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## HAYWOOD & ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM IN THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT

**F**ebruary 4 marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of William D. Haywood, one of the major figures in the American labor movement. Through his activity in both the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Haywood left an imprint on the labor movement that has lasted to the present day.

Now, more than half a century after his death, Haywood has become an almost legendary hero, revered in some quarters as one of America's first revolutionary Socialists and in others as a leading proponent of revolutionary unionism. Haywood's rejection of the class-collaborationist unionism of the American Federation of Labor and his consistent opposition to capitalist class rule continue to attract the attention of militants.

But as with most "heroes," it is necessary to cut beneath the folklore that has grown up around his name to assess the real significance of Haywood's career. An uncritical accounting of Haywood's career does little to either help the revolutionary movement today or clarify our revolutionary heritage. On the contrary, such an accounting would fail to illuminate the lessons that can be drawn from the early history of industrial unionism and anarcho-syndicalism in America.



**WILLIAM D. HAYWOOD**  
(1869-1928)

### Haywood and De Leon

Haywood's career is of interest not only because it spans an important era in the labor movement, but also because it chronologically parallels that of Daniel De

Leon. Six years after De Leon joined the Socialist Labor Party and four years after he became editor of the *Weekly People*, Haywood became a leading activist in the Western Federation of Miners. De Leon and Haywood were both prominent figures during the first convention of the IWW in 1905, and they became major political antagonists in 1908. Haywood subsequently became a leading figure in the Chicago IWW, an anarcho-syndicalist outfit, while De Leon supported the Detroit IWW, later known as the Workers International Industrial Union (WIIU), until his death in 1914. (Haywood outlived De Leon by 14 years, but spent his last seven years in exile in Russia.) Taken together, the lives of both men define an important chapter in the American labor movement.

Two years before Haywood joined the WFM, the SLP, under De Leon's guidance, formed the first revolutionary union in America, the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance (ST&LA). Headquartered in New York, the ST&LA explicitly rejected the idea of a brotherhood between capital and labor and firmly opposed the reformist unionism of the American Federation of Labor. The ST&LA fought the day-to-day struggles against capital without losing sight of the ultimate objective of socialism. But De Leon had not yet formulated the concept of an industrial form of government to replace the political state.

However, the alliance never fully realized its potential. The union's comparatively small membership dwindled to about several thousand members, and in 1905, the ST&LA joined the IWW.

### **WFM Wages Militant Strikes**

While the ST&LA embodied the concepts of revolutionary unionism in the East after cutting its ties to the AFL in 1897, the WFM advocated revolutionary unionism in the West. Responding to unbearable pressures caused by a combination of low wages and oppressive working conditions, miners organized the WFM in 1893. Though initially affiliated with the AFL, the WFM became an independent union in 1897. The next year it formed an alliance with the Western Labor Union (WLU) and later changed its name to the American Labor Union (ALU). However, several years after joining the IWW in 1905, the WFM rejected industrial unionism, rejoining the AFL in 1911.

In its earlier stages the WFM waged some of the most militant strikes in American labor history. Major struggles were fought by the miners in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; Cripple Creek, Idaho Springs and Leadville, Colorado; and Salt

Lake City. During these strikes, it was not uncommon for officials to call up state militias and federal troops and to terrorize, drive out and/or jail miners indiscriminately. According to Carl E. Hein, a biographer of Haywood, “Haywood was everywhere—setting up union stores to feed the miners and their families, encouraging the district locals, organizing strike strategy. Along with other union officials . . . [Haywood] was a marked man to the omnipresent deputy sheriffs.”

In large measure, the WFM and Haywood were products of these early class wars. The collusion of the mine owners and state officials drove the WFM to take an uncompromising position. These struggles also set the stage for the rise of anarcho-syndicalism, which eventually dominated the IWW. The anarcho-syndicalist viewpoint that dominated the post-1908 IWW had already gained a strong foothold during the earlier years of the WFM and the ALU. As Melvyn Dubofsky noted in his history of the IWW, “The combination of industrial unionism, labor solidarity, political nonpartisanship, direct economic action and syndicalism, so characteristic of the IWW, had already been subscribed to by the WFM and its offspring, the American Labor Union.”

Yet, prior to the 1905 IWW convention, De Leon and the SLP looked upon the ALU as a beacon of hope. As Rudolph Katz points out in his work, “With De Leon Since '89,” the *ALU Journal* was discussing industrial unionism in 1904 in terms similar to those used by the SLP.

Furthermore, at least some members of the SLP regarded the fact that the leaders of the ALU were members of the reformist Socialist Party as a positive sign. According to Katz, “if the men [including Haywood] who advocated industrial unionism should carry their convictions into the Socialist Party camp it could only mean the recognition of the correctness of Socialist Labor Party principles, and unity would be bound to follow.”

With the spirit of hope running high, delegates from a host of labor organizations, including the WFM, ALU and ST&LA, formed the IWW in 1905. In major speeches to the convention, both De Leon and Eugene Debs, a leading figure in the Socialist Party, assumed conciliatory stances. Though nominated at the June convention for the presidency, Haywood declined because of his duties as secretary-treasurer of the WFM. De Leon was not elected to an IWW office, but he did play a prominent role in the convention's proceedings. While there were serious differences among the delegates—differences that ultimately split the organization—in 1905 they were put aside.

### **The Haywood-Pettibone-Moyer Case**

Moreover, in the wake of the 1905 IWW convention, Haywood and two other WFM officials, Charles Moyer and George A. Pettibone, were arrested, an event that prompted the revolutionary union movement to close ranks against the common class enemy.

On December 30, 1905, Idaho officials swept the three men off the streets in Denver. In violation of extradition laws, they were taken on a special train to Idaho, where they were charged with the murder of Idaho Governor Frank Steunenberg. The charges against them were based on the alleged confession of Harry Orchard, who, in the words of the *Daily People*, appeared “to be a paid tool of the mine owners.” Another major figure in the case was the notorious Pinkerton detective James McParland, who framed and paved the way for the execution of members of the “Molly Maguires,” who resisted the exploitation and oppression imposed upon Pennsylvania coal miners by the coal, iron and railroad capitalists.

Recognizing that the three labor leaders were being railroaded to the gallows, the *Daily People* supported their defense efforts by publishing calls for funds and notices of demonstrations protesting the frameup. For example, one front-page notice read, “Monster Demonstration and parade to protest against outrage put on Moyer, Haywood, Pettibone. . . .” and listed Daniel De Leon as one of the demonstration’s speakers.

The *Daily People* also carried a front-page appeal from the Party’s National Executive Subcommittee. Olive M. Johnson, later to become an editor of the *Weekly People*, was dispatched to Boise to cover the trial. And when the Socialist Party ran the imprisoned Haywood as its gubernatorial candidate in 1906, the SLP supported his candidacy.

When Haywood was acquitted in July, 1907, De Leon hailed the verdict in an editorial in the *Daily People* and condemned the capitalist class for its “guilty intent” to have Haywood executed. (Both Moyer and Pettibone were released without standing trial.)

De Leon also recognized that, in the wake of the acquittal, Haywood was in a unique position to unify the revolutionary labor movement. Because of the frameup and the massive publicity surrounding the trial, Haywood had become an influential figure with the rank and file. Accordingly, De Leon sent Haywood a letter congratulating him on his victory. De Leon went on to suggest that Haywood could now become a rallying point for the revolutionary labor movement in America.

Recalling the incident, former SLP secretary Henry Kuhn wrote, “The real De Leon was quite ready to step aside if the animosities, engendered of necessity during the early struggles of the movement, stood in the way of the movement’s unification.” And Kuhn added, “It was the movement and always the movement that was to be considered—never the individual, no matter what services he might have rendered. We see thus in the real De Leon a man different from the imaginary De Leon that his enemies constantly pictured.” However, Haywood never responded to De Leon’s letter.

While Haywood was imprisoned, the WFM withdrew from the IWW. Though Haywood retained his membership in the IWW, he failed to show up at its 1907 convention, held a few months after his release from jail. Instead he began a speaking tour for the Socialist Party (SP).

This disturbed SLP members for a number of reasons. First, as Rudolph Katz noted, the SP was “the very organization that did its utmost to destroy the IWW, its declarations of ‘neutrality’ toward trade unions notwithstanding.” Secondly, after Haywood’s release from prison, larger numbers of workers turned out to hear him speak. But, as Katz noted, “when the revolutionary spark only needed to be fanned to become a flame, Haywood’s speeches were as weak as mush. Haywood only distantly referred to industrial unionism; did not even mention the Industrial Workers of the World; the supposed ‘tower of strength’ turned out to be the very opposite. . . .” In De Leon’s words, Haywood turned out to be a “hollow tooth.”

### **The Split in the IWW**

By 1908, the factional strife that had been brewing since 1905 in the IWW finally came to a head. Two incompatible currents existed in the IWW: the De Leonists, who believed that political activity, as well as economic activity, was necessary for the working class to resist capitalist encroachments and to ultimately consolidate working-class power; and in opposition to this viewpoint, the Vincent St. John-Haywood faction, which rejected political agitation and believed in “direct action,” which De Leon defined as “the denial of the ballot or political action.”

Using the flimsy excuse that De Leon was not representing his own union, the direct actionists denied him a seat at the 1908 convention. Thereafter, De Leon supported the Detroit IWW, which was based on the principles of Socialist Industrial Unionism. The Detroit IWW held that both political and economic action were essential for the emancipation of the working class. Haywood, in turn, became

a leading figure in the Chicago IWW, which continued to eschew political agitation.

As editor of the *Daily People*, De Leon continued to defend his views and to counter the arguments of the direct actionists. The Detroit IWW and the SLP held that political agitation was an indispensable weapon that enables revolutionists to agitate openly among workers and to pave the way for the development of a workers' mass movement aimed at abolishing capitalism.

In an editorial on March 4, 1912, De Leon noted, for example, that political action does not begin and end with voting, but that it serves as a propaganda platform. Accordingly, De Leon said, "Political action makes it possible for the social revolution to be preached in the open, promoted in the open, organized in the open—the only way to drill for the overthrow of the capitalist order. . . ." And De Leon added, "So valuable is political action of the working class, so necessary is it to the emancipation of the working class, that the capitalist class is at its wits end for [a] scheme to render political action on the part of labor impossible."

Meanwhile the membership of the Chicago IWW began to change. By 1915, the IWW had a comparatively small dues-paying membership, and it had organized few shops. As a labor organization, it had largely ceased to function. But there was a relatively large number unemployed who associated themselves with the IWW. The tactics and philosophy of the IWW became increasingly anarchistic, conforming "largely to the ideals of the permanent 'out of work' traveler," as the Detroit-based *Industrial Union News* put it. According to the WIIU, the IWW's activities were "composed of complaining, individual reprisals, sabotage and revenge. . . ." The *Industrial Union News* argued against tactics that tended to isolate revolutionists from the mass of workers and that gave state officials a pretense for repressing the union, often by the most violent and brutal means.

For his part, Haywood remained a major figure in the IWW until he was arrested in 1917 under the Wartime Espionage Act and charged with obstructing the war effort. Along with 94 other IWW members, Haywood was convicted in August 1918, and sentenced to 20 years in jail and a \$10,000 fine. But, while awaiting a decision on a new trial, Haywood jumped bail on March 31, 1921, leaving the U.S. for the Soviet Union. At first warmly greeted by the Russian revolutionaries, Haywood became disillusioned with them before his death in 1928.

There is, of course, much more to be told about Haywood's career that is of interest to students of the labor movement and of De Leonism. Haywood undoubtedly struck a number of blows for the emancipation of the working class,



but his positive achievements must be balanced by the tactics and strategy that later led to the undoing of the IWW—a setback from which the labor movement has yet to recover.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
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