Workers of the World, Subscribe!

The *American Federationist,* the *Oregon Labor Press,* and the First World War

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Introduction

As America celebrated Labor Day in the midst of war in September 1918, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker penned a statement of reassurance to workers in the American Federation of Labor's newspaper. "When the story of America's participation in this war comes to be written, the formation of our great army, its transfer across the seas and the heroic battles in which it engaged will no doubt be given the most impressive place," he wrote, "but the wise historian will analyze the cause which made these things possible, and high among them he will find the patriotism and zeal of American Labor."[1] For organized labor, the years between the assassination of Arch-Duke Ferdinand in 1914 and the armistice agreement at Versailles in 1919 were critical. When America sent its army to Europe in 1918, Labor's "industrial army" was pressed to build the ships and airplanes to transport it. Throughout the war, the government and union leaders urged labor's soldiers to increase productivity to ensure guns, munitions, blankets, and uniforms to be supplied to the front lines.

For subscribers to the *American Federationist*, the AFL's monthly newspaper, this also meant a constant stream of pleas for patriotism, ceaseless production, and a crack down on more radical movements within the trade union. During the two years of America's involvement, the paper became a tool of Samuel Gompers for promoting his brand of conservative trade unionism; the preponderance of articles, features, and editorials stemmed from his single pen.[2] Moreover, during the war the *Federationist* increasingly showed signs of the direction the AFL was heading under Gompers,

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[1] *American Federationist* (henceforth: AF) Sept. 1918.
[2] AF Jan. 1912 - April 1914.

abandoning many of the principles the union had been built upon in favor of President Wilson and the war.

The *Federationist* was far reaching. State branches of the AFL offered the publication to workers as an alternative to the less labor-friendly dailies and weeklies offered locally. With no radio, television, or national conventions west of the Rockies, the publication also served as the mouthpiece for the AFL, giving those with limited access to the doings of the union an opportunity to read about how the union was faring nationally. Coverage, however, was limited; the news from Washington D.C. could provide little breaking or immediately pertinent news for workers in the West. To remedy this, state branches created their own publications to fill the gaps left by the *Federationist*.

For workers in Portland, Oregon, the *Oregon Labor Press* (OLP) took that role. An alternative to what the OLP called "capitalist press," it provided the local coverage, editorials on regional/local issues, and an outlet for local labor expression.[3] As the war progressed, the *Press* also became a venue for Portland workers to begin forming a class-consciousness. Their ideas, like Gompers's had in his publication, began to change and became more visible in the pages of their newspaper. But it was hardly in the same direction. They began promoting ideas that were in direct opposition to the sort promoted by Gompers in the *Federationist*, and as the war progressed, their ideas led the *Oregon Labor Press* to the edge of acceptable radicalism. More interestingly is that this radicalism came about in area many historians point to as unlikely for militant, radical unionism. It lacked many of the qualities such as radical leadership, significant wartime industry, or massive immigration that had contributed to radicalism elsewhere.

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[3] *Oregon Labor Press* (henceforth: OLP) Feb. 13, 1917.

By examining the content of the OLP and the *Federationist* during this time, a dramatic shift in the ideas, politics, and concerns of the AFL's president and workers becomes evident. The *Federationist* would move from being a non-partisan publication into a vehicle that promoted the aims of its editor and his new friends in Washington, while the OLP in a more radical direction, drastically different from Gompers's brand of conservative unionism. The years during the First World War would prove a turning point at which the *American Federationist* and the *Oregon Labor Press* would transform into very different publications representing the growing differences between the organization's president and the workers he represented. Further, that workers in Portland were among those resisting suggests that radicalism was not confined to only localities with the proper ingredients for it. Thus it is my contention as Gompers began to change the direction of the AFL in league with the Democratic Party during World War I, there were not only radical factions existing within the AFL resisting his move toward more conservative unionism, but that radical factions emerged in areas that historians have suggested were unlikely

The "Wise Historians" and Labor's Role

Long after the war was over, Newton Baker would turn out to be right. Historians have analyzed the significance of American Labor's contribution to the war effort in 1917, some have even found to have reached the "most impressive place" among battles and technology. Further, many note that the First World War marked a turning point in union politics, policies, and ideas, particularly for the American Federation of Labor.

To demonstrate this change, many of the older guard of AFL scholarship looked particularly to the changes made by Samuel Gompers as the most significant trends that shaped the union. Simeon Larson and Frank L. Grubbs argue that it was Gompers who was able to assert almost total control over the AFL, and thus steer the direction of organized labor policy toward conservative unionism.[4] Their approach, however, is very top-down. Hardly mentioning the rank-and-file as an independently thinking group, Larson manages to give a very detailed account of the extent Gompers went to secure their support and the problems he encountered. Larson suggests that Gompers was ultimately successful in that attempt to secure support and that radical opposition was reserved for socialists or non-AFL unions like the Industrial Workers of the World. Grubbs also takes Larson's top-down approach, portraying Samuel Gompers as the "icon of the labor movement," but notes that the AFL was not entirely supportive. Grubbs highlights Gompers's struggle to overcome the Pacifist resistance within AFL, acknowledging that opposing viewpoints did exist within the union. Like Larson, he also maintains that Gompers was ultimately successful in gaining AFL support, however, Grubbs points to Gompers's insistence on stamping out more radical factions during World War I as the reason for that success. Ultimately, Grubbs suggests, the AFL could fully support Gompers because the radical factions had been removed. Further, both historians' discussion of that resistance is limited as they examine Gompers's reaction without addressing the workers themselves.

