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The Butte Labor Strike of 1920

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THE BUTTE LABOR STRIKE
OF 1920

BY

RUDOLPH J. SHUTEY

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Carroll College in fulfillment of requirements for the candidate for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in History with Honors April, 1961
This thesis for the A. B. Degree, by
Rudolph J. Shutey
has been approved for the
Department of
History
by

Thomas A. Clinch
THOMAS A. CLINCH

April 5, 1961
DATE
The city of Butte has experienced many strikes throughout the course of its history. Of all these, the 1920 strike can be considered the bloodiest and, strangely enough, the most forgotten. It has been to the interest of some that as little as possible be known about the hellish nightmare which occurred on Anaconda Road in April of 1920. In order to correct this situation, I have taken on the responsibility of this thesis.

In the following pages I have tried to be as objective as possible. Both sides of the affair were considered at length before judgement was passed. Once all the facts were gathered and placed side by side, I was forced to condemn the Anaconda Company for their actions. This condemnation was based on the many contradictions which were evident in their testimony and in their newspapers.

In taking the side of the Industrial Workers of the World, I am not condoning their policies. It is a well established fact that they were an extremely radical and socialistic organization, bent on the purpose of replacing the existing government with a workers society. Rather, I have defended them because I feel an injustice was done. A wrong can never be made a right just because one does not agree with another's policy.

At this time, a debt of thanks must be paid to the various individuals who have helped make this thesis possible. I am extremely grateful to Mr. John L. Sullivan and Mr. Harlow Pease, who so readily gave me their time and much needed information.
My thanks also to my mother, Father William Waggenor, and Mrs. Francis Jeske, who encouraged me to continue my work when things looked their blackest. Finally, to Mr. Thomas A. Clinch, I owe a debt that can never be repaid. His patience, helpful information and guidance have been encouraging in this work, and without them it would never have reached completion.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I The Fruitful War</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II The Reversal</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III And the Walls Came Tumbling Down</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Wood For the Fire</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V Bloody Wednesday</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI And So It Ended</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE FRUITFUL WAR

Labor problems as we know them today were not unknown, but were of slight importance during the early decades of the mining industry. Men of the old West had the ability to look out for their own interests. They were either self-employed or were employed by an individual, or group of individuals, with whom they might bargain directly. As long as they received a fair deal, they took their lot in stride, blaming good or ill fortune on "Lady Luck."\(^1\)

It was only after large scale, permanent employer-employee relationships developed, that marked difficulties and the need of labor organizations became apparent.\(^2\) Now, instead of having one individual to barter with, a miner, quite frequently, was forced to face opposition in the guise of large, monopolistic corporations. These corporations, felt obligated to fatten the purses of their stockholders, no matter what consequences their devious procedures might have on their employees. Therefore, the resulting conditions in industry were anything but conducive to the common good of the laboring class. It was in response to this situation that labor organized.\(^3\) Theodore Roosevelt, in his autobiography, summed up this problem quite admirably when he stated, that labor was forced to organize "to secure not only their economic but their simple human rights."\(^4\)

2 Ibid., p. 10.
4 Ibid., p. 149.
Although the necessity of labor to organize was apparent, it met with opposition, not only from the employer but also from the employees. This latter group, felt it against the American laissez-faire and individualistic tradition of life. It is no wonder then, with adverse feelings on all sides, that labor unions, were greatly handicapped. Thus, it seems strange, that with such general persecution of organized labor, a mining camp like Butte, Montana, should so easily develop into a "Gibraltar of Unionism." 6

In Butte, as early as 1866, labor began organizing. On June 13, 1878, it progressed one step further with the formation of the Butte Workingman's Union. 7 Between 1878 and 1906 there were no significant labor problems in the "Copper Camp." As Burlingame and Toole point out, "Labor was assiduously courted and treated with the utmost regard." 8 On the surface labor reigned supreme.

What caused this surprising reversal in Butte? The answer to these questions can be found in the great feud of the "Copper Kings," which began in 1888 and extended to 1906.

The two principal participants in this war were Marcus Daly and William Andrews Clark. No two men were ever more different in character than the protagonists in this battle. Daly was popular, gregarious and generous, whereas Clark was tight, starchy, and ruthless. 9 Daly, a short, stocky, dark man, had come to the West from Ireland, gaining mining experience at Virginia City, Nevada.

6 Jensen, op. cit. p. 289.
7 Ibid. p. 289.
9 Isaac F. Marcosson, Anaconda, New York, Dodd and Mead, 1957, p. 82.
His ability was soon recognized and he was raised to the position of representative for the Walker Brothers in Butte in 1876. In this capacity he purchased and managed the Alice Silver Mine for them. Four years later, he started on his own by buying the Anaconda mine, which two years later developed into a prosperous copper mine.\footnote{Jensen, \emph{op.cit.} p. 291} Daly now was destined for a rapid rise, both in prestige and wealth.

Clark, on the other hand, was a wiry man of slight build and, unlike Daly, did not fit well in a crowd of miners.\footnote{Ibid. p. 291} Of Clark, it has often been said, that "never a dollar got away from him except to come back stuck to another or to buy some flourish for his vanity."\footnote{Howard, \emph{op.cit.} p. 58.} In 1863, this great magnate had entered Montana Territory penniless. Nine years later, after a successful partnership in a Deer Lodge bank, he entered Butte a rich man.

How the feud began, is a point of interest for many Montana historians. A great number of theories have been put forth, each as capable of veracity as the other. Whatever the origin, the resulting repercussions, could be felt around the "Copper City" and the nation for quite some time.\footnote{Jensen, \emph{op.cit.} p. 291}

The fighting began in 1888, when Clark was running for the nomination of Territorial Delegate. Due to Daly's efforts, Clark lost to Thomas H. Carter, a young Republican upstart.\footnote{Howard, \emph{op.cit}. p. 64.}

The second round took place in 1893, when Clark was trying for a Senate seat. Bribery played an important role in this election. Clark bought many votes, but as fast as he did, Daly bought them back. The result was a second defeat for Clark.\footnote{Ibid. p. 64.}
Finally, in the third round, Clark gained a victory. After many thousands of dollars spent by both sides, Clark's city of Helena was declared the capital of Montana.  

