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The Frank Little Episode And The Butte Labor Troubles Of 1917

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THE FRANK LITTLE EPISODE AND THE
BUTTE LABOR TROUBLES OF 1917

by

Donald A. Carrity

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Carroll College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Arts
Department of History.

April 1957

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FOREWORD

This is the story of a hanging. Such an event is not unusual in the history of a state which numbers many hangmen among its founding fathers and glorifies them under the romantic term of "Vigilantes." Lynch law is an accepted part of Montana's tradition, which may explain why we have retained the gallows as the official means of inflicting capital punishment.

This particular hanging is important not because it was unusual but because it was typical. In it we see a dramatic representation of the pattern which labor-management relations had assumed in Montana's mining industry. In tracing the pattern, it has been necessary to briefly sketch the history of labor relations in Butte prior to 1917.

This paper is not intended to be an apologia for either Frank Little or the Industrial Workers of the World. The first sentence of the I.W.W. preamble states that "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common." Theirs is a philosophy which I have no desire to defend. It is not Little's life, but his death which is important here. It may be said that had the Little group been victorious in the struggles of 1917, the results would have been much more disastrous. But they did not win and so that possibility need not overly concern us. The fact that they were beaten by methods at least as vicious as those proposed by Little does
concern us. For if Little can be termed a communist, his killers cannot escape the classification of fascists.

In the suppression of one evil, at least as great a one was spawned and strengthened. It is my intention to demonstrate this in the following pages.

To the many persons who have assisted me in the writing of this thesis, my sincere thanks. The services of Miss Virginia Walton and her staff at the State Historical Library as well as those of Father James White of the Carroll College Library were especially helpful. The time and information so graciously given me by Governor Sam C. Ford, Mrs. Mary Zoe Neal, and Mr. William Crowley are remembered with appreciation. To my sister, my thanks for typing this manuscript. Special thanks are due to Mr. Thomas A. Clinch, whose interest, encouragement, and patience have greatly facilitated the completion of this thesis.
The efforts of American labor to adjust itself to the rise of vast corporations through the organization of unions met with early opposition from American popular opinion. The philosophy of unionism was opposed not only by employers but by workers themselves, imbued with the American tradition of rugged individualism and laissez-faire which viewed any idea implying the existence of class lines and unequal opportunities for all as un-American. Strikes were viewed as conspiracies against the public interest, and such basic union institutions as the closed shop seemed dangerously foreign to the American popular psychology. The turbulence resulting from such opposition has made the history of American labor principally a fighting history.

In contrast to this generally bleak picture of the States of early American labor, organized labor in Butte seems to have been singularly blessed. As early as 1866, there is evidence of the formation of a miners' union in Butte. With the organization of the Butte Miners' Union on June 13, 1878, the concept of unionism became an accepted element of mining activities in

2 Ibid., p. 166
4 Ibid., p. 289
Butte. What is most notable is the fact that this acceptance was not preceded by employer recognition of the miners' union. Union requests were usually promptly acceded to or at least peaceably negotiated. Under such optimum conditions, Butte Miners' Union grew and flourished. The "richest hill on earth" became known as the "strongest union town on earth." A union existed for every occupation and, although there was no contractual closed shop, there were no jobs for non-union men.5

While other western mining towns were erupting with violent wage and hour struggles between employers and often weak and poorly organized unions, the members of the relatively powerful Butte union were receiving high wages and working shorter hours than most of their counterparts even dared to demand. Miners in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and Cripple Creek, Colorado, took up arms to oppose armies of company detectives and strikebreakers. The decades immediately before and after the turn of the century were replete with violent labor-management struggles in the western mining camps.6 Yet throughout all of this period, the union in Butte is unique in the harmony and effectiveness of its relations with the employers.

What made Butte such a model union town? Why does the success of its union stand in marked contrast to the failure of those in the other western mining camps? Who was the brilliant labor leader who brought this about? Or was it an unusually liberal employer who made Butte such a union paradise?

5 Ibid., p. 292
Unfortunately, although Butte did produce some labor leaders who became nationally prominent, the credit for the early success of unions in Butte cannot be laid to the influence of any particular labor leader. The explanation of a liberal employer is the truer of the two, but it is a theory which must be strongly qualified. For the real success of the miners' union in Butte was the result of the bitter feud that existed between two of the most remarkable men ever produced by that remarkable city—Marcus Daly and William A. Clark. Both were employers, but their liberality under other circumstances is at least questionable.

Such a personal antagonism between the brash Irishman and the reserved financier, had it remained a purely personal matter, would probably never have affected the miners, who would then most likely have been forced to employ as extreme measures as those used by miners of other western cities to win better wages.

However, among other things, the Clark-Daly feud extended into politics, notable examples being their fight over the site of the State capitol and Clark's election and subsequent unseating as a U. S. senator. Thus open opposition of the union was inexpedient for either of the two if he wished to remain a power in politics for the number of votes represented by the unions in Butte was too great to be ignored. It was the workman's power to vote, rather than his union or even his ability as a worker, which, in the long run, was the prime factor in the high wages and short hours which he enjoyed. In 1900, the

8 Jensen, op. cit., p. 291.
union asked for and immediately received the eight-hour day with no reduction in wages, a concession which other unions did not receive until years later and only then after long strikes or government intervention.

Even more than the individual union members, the labor leaders greatly profited from the feud. Prior to 1909 those officers lined up with Daly were given free leases in one of the Amalgamated mines and the right to remove what ore they could. Of course, such privileges extended by management to labor do not contribute to the development of a militant and solidly united labor union but, when all their requests were granted so easily there was no need for militancy or even much unity in the Butte Miners' Union. Its leaders were almost "company men," but as long as the Clark-Daly feud continued the "copper collar" did not chafe Butte labor. Things were good and easy; labor could well afford to relax and grow soft.

In February of 1906, however, F. A. Heinze sold out to the Amalgamated and Butte for the first time became a one-company camp controlled by the manager of the Amalgamated Copper Company. Labor's leadership was still largely in the control of "company men" and management was strong and united as opposed to a union which had never had to face any crisis which may have molded its membership into solid unity. Labor relations in Butte had entered a new era.