In more recent years, scholarship has turned away from looking at Samuel Gompers as the sole spokesperson for organized labor and has examined the movements

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[4] Simeon Larson, Labor and Foreign Policy: Gompers, the AFL, and the First World War, 1914-1918, (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1975). Also: Frank L Grubbs, The Struggle for Labor Loyalty: Gompers, the A.F.of L., and the Pacifists, 1917-1920, (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1968).

of workers within the AFL. Julie Greene in Pure and Simple Politics explores the influence Gompers's understanding of politics had on the AFL.[5] She contends that Gompers was only able to construct AFL policy by exerting his dynamic influence and was actually met with a measure of defeat from factions within who refused to go along with the changes during World War I. Her discussion breaks away from Larson and Grubbs by looking at the significance his politics had on workers. While her discussion is still rather limited, it knocks Gompers off the pedestal as the embodiment for the AFL and looks at his ideas as simply the most prominent within the union.

David Montgomery and Joseph McCartin take this idea even further. Both look at Grubbs and Larson as the "old guard," and suggest that while Gompers's had been the spokesperson for organized labor, he was by no means representative of the entire AFL. Nor do these historians contend that AFL workers simply followed Gompers's lead. Rather, both Montgomery and McCartin note that radical factions existed within the union and were by and large tolerated until World War I. In Fall of the House of Labor, Montgomery notes that during the war, it was a "crucial matter for Gompers was to secure the political loyalty of the AFL to the war effort," regardless of the qualms" of many of its rank-and-file preferring a more radical alternative to the Gompers's conservatism.[6] McCartin also points to more radical factions within the AFL as being nothing new to the organization by 1917, but nonetheless problematic for Gompers during this time. Using examples of movements in Schenectady and Bridgeport, McCartin suggests that with "radical militants dominating the movement" in these

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[5] Julie Greene, Pure and Simple Politics: The American Federation of Labor and Political Activism, 1881-1917 (New York, NY: Cambridge UP, 1998).
[6] David Montgomery, The Fall of the House of Labor: the Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925, (New York, NY: Cambridge UP, 1987) p. 375.

centers of war production, "Gompers's vision of industrial democracy as pure and simple collective bargaining was sure to be challenged as the war unfolded."[7]

Portland provides an interesting case study to build upon the sort of ideas McCartin and Montgomery present. They cite examples of radical unionism in areas where it should be expected; cities with radical heritage, like Butte or Seattle, or hubs of Socialist or Wobbly activity that were bound to put up a fight. Moreover, those with strong connections to war production were to be most affected by Gompers's efforts in shaping wartime work conditions.[8] As McCartin writes, it was centers of the metal trade in which the radical alternatives were more visible and "loyalty to 'Gomperism' more tenuous."[9] But Portland had neither.

According to Carlos A. Schwantes, "Portland, in contrast with the communities further north, never earned fame as a boom town." He claims Portland had undergone growth of a "slow and natural process," compared to "her brash and energetic rivals, was almost a declining city." Sleepy and conservative, Schwantes notes, characterized Portland's labor leaders as well: "nowhere in the Pacific Northwest were labor leaders such models of restraint and caution."[10] This said, it is no surprise that Portland was among the first city centrals in the region to join the AFL, getting a charter at the personal request of Samuel Gompers in 1889, several years before other Northwest cities did so.[11] Additionally, Portland had only limited wartime production industry. Despite drastic

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[7] Joseph A. McCartin, Labor's Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations 1912-1921, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p. 63

[8] Wobbly is a name for members of the Industrial Workers of the World, one of the more radical organizations at the time.

[9] McCartin, p. 58.

[10] Carlos A. Schwantes, Radical Heritage: Labor, Socialism, and Reform in Washington and British Columbia 1885-1917, (Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Press, 1979) 16.

[11] Schwantes, p. 38.

growth in the decade prior to the war, the construction of new docks and creation of new jobs, a 1915 expose in *Survey* Magazine revealed the city to be suffering from severe unemployment and poverty. E. Kimbark MacColl writes that as the nation geared up for war in 1917,the already strained Portland would have to face "severe economic and social conditions that it was not prepared to handle."[12]

In response to the situations created by the war, "Portlanders generated a number of rather unconventional [and] unpopular ideas," according to Robert D. Johnston.[13] Those ideas were, ideologically, far more left than would be expected from the picture of Portland workers Schwantes portrays. But despite the lack of a radical heritage or the typical sorts of industry that seemed to breed militancy, AFL workers in Portland grew increasingly radical during the years of World War I and, as such, increasingly distant from Gompers. While the reasons for this are many and complex, the focus in this essay is how that radicalism was evident and unabashed despite the fact it was operating under Gompers's leadership.[14] The evidence of this distancing between worker and president comes largely from the ideas promoted in their respective newspapers.