The fourth and final round came to a climax on January 28, 1899 when Clark for the sum of $431,000 obtained a Senate seat. Clark did not keep this position for long however, as a Senate investigation resulted and Clark was forced to resign. Shortly after this, on November 12, 1900, Daly died, but the war in Butte continued on, for a new participant, Frederick Augustus Heinze, the "Robin Hood of Copper," had come to Montana.

Heinze was gay, handsome, and intelligent, with an Irish flair and Yankee cunning. He was brought to Butte by the Boston and Montana Company, with whom he soon broke connections, by buying the Rarus Mine adjoining their property. With this lucrative purchase "Fritz" was on his way up, for by employing the federal mining law of 1872, he put his "apex theory" to work. The 1872 law had stated "that a claim constituted a surface area of 1,500 feet long and 600 feet wide in which a vein came to its apex." The locator could follow his vein any distance underground, provided he stay within the 1,500 foot length of his claim. There was no restriction on the lateral variation of the vein underground. Heinze saw an opportunity in this law since it was quite difficult to determine where one vein left off and another started. Through the use of this law and friendly judges like Clancy and Harney, Heinze proceeded to loot the mines of his competitors. Thus, began a war with the Amalgamated Copper Company, which lasted until February 14, 1906, when Heinze was forced to sell out for approximately $10,500,000. This affair had cost the Amalgamated about $1,000,000 a year for approximately six years.

18 Ibid. pp. 67-68.
20 Howard, op.cit. p. 69.
Besides this, Heinze had robbed their mines of uncounted sums -- $1,000,000 from the Michael Davitt alone.

Labor during the war, due to the sizable vote of the working class, never had it so good. As Mr. Jensen, in his *Heritage of Conflict*, points out "Workingmen had political power through their votes as well as their power of brawn and muscle. The latter was at times only incidental to their welfare, for the former kept them in wages."

Labor organizers took advantage of the situation and Butte soon became known as the strongest union town on earth. Soon there was a union for each job and no job for a non-union man.

Labor was on such splendid terms with its employer, that their leaders could almost be called company men. As long as the struggle continued, conditions in Butte remained on a high level. Whatever labor desired, if it was in the least reasonable, they received. In 1900, for example, they asked for and immediately got the eight hour day.

As all things must end, so did the war, and so did the wonderful conditions in Butte. Now, the Amalgamated owned the city of Butte -- its mines, stores, and normally its government. Until recently, when it sold out to the Lee Newspapers, it owned the majority of Montana's newspapers. It also had and still has, it hands in nearly all of the Treasure State's civic agencies. Through these agencies it has been able to keep new industry and competition out of Montana.

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21 *Ibid.* p. 81
25 The Amalgamated became the Anaconda as a result of Roosevelt's trust-busting efforts, but needless to say, it remained unbusted and is still a part of the Standard Oil Chain.
26 Howard, *op. cit.* pp. 83-84.
With the lack of competition and the union leaders closely allied with the company, Butte was faced, for the first time, with labor difficulties. A new era was born in the Mining City, an era of "struggle and hardship."\(^2\)

\(^2\) Garrity, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
THE REVERSAL

With the Anaconda Company now the sole employer of the miners in Butte, labor conditions were so odious that whole neighborhoods of fatherless families became common in the mining city. The average wage was so low as not to allow a reasonable life; and the average life of the miner was shortened to about forty-five years. Those who did not die in the mines, died of illness, contracted as a result of their chosen occupation. As Mr. Sullivan, an old time Butte resident, pointed out, there wasn't even a place provided in the mines for the men to clean up after their shift. This coupled with the fact that no provisions were made to keep the miners' street clothes dry, sent many to an early death. Anyone familiar with the winters in Butte, can easily see why this would occur. Miners often returned home from work, with their clothes frozen to their chilled bodies and so exhausted that any further motion was almost an impossibility. A human being can only bear so much, and after that he must succumb, and succumb the miners did, to the tortures of the "con", pneumonia, arthritis, and other dreadful diseases.

Union conditions, were as abominable as were working conditions. As was previously mentioned, the union leaders, during the time of the Copper Kings, had become very closely allied with their employers. That this alliance continued after the Amalgamated took over is a matter of dispute, but most authorities are of the opinion, that the officers of the Butte Miners' Union continued to be Company controlled.

29 Ibid.
30 Garrity, op. cit. p. 7.
At any event, a split in the union, a local of the Western Federation of Miners since 1893, soon became apparent. On the one side, there was the progressive or anti-company branch and on the other the conservative or pro-company branch. The progressives, it is believed, were influenced by the Industrial Workers of the World, better known as the I. W. W. This division, it is to be kept in mind, occurred within the W. F. M. which later found it necessary to reprimand the Butte local.  

About 1907, the relations between the W.F. M. and Butte union became even more strained. During this year, the progressives began to gain an upper hand and soon had their men holding the union offices. A resurgence of labor power resulted, which in 1909 manifested itself in a closed shop for the Butte area. This condition was to last until the memorable year, 1912, when Dennis Murphy and a slate of officers, wholly unacceptable to the progressives were elected to head the Butte union. These new officers, it has been commonly contended, were a company selected and a company dominated group.

On December first of this unpredictable year the Anaconda Company inaugurated its controversial "rustling" card system. By virtue of this act, for a man to obtain employment it was now necessary that he first go to the rustling card office. Here, as Donald Garrity in his masterful thesis on the "Little Episode," pointed out, the prospective employee had to

Submit to a stringent examination as to birth, family, the different places where employed, politics, and if of alien birth, must give date of arrival in this country, name of ship, and other details.

31 Burlingame and Toole, op.cit. p. 192.
32 Ibid. p. 192.
33 Jensen, op.cit. p.318.
The applicant was then asked to report later for an answer to his application. In the meantime, his record was investigated, which usually required from ten days to a month.