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9 Perlman & Taft, op.cit., p. 255.
10 Ibid., p. 255.
11 Ibid., p. 255.
As has been shown, the "glorious revolution" in Butte was not an unmixed blessing for the Butte Miners' Union. Although it received the first charter issued by the Western Federation of Miners on June 16, 1893, its principal activity in that organization was its monetary support and not its leadership. The union did not swerve from its original determination not to let wages go below $3.50 a day, but this had early become a dead principle, and unions do not thrive on dead issues.

With the emergence of the Amalgamated as the dominant company in Butte or, perhaps more important, the end of the "war of the copper kings," the political power possessed by the unions was greatly decreased. There was now only one power in the field and the Montana tradition of buying legislatures was by no means dead. Thus the miners were no longer a voting group to be lavishly courted, but a group to be subjected and controlled as a possible danger to profits. Their first step in this direction occurred in April, 1907, when Butte Miners' Union No. 1 entered into a five-year contract with the Amalgamated. Time agreements were opposed to the philosophy of the W.F.M. and at its convention in June of 1907, time agree-

12 Perlman & Taft, op.cit., p. 254.
13 Jensen, op.cit., p. 290.
14 Perlman & Taft, op.cit., p. 254.
15 Ibid., pp. 255-56.
ments were declared null and void. However, the Butte Miners' Union was a group not to be offended and the status of the contract was unaltered.

"The company" used three major instruments to keep the union docile and easily pliable. The instruments are well known to all dictatorships and were: a kept press, infiltration of the union, and the infamous "rustling card."

During the "wars of the copper kings," each had his own paper: Clark's Butte Miner, Daly's Anaconda Standard, and Heinze's Reveille effectively covered the Butte area. After Clark was sent to the senate in 1901, his paper adopted a conciliatory tone towards the Amalgamated and, in 1906, the Reveille passed into Amalgamated's hands.

There has seldom been any notable absence of more radical newspapers in Butte's journalistic history, which runs the gamut from such proto-fascist publications as the A.P.A.'s Butte Examiner to the Butte Bulletin, tinged with socialism and anarchism, but it was the company papers which were most universally read and which thus exerted the greatest influence. Even today, the newspapers owned by the Anaconda Company (or rather its subsidiary, the Fairmont Corporation) circulate 56% of the state's newspapers.

Coupled with this, Butte had no tradition of objective journalism. The papers owned by Clark, Heinze, and Daly were admittedly tools of their owners, as in their restricted way, were the other Butte publications of the day. It seems safe to

16 Ibid., p. 256.
17 Ibid., p. 256.
19 Ibid., p. 4.
20 Ibid., p. 6.
21 Ibid., p. 4.
assume, therefore, that these papers, after they had come under the control of the Amalgamated, would continue to advance views compatible with those of their owner. How this company control of the press served to influence subsequent events will be seen later.

Company infiltration and control of the unions is difficult to document. It seems to have been commonly assumed, as early as 1906, that the officers of the Butte Miners' Union were company controlled. In 1907, an anti-company ticket was partially successful, winning complete control of the union in 1909. This control enabled them to enforce the closed shop on the Butte hill when, late in the same year, the conservative engineers' union attempted to secede from the W.F.M. But this resurgence of life in the Butte Miners' Union was of short duration, and the company again gained control of the union in the crisis of 1912. This aspect of Butte's labor history will be discussed more fully in the following chapter.

The third and most effective means used by the company to control its miners was the company work permit, or "rustling card."

To secure employment at any of the mines in Butte (except Tuolumne), applicants were required to go to the Anaconda employment office and 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. The applicant is then asked to report later for an answer to his application. In the meantime, his record is investigated, which usually requires from ten days to a month.

22 Perlman & Taft, op.cit., p. 256.
23 Ibid., p. 256.
If anything is found in his record not satisfactory to the employment agency, applicant cannot get work. If investigation is satisfactory, he is given a permit to seek work, this permit being known among miners as a "rustling card," or permission to "rustle" for work. When he finally goes to work he is in good standing until he quits or is discharged, and then he cannot get another card for one month. The causes of his discharge will be noted and perhaps be counted against him when he again applies for a card. 25

The system was inaugurated by the ACM in Butte on December 1, 1912. 26 It met with immediate opposition from the miners, but through the clever manipulations of the by now unquestionably "company" officers of the Miners' Union, no formal opposition to the "rustling card" system was made by the union, even though a referendum opposing the system was passed by a majority of some four hundred votes. 27

The "rustling card" gave the company a great degree of control over the type of men employed in their mines. Several of the more radical members of the union were effectively blacklisted, notably a number of Finnish miners, whose race had long been associated with radical labor movements in the U. S. such as the I.W.W. 28

All of these things, the company "spy system" functioning through company domination of the union and the powerful tool

26 Jensen, op. cit., p. 323.
27 Ibid., p. 324.
28 Perlman & Taft, op. cit., p. 257.
of the "rustling card," and the effectiveness of the company press in promulgating the news according to the proper slant, combined to give the Anaconda Copper Mining Company effective control over their miners.

It must not be presumed, however, that all of the miners accepted these conditions unquestioningly. Butte's early emergence as a center of union activities in the West and the city's relative tolerance of organized labor movements attracted a large and always vocal radical minority to the city. Besides these, a growing minority of the Butte miners were dissatisfied with the management of their union and company control of the union was still not strong enough to deny employment to all of these men. This dissatisfaction was steadily rising and in 1912 the first cracks appeared in the Miners' Union, cracks which were later to result in the "strongest union town on earth" becoming an open shop with the company in virtually exclusive control of its miners.

Ibid., p. 256.
THE OPEN SHOP COMES TO BUTTE

The existence of a large and vocal radical minority in Butte is enigmatic in view of the rustling card system, which often blacklisted radical unionists. It is partially explained by the fact that the ranks of the Butte "progressives" were infested by company detectives. This fact was generally known and thus an aura of suspicion was created around nearly all of these "progressives." Those outspoken in their opposition to the company who still kept their job were the objects of particular suspicion among the miners.