Both the *American Federationist* and the *Oregon Labor Press* are classic examples of labor journalism of the time, despite their dramatic differences in layout, style, and even function. And while historical scholarship on labor during World War I has grown during the last few decades, the subject of labor journalism remains relatively

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[12] E. Kimbark MacColl, The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon 1915-1950 (Portland, OR: Georgian Press, 1979) p. 35-36. See also: Owen, Bess C., "Fighting Unemployment and Destitution in Portland," Survey, Vol. 34, No. 1, April 10, 1915, p. 52-53.

[13] Robert D. Johnston, The Radical Middle Class: Populist Democracy and the Question of Capitalism in Progressive Era Portland, Oregon, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. xii.

[14] Johnston's discussion of Portland during the Progressive Era offers an in-depth discussion of Portlander's understanding of labor as being rooted in old, Lockean notions of production and land. Workers in Portland were very interested in receiving the full value of the wealth they created, which put them at odds with capitalism, big business, and, in many ways, the AFL. Johnston, chapters 1, 5, 11; during WWI, p. 171-176.

untouched. Indeed, labor historians often rely on the text of labor newspapers as materials for research, but the significance of the publications themselves as mouthpieces of a movement appear often overlooked.[15] In addition to providing a new example of the split between the AFL leader and radical factions within the union, this essay also seeks to show the changes in the OLP and *Federationist* as examples of the role of the labor press during a tumultuous time for unions.

Understanding the role of the labor newspapers, however, first requires some understanding of how they differ from more mainstream media of their day. Taking a number of shapes, sizes, and political opinions, the labor press could mean anything from simply listing strikes in a news bulletin, or detailed news-magazines that centered around the larger philosophical questions surrounding labor, the right to work, or the problems with wages.[16] With roots in the tremendous technological advancement and growth of specialty presses during the 1880s, labor journalism was part of a larger trend of newspapers transforming themselves to reflect broader developments in the country.[17] New technologies not only allowed newspapers to crop up on the smallest of budgets, but the cheap printing cost meant the papers could also sell at a lower rate. Papers for many sections of society began to develop; movements, opinions, organizations could all be covered in a special press devoted to specific coverage. As a result, the publications often

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[15] See Schwantes, p. 263 for a discussion of the significance of labor publications in producing labor history; also: Johnston, p. 17-19.

[16] These questions were specifically taken from various 1917 issues of the OLP, AF, Butte *Daily Bulletin*, and Seattle *Union Record.*

[17] Often called the "Age of New Journalism," the years between 1883 and 1900 were a time of tremendous development in journalism. Cheaper printing costs meant cheaper newspapers, allowing for the growth of both circulation and readership, and thus specialty newspapers – the Immigrant Press, club newspapers, and labor publications are just some examples. The large number of papers also contributed to more newspaper competition, which inevitably changed the face of the newspapers into flashier, eye appealing publications. This also redefined news and news placement, securing the front page for more important, "breaking" news to hook readers into buying from the newsstands. For more discussion of the labor press and specialty press, see Wm. David Sloan (ed.), The Media in America: A History, (Northport, AL: Vision Press 2002), chapter 12.

changed to reflect the viewpoints, not only of their editors, but also to the needs of their readers.[18]

For workers, the labor press was an ally against the mainstream press, frequently accused of "ruling the minds of the majority" or catering to business.[19] As the *Oregon Labor Press* claimed "we regard the newspapers as the most dangerous enemies of labor and democracy because they are vehicles for the spreading of intelligence [for] one class, while pretending to be the impartial mouthpieces of all classes of society." It was, they wrote, the "solemn duty to expose the fraud" and "flay the deceivers with all the power at our command."[20] The newspaper was a tool for doing so. In the case of Gompers, it was also a powerful tool for getting ones own interests promoted as well.

"Pure and Simple" Publication

Underneath the masthead of the *American Federationist*, before the articles and advertisements began, even before the date and volume number, read a pure and simple mission statement. The American Federation of Labor ensured readers that the periodical in their hands was "Devoted to the interests and voicing the demands of the trade-union movement."[21] Its pages were filled with everything from commentary on national policy issues to news about labor developments in small towns across the country. During the first 30 years of the newspapers existence, the preponderance of this material was written

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[18] Sloan, p. 226, 244.
[19] OLP March 2, 1918, p. 2. This is just one example of several features presented in the *Press* addressing the need for a publication devoted to labor's interest. Each time the argument is the same: business is behind the daily newspapers, including the *Oregonian*, and thus will never give labor issues fair coverage of their issues. See also: OLP Feb. 13, 1917, p. 2; June 8, 1918, p. 4.
[20] OLP March 2, 1918, p. 2.
[21] AF April 1914 – Dec. 1921.