If anything was found in his record not satisfactory to the employment agency, the applicant could not get work. If investigation was satisfactory, he was given a permit to seek work, this permit being known among miners as a "rustling card," or permission to "rustle" for work."

When employed, his card was taken up by the mine foreman who then returned it to the employment office. If a miner happened to quit his job or was fired, the whole process again ensued.

This quite obviously gave the company a tight control over personnel and led to the building up of a kind of dossier on all who sought work in the Butte mines. These cards, it is needless to say, ran into the bitter opposition of the progressives in the union. Now, the sought-for compromise of the two union factions became impossible and by 1913, Butte became a powder keg of unrest, the fuse of which was to be ignited the following year.

34 Garrity, _op.cit._ pp. 7-8.
35 Jensen, _op.cit._ p. 323.
36 Burlingame and Toole, _op.cit._ p. 194.
AND THE WALLS CAME TUMBLING DOWN

The Anaconda Company, besides employing the press and the rustling card as weapons against the union, also followed the practice of hiring detective agencies, such as the Burns and Pinkerton outfits, for the purpose of infiltrating the unions and causing their eventual collapse. One such detective was Burt Foster. Burt was a likeable fellow and got along well with the miners. As a matter of fact, he got along so well with them, that he soon found himself, the newly elected secretary of the union. As secretary he had access to the books and it was only a matter of time before he manipulated them in such a way that the union went broke. 37

Another, and more famous company detective, was one Muckie McDonald. Muckie, was blessed with a radiant personality and a brilliant gift of conversation. Muckie began his career in Butte as an ordinary miner. It was not long, however, before he had the men so worked up, that an independent union was established in 1914. Muckie, as can be expected, shortly after the inception of the union, on August 10, 1914, found himself president of the Butte Mine Workers' Union. 38

The background of Muckie's success lies in the fact, that at this time, the members of the Butte union were paying an assessment to benefit the striking miners in Michigan. 39 By some strange coincidence, word got back to the miners in Butte, that the money they had been paying never reached Michigan, but was confiscated on the way. 40

37 Interview with John L. Sullivan, March 1, 1961, Helena, Montana
38 Ibid.
39 Copper Camp, op.cit. p. 292.
40 Interview with John L. Sullivan, March 1, 1961, Helena, Montana
The result was inevitable -- the men became infuriated with the W. F. M. and refused to pay any more. Thus, Muckie acquired a following of 4,000 dissatisfied miners for his new Independent Mine Workers' Union. 41

This was only the beginning of the fun, which was to take place this year, for on June 12, a mob of miners attacked six representatives of the old miners' union at the gate of the Speculator mine. This seemed to be the signal for the more spectacular events which were to follow. The next day, June 13, was Miners' Union day, usually a day of drunken celebration in the mining city. There may have been many a drunken miner that day, but there certainly was no celebrating. The trouble started that afternoon when the Union parade was attacked and broken up by a group of disgruntled miners. Later the same day, thousands of bitter men attacked the Union Hall on Main Street and tore out all the furniture and fixtures. But, this did not end the day's activities. Later that night the union safe, containing funds and records, was loaded on a moving van and taken south of the city, where it was dynamited. After this things cooled down until June 23, when Charles Moyer, the president of the W. F. M. and about one hundred men fired on a mob of about one thousand miners gathered in front of the union hall. The men fired back, and by some stroke of luck Moyer and his men escaped injury, but the same can not be said for the union hall, for that afternoon it was blasted with over 25 charges of explosives. 42 The police stood by helpless. No one has yet discovered who destroyed the hall. The W. F. M. blamed the "new union" and the "new union" blamed the W. F. M.

While this ordeal was transgressing, the Company sat calmly back watching the show, which is said by some, to have been given impetus by them. Nevertheless, the Company denied any part in the action, and stated that it was "purely a squabble between the miners' organizations in which other citizens had no part." 43

41 Copper Camp, op. cit. p. 292.
42 Copper Camp, op. cit. p. 293.
43 Burlingame and Toole, op. cit. p. 194.
By some strange trick of fate, the blame for the riot fell on Butte's Socialist Mayor Lewis Duncan and the town's Sheriff, Timothy Driscoll. They were accused of not taking the necessary steps to quell the trouble and so were impeached.

Violence was not over yet for on August 20, the rustling card office of the Parrot mine was blown up. This event ended in martial law being declared in Butte by Governor Sam V. Stewart. Upon the arrival of the National Guard, Muckie and some of his followers fled Butte, but were soon caught and arrested. A trial was held in Jefferson County at which Muckie was convicted and sent to Deer Lodge. There is much controversy over this trial. Many Butte residents feel that Muckie was only convicted for protective purposes and was not an inmate of the prison at all. They substantiate this story with an incident which occurred a short time later. It appears, an anti-company man was giving an election speech in the American Legion Hall, when a man in the crowd began to heckle him. The man was quickly arrested and to the amazement of all, turned out to be none other than Convict McDonald, who at the time was employed as a chauffeur for the prison's warden.

As things worked out, both Muckie and the A. C. M. achieved their goal, for on September 9, 1914, the Company announced an open shop and said henceforth it would recognize neither union. The union was now successfully disrupted and was not really to become effective again until the days of the N. R. A.

44 Copper Camp, op. cit. p. 194.
45 Interview with John L. Sullivan, March 1, 1961, Helena, Montana
46 Burlingame and Toole, op. cit. p. 194.
47 Howard, op. cit. p. 89.
With this collapse of organized labor in Butte and as the clouds of World War I gathered, I. W. W. workers found fertile ground among the demoralized labor elements in Butte. It was not long before consternation fermented between the "Wobblies," a newly organized Metal Mine Workers' Union and the Anaconda Company. Things really reached a fever pitch when on June 9, 1917, a fire broke out in the Speculator mine, killing one hundred and sixty-two men and injuring scores of others. With this, the I. W. W. swung into action and gave impetus to the "new union," which called a strike. The reasons given to justify the strike were that working conditions were intolerable and also that they wanted a six dollar day, irrespective of the price of copper.