In spite of this handicap, opposition to the management of the union was formally organized early in 1912 as a Central Committee for Industrial Union Organization. The committee nominated Thomas Campbell for president of the W.F.M. against the incumbent Charles Moyer. Campbell was the leader of the Butte "progressives" and their dissatisfaction with the local union had quickly led to dissatisfaction with the national administration as well. Campbell was soundly defeated, but at the national convention, he brought charges against the officers of the Butte Miners' Union and against the national officials of the Western Federation of Miners. Instead of examining his charges, the convention placed Campbell on trial for "conduct unbecoming a Union man" and, after a two-day

30 Jensen, op.cit., p. 326.
31 Perlman & Taft, op.cit., p. 257.
32 Ibid., p. 257.
debate, Campbell was expelled from the W.F.M.\textsuperscript{33} However, rather than discrediting Campbell, his trial and expulsion served as proof to his many followers in Butte that the union was indeed company-controlled and little was to be gained within its confines.

In 1914, certain that an "anti-company" slate of officers could be elected only by the use of voting machines, the "progressives" introduced a motion to that effect. The vote on the proposal was declared lost by President Bert Riley on a show of hands and a request for a standing vote was refused.\textsuperscript{34} Because of this high-handedness, the progressives refused to participate in the election and the "company slate" was unopposed.

They quickly expressed their opposition by refusing to show their union cards to union representatives before entering the mines.\textsuperscript{35}

The following day, June 13, was "Miners' Day" in celebration of the founding of the Butte Miners' Union. The disgruntled progressives refused to participate in the customary parade and jeered the marchers until the parade was finally broken up by mob violence. The union officials escaped the by now explosive mob which then proceeded to the Miners' Union Hall. The interior was wrecked and the membership records of the union scattered in the street with the cry, "We're all in

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 257
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., pp. 258-259; Jensen, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 326
\textsuperscript{35} Perlman & Taft, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 258.
Moyer rushed to Butte and declared the June elections void, but this and all other efforts to placate the aroused miners were in vain. On June 17, the W.F.M. was repudiated by Butte's miners in a referendum vote and on June 21, the independent Butte Mine Workers' Union was organized.

On June 23, the Butte Miners' Union No. 1 (WFM) held a meeting at which Moyer was to be the principal speaker. A large crowd assembled outside of the hall and heckled those entering. When a shot was fired from the hall, wounding a bystander, the hall was invaded amidst general shooting from both elements. One person was killed and three wounded. The mob dynamited and completely demolished the Butte Miners' Hall. Butte's Socialist mayor charged Moyer's followers with responsibility because the first shot came from the hall.

Moyer then left for Helena to confer with the Governor, whom he asked for state intervention to protect him from violence. The report quickly circulated in Butte that Moyer had requested that the state militia be called into Butte. This alone was enough to permanently discredit both Moyer and the WFM in a city whose dislike for the National Guard is legendary.

36 Jensen, op. cit., p. 328.
37 Perlman & Taft, op. cit., p. 259.
38 Ibid., p. 259.
39 Ibid., p. 259.
40 Ibid., p. 259.
41 Ibid., p. 259.
42 Ibid., p. 260.
The unrest continued to mount. The insurgents deported several former officers of the Butte union and many of its loyal members. A mine employment office was dynamited and amidst this turmoil, the state militia arrived in Butte on September 1. An immediate round-up of the leaders of the new union was begun. They were subsequently tried for their activities in deporting men from Butte. Charges were brought against Mackie McDonald, president of the new union, Joe Bradley, vice president, Joe Shannon and James A. Chapman. McDonald was sentenced to three years in the state prison. Bradley received a five year sentence. Shannon was released because of the need of his wife and six children.

Chapman, however, was released early and was not required to stand trial. This fact and a study of his subsequent career in Arizona gives credence to the theory that he was a company detective employed as a "spy" among the radicals.

The imprisonment of its leaders demoralized the new union and the old union had been discredited beyond restoration. On September 8 all the operating companies in Butte made a joint declaration that they would refuse to recognize either union. In it, they declared that Butte Miners' Union No.1 of the WFM no longer possessed the confidence of the Butte miners, and the

43 Ibid., p. 260.
44 Jensen, op.cit., p. 349.
46 Ibid., pp. 350, 379, 402, 412.
The new Butte Mine Workers' Union had shown itself unfit for recognition by its acts of violence and lawlessness. With the militia present, the companies were able to establish the open shop with a minimum of resistance.

The passing of unionism among the miners in Butte by no means went unmourned. The people of Butte had seemingly enjoyed their reputation as a "union town" and they were not pleased at losing that reputation. A scapegoat was required and it was furnished by no less a personage than WFM president Charles Moyer. He stated:

"The wrecking crew of the I.W.W. is the force at work in Butte. ...I have positive information that at least 600 I.W.W. agitators have arrived in Butte within the past few weeks. ... the operations of the I.W.W. are well known. The call goes out for the massing of men in some particular city, and the response is uniformly heavy. They have nothing to lose, and out of the discord and excitement and disorder they get their "pickings."

When Mackie McDonald denied that the I.W.W. had anything to do with the new organization, Moyer replied that "The I.W.W. has gone too far in showing its hand in Butte. ...They started in six years ago to get me, and failing in that they determined to get the Federation."

Whether or not the I.W.W. was influential in the destruction of the Butte Miners' Union is impossible to document. The identity of the persons responsible for the dynamiting of the

47 Perlman & Taft, op.cit., p. 261.
49 Ibid., p. 336.
union hall is still unknown today. But Moyer's accusations against the Industrial Workers of the World were certainly convenient if not true. For the citizens of Butte, it proved convenient because it fixed the blame on a strange and generally disreputable group of "outsiders" (i.e., non-citizens of Butte) who were pictured in the average person's mind as a group of red card carrying hoboes who sang shockingly anti-Christian songs, were unpatriotic and lazy. (I.W.W. was early coined as being the abbreviation for "I won't work").