by the newspaper's editor and AFL president, Samuel Gompers. As such, it was laced with his ideas of trade unionism upon which he built the American Federation of Labor.[22]

The domination of the *Federationist* by Gompers was particularly important prior to and during war. As Gompers began to head in his own direction, the rest of the AFL followed suit, but only after Gompers had fiercely promoted his opinions and exerted a powerful influence over the rest of the organization. As Simeon Larson and Grace Palladino contend, Gompers had a vital asset in the *Federationist* that allowed him to do so. With complete control over all AFL publications, Gompers "was able to transform his role into the guiding hand that led the Federation into unquestioned support of Wilson's war policies."[23] To do so, Gompers flooded the pages of the *Federationist* with articles and editorials to, as William George Whittaker notes, "harangue the rank-in-file" to adopt his stance and "win the trade union movement to his own position."[24]

By examining the content of the *Federationist* from 1912 to 1920, a dramatic shift in the policy of the organization it represented is revealed. The years during the First World War, primarily America's entry in 1917, would prove a turning point at which the *American Federationist* would move from being a non-partisan publication "devoted to the interests and voicing the demands of the trade union movement," into a tool that promoted the aims of its editor and his new friends in Washington, President Wilson and, later, the Democratic Party.

Since its founding in 1886, the AFL had frequently put its fingers into politics, but had remained formally nonpartisan. This was part of the "pure and simple" fundamental

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[22] McCartin, p. 14. See also: William George Whittaker, "Samuel Gompers, Anti-Imperialist," *Pacific Historical Review 38* (1969), p. 429-432.
[23] Larson, p. 42. See also: Grace Palladino, "Over Here: Samuel Gompers, the AFL and the First World War," *Labor's Heritage* Winter/Spring (2002), p. 29.
[24] Whittaker p.432, 436.

planks on which the AFL would be built. "Pure and simple" meant that only trade union members and leaders should determine the shape of labor politics, achieve basic goals within the existing political system, and remain strictly non-partisan. This philosophy was hatched by Gompers in the AFL's formative years and was further engrained into the very fibers of the AFL during his term as president, directly translating into the outlets of his control, including AFL publications. [25]

With Gompers at the editor's desk of the *Federationist*, the newspaper was saturated with his political philosophy. Its masthead claimed to be dedicated to the cause of the worker, and it meant it. The content that filled the pages never crossed the "pure and simple" line.[26] Moreover, Gompers frequently took the content into his own hands by writing a substantial portion of it. It was still, however, a worker's paper. The news, the editorials, and everything in between was for the AFL unionist.

The typical monthly issue of the *Federationist* served a number of functions for the AFL reader. It first provided the latest labor news, from strikes by rail workers to the progress of labor legislation. Topics varied depending on the items of the month deemed newsworthy and serialized stories were rare.[27] When he wrote news, Gompers frequently graced the front page, but his stories were brief and generally on topics different from the other articles. He tended to save his words for the large editorial section that graced the center of the paper. [28]

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[25] McCartin, p. 14. See also: Whittaker p. 432, 436.
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] AF Jan 1912- April 1914.
[28] Article content summary based on averages from all *American Federationist* issues from Jan. 1912 to April 1914. Some issues carried as many as six major news articles in an issue, as few as two. Gompers's stories appeared in a random order, and did not always secure the front page. Labor news from England and Germany rotated monthly, however some issues would carry both updates simultaneously. The annual financial summary appeared every October and would take up some ten to fifteen pages. AF Jan. 1912-April 1914.

Those who waded to the middle of the publication would be met with an editorial section that was just that: written by the editor. Each issue carried editorials dealing with a wide variety of subjects, but never had any real connecting theme. In a single edition, Gompers might tackle the parcel post, the International Workers of the World, women's suffrage and the need for workers to recognize the significance of Labor Day.[29] To lighten things up, the paper was also sprinkled with poetry or human-interest stories to strike the union chord in each reader. A story might tell tales of a brave worker and his tattered uniform, or stir union loyalty with Kipling's "Cry of Toil."[30] The stories were essentially fluff, but served a point of directing readers back to the newspaper's promise of promoting workers' interest.