To quell this disturbance martial law was again imposed on the Butte residents.

From this time on the situation deteriorated rapidly. One Frank Little, a member of the I. W. W. executive board, was particularly militant and the Company's Post began attacking him as a traitor and a fiend. Little did nothing to improve his reputation as time progressed, thereby incurring the hatred of many, especially the Company, who, although they found him a good propagandist, were fearful that his presence would have ill effects on their profits and property.

At about three o'clock in the morning of August 1, 1917, six masked men drove up to Little's boarding house, the Steel Block, on North Wyoming Street, where they apprehended him and carried him bodily to an awaiting car.

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49 Copper Camp, op. cit. p. 294.
50 Ibid. p. 294.
51 Toole, op. cit. p. 217.
The car sped away but soon stopped and Little, still in his underwear, was tied to the bumper and dragged for a considerable distance. The next morning Little's body was found hanging from the Milwaukee Railroad bridge near the Centennial Brewery. Attached to his clothing was found a card reading: "OTHERS TAKE NOTICE! FIRST AND LAST WARNING! 3-7-77." At the bottom of the card the letters L-D-C-S-S-W-T were printed, with the L circled.52

The next morning the Butte Daily Post called the incident regrettable but referred to it as "vigilante activity." The Butte Bulletin, a new labor paper edited by the inimitable W. F. Dunne, reported that "every man, woman and child knows that the company perpetrated this foulest of all crimes."53

Who committed this violent act of murder was never determined, but the act itself stirred labor deeply and exasperated an already touchy situation. The strike, which was called earlier this year, had almost run its course and by September the miners had all returned to work with none of the basic issues settled.54

Although the men were back in the mines again, things were not completely quiet on the "Butte Front." Soon, greatly due to the influence of the I. W. W., things began boiling and it wasn't long until Butte was again torn by the strife of bloodshed and strikes.

52 Garrity, op. cit. p. 32.
53 Toole, op. cit. p. 196.
54 Burlingame and Toole, op. cit. p. 196.
WOOD FOR THE FIRE

Butte labor during the three years following the Little hanging was greatly influenced by the Industrial Workers of the World. The I. W. W. was established in 1905 for the purpose of organizing unskilled laborers. The initial success of this organization can be attributed to the large immigrant population in America. These immigrants, particularly those in the Northwest lumbering and wheat areas, turned to the I. W. W. because the American Federation of Labor refused them membership.

The I. W. was a direct actionist movement which was opposed to the signing of collective bargaining agreements. Its ultimate goal was the replacement of the existing government with a workers' society in which the unions would own and operate all industry. They realized that this would be difficult to achieve, and so they contented themselves with improving labor conditions as a beginning. In improving conditions they frequently employed violence, which in turn was met with more violence from employers.

From the preceding account, one can see that the "Wobblies" were a somewhat radical and socialistic organization, but to dwell completely on their faults would be a gross injustice. They frequently filled a void for workers who did not have anyone to speak in their behalf. In such a capacity they existed in Butte. The Western Federation of Miners, Butte's original union, was in disfavor at the time. The I. W. W.'s Metal Mine Workers' Industrial Union No. 800 therefore served as an effective substitute.

57 Current, Williams and Freidel, op. cit. p. 618.
59 Current, Williams, and Freidel, op. cit. p. 618.
One of the first actions of this new union was to call a series of short strikes and strikes on the job in 1918. These continued for a period of time and were of no special significance. The first notable act occurred in July, when John D. Ryan, president of the A. C. M. paid a visit to Butte. Upon his arrival, he was presented with the same demands made in the strike of 1917. A strike was threatened in three days if he did not respond. An immediate reply was made by Cornelius F. Kelly, vice-president of the A. C. M., who stated that the Company would not deal with the I. W. W. The proposed strike was then called off.

On September 12, 1918, several thousand miners left their jobs. This walkout was in response to a handbill urging workers to cease work in protest of the conviction of Thomas Mooney, Eugene V. Debs, William D. Haywood, and other imprisoned I. W. W. and socialist leaders. No formal demands were made to the Company. Instead, posters were put up stating, that the miners wanted abolition of the rustling card and a minimum wage of six dollars a day.

Troops immediately were brought in, and the I. W. W. headquarters and the office of the Butte Bulletin were raided. W. F. Dunne and twenty-three other suspects were arrested. No other unions endorsed the strike. Tom Barker, a federal mediator, was called in and by the end of the month the men were back on the job.

On February 6, 1919, the Company announced a wage cut of one dollar an hour. Another strike was called.

60 Jensen, op. cit. pp. 446-447.
61 Ibid. p. 447.
62 Jensen, op. cit. p. 446.
63 Burlingame and Toole, op. cit. p. 196.
Although no demands were formulated or a strike officially declared, an effective picketing system closed the mines. On February 9, U. S. troops arrived. The same day the Butte Army and Navy League held a meeting at which they decided to endorse the strikers. The next day a protest was sent to the Secretary of War. The Sixteenth Legislative Assembly appointed a joint committee to visit Butte and investigate. It later reported that the high cost of living was the primary cause for the unrest. 64

The Silver Bow Trades and Labor Assembly voted on February 11 to endorse the strike, but it was only two or three days before the individual unions refused to support it. On February 17, the strike ended. 65

On July 4, 1919, the Metal Mine Workers' Industrial No. 800, I. W. W. and the Metal Mine Workers, which was not an I. W. W. union, again walked out. The reason for this strike was a protest against the refusal of California authorities to give Tom Mooney a new trial. The walk-out was to last for a period of five days but it lasted ten, due to the companies' refusal to take the men back.