For the Amalgamated, placing the responsibility with the I.W.W. was even more convenient because it served to divert attention from any possible part they may have had in the destruction of the union. Chambers, who was suspected both in Butte and later in Arizona of being a Thiel detective, is known to have boasted of his part in the dynamiting of the Union Hall in Butte.\(^{50}\) Thus the company's part in the events of 1914 are at least as suspect as that of the I.W.W.

In any event the I.W.W., already a dirty word in many parts of the country, received the major blame for advent of the open shop in Butte. The charge may have been an unjust one, but what mattered to the company and its newspapers was that it was an expedient measure to maintain the open shop and for the next several years, "I.W.W." or "wobbly" became the conveniently damning label placed upon all those who opposed the Anaconda Copper Mining Company.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., p. 336
THE NEW UNION

The open shop prevailed in Butte without incident for nearly three years after its declaration. The old Butte Miners’ Union No. 1 was reduced to a small group of men whose sole function seems to have been to liquidate the holdings of the old union. A local of the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers—formerly the W.F.M., claimed a small membership as did the Metal Mine Workers’ Industrial Union No. 800, I.W.W. The distrust prevalent in Butte of both of these organizations probably prevented their growth. Also, paying dues to a union would seem like a wasteful extravagance in view of the open shop conditions.

Still, the majority of the miners wanted a union and on June 9, 1917, a disaster occurred to ignite that ambition into action. On that date a fire broke out on the Speculator level of the Granite Mountain mine and, in spite of some admittedly valient rescue attempts, 162 men perished in the flames.51

The resultant bitter feelings aroused among the miners and the families of the dead miners were largely directed against the company. Men quickly described by the local press as “I.W.W. agitators”52 distributed bulletins calling for the miners to strike for better wages, abolition of the rustling card, discharge of the state mine inspector, unqualified observance of the State

52 Ibid., pp. 1-2.
The workers at the Elm-Orlu mine's night shift walked off the job the night of June 11. The following afternoon a group of the striking miners gathered at Finlander Hall on North Wyoming Street, where they formed the Metal Mine Workers of Butte. Tom Campbell, who had been active in the 1914 troubles, presided as chairman. The similarity of the new union's name to that of the I.W.W. union in Butte was perhaps unfortunate. The Butte Daily Post quickly labeled it as an I.W.W. organization and described Campbell as a "notorious I.W.W. leader and chairman of the so-called deportation committee in Butte three years ago." The charges of I.W.W. influence were consistently denied by the union officers and its publication. And since Campbell was not among those even charged with the illegal deportation of persons in the 1914 episode, his part in that affair must have been at least somewhat less than that which the Post ascribes to him.

The influence of the I.W.W. is problematical, especially in the early phases of the strike. On June 14, the mining companies jointly issued a statement charging that the leaders were the same element responsible for the troubles in 1914 and also stating that there had been a notable influx of I.W.W. members into the city in the previous month. It is true that I.W.W. stickers appeared on the walls of Butte's buildings.

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54 Butte Daily Post, June 12, 1917, pp. 1-3.
55 Ibid., June 13, 1917, pp. 1, 16.
56 Ibid., June 13, 1917, pp. 1, 16.
but these brightly colored mottoes were probably in evidence long before the beginnings of the strike and their presence is little indication of a sudden increase in the number of I.W.W. 's in Butte. Also, members of the I.W.W. who were not native to Butte were usually arrested and the Butte papers report no unusual increase in I.W.W. arrests during this period. If there was an increase in the influx of I.W.W. 's at this time it was probably composed of company detectives who often joined the I.W.W. to act as company spies.  

As the strike grew, the attempts of the local press to prove I.W.W. influence intensified. The Daily Post reproduced a telegram to L. Laukki, editor and proprietor of the Industrialisti, a Finnish language semi-official publication of the I.W.W., from two Butte Finns who were both recognized members of the I.W.W. The translation reads:

Send our request to Haywood. Send Italian, Austrian, and English speaking organizers here to Butte. Situation is ripe. Everybody ready to strike. We require immediate aid.  

(signed) Kangas and Mankki  
423 E. Granite  
Butte, Montana  

However, both men later swore that they did not send the telegram and expressed the belief that company agents did.  

59 The scrapbooks of Mrs. Mary Zoe Neal, widow of one time Pinkerton detective Frank C. Lavigne, contain membership cards in an I.W.W. lumber union, agricultural union, railroad union, and the Metal Mine Workers' Industrial Union No. 800. The card in the M.M.W.I.U. was issued January 29, 1917.  
60 Butte Daily Post, June 14, 1917, p. 1.  
Since the telegram was sent from Whitehall rather than Butte, this seems the more probable explanation. In the same issue, there is published a telegram to "Lucky" McDonald, then in Globe, Arizona, which read, "Campbell and rest of rebels here. Thing is going good. Beat it for Butte quick." It was signed simply, "Joe". The authenticity of this document also seems doubtful, although the Post claimed that it was sent by Joe Shannon, a friend of McDonald's and a leader in the present strike.

These efforts to link the I.W.W. with the new Butte union are understandable since it was common knowledge that the I.W.W. often contained within its ranks a definite criminal element. Pinkerton detective Frank C. Lavigne represented himself as an ex-convict in order to gain his membership in the I.W.W. In order to heighten this popular conception of the "wobblies," stories of their arrests, no matter how far distant, were given prominent coverage in the local press. The inevitable conflicts between strikers and non-strikers were even more prominently displayed. On June 16, the Post reported that "I.W.W. agitators" Joe Shannon, William Winchester, and James Turpin beat up a miner, G.A. Brown, when he was coming home from work at the Leonard mine. The same issue reports an assault on two miners outside M.W.W.U. headquarters.

