave advice on revisions to the state criminal syndicalism bill. In his letters to legislators and other parties Hall consistently attacked radicals seemingly because of their alleged threat to the stability of the nation in the postwar period. Through strong laws, he believed that the menace of radicalism could be eliminated, and, as the situation developed, Hall turned out to be partly correct in his assumptions. The motives behind some of Hall's antiradical actions appeared to originate from a reflexive hatred of left-wing radical organizations.³

Walter Odale, one of the most determined antiradicals of Portland, appeared to remain fairly consistent in his beliefs and activities throughout his long career as director of the Police Bureau's Red Squad. Odale had served in a branch of the military intelligence service during World War I, and in 1922 he joined the police Red Squad, where he remained until 1949. His publication of anticommunist pamphlets, testimony before congressional committees, lectures in various communities, and attendance at Communist meetings in order to collect evidence of subversive activities showed that from the beginning of his involvement with the Squad, Odale worked the front lines against what he perceived to be the radical menace. He maintained a file card record system for decades, and his operations reflected similar activities that occurred in the Red Squads of other cities, including Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Members of these units exchanged information on radical activities in order

to better coordinate the antiradical campaigns along the West Coast. The records of some of these Squads still exist, and studies should be conducted to explore the methods of interagency cooperation.⁴

During his career with the Red Squad Odale engaged in some dubious activities. His superiors probably tolerated and possibly even sanctioned the employment clearinghouse operation in the Railway Exchange Building because of the supposed benefits of keeping local radicals out of work. But, according to the National Lawyers Guild Report, some employers questioned the value of services they received for their financial support of the Squad's operation. Evidence also linked the Red Squad with unsavory characters such as company spies, and suggested that its members may have engaged in labor espionage practices. The involvement of Merrill Bacon and John Keegan in the Harry Bridges deportation hearing was probably arranged to aid the waterfront employers. Odale received some funding from questionable sources during his tenure on the Squad, and the unit's activities frequently violated the city's charter when its members conducted operations outside of Portland. Yet, Odale's consistent antiradicalism, reflected in his publications and testimony, seemed to be the main motive behind his responses to radical activities.⁵

Walter W. R. May and W. D. B. Dodson represented examples of business opposition from within the Portland Chamber of Commerce to the activities of organized labor and radicals. May, the manager of the Chamber of Commerce, and Dodson, its lobbyist in Washington, D.C., had no use for communism, but they seemed to be more uncomfortable with the revival of organized labor under the National Industrial Recovery Act. As representatives of the Chamber their main

concern centered on the protection of the interests of Portland and Oregon businesses. With the rise of labor disturbances at the beginning of the Maritime Strike of 1934, Dodson wrote to May and expressed strong misgivings about the developing labor movement; he even articulated his fears and those of others about a potential takeover of the government by organized labor. Businesses in many areas of the nation experienced labor unrest in 1934, and individuals like May and Dodson remained distressed by the impact of these developments on the economies of Portland and Oregon. The alleged radical menace appeared to be a side issue compared to the threat of organized labor for these two men, although this was not the case with other elements within the Chamber and members of groups like the Commanders' Council.⁶

Monroe Sweetland, unlike the previous antiradical individuals, represented an example of liberal antiradicalism during the 1930s. Sweetland had been an active Socialist in New York State before he moved to Oregon during the mid-1930s to help launch a progressive movement. He aided in organizing the first convention of the Oregon Commonwealth Federation (OCF) in April 1937. The OCF, a progressive association funded mainly by the Congress of Industrial Organizations-affiliated International Woodworkers of America (IWA), had been accused of being a Communist front organization by the Red Squad and the American Federation of Labor. But Communists never dominated the OCF, in part because of the actions of Sweetland. Because of his Socialist background and previous dealings with Communists, he understood the tactics of the Communist party (CP) and outmaneuvered them to keep the OCF under the control of a progressive leadership. The directors of the OCF did allow Communists to remain in the organization for

about a year, although a close watch was maintained on their activities. Sweetland stated that the CP attempted to destroy organizations that it could not control and direct towards its own purposes. His political actions and experience helped to keep the OCF free of Communist domination during the Popular Front Era.⁷