Also at this time the Metal Trades' Council of Butte called a strike. They asked the I. W. W. union to strike in sympathy. The latter agreed to do this, provided that during their strikes the favor would be returned. This proposition was rejected by the Trades' Council, and so the miners refused to strike. 66

64 Ibid. p. 447.
65 Ibid. p. 448.
66 Jensen, op. cit. p. 449.
All that had transpired in Butte for the last two years was just so much wood for the fire that began in April of 1920. On the seventeenth of this month, a meeting was called in Finlander Hall on North Wyoming Street. At the meeting, a strike in the near future was discussed, but it was decided that the walkout should be postponed until June. Another meeting was scheduled for Sunday night. When the miners met on that fated day, a strange turn of events occurred, and the men decided to quit work immediately. 67

The next day, April 19, 1920, was the start of a strike never to be erased from the memories of the Butte inhabitants who lived during its short but bloody duration.

The day the members of the I. W. W. union ceased to work, so did the members of the One Big Union in sympathy. This same day also saw two controversial messages written in Butte's rival newspapers. One appeared in the Butte Daily Bulletin and was written by its editor W. F. Dunne. The other was written in the Anaconda Standard, the Butte Miner, and the Post and was attributed to Sheriff John K. O'Rourke and Mayor W. T. Stodden. The first, that written by Dunne, was an apologia for the strike and it read:

The contemptuous indifference displayed toward any of the desires of the workers, the scornful disregard for anything but their profits by the employers of this country, the blatant threats of federal secret service operatives thundered in a peaceful community, the soaring living costs, the installation of a contract and bonus system, the increasing hazards in mines where the doctrine of "safety-first" is for public consumption only, have all combined to bring the inevitable -- a strike of the miners...

67 Butte Miner, April 19, 1920.
It is sufficient to comment on our system of production and distribution to say that in order that they may not starve while working, the workers are forced to remain idle and starve in an attempt to secure enough to keep soul and body together. This is the explanation of the strike and its justification, if indeed a strike ever needs justification.68

The other was a plea written by the Sheriff and Mayor, asking the miners to refrain from violence or suffer the consequences:

We would respectively ask the striking miners to refrain in every way possible from interference with citizens who wish to follow their vocations, and to use their best efforts to maintain law and order in the community. This is their duty as American citizens and there is no reason whatsoever why they should not do that much. Should they act otherwise they would only injure their own cause and compel the officials of the county and city, whose sworn duty it is, to protect the lives and interests of every citizen. We hope the striking miners will see their duty in the light of the outlined above. It will be the object of these officers to protect all citizens wishing to follow their work and at this time we would request those contemplating to leave the city to remain, for the protection necessary will be given, whatever that might be.

John K. O'Rourke - Sheriff
W. T. Stodden - Mayor

These messages invoked much discussion in Butte. No doubt, many of the striking miners read their town leaders' message and gave up all hope of aid for their cause. From the appearance of this message, it looked as though the officials were going to do all in their power to allow the "scabs" to cross the picket lines.

69 *Butte Miner*, April 19, 1920, pp. 1 and 9.
Their sentiments were echoed in a caustic column which appeared in the Bulletin:

**O'ROURKE AND STODDEN WANT LAW AND ORDER**

If those two resolute upholders of law and order, Sheriff O'Rourke and Mayor Stodden, really wish to assist the miners in keeping the peace while the strike is on, let them cooperate with the miners in closing the places they have been allowing to sell liquor in violation of the law for the last year. The only protection needed now is protection from the gunmen sworn in as special deputies ... 

There is no disorder and will be none if the gunmen are not allowed to roam at large, which has been the custom in the past.

Syncopatic officials of the country and city are only increasing the contempt decent people have for them by palpably trucking to the copper companies -- as they have in their statement.70

The I. W. W. following their usual practice, made no formal demands to the company but had them posted:

1. Six hour day from collar to collar.

2. Minimum wage of $7.00 a day for all workers in the mining industry.

3. Abolition of the rustling card.

4. Abolition of the contract and bonus and the so-called efficiency system.

5. Two men to work together in all workings.

6. Release of all industrial and political prisoners.71

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71 Butte Miner, April 19, 1920, p. 1.
The majority of these demands are reasonable enough. Why should not the miners receive at least seven dollars for an extremely dangerous day's work? Why not abolish the rustling card and contract system, since they existed for the sole purpose of discriminating against the miners? Why could not safety measures be taken to protect the miners? The only demands which appear impractical are those asking for the six hour day and the release of industrial prisoners. Of the six hour day it is sufficient to say that it was quite premature.

The demand asking for the release of prisoners, on the other hand, requires a little more comment. It was an idealistic and very optimistic request. The Butte Miner realized this, and played it up as the only plausible reason they knew for the strike.

On the other side of the ledger, Dunne proceeded to defend the demand:

> It is a demand that will continue to be incorporated in the program of striking workmen in an increasing number of cases as time goes on and with no intention of acting in an advisory capacity to our rulers we state as our opinion that nothing would do as much for the cause of general proclamation of a general amnesty for the workers and the spokesman of the workers now imprisoned for the expression of their opinion.\(^73\)

As the strike progressed through its first day, seventy to eighty percent of the fourteen thousand Butte miners left their jobs.\(^74\) The town was again in a turmoil and so J. R. Wharton, manager of the Butte Electric Street Railway, feared an attack on his business because it was on his street cars that the "scabs" were transported to work.\(^75\)

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72 Butte Miner, April 20, 1920, p. 1.
74 Great Falls Tribune, April 20, 1920, p. 1.
75 Butte Miner, April 20, 1920, p. 1.
For the most part, his fears were unfounded, as the attacks on the trolleys were few and far between and nothing of a serious nature.

From all indications, the strike seemed amazingly peaceful. To insure that this order would continue, the striking miners formed a committee, or "dry squad," to close the local alcoholic dispensaries.76 These men, about two hundred in all, proceeded to do their assigned task without force or violence.77 Shortly before midnight, some of the men had completed their work and had congregated on the corner of Broadway and Wyoming. Interspersed in this group were many of the townspeople. Nothing of a violent nature was done, and the crowd seemed peaceful. Still, it was to the interest of some that the crowd be dispersed and so the police were called. The police, when they arrived, noted that there was a number of boys in the crowd. They told them to go home. The boys began to run and were pursued by an officer, who fired three shots into the air. Most of the boys escaped, but some were corralled and arrested.78 After this the crowd was dispersed, and the police, proud of their accomplishment, returned to the station.