63 Ibid., June 14, 1917, p. 8.
64 Interview with Mrs. Mary Zee Neal, March 25, 1957.
Of course, such lawlessness should be reported. But the picture is an unbalanced one, for, if the striking miners were guilty of intimidating the non-striking miners, the large number of guards hired by the company were no less guilty of intimidating the miners. Crowds of these company guards would congregate at East Granite and East Broadway where they would beat, abuse, and insult the men, women, and children who passed by. Strikes were attacked and beaten into insensibility by two and three of these company guards. However, no mention of these activities appeared in the two major newspapers of the city. They steadfastly insisted that "I.W.W. agitators" were the cause of all Butte's troubles and that the only solution to those troubles lay in expulsion of the "agitators."

As the Strike Bulletin commented:

Taking the papers' view of the matter, every man who demands better wages automatically becomes an I.W.W. If such is the case, the "woods are full" of I.W.W.'s, because no union man in Butte is satisfied with present conditions... Our system is far superior to any that involves the use of guns; simply sit down and take it easy until things go to suit us. And yet they say we are anarchists! 69

But the I.W.W. issue was not the only issue which the companies used in their attempts to discredit the new union. Copper is a strategic material and its production is vital to the conduct of modern war. At the time of the strike, the

69 Ibid., July 25, 1917.
United States had been at war for nearly two months and America was reacting in a frenzy of hysterical patriotism which saw a German spy around every corner. The abnormal mental attitude created was deliberately fostered by the government in order to create a war spirit. A "Council of Defense" was formed and one of the activities of that body was to forbid the teaching of the German language in Montana. The "real American" baptized his sauerkraut "liberty cabbage" and Salisbury Steak replaced the word hamburger on menus of patriotic restaurants.

The presence of large numbers of Irish in Butte and their traditional anglophobia, as well as the Finns and I.W.W.'s probably made Butte less "patriotic" than the nation as a whole. However, the unannounced arrival of Federal troops in Butte on April 13 to guard important railroad tunnels and bridges as well as the mine shafts and power houses at least made Butte conscious of the prevailing German scare. And Butte seems to have sold its share of such "patriotic" records as "What Kind of an American Are You?" and "I'm a Regular Daughter of Uncle Sam."

The most frightening aspects of the war hysteria appeared with the formation of pseudo-legal "Vigilante" organizations. In March of 1917, a Chicago advertising executive, with the blessings of the Department of Justice, formed the American Protective League and by June of that year, 250,000 Americans

71 Ibid., p. 527.
carried on their person the badge bearing the legend, "American Protective League—Secret Service Division."

This organization seems to have enjoyed a large membership in Montana. An undated bulletin of instructions from the "Nathan Hale Volunteers, American Secret Report Service, Universal Safety Alliance and International Protective Association ("helping to make the world safe for democracy") to Frank C. Lavigne cites the increasing influx of undesirables, notably I.W.W. and "Bolsheveki" to the West. The bulletin concludes with the admonition that:

...it may behoove loyal, calm, judicious lovers of Decency and Democracy to fight fire with fire...This applies especially to the interior states of the Western Department such as Montana and Nevada. Conditions in Butte, Helena, Great Falls and other points you cover with your 26 men—cooperating with our men and women N.H.Y. 75

Another bulletin of the organization, also undated, contains this statement of policy:

Now that the Liberty Loan and Red Cross drives have succeeded we can all center on the problem of the "Shadow-Hun" and his hidden poisoners, and safeguard America and Humanity from the enemy that weakened Russia—the radical agitator and weak-kneed "Pacifist." ...to this end the N.H.Y. has become the secret bureau of the International Protective Association working in new channels as well as the old ones. 76

The letter contains a post script asking, "How many SECRET REPORTS have you sent, to whom, and what result—if any?"
The existence of such an organization in Montana would conceivably force everyone to cast a wary eye over his shoulder before making any critical observations about the national government. It certainly would not operate for the well-being of anyone accustomed to raise his voice in ringing denunciation of the war, England, or the United States.
"MARTYR TO SOLIDARITY"

If the members of the Industrial Workers of the World had not been responsible for the organization of the new miners' union in Butte in 1917, they seem to have taken an early and active interest in it. I.W.W. organizers were sent into Butte. This is not unusual since many unions were interested in "adopting" the Metal Mine Workers of Butte as their own, notably the A.F.of L. and the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers. However, at a meeting between local A.F.of L. leaders and the officials of the new union, it was explicitly stated that the miners would have nothing to do with either the I.U.M.M.S.W. or the I.W.W. 77 This strict avoidance of involvement with the I.W.W. may have been more apparent than real. Although the majority of the members of the new union cannot be considered to be either sympathizers with or members of the I.W.W., their leaders, notably Chairman Tom Campbell and Secretary-Treasurer Joe Shannon, were at least sympathetic to the I.W.W. It is not clear if these two were ever members of the Butte local of that organization. Will A. Campbell, editor of the Helena Independent, claimed that he had personally examined the membership records of the I.W.W. local in Butte and found that "many of the leading labor agitators" were old members of the I.W.W. 78 It seems doubtful that the I.W.W. would voluntarily allow a man like Mr. Campbell to examine their books and there

78 Helena Independent, August 19, 1917, Sec. 2, p. 1.
is no record of an official examination of the Butte I.W.W.'s records at this time. Still, Campbell, who was the secretary of the Montana Council of Defense, may have obtained access to these records in some other way.

The theory that some sort of connection existed between the I.W.W. and the Metal Mine Workers' Union is strengthened by an article in the *Industrialisti* of June 21, 1917, advising Butte's Finnish members of the I.W.W. to join the new union but not to give up their I.W.W. card. The article further states that, "Every one who has paid dues to the I.W.W. will not have to pay to the new union." Such an arrangement could not have existed without the knowledge of Shannon and Tom Campbell, and it seems possible that an incorporation of the union with the I.W.W. was planned for some later date. Prudence indicated that such a connection, if it existed at all, be temporarily kept from the average miner. The large Serbian population in Butte had beaten Serbian organizers for the I.W.W. sent to them and, especially after the assistant U.S. district attorney made the highly publicized claim that he had definite proof of the connection between I.W.W. leaders and organizers and the German government, any open alliance between the I.W.W. and the new Butte union would have run the risk of alienating large numbers of its membership.