Through its content, the newspaper characteristically adhered to the policy of "pure and simple," particularly with regards to avoiding party politics. Stories often dealt with politics, but any definite stance in favor of one party or another was absent. Instead, the AFL adhered to "principles, not parties," and did not support any party, candidate or legislation that "says workers must not strike, must continue to work without interruption" or "invades personal rights and liberty."[31] Generally, articles that could have potentially endorsed any person or party instead focused on the pros and cons for organized labor. For example, during the Congressional elections in the fall of 1914 and the presidential election of 1916, in depth articles or editorials endorsing a particular candidate or party were absent from the publication. Rather, the few political articles that

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[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *Ibid.* Cry of Toil featured Feb. 1913.
[31] AF Feb. 1913, p. 116-117.

were printed dealt with all of the candidates, reviewing their relationship to labor and their stand on the open shop.[32]

Further, even though Gompers had been strengthening ties with the Woodrow Wilson and the Democratic Party as early as 1912, it was not immediately apparent in the newspaper until a few years later. Gompers's efforts in swinging the labor vote in favor of the Democrats that year had provided the AFL with immediate benefits.[33] The newspapers, though, refrained from any indication that the two were drawing closer, save for a few small hints in 1914. Ultimately the paper would full out endorse Wilson and the Democrats, but it was not until America entered the war. Until that time, the newspaper still carried its usual repertoire in its traditional fashion, avoiding even the subtlest hints that the editor was growing closer to Wilson.[34]

But in September 1914, the front page of the *Federationist* ran a set of letters that offered a hint to the direction the publication was heading. The first was a message from the editor highlighting the endeavor of workers "who are striving to make freedom, justice and humanity practical forces in daily life and work." Appearing immediately below it was another written by President Woodrow Wilson explaining "to the Editor of the *American Federationist*… that there is a steady movement both of purpose and of action towards justice, and a fuller comprehension and realization of the essential rights and liberties of men." Gompers further wrote that "the movement may at times seem distressingly and discouragingly slow; and all that we have to do to set forward with

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[32] AF July 1914-Nov 1914; July 1916-Nov 1916.
[33] The immediate creation of the Department of Labor and the United States Commission on Industrial Relations proved to be a great victory for the AFL, as President Wilson would follow the advice of Gompers in assigning William B. Wilson to head the new Department of Labor, thereby acknowledging labor as a constituency of the Democratic Party and administration. McCartin, p.15.
[34] AF Jan. 1912 – April 1914. For more on the relationship between Gompers and Wilson, see McCartin, p. 54-58.

increasing momentum is to think justly, propose the things that are right, and be afraid of nothing except to be unfair and selfish and hasty when interests as great as the country itself are involved."[35] Despite Gompers's base philosophy of non-partisan ship and the paper's mantra of "union first," messages from Wilson began creeping into the pages of the *Federationist*.[36]

In the later months of 1914 and throughout the following two years, Gompers would devote only a small portion of the publication to anything that resembled Wilson's aims. His own work would maintain its regular volume, but the content also became slightly more thematic and longer. Gompers also began to provide brief editorial on the ongoing developments of the war in Europe.[37] The language, though, remained the same calls to "resist all wage reductions," "work for the eight-hour day!" and spoke of unions "fighting to obtain justice."[38] These were additionally intermixed with frequent messages from Wilson posted in the editorial section. As time went on, Wilson received more coverage and his letters were printed in full.[39] But it was not until spring of 1917 that Gompers made any blatant statements announcing full support of the president.

When America declared war on Germany in April 1917, Gompers was quick to rush to the colors. Gompers explained that to "carry on a war against the Imperial German Government and to bring the war to a successful termination" required allowing "the President to exert all the power" and supporting his "employ[ment] all of the resources of our nation," which included labor.[40] "The working people," he wrote, "are

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[35] AF Sept. 1914, p. 709.
[36] AF, Sept. 1914 – April 1916.
[37] AF Jan. 1915 - April, 1916.
[38] *Ibid.* AF, December 1914.
[39] AF April 1916-April 1917.
[40] AF May 1917, p. 357. AF April 1917-Dec. 1918. See aslo: Palladino, p. 32.

fully prepared to do their part."[41] The newspaper soon became a manner in which Gompers could "secure the cooperation of all those whose work is necessary in national defense."[42] The stories would cry for "full support of President Wilson," and his request for "cooperation of men from all walks of life," and hopes for "a national feeling and national unity."[43] Moreover, Gompers ensured that readers knew and understood what Wilson wanted from them. In addition to reiterating its support, the newspaper also ran full-page letters from Wilson and comments on Wilson's aims and performance.[44] Gompers would add to these with pleas to readers to cooperate with "the men on the frontlines" who relied so heavily "upon its machinists and metal workers, upon those who dig the ditches, who produce the materials of war, upon those whose hands are on the throttles and levers of transportation, who connect the arteries of communication."[45] For the rest of 1917, and well into 1918, the war would be headline news in the *Federationist*, but its editorials would take it a step further.