The Company, following their normal policy, hired out-of-state gunmen during the 1920 strike. These men were very rough and they got extremely violent when they drank.79 There were many such thugs in the mining city, but the two most prominent were Joe Boudoin and Billy Oates.80

76 Butte Miner, April 20, p. 1.
78 Ibid. p. 1.
79 Interview with Mr. John L. Sullivan, March 1, 1961. Helena, Montana.
80 Butte Daily Bulletin, April 20, 1920, p. 3.
These individuals led various attacks on the pickets, until finally a warrant was sought for the arrest of Billy Oates. 81

The Company detectives did their best to cause trouble, but with slight success. The city was so quiet that the Bozeman Chronicle reported on the morning of April 21: "The streets of Butte are crowded with idle men, but only a few cases of violence have come to the notice of the authorities." 82

Verifying the Chronicle's account, the Great Falls Tribune wrote: "The streets of Butte are crowded with idle men, but the city is orderly." 83

With the state's papers telling of such serene conditions, who could have guessed the events which were going to occur that day? A day, which was to be written up in the annals of history as "Bloody Wednesday."

81 Ibid. April 21, 1920, p. 1.  
83 Great Falls Tribune, April 21, 1920, p. 1.
BLOODY WEDNESDAY

Wednesday April 21, 1920, from all indications, was to be as tranquil as the two preceding days of the strike. The pickets began gathering on Anaconda Road, a public street, leading up the Butte hill to the gate of the Anaconda Mine. 84 Before long, a large group of spectators also assembled there. Events were proceeding in a normal, relatively orderly fashion. Then suddenly, the entire day-shift police force and the Sheriff with two hundred deputies arrived on the scene. The greatest number of the deputies, accompanying the sheriff, had just been appointed the previous day. O'Rourke justified this questionable action by remarking, "force will be met with force if necessary." 85 Strangely enough, the Company also saw the need to increase their mine guards. Stranger yet, the increase in the number of guards took place on the very day that the Sheriff increased his staff. 86 With the Treasure State's papers stressing the orderly conduct of the strike, was not this an odd thing to do? Why would such a precaution be necessary? Did the Company and Sheriff have an ulterior motive for their actions?

The Sheriff immediately ordered the pickets and the mob of spectators to disperse. This, they did not do. They were gathered near the Neversweat Mine, but were not on the property itself. They were not doing anything of a violent nature and had no intentions to. The men, therefore, felt the command to be unjust. After his order failed, the Sheriff began to speak with A. Samuel Embree, the former secretary of the I. W. W.

84 Harlow Pease to the writer, February 26, 1961.
85 Great Falls Tribune, April 22, 1920, p. 1.
86 Ibid. p. 1.
There is a controversy over the statements made in this conversation. One side holds that the Sheriff was trying to arrest Embree. The other argues that he was promising protection for the strikers.

Shortly after, or during this conversation, at approximately five o'clock in the afternoon, the first shot was fired. It is believed by some to have come from a weapon held by Roy Alley, a Company gunman and also secretary to John D. Ryan, president of the A. C. M. In any event, Alley, or a man closely resembling him, pulled out an automatic and fired a shot into the crowd with the injunction:

GO GET THEM BOYS!

GIVE THE SONS OF BITCHES HELL!

This was the signal for the general slaughter which followed. The gunmen rushed into the crowd wielding clubs and guns. Rifles and shot guns were fired. Men, struck with fear, began to panic. Some ran down the hill; others ran into a nearby boarding house. The gunmen followed in pursuit and all attempts to rescue the hurt miners were met with a volley of shots. The men who took refuge in the boarding house were sought out and beaten severely. Those who fled down the hill barely escaped with their lives.

88 Interview with John L. Sullivan, March 1, 1961, Helena, Montana.
90 Ibid. p. 6.
After the shooting had ceased and the toll of the injured was taken, fourteen union men were found to have been shot. The names and injuries of the wounded were: Roco Lavus, shot twice in the back; James Sullivan, a bullet shattered his spine and lodged in his right lung; James (Swede) McCarthy, shot in the lung; George Drapulis, shot in the right leg; Edward Dyos, shot in the hip; Mike Miller, shot in the arm; Peter Marovich, shot in the left lung; Donald DeLong, shot in the left leg and hip and also received a slight scalp wound; Peter Bates, fractured skull and wound caused by a bullet grazing his head; Thomas Manning, bullet traveled through his body and lodged over his right hip; Gus Kunda, shot in the right knee; and James Reegan, who received scalp wounds. These men were all shot from the rear while fleeing from the scene.

The only other person reported injured was a motorcycle policeman, Samuel Hautenen. He received slight injuries when hit in the head with a rock. Officer Hautenen was the only law officer hurt of the two hundred and some present. As to the brave Company guards, it has never been claimed that any were shot or hit, before, during or after the shooting.

The guards, according to the testimony of Colonel DeGay Stivers, were armed with

12-gauge riot guns, being Winchester pump guns with 20 inch barrels, which were loaded with shells containing 9 "double 0" buckshot, each pellet of which was .34 caliber.