I.W.W. organizers continued to come into Butte and, unlike most of their predecessors, they were found to be in possession

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79 Record of Proceedings, "State vs. Dunn," 57 M 591
80 As quoted in the Butte Daily Post, June 25, 1917, p.16.
81 Butte Daily Post, June 16, 1917, p. 2.
of large sums of money. One member of the I.W.W. stated that, "Haywood, general Secretary-Treasurer of the I.W.W., has promised to send $300,000 into Butte as it is needed to keep up the work we are doing."63

The members of the I.W.W. who had arrived in Butte previous to July 16 seem to have had little real success. At least, no record exists, except by innuendo, that they found welcome in the new union in their status as organizers for that body. But on that date, a man of unquestioned national stature in that body appeared on the streets of Butte. Frank Little, listed by Solidarity (national I.W.W. publication) as the chairman of the general executive board of the Industrial Workers of the World, came to Butte with a somewhat understandable chip on his shoulder. He came to Butte from the violent labor troubles of the Arizona copper camps where, on July 12, some 1200 members of the I.W.W. and others were forcibly deported from Bisbee, Arizona, and taken to the New Mexican desert, where they were left without food or water, by a mob of some 1800 "Vigilantes."64

While in El Paso, Little was beaten and his leg broken and he was forced to hide in a miner's cabin in Miami, Arizona, until he was able to travel out of reach of the Arizona "Loyalty League."65

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63 Helena Independent, August 19, 1917, Sec. 2, p. 1.
65 Butte Daily Post, August 1, 1917, pp. 1, 3, 14.
Little had been a member of the I.W.W. in 1906 and had been jailed in the famous "free speech fights" of the I.W.W. in Spokane in 1909 and in Fresno in 1910\textsuperscript{86} where the "Wobblies" were brutally suppressed by extra-legal "Vigilante" committees whose methods approached, if not surpassed, those of fascism.\textsuperscript{87}

With this background of violence and the bitterness it naturally engenders, it is small wonder that the bitter cripple was an apostle of direct and violent action with an active distrust and dislike for constituted authority which had so often "done him dirt."

Little had early opposed the draft, sending a wire to Bill Haywood on April 10 suggesting that he call a conference of all radical organizations to prepare to fight compulsory enlistment and "to prepare for and advocate a general strike of all industries to fight for industrial freedom."\textsuperscript{88}

Little lost little time in expressing these views once he had arrived in Butte. On July 19, in a speech concerning the strikes in Arizona, he stated that, "Down in the hot deserts of Arizona they have taken 2,000 of our men guarded by the uniformed scabs of the U.S. government and shut them up in Pershing's bull pen."\textsuperscript{89} In the same speech, he told of a talk he had with Governor Campbell of Arizona.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{86} Butte Daily Post, August 1, 1917, pp. 1, 3, 14.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Perlman and Taft, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 240 ff.
\item \textsuperscript{88} Wire from Frank Little to Bill Haywood, April 10, 1917, in Butte Daily Post, August 8, 1917.
\item \textsuperscript{89} Butte Daily Post, August 1, 1917, p. 14.
\end{itemize}
When the governor reminded him that this country was at war, Little supposedly answered: "Governor, I don't give a damn what your country is fighting for; I am fighting for the solidarity of labor." In view of his experiences with these "uniformed scabs," Little's statements are understandable, but the majority of his audience, the conservative Butte miners, had had no such experiences and Little was probably greeted with mixed emotions by the majority of the miners.

But if most of the striking miners were not overly fond of Little, their leaders seem to have more than made up for this lack of affection. Chairman Tom Campbell had early stated, in response to invitations, that "The fight must be won first... we want to know our friends before we reach the question of affiliating with anybody." It seems evident that Campbell considered Little a friend. Although Campbell later declared that Little acted only in his acknowledged capacity as an organizer for the I.W.W. and was strictly a guest at union meetings, it was Little alone of all the different representatives of national unions, who seems to have been allowed to participate in the actual union meeting. On July 27, he proposed to the union that they organize the Finlander women and children into picket crews and vigorously favored Tom Rimmer's suggestion that non-strikers be persuaded to remain away from work "with a
punch in the mouth."92 It is about this time that the local press reports a return of the miners to work.93 The reports may or may not be true; a vast discrepancy exists between the numbers listed by the two major Butte newspapers as working and those claimed by the Strike Bulletin. However, it seems safe to infer that some men were returning to work at this time, either because of need, threats, or because they had been alienated by the radical speeches of Frank Little.

Also, on July 28, the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, in conjunction with the thirteen other mining companies then operating in Butte, offered the miners a wage of $3.50 per day when copper was selling at fifteen cents a pound or under and an increase of twenty-five cents per day for each two cent increase in the price of copper.94 The offer did not include recognition of the Metal Mine Workers' Union and the union quickly pointed out that the prices quoted were those which the ACM charged to its own companies and thus could be controlled by them.95 Whether the wage increase was a real one or not, it did serve to entice some strikers back to work.

Little is rarely mentioned in the newspapers between July 18 and July 31, but he continued his speechmaking. At various times during that period, he advocated a "free speech fight" similar to those he had let in Fresno and Spokane. In this connection, he supposedly said, "A city
ordinance is simply a piece of paper which can be torn up. The same can be said of the Constitution of the United States." 96 Other statements attributed to Little are in the same vein, such as, "If the mines are taken under federal control, we will make it so damned hot for the government it won't be able to send any troops to France." 97

He supposedly sent for members of the I.W.W. "wrecking crew" and told them, "When we find anything in our way, we have to remove it by physical force. This man Con Kelley is in our way... Now you ask me what you can do to help the cause. I'm telling you, ain't I, just as plain as I can?" 98

Some of the other statements Little supposedly made in public speeches in Butte were:

We are not interested in this country but use the war just like the business men are doing; to make a profit for our class.