The responses of antiradicals to left-wing radicalism in Portland and Oregon during the period under study frequently involved complex cultural, political, and economic motivations. Some individuals advanced their own agendas by participation in and support of the antiradical crusade. Yet, a popular conviction that left-wing radicalism represented a threat to the traditions and values of the nation also formed the basis of the response of many antiradicals to radical activities. During the 1990s evidence emerged that validated many of the claims of the anticommunists. Some members of the CP subverted the government and economy of the U.S. in support of the foreign policy objectives of the Soviet Union. Communist spies engaged in treasonous espionage activities, and many of these operations had originated during the Popular Front Era. Antiradicals provided a vital service by keeping citizens informed of the activities of the CP and the alleged threat that its members presented to the nation.⁸

Additional studies should be conducted to develop a comprehensive understanding of the motives and activities of antiradicals along the West Coast as well as throughout the rest of the nation. In Portland the motives and responses of antiradical individuals to left-wing radicalism probably reflected the experiences of other antiradicals along the West Coast during the period under investigation. But much research remains to be done in Portland and other communities to better

understand the cultural, political, and economic motives of antiradicals. This topic deserves further study throughout every phase of the conflict between radicals and antiradicals in the United States.

Notes to Conclusion

- ¹ Gordon DeMarco, *A Short History of Portland* (San Francisco: Lexikos, 1990), 111-114; E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915-1950* (Portland: The Georgian Press, 1979), 140, 142-143, 157-158.
- ² DeMarco, *A Short History of Portland*, 114-116; MacColl, *Growth of a City*, 167-168, 170-172.
- ³ Resolution by John H. Hall, Oregon State Bar Association, n.d., John H. Hall to Walter A. Dimick, 16 January 1919, Hall to Dimick, 21 January 1919, Box 7, Folder 7, John H. Hall Sr. Papers, OHS, MSS 1797; MacColl, *Growth of a City*, 157.
- ⁴ Walter B. Odale and M. R. Bacon, *Does America Want Communism?* (Portland: The Citizens' Educational Service, 1934); "Bert Odale Succumbs," *Oregon Journal*, 28 July 1958; Harry Arthur Whitten, "Subversive Activities: Their Extent and Meaning in Portland" (bachelor's thesis, Reed College, 1939), 136-137.
- ⁵ Scrapbook, n.d., Vol. 1, section 4, pp. 67-69, Burl A. Green Papers, OHS, MSS 2828; Whitten, "Subversive Activities," 133-135.
- ⁶ W. D. B. Dodson to Walter W. R. May, 6 June 1934, Copy of letter from Dodson to May, 8 June 1934, Box 25, Labor Strike-Longshoremen Folder, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, UOL, Bx 170; Board of Directors Meeting minutes, 9 June 1934, Box 19, Citizens Emergency Committee, 1934 Maritime Strike Folder, Portland Chamber of Commerce Records, UOL, Bx 170; MacColl, *Growth of a City*, 469-472.
- ⁷ Monroe Mark Sweetland, interview by author, tape recording, Milwaukie, Or., 16 March 2002.
- ⁸ John E. Haynes, *Red Scare or Red Menace: American Communism and Anticommunism in the Cold War Era* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996); Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism* (New York: The Free Press, 1995).

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APPENDIX A

Text of the Oregon Criminal Syndicalism Statute of 1919

CHAPTER 12

AN ACT

Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:

Section 1. Criminal Syndicalism is hereby defined to be the doctrine which advocates crime, physical violence, arson, destruction of property, sabotage, or other unlawful acts or methods, as a means of accomplishing or effecting industrial or political ends, or as a means of effecting industrial or political revolution, or for profit.

Section 2. "Sabotage" is hereby defined to be malicious, felonious, intentional or unlawful damage, injury or destruction of real or personal property of any employer, or owner, by his or her employe or employes, or any employer or employers or by any person or persons, at their own instance, or at the instance, request or instigation of such employes, employers, or any other person.