93 The number of men shot varies in different sources from fifteen to nineteen. From the facts found and the names and injuries of the men discovered, the more probable figure is fourteen.
94 Butte Miner, April 22, 1920, pp. 1 and 10.
95 Harlow Pease to the writer, February 26, 1961.
96 Harlow Pease to the writer, February 26, 1961.
97 Stivers was head guard and also an attorney for the Company.
98 The caliber of bullet used varies in different sources from .32 to .38 caliber.
Of the gunmen and artillery used, Stivers testified that

The guns were purchased by and owned by the Company, the ammunition likewise, that the mine guards were issued the guns and ammunition by the Company; that all of the men so armed were in the employ of the Company the entire day of April 21, 1920, and were paid wages by the Company for the services which they rendered on that day. 100

The Sheriff and his men stood by and watched the slaughter. They did absolutely nothing to aid the stricken miners. The Sheriff excused his unpardonable conduct by saying, "it happened so rapidly I didn't have a chance to know who was shooting." 101 In answer to this weak alibi the Bulletin replied:

O'Rourke stood by and watched thugs led by Alley shoot miners who just a few seconds before he had sworn to protect. O'Rourke's message to the effect that it all "happened so rapidly" that he didn't have a chance to know who did the shooting, is characterized as a deliberate falsehood made for the purpose of assisting in alibis for the murderous gunmen -- thugs of the Copper Company. 102

The law officers present at the shooting denied that their weapons were discharged. The Sheriff went so far as to say that he examined all of his deputies arms right after the affair and that none had been fired. 103

100 Ibid.
102 Ibid., April 23, 1920, p. 6.
103 Butte Miner, April 22, 1920, p. 9.
The Bulletin made good use of this denial and thus was able to point out the true killers.

The copper press states this morning that Sheriff O'Rourke's deputies did no shooting. Sheriff O'Rourke states that his men did no shooting. The city police state that they did no shooting. The question occurs: Did the 15 miners shoot themselves? By a process of elimination we arrive at the answer and that answer, based solely on the contradictory statements of the copper press, convict by their testimony the slayers whom the shameless journalists of this community attempt vainly to shield.

The answer forced by the testimony of the copper press to the above is: The miners were shot by the gunmen of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company.104

The I. W. W. members, as Dunne so aptly points out, would never shoot themselves. If they were going to shoot anyone it would have been the gunmen.

The Company did not see the logic in the above statement. Instead, they tried to prove that the union members did fire on each other. The substance of their story lies in an anonymous shot fired from a second story window of the nearby Simon's boarding house at 246 Anaconda Road. The shot was aimed at D. G. Stivers, the captain of the guards. This was the signal for the confusion which followed. On hearing it, the miners pulled out two hundred or more guns and started shooting aimlessly.105

After the shooting subsided, the deputies ran to the boarding house to catch the guilty party, but somehow he had vanished. The Company and O'Rourke thought the trouble to have been the work of a mob of I. W. W. sympathizers, brought to Butte for the purpose of starting a riot.106

105 Butte Miner, April 22, 1920, p. 1.
106 Ibid. p. 9.
The Company had many witnesses to testify to the validity of their story but ninety-nine percent of them were Company men. One of their chief witnesses was Deputy John Templeton. Templeton had very keen eyes. His eyes were so good, that he was able to see the color of the gun which fired the first bullet, but strangely enough he was unable to say if it was a man, woman or child wielding the weapon. 107

The union, on the other hand, had more reliable witnesses, such as Elmer Harilla, Madeline Lynch, Mrs. Catherine Dougherty, and Mrs. John Lowney. Elmer Harilla, not an I. W. W. member, was searching for a house to rent when he stopped on Anaconda Road to see what the confusion was about. As he stood watching he saw guards coming from the mine yard. Shortly after this, he saw a short stout man raise his hand and say, "Go at the sons of bitches." 108

Mrs. Dougherty substantiated Harilla's story. 109 She testified that she stood twelve feet north of a group of gunmen. As she stood there, she saw a truck loaded with men go into the mine yard. About ten minutes later, a miner was beaten with the butt end of a gun by a Company thug, later identified as Billy Oates. Shortly after this assault occurred, Mrs. Dougherty replied, "a short, stout man, with dark hair and wearing glasses, pulled out a pistol and fired a shot toward the strikers." While shooting, he signaled to his men to go into the crowd. The men obeyed the command and fired into the mob or just over their heads. She could not tell for sure because of the position of the weapons. 110

108 Ibid. May 7, 1920, p. 5.
Lodging house from which first shots were fired precipitating strike riot.

From the window shown in the above photograph, indicated by an "X," the first shots were fired into the ranks of mine pickets, mine guards and peace officers on Anaconda road Wednesday afternoon. The shooting started a strike riot near the Never Sweat mine, in which 16 persons were injured, four perhaps fatally.

(Simons boarding house is situated at 346 Anaconda road.)

(Butte Miner, April 23, 1920)
Another key witness for the union was seventeen year old Madeline Lynch. Madeline was in the boarding house at the time of the shooting. She reported that no one inside the house fired the shot.  

Mrs. John Lowney, proprietor of the Simon's boarding house, also denied the Company's story. She and the other occupants of the house agreed that no one had fired from the building and that none were there in the afternoon except the usual patrons.

The I. W. W. also had many other witnesses to stand behind them. Their stories are not necessary here, for they merely substantiate what has already been said.

The citizens of Butte were horrified that such a cold blooded plot should come to life in the midst of their community. Their bitter feelings were intensified a few days later on April 26, when Thomas Manning, one of the miners shot on Anaconda Road, died. Manning immediately became a great hero for the I. W. W. and the laboring class of Butte. He, according to John L. Sullivan, was a "respected martyr, an altar of liberty or justice."

A terrific demonstration was staged on the day of Manning's funeral. All the unions in town turned out to show him their respect. A tremendous parade of mourners was the result. Some of the men present put Manning's casket on their shoulders and carried him from the Scanlon home to Saint Patrick's Church, where a requiem mass was celebrated in his honor. After mass, the honored body was carried out to the Holy Cross Cemetery. Here, Manning was given a hero's burial.

112 Butte Miner, April 23, 1920, p. 3.
113 Great Falls Tribune, April 22, 1920, p. 1.
114 Butte Miner, April 26, 1920, p. 1.
115 Interview with John Sullivan, March 1, 1961, Helena, Montana.
116 Ibid.
With Manning's death came a demand from the Silver Bow Trades Assembly:

Resolved by the Silver Bow Trades and Labor Council in regular meeting assembled, that we call upon the federal, state and county authorities to make a complete and searching investigation of the wanton shooting on Anaconda Road on April 21, to fix the responsibility for this outrage, and bring to justice the criminals.117

This demand echoed the feelings of the majority of Butte's citizens. The "richest hill on earth" was no longer an ordinary mining camp. It was a place inhabited by growing families. If plain murder was allowed to go unpunished could the fair city of Butte be deemed worthy of the trust placed in her by her unsuspecting citizenry. Yes, something had to be done, but the question remains: Could it be done?
THOMAS MANNING
I.W.W. STRIKE PICKET
MURDERED BY A.C.M. GUNMEN - BUTTE MONT.
APRIL 21 1920

(Butte Daily Bulletin, April 28, 1920)
AND SO IT ENDED

The day after the riot, troops arrived in Butte from Fort George Wright and Camp Lewis. They had been summoned by Governor Samuel V. Stewart. The Governor justified his action by saying, "I asked that government troops be sent to Butte because I thought they were needed there." The Governor, in this message, forgot to mention the fact, that troops were requested by certain Butte officials before the riot ever took place.

The troops, under the command of Colonel Herman Hall, were given a cold reception by the Butte people, who are notorious for their hatred of these "strikebreakers." The soldiers had to be stationed at the Florence Hotel because their regular barracks at the Pennsylvania Mine were filled with A. C. M. guards.

The troops, according to Colonel Hall, were well equipped. They had machine guns, revolvers, rifles, side arms and everything else needed. It appears that the soldiers were expecting a great deal of violence. This was not the case. Butte remained so quiet that on April 24 the Great Falls Tribune was able to report:

Butte is so tame that the soldiers were called in before noon and loafed the rest of the day. They weren't the only ones who loafed for most of the miners loafed also, refusing to resume work.

With the arrival of the troops, the mines were reopened and the picketing ceased. Those who wished to work were not harmed.

123 *Great Falls Tribune*, April 24, 1920, p. 1.
But the strike was not yet over. On April 22, the I. W. W. issued a handbill declaring the strike to be still in effect.

The strike is declared still on. Don't walk to the mines over the blood of your fellow workers.

**STRIKE COMMITTEE**

The death knell of the strike was not to begin sounding until April 24. On this day, the Metal Trades' Union voted not to participate in the I. W. W. strike. The reason given for their refusal was that the I. W. W. union failed to support them in their 1919 strike.

The strike quickly came to an end. On May 12, the Metal Mine Workers' Industrial No. 800, I. W. W., called off their strike, and changed to a sit down strike.

The same day that the I. W. W. called off their strike, notices were put up on Company properties which read:

**NO MEMBER OF THE I. W. W. WILL BE EMPLOYED AT THIS PROPERTY**

Explaining this action, John Gillie, general Superintendent of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, said,

We have taken this stand to protect our own interests and because we believe it is a patriotic thing to do. The mining companies are determined to weed out trouble breeders and social revolutionists.

Gillie went on:

Since 1914, the I. W. W. has had a grip in Butte. During the war we hired anyone but now we're going to break their grip.

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129 Ibid. p. 1.
Break their grip they did, by calling in all the rustling cards of the I. W. W. members who participated in the recent anti-company action.

The I. W. W. was no longer to be a force of great importance in Butte. It had reached both its high point and breaking point in the 1920 affair. It now had to pull up most of its roots and search for more fertile ground elsewhere.

Two judicial proceedings followed the slaughter on the Butte Hill. One was the inquest into the death of Thomas Manning. The other was the civil action of McCarthy vs. Anaconda Copper Mining Company. The inquest, which began on February 29, proved to be a long one. All the evidence presented in the case pointed toward the guilt of the Company gunmen, but the identity of the individual who actually murdered Manning could not be established. The jury therefore came out with a verdict favoring the Company:

It is the verdict of this jury that Thomas Manning died April 24, 1920, at the Saint James Hospital, Butte, Silver Bow county, Montana, from the effects of a wound caused by a .32 caliber bullet fired from the hands of some person to this jury unknown. We find that there is no testimony tending to show where Manning was when shot.

(signed)

George Hagerman - Foreman
Mark Ezehiel
Thomas Driscoll
M. E. Dougherty
Thomas Fletcher
R. J. Dwyer

130 Jensen, op. cit., p. 451
131 Harlow Pease, to the writer, February 26, 1961.
Although the jury failed to find Alley guilty, it appears that the A. C. M. was convinced of his guilt. The company officials now considered him a danger to their cause and so he was quickly eased out of any position of importance. 133

The case of McCarthy vs. A. C. M. was another Company triumph. James (Swede) McCarthy, the plaintiff, was refused compensation for the wounds inflicted on him by the gunmen. The jury, in this case, directed its verdict for the Company on the grounds that the gunmen were deputy sheriffs. 134

There must have been a complete reversal in the testimony of Sheriff O'Rourke during this proceeding. It has already been pointed out that the sheriff denied that any of his deputies fired a shot. With this contradiction in mind, how could the jury help but come out in favor of McCarthy? The fact, nevertheless, remains that they did not see it this way. Instead, they were content to remain Company tools.

The verdicts issued in the two preceding cases had very little influence on the citizens of Butte. They considered the act to be "murder of an aggravated degree." 135 Their feelings were promptly exemplified. They refused re-election to the district judge who tried the McCarthy case. The officials refusing to prosecute, for fear of company reprisal, shared a similar political fate. Finally, in 1930 they elected Lawrence Weir sheriff on the basis of his pledge that he would never appoint a Company gunman as a deputy. From that time to this, no mine guard has ever been deputized. The people took the initiative that their elected officials refused to take and thereby made Butte a fit place in which to live. 136

133 Harlow Pease, to the writer, February 26, 1961.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
136 Harlow Pease, to the writer, February 26, 1961.
The bloody 1920 episode had come to an end. It was not, however, the complete failure it appeared to be on the surface. It had brought Butte one step closer to the establishment of an effective union, a union which would be responsible to the workers and not to the dictates of the Company.
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