Unlike the previous volumes of the paper, the editions released during America's involvement in World War I saw a theme that ran through the editorial sections. Titles such as "To Steady, Not to Hinder," "Patriotic, but on Guard," "Win the War for Freedom," and the blatant "Why Labor Must Support the War," alone illustrate the general tone of the editorial section as a venue for Gompers's new cause.[46] Of course, the content was no less oriented toward support of Wilson and the war. "The American

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[41] *Ibid.*
[42] AF April, 1917, p. 269-273.
[43] AF May 1918, p 386; June 1917, p. 454.
[44] *Ibid.* AF April 1917-Dec. 1918.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] AF April 1917-Dec. 1918. These titles specifically: AF May 1917; May 1917; Sept. 1918; June 1918.

nation is unreservedly in support of President Wilson," he wrote. Moreover, he was still prodding the laborers:

> We serve in the great industrial army that serves overseas with the fighting forces.... We must give this service without reserve until the war is won. No strike ought to be inaugurated that can not be justified to the men facing momentary death.[47]

Editorials called workers and unions to do everything from abandon strikes and support Wilson to promoting the sale of war savings, even to "take up the guns of the fallen" on the battlefield.[48] But fiery statements in news and editorials were not the only method the paper harangued its readers to rally to the cause. "The man who wins is the average man," an unknown poet encouraged *Federationist* readers in July 1918. These poems and short stories told the readers who were the real winners of the war:

> For the man who wins is the man who works,
> Who neither labor nor trouble shirks,
> Who uses his hand, his head, his eyes.
> The man who wins is the man who tries.[49]

Tidbits highlighting valor in the workplace, continuous production and "making the earth safe from fear by striking despots down" ran frequently during the war.[50] As before, they were essentially light pieces to breakup the heavy issues, but served the purpose of drawing the readers' attention to the cause.

These editorials and poems, coupled with headline news about the war and letters from the White House created a publication that essentially acted as a vehicle for promoting and supporting Wilson, a complete contradiction to its original insistence on

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[47] AF May, 1918, p. 386-386.
[48] AF June 1918, Sept. 1918, p. 804.
[49] Author not given. AF July 1918. p. 584.
[50] AF Jan. 1918 - Dec. 1918. This poem: Spencer, no title, in AF, Dec. 1918, p. 1088.

allegiance to "principles, not to parties, or to men."[51] But it didn't just stop at support of Wilson. During the Congressional election of 1918, the newspaper began to reveal a gradual orientation toward the Democratic Party. As before, the AFL would attend to politics by covering issues, rather than candidates, in terms of what was best for labor. Those candidates more sympathetic to specific issues, in this instance particularly maintaining the National War Labor Board, would be given full support and praise in the *Federationist*.[52] Previously, those candidates could be from either side of the aisle. This time, Gompers outlined the AFL's demands one by one and then set out how those demands were met by the Democratic Party. While it did not fully and blatantly endorse the Democrats, as it would in the 1920 election, it gave a solid hint that a full embrace of that party was in store.[53]

Gompers claimed "victory for democracy, now and forever" when the war ended. His news and editorials would continue to rally behind Wilson for the editions that followed. As time went on, the newspaper would begin to revert to its old self. Gompers wrote his standard single story and a few brief editorials on a variety of subjects. Moreover, the general theme of the newspaper would return to promoting the interests of labor, this time in terms of "industrial democracy." Workers made the world safe for democracy, now it was time for democracy in the workplace. He encapsulated this new target in a December, 1918 editorial: "Our great military victory means to our nation, to the working people, opportunities to go on in democracy, making free use of the great

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[51] AF April, 1920 p. 321.

[52] The National War Labor Board was one of the new state organizations to mediate between the government and organized labor during the war to help maintain production. Throughout the war, these organizations secured a number of rights for labor, persuading many (including Gompers) that the state could be a useful ally in negotiating labor's demands. Part of "Pure and Simple" unionism had been to avoid this at all costs, but Gompers's insistence the NWLB continue further marks a departure from that philosophy. McCartin, p. 189-191.

[53] AF July 1918 – Nov. 1918.

opportunities of democracy.[54] The poetry and short tales that dotted the paper would pat workers on the back for a job well done, and urge them to now concentrate on the path that lay before them. It would appear the newspaper was its old self again.[55]

But the paper had changed. During the last few years it had come to embrace a partisanship that it had previously avoided at all cost. Though Gompers's front page "Unfurling Labor's Political Banner," assured readers that "Labor's position is not new," and that "the partisanship of Labor in this campaign is a partisanship to principles," the content in the years to come suggests it was also partisan to the Democrats.[56] During the 1920 election campaign, the *Federationist* would pit the Republicans and Democrats against Labor's demands in a series that ran through a few different issues. It would then publicly endorse the Democratic Party, claiming "the Republican party has declared for the enslavement of the workers and for an open field to profiteers and to those who seek to suppress the aspirations of the great masses of our people." The Democrats' "splendid spirit," they said, met the AFL's desires.[57]

The paper continued to "voice the demands and promote the interests of the trade union movement," but in the years after 1919 it would continue to do without the non-partisan element of the "pure and simple" philosophy it originally had been infused with. It is important to note, though, that it was not simply the Democrat's spirit that had prompted Gompers to move away from "pure and simple." Gompers's steady stream of articles throughout the war asking workers to support the government, and indeed those

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[54] AF Dec. 1918, p. 1090-1091.
[55] AF, Dec. 1918- Dec. 1920.
[56] AF April 1920. p. 322.
[57] AF July-Aug. 1920. Endorsement: Aug. 1920. p. 737-738.