Section 3. Any person who, by word of mouth or writing, advocates, affirmatively suggests or teaches the duty, necessity, propriety or expediency of crime, criminal syndicalism, or sabotage, or who shall advocate, affirmatively suggest or teach the duty, necessity, propriety or expediency of doing any act of violence, the destruction of or damage to any property, the bodily injury to any person or persons, or the commission of any crime or unlawful act as a means of accomplishing or effecting any industrial or political ends, change or revolution, or for profit; or who prints, publishes, edits, issues or knowingly circulates, sells, distributes, or publicly displays any books, pamphlets, paper, handbill, poster, document, or written or printed matter in any form whatsoever, containing matter advocating, advising, affirmatively suggesting or teaching crime, criminal syndicalism, sabotage, the doing of any act of physical violence, the destruction of or damage to any property, the injury to any person, or the commission of any crime or unlawful act as a means of accomplishing, effecting or bringing about any industrial or political ends, or change, or as a means of accomplishing, effecting or bringing about any industrial or political revolution, or for profit, or who shall openly, or at all attempt to justify by word of mouth or writing, the commission or the attempt to commit sabotage, any act of physical violence, the destruction of or damage to any property, the injury of any person or the commission of any crime or unlawful act, with the intent to exemplify, spread, or teach, or affirmatively suggest criminal syndicalism, or organizes, or helps to organize or become a member of, or voluntarily assembles with any society or assemblage of persons which teaches, advocates or affirmatively suggests the doctrine of criminal

syndicalism, sabotage, or the necessity, propriety or expediency of doing any act of physical violence or the commission of any crime or unlawful act as a means of accomplishing or effecting any industrial or political ends, change or revolution or for profit, is guilty of a felony, and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by imprisonment in the state penitentiary for a term of not less than one year nor more than ten years, or by a fine of not more than \$1,000, or by both such imprisonment and fine.

Section 4. The owner, lessee, agent, superintendent or person in charge or occupation of any place, building, room or rooms, or structure, who knowingly permits therein any assembly or consort of persons prohibited by the provisions of section 3 of this act, or who after notification by authorized public or peace officer that the place or premises, or any part thereof, is or are so used, permits such use to be continued, is guilty of a misdemeanor and punishable upon conviction thereof by imprisonment in the county jail for not less than sixty days nor for not more than one year, or by a fine of not less than \$100, nor more than \$500, or by both such imprisonment and fine.

Section 5. It appearing that there is a very active element within this state which is determined if possible to overthrow our existing political structure, destroy our industrial and economic institutions, disrupt our labor organizations, and bring ruin and chaos to our people, by organizing all lawless and dissatisfied elements which they may be able to gather here, and teach, instruct and incite crime and destroy property, this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety; and an emergency is hereby declared to exist and this act shall take effect and be in force immediately upon its approval by the governor.

Approved by the governor February 3, 1919.

Filed in the office of the secretary of state February 3, 1919.

Source: *General Laws of Oregon, 1919*, pp. 25-26.

APPENDIX B

Text of the Oregon Criminal Syndicalism Statute of 1921

14-3, 110. Criminal Syndicalism – Definition. – Criminal syndicalism is hereby defined to be the doctrine which advocates crime, physical violence, arson, destruction of property, sabotage or other unlawful acts or methods, as a means of accomplishing or effecting industrial or political ends, or as a means of effecting industrial or political revolution, or for profit. [L. 1921, ch. 34, section 1, p. 45.]

14-3, 111. Sabotage – Definition. – “Sabotage” is hereby defined to be malicious, felonious, intentional or unlawful damage, injury or destruction of real or personal property of any employer, or owner, by his or her employe or employes, or any employer or employers, or by any person or persons, at their own instance, or at the instance, request or instigation of such employes, employers or any other person. [L. 1921, ch. 34, section 2, p. 45.]

14-3, 112. Criminal syndicalism or sabotage – Advocating or teaching – Membership in organization – Penalty. – Any person who, by word of mouth or writing, advocates, affirmatively suggests or teaches the duty, necessity, propriety, or expediency of crime, criminal syndicalism, or sabotage, or who shall advocate, affirmatively suggest or teach the duty, necessity, propriety or expediency of doing any act of violence, the destruction of or damage to any property, the bodily injury to any person or persons, or the commission of any crime or unlawful act as a means of accomplishing or effecting any industrial or political ends, change or revolution, or for profit; or who prints, publishes, edits, issues or knowingly circulates, sells, distributes, or publicly displays any books, pamphlets, paper, handbill, poster, document, or written or printed matter in any form whatsoever, containing matter advocating syndicalism, sabotage, the doing of any act of physical violence, the destruction of or damage to any property, the injury to any person, or the commission of any crime or unlawful act as a means of accomplishing, effecting or bringing about any industrial or political ends, or change, or as a means of accomplishing, effecting or bringing about any industrial or political revolution, or for profit, or who shall openly or at all attempt to justify by word of mouth or writing the commission or the attempt to commit sabotage, any act of physical violence, the destruction of or damage to any property, the injury of any person or the commission of any crime or unlawful act, with the intent to exemplify, spread, or teach, or affirmatively suggest criminal syndicalism, or who shall be or become a member of, or organize or help to organize, or solicit or accept any person to become a member of, or voluntarily assemble with any society or assemblage of persons which teaches, advocates, or affirmatively suggests the doctrine of criminal syndicalism, sabotage, or the necessity, propriety or expediency of doing any act of physical violence or the commission of any crime or unlawful act as a means of accomplishing or effecting any industrial or political ends, change or

revolution or for profit, is guilty of a felony, and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by imprisonment in the state penitentiary for a term of not less than one year nor more than ten years, or by a fine of not more than \$1,000, or by both such imprisonment and fine. [L. 1921, ch. 34, section 3, p. 45.]

14-3, 113. Owner, agent, or lessee of premises – Syndicalistic meetings – Penalty.
– The owner, lessee, agent, superintendent or person in charge or occupation of any place, building, room or rooms, or structure, who knowingly permits therein any assembly or consort of persons prohibited by the provisions of section 3 of this act, or who after notification by authorized public or peace officer that the place or premises, or any part thereof, is or are so used, permits such use to be continued, is guilty of a misdemeanor and punishable upon conviction thereof by imprisonment in the county jail for not less than sixty days nor for (not) more than one year, or by a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500, or by both such imprisonment and fine. [L. 1921, ch. 34, section 4, p. 45.]

Source: *Oregon Code, 1930*, Vol. 1, pp. 1304-1306.

APPENDIX C

Text of the Oregon Criminal Syndicalism Statute of 1933

CHAPTER 459

AN ACT

Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:

Section 1. That section 14-3, 110, Oregon Code 1930, be and the same hereby is amended so as to read as follows:

Sec. 14-3, 110. Criminal syndicalism hereby is defined to be the doctrine which advocates crime, physical violence, sabotage, or any unlawful acts or methods as a means of accomplishing or effecting industrial or political change or revolution.

Section 2. That section 14-3, 111, Oregon Code 1930, be and the same hereby is amended so as to read as follows:

Sec. 14-3, 111. Sabotage hereby is defined to be intentional and unlawful damage, injury or destruction of real or personal property.

Section 3. That section 14-3, 112, Oregon Code 1930, be and the same hereby is amended so as to read as follows:

Sec. 14-3, 112. Any person who, by word of mouth or writing, advocates or teaches the doctrine of criminal syndicalism, or sabotage, or who prints, publishes, edits, issues or knowingly circulates, sells, distributes or publicly displays any books, pamphlets, paper, handbill, poster, document or written or printed matter in any form whatsoever, containing matter advocating criminal syndicalism, or sabotage, or who shall organize or help to organize, or solicit or accept any person to become a member of any society or assemblage of persons which teaches or advocates the doctrine of criminal syndicalism, or sabotage, or any person who shall orally or by writing or by printed matter call together or who shall distribute or circulate written or printed matter calling together or who shall preside at or conduct or assist in conducting any assemblage of persons, or any organization, or any society, or any group which teaches or advocates the doctrine of criminal syndicalism or sabotage is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by imprisonment in the state penitentiary for a term of not less than one year nor more than 10 years, or by a fine of not more than \$1,000, or by both such imprisonment and fine.

Section 4. That section 14-3, 113, Oregon Code 1930, be and the same hereby is repealed.

Approved by the governor March 15, 1933.

Filed in the office of the secretary of state March 15, 1933.

Source: *Oregon Laws, 1933*, pp. 868-869.