It is a waste of time to send resolutions to the president. The only thing to do is for workers to form a big army and go before the president and demand that if the men deported at Bisbee are not released immediately, the army will turn itself loose. I am an I.W.W., and as an I.W.W. I am responsible for what I say. The place to start is to handle the scabs; forget the quiet stuff and use action.

The I.W.W. did not object to war, but the way they wanted to fight was to put the capitalists in the front trenches and if the Germans did not get them the I.W.W. would. Then the I.W.W. would clean the Germans. The capitalists are our worst enemies... We have no interest in the war. Our interest is solely with the working class. We do not care what the nations of America, England, Germany, and Russia do.

Let the capitalists fight the battle and we will go into the munition plants and see that they get plenty of butts.

The laws were made by Congress and Senators, not workers; four years ago every house had Wilson's picture as "He kept us out of war" but last February when we entered into war he told the people "to shut their mouths, we are running this" and he said no one could be had to fight except by the draft.

Such statements undoubtedly caused talk among Butte's "solid citizens" and it is highly probable that several "secret reports" were filed concerning the person of Frank Little. U.S. District Attorney Burton K. Wheeler, probably at the prodding of the Montana Council of Defense, wrote the Attorney General asking if Little could be prosecuted on the basis of these utterances and on July 24, government agents were assigned to investigate the case. Evidently nothing was found to be illegal in these statements and no prosecution was undertaken.

Whether or not Little was within the law, certain groups felt that his presence in Butte was dangerous. The above named patriotic groups saw him as an unpatriotic "slacker" if not an actual agent of the German government. The methods he supposedly espoused probably alienated several of the miners themselves. Although he provided good propaganda, the company considered him as potentially dangerous to their profits and property. Something had to be done about Little and, true to the lowest western traditions, one of these groups "got" him.

100 See above p. 22.
101 Butte Daily Post, August 1, 1917, p. 3.
At about three o'clock on the morning of August 1, six masked men drove up to Little's rooming house, the Steel Block on North Wyoming Street, next door to Finlander Hall. Without speaking, they entered the house and broke into room thirty on the ground floor. The room was empty. The landlady, Mrs. Nora Byrne, was awakened and asked Little's room number. To her, the men represented themselves as police officers. She told them Little was in room thirty-two and they then rushed to that room, seized Little, and carried him out to their waiting car.102

The car sped away but eventually they stopped and Little, still in his underwear, was tied to the bumper of the automobile and dragged a considerable distance. In the morning he was found hanging from the Milwaukee Railroad bridge near the Centennial Brewery. Pinned to his underclothing was a 6x10 inch placard with the crudely lettered warning: "OTHERS TAKE NOTICE! FIRST AND LAST WARNING!" 3-7-77." At the bottom of the tag the initials L-D-C-S-S-W-T were printed, and the L was encircled.103

The newspapers quickly played up the Vigilante angle, assuming that Little had been killed for his "seditive" utterances. Editorial comment throughout the state was generally of the opinion that Little deserved his fate, even though the procedure was a bit irregular. A congressman asked on the

102 Ibid., August 1, 1917, p. 1.
103 Ibid., August 1, 1917, p. 1.
104 Ibid., August 3, 1917, p. 3.
floor of the House whether those who professed no allegiance to the United States "have any right to squeal when the citizens of this country hang one of them occasionally?" and a western newspaper said Butte had "disgraced itself like a gentleman." 105

Because of this attitude, Montana's Attorney General Sam C. Ford felt it necessary to personally investigate the murder. The general condonement of the action coupled with the fear that the Butte authorities would not exert themselves in finding the killers caused him to go to Butte the next day to try to uncover their identity. 106

The county authorities resented his presence, but he was given a room in the courthouse, and the police brought him any witnesses he wished to interview. Among the miners, it was generally believed that the company had engineered the murder, but the company had a "complete and intelligent secret service," and the witnesses whom Ford interviewed were frightened to talk. Little's landlady, Mrs. Nora Byrne, seemed to Ford to know much more than she was willing to tell, and her fear of telling anything was evident. Several persons had seen the car dragging Little, but they all "forgot" what color or make it was, and how many people were riding in it. Butte was wrapped in a cloak of fear that made identification and conviction of the unknown murderers impossible. 107

105 Whitehead, op. cit., p. 36.
106 Interview with Sam C. Ford, March 25, 1957, Helena, Montana.
107 Ibid.
Theories were rife but evidence was non-existent. The Strike Bulletin named William Oates, Herman Gillis, Pete Beaudin, "a rat named Middleton and about two dozen others working under a chief gunman named Ryan" as the killers.108 The union attorney, William G. Sullivan, claimed knowledge of five of the men who had participated in Little's hanging,109 but Sullivan was a man accustomed to "drawing things out of the air", and the only evidence he had was rumors that he had heard.110

Other theories were that Little was a detective and had been slain by the I.W.W. themselves; that a group of soldiers had killed him because of his insulting remarks; friends of Tom Munro, a company guard slain in the 1914 labor troubles, were thought to have killed him and still others blamed the 111 A.F.ofL.

Whoever killed him, the most popular theory among the striking miners was that the company had done it and the practically unknown Little became a martyr overnight to the "anti-company" element of the state and to the radicals throughout the nation. Thousands flocked into Butte for the funeral of the first man lynched in Butte since the hanging of three Chinese in 1868.112 The mayor warned the visitors that "the fair name of Butte will not be stained by any I.W.W. demonstrations, acts of violence, riots of any intimation of a

110 Interview with Sam C. Ford, Helena, Montana, March 25, 1957.
111 Butte Daily Post, August 2, 1917, p. 12.
112 Ibid., August 1, 1917, p. 3; August 6, 1917, p. 9.
movement against the flag. The law will be vigorously enforced..."

Approximately three thousand persons marched in Little's funeral procession, one thousand of whom were supposedly imported members of the I.W.W. The procession was led by Tom Campbell and the American flag (presumably displayed in the proper manner). Next came a volunteer band; the members of the Pearse-Connolly club wearing bright green sashes and displaying the white button of the M.W.W.U. on their coat lapels; about two hundred Finnish women; committees from various Butte unions; the members of the Metal Mine Workers of Butte and the newly arrived "Wobblies"; and finally the casket covered with a red silk banner bearing the words, "a martyr to solidarity." The casket was surrounded by an honor guard of one hundred members of the I.W.W.

The burial was without religious ceremony and the body was lowered into the grave to the accompaniment of the "Workers' Marseillaise."

The thousands who attended Little's funeral seemed to indicate that his martyrdom would strengthen the striking miners. However, such was not the case. No matter how inspiring Little's death may have been to the Butte miners, it was also a grim warning which many did not choose to ignore.

113 Helena Independent, August 19, 1917, Sec. 2, p. 2.
114 Butte Daily Post, August 6, 1917, p. 9.
115 Ibid., August 6, 1917, p. 9.
THE AFTERMATH

The effects of the Frank Little episode are almost impossible to delineate. Who benefitted most from that death, the miners or the company? What part did his lynching have in the events of the subsequent year in Butte and in Montana? To some extent, Little's vicious murder did redound to the advantage of the striking miners. It focused national attention on their struggle. It gave them a martyr, a hero, a common cause around which they could rally. It broadened the scope of their struggle from an economic to an ideological base. But these things are intangibles and difficult to evaluate definitively. Besides, the majority of Butte's miners did not identify themselves with Little's philosophy while he lived and, in spite of the dramatic circumstances of his death, it is extremely doubtful that many more would subscribe to his views because of that death.

In a sense, however, the miners of Butte did identify themselves with Little after his death. Those who killed Little had made identification fairly easy by writing at the bottom of the placard found pinned to Little's corpse the initials of the most prominent leaders in the strike—Dunn, Campbell, Shovlin, Shannon, Williams and Tomich. It was not a difficult step in the miner's imagination to picture

their own lives in jeopardy if they continued to oppose the company. This relationship of fear is much easier to document.

On the day of Little's death, the local press reported a "decided increase" in the number of miners returning to work and predicted the early dissolution of the new union.117 This might be dismissed as more of the numerical dishonesty which seems to characterize the "company press" reporting of the entire strike but, two days later, the mines resumed night shifts for the first time since mid-June.118 The sudden increase in workers so soon after Little's murder almost certainly had its basis in fear.

The comparative ease with which Little's killers escaped identification also seems to have encouraged the company's gunmen to increase their efforts to intimidate the strikers. The company received permission from the county authorities for their guards to bear arms outside of company property,119 and conditions became so bad that Attorney-General Ford finally ordered them back on the hill.120 On August 10, a detachment of federal troops appeared to patrol the streets of Butte and their presence seems to have been actually welcomed by the strikers.121 Such a welcome seems hard to imagine.

117 Ibid., August 1, 1917, p. 8.
118 Ibid., August 3, 1917, p. 3.
120 Interview with Sam C. Ford, Helena, Montana, March 25, 1957.
unless company terrorism had considerably increased. On August 23, Dunn, Shannon, and Campbell each received by special delivery envelopes bearing replicas of the note found on Little's body with the notation, "twelve noon Saturday."

The strike received a temporary return to health on August 23 when the Anaconda Smeltermen walked off the job. In retaliation, the ACM closed its mines in Butte as well as the smelter in Great Falls and threatened to keep them closed until the "radicals" had been eliminated from leadership. Less than three weeks later, on September 11, the union in Anaconda voted to return to work and on September 18 the ACM re-opened the smelters and its mines. From this time the membership in the Metal Mine Workers' Union seems to have dwindled rapidly. Officially, the strike did not terminate until December 28, but it had little effect after mid-September.

If no direct causal relationship exists between the murder of Little and some of the events that followed, his death was at least prophetic of them. In June of 1918, the Montana Council of Defense called U. S. District Attorney Burton K. Wheeler before it and publicly rebuked him for his "laxity" in not prosecuting Little for sedition. Although they finally admitted that no evidence of sedition had existed against Little, they still adopted a resolution demanding that Wheeler be denied reappointment for

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123 [Note: page 35 is missing in the text.]
125 Ibid., December 28, 1917, p. 3.
not being "vigorously and enthusiastically in the suppression of internal disorders." 126

The Council had their own ideas about suppressing internal disorders and they decreed that idleness of more than two days in any week made one subject to registration and prosecution for vagrancy. They also "outlawed" processions and demonstrations (actually, strikes and picketing). Any suspects brought before the Council for hearing could offer testimony on their own behalf only if a majority of the Council so agreed. 127

The fact that Little was not guilty of sedition probably is what prompted the state legislature to adopt a new and broader Sedition Act when they met in extraordinary session in 1918. 128 If "bolshevism" ever threatened the citizens of Montana, it could not exist long under this law. An I.W.W. officer in Billings stated in a saloon there that the I.W.W. would win the case which the government then had pending against I.W.W. Secretary Bill Haywood. For this statement, he was convicted of sedition on July 8, 1918. 129 A judge was impeached by the state legislature for not cooperating in keeping two I.W.W.'s in the Rosebud County jail in what the county attorney admitted was a "kangaroo court proposition." 130

Under these methods, Montana was definitely "cured" of any open "Bolshevist" tendencies. The philosophy of "fighting fire with fire" 131 may have destroyed the "rats" but the barn

127 Ibid., p. 234.
128 Montana Laws, Extraordinary Session, 1918, Chap. II ap
129 State vs. Griffith, 56 M 241
of democracy did not escape unharmed by its over-zealous defenders in Montana. Some may argue that it has not yet fully recovered in the state.

Perhaps the members of the Industrial Workers of the World were scoundrels and drastic action was required. No record exists of an I.W.W. caught practicing sabotage or convicted of its practice, but their philosophy is at least questionable.

Scoundrels though they may have been, they were not the type who sought refuge in "patriotism" which became for their opponents a synonym for the ultra-nationalism later displayed by Hitler's Germany and the Italy of Mussolini. Something more important than Frank Little may have died that night in August.

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131 See above, p. 22
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