after the war advocating the Democrats suggest that Gompers had come to understand the state as a useful ally to labor in another departure from "pure and simple."[58]

Though typically shrouded in patriotic support of Wilson and the war, Gompers outlined in the *Federationist* that he believed the state could work with labor to secure demands. After detailing Wilson's "war for democracy," in a 1918 editorial, Gompers outright claimed the AFL "will work with all who seek justice – with all who wish to use the bright path to the future through the opportunities of democracy. We will work with all who go the way of justice and we shall be glad to work with them."[59] Gompers further expressed his willingness to cooperate in 1920, as he wrote: "The government exist[s] for the service of human beings and the promotion of their betterment."[60] By endorsing the Democrats, Gompers felt he was promoting candidates who could provide "reason for the conviction that citizens can rely upon the government for impartial maintenance of rights and protection."[61] Clearly Gompers had completely abandoned his notion that the state had no business in negotiating for labor.

Moreover, sentiments such as these suggest that Gompers's support of Wilson during the war and the Democrats immediately after had been expressions more of his interest to build a relationship with the state than simply his own sense of patriotism and loyalty.[62] The process, though, had been gradual. Gompers had given hints in the *Federationist* in 1914 that Wilson could help secure some of labor's interests, and the war had prompted Gompers to take this even further, to offer full support of the president

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[58] McCartin, chapter 8.
[59] This editorial actually follows a transcript of a meeting between the AFL and Frank Walsh, then co-chair of the National War Labor Board, speaking on behalf of the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy. The two articles are not connected, however the placement of material from NWLB leaders also suggests Gompers's non-hostility toward state involvement in labor politics. AF Dec. 1918, p. 1093.
[60] AF July 1920, p. 657.
[61] *Ibid.*
[62] McCartin, p. 221.

and his administration. By the end of the war, the paper's content showed a synthesis of labor's interests with a partisan position and support of the state, a dramatic change from prior to the war.

Perhaps more important, however, is that the direction Gompers had taken the union was not necessarily congruent with the wishes of the workers. As his stance had changed over the years, the *Federationist* showcased them in a public display for all of the AFL to see. While it kept AFL union workers were up to date, the paper lacked the ability to print and report on local news, issues, and strike coverage many workers depended on. Supplemental information was thus the responsibility of the state branches that would print a publication more frequently to fill in gaps the *Federationist* left out.

In many cases, however, the local publication did more than just offer the local news and in some it was hardly supplemental. This was particularly true in Portland, Oregon, where a boom in industry prior to World War I created "severe economic and social conditions that it was not prepared to handle" and a labor publication that was shades more radical than its national counterpart, often even reactionary to Gompers's ideas put forth in the *Federationist*.[63]

Portland Workers Get a Different Scoop

To complement their subscription to the *American Federationist*, Portland workers turned to the pages of the *Oregon Labor Press* (OLP) to get the latest information on local union activity. Since its inception in 1900, the OLP guaranteed readers that "the *Labor Press* is owned and controlled by all the unions of the city," and

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[63] MacColl, p. 35-36. See also: Owen, p. 52-53.

suggested that "it should be taken by every one of their members."[64] By and large, it was. In 1909 the publication happily reported that all but twenty of the area's unions had full member subscriptions, and nearly all the union-men in Portland, whether subscribers or not, paid an annual fifty-cents to run their union bulletin on page three.[65] The *Press*'s significance in reaching workers was so great, new recruits to an Oregon Federation of Labor local were often presented with a year's subscription as a sort of signing-bonus "in order to be able to keep in closer touch with the general labor movement."[66] Despite its pages of union notices, though, the *Press* served another function and its scope went much farther than just labor.

Two cents per week bought the reader eight pages of coverage of everything from strikes to women's gardening tips.[67] Like the *Federationist*, the *Press* often included a fair share of commentary and human-interest stories, poems, and songs to break up the issues. It included pages of updates on issues or movements significant to labor but left out by other Portland publications. Though its main focus was labor, the *Press* often covered broader topics like education, science, and in some instances even sports news that could easily be found in another penny paper or the Portland *Oregonian*.[68] Indeed,

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[64] This call to petition in 1909 was later shortened to "Owned and Controlled by Organized Labor," and added the masthead of the publication as the official slogan of the *Oregon Labor Press*. *Portland Labor Press* June 25, 1909, p. 1.

[65] *Portland Labor Press* June 25, 1909, p. 1.

[66] OLP, April 6, 1918. p. 1.

[67] Article content summary based on *Oregon Labor Press* issues from January 1916 to December 1918. Each issue contained anywhere from one to seven front page stories, at least three front page photographs, and at least one editorial section on page two. Pages three and four were devoted to local and national labor news, while five and six ran guest contributions, human-interest stories, advertisements, and union updates. Page seven was for lesser news, and eight was generally reserved for special interest news, predominantly a women's section called "Woman and Her Interests." Articles were generally written by a host of contributors and the OLP's four editors, who divided sections in no particular order. OLP Jan. 1916 – Dec. 1918.

[68] Historian Robert Johnston relies heavily on the *Portland Labor Press* as a mouthpiece not only for workers, but the middle class, suggesting that in Portland the two had melded together, creating a sort of "middle-class utopia." Johnston, p.16-17.

the publication's bold and flashy face, loud and wide headlines, and graphical design indicate the publication may have had a significant news-stand appeal – designed not only for workers or union men, but anyone who might pick it up instead of "the great newspapers and magazines owned by millionaires whose sympathies are all with their class."[69] Letters to the newspaper often expressed appreciation to the OLP for providing a good alternative to "the capitalist press" written for the "capitalist-duped working class," or the "grave, highly respectable dailies host[ing] propaganda sheets… speaking to the people in honeyed tones, warning them against the wiles of labor union agitators… whose purpose is to deceive and betray."[70] For these readers, the *Press* took on the role of their weekly source of all news and information.

Moreover, it included a heavy load of national labor issues overlooked by the *American Federationist*. For example, headlines in February 1917 scathed a judge who priced "Human Lives at Ten Dollars Each" in a story of a mining tragedy in West Virginia; the story was overlooked by the *Federationist* as too local, but made the front page of the OLP.[71] Stories that dealt with land taxes or land monopoly were of particular prominence in the *Press*, regardless of where the story originated. In one single edition of the *Press* no fewer than 17 stories on this subject were printed, dealing with vacant lot taxes in Missouri, farmers and railroaders' taxation in Montana, and land monopoly in the South.[72] Occasionally, some of Gompers's more windy pieces from the *Federationist*

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[69] OLP June 8, 1918 p. 4. This comes out of an series of commentaries about the importance of having a national labor press by Charles Hiram Chapman, Ph.D. Portland. The series ran for several weeks as was applauded in letters to the editor with numerous responses who shared Chapman's sentiments.
[70] OLP Feb. 13, 1917, p. 2; June 8, 1918, p. 4.
[71] OLP Feb. 13, 1917.
[72] OLP Aug. 4, 1917, p. 3. Johnston's chapter on the Single Tax offers some insight into the OLP's concern with land, suggesting it rises out of Portland workers' understanding of production. Johnston, chapter 5.

would be included in the *Press*, but they were few and far between, safely tucked away on page seven.[73]

The *Press*, did, however share a number of the *Federationist*'s qualities. Prior to World War I in particular, the core of the publication was Sam Gompers's brand of "pure and simple" trade unionism. This meant that only trade union members and leaders should determine the shape of labor politics, achieve basic goals within the existing political system, and remain strictly non-partisan. Unions, thus, should strive only for better wages and better working conditions, and politically align "principles, not to parties, or to men."[74] Although the *Press* had previously opened its pages to a Socialist forum, by 1915 this section had disappeared and strict party politics were more or less absent from its pages. [75] The vast majority of content, in news, commentary and even features, prior to the war was centered around wages and improvement of conditions. Like the *Federationist*, the paper was sprinkled with quotations or stories about the plight of workers, the strength of a union man, coupled with stories searing local businesses that were unfair to their workers and editorials calling for wage reform.[76] Though it had a more radical tone, it was nothing too extreme for Gompers, nor any more radical than factions existing elsewhere within the AFL, as McCartin's accounts of Bridgeport,

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[73] Labor publications, like mainstream newspapers, are organized on the basis that more important and relevant news is located in the front sections or on even numbered pages, as studies show this is where readers tend to look first. As far as page layout, more important stories are also placed near the top with the idea that readers may not reach the bottom. Thus, the placement of Gompers at the bottom of page seven does suggest his stories were considered of lesser importance. Michael Shudson, The Sociology of News, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2003) p. 122-125. See also: Sloan, p. 223-227.

[74] AF April, 1920 p. 321.

[75] This section was not specifically for endorsing the Socialist party, rather served more of a purpose of exploring the Socialist movement in other parts of the country or international. Nonetheless, it gave the OLP a significantly more radical flavor than the *Federationist*, but such factions were not altogether uncommon within the AFL. PLP Dec. 1913 – Dec. 1914. See also: McCartin, p. 58; "Portland Labor Press," *The Labor Press Project*, Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies at the University of Washington, July 20, 2003 < http://faculty.washington.edu/gregoryj/laborpress/>

[76] OLP Jan 1915 - April 1917.

Schenectady demonstrate.[77] It was the model of a "pure and simple" publication, as Gompers would have wanted it.

While the OLP clung to Gompers's form of "pure and simple" trade unionism in matters of wages or working conditions, it never shared Gompers insistence on remaining neutral on political candidates. On the contrary, one of the main functions of the OLP was to discuss candidates or officials and their significance (or lack thereof) to Portland workers. This took a variety of forms, from small corner advertisements for mayoral candidates, to bold front page, lead headlines that read "Daly Campaign is Progressing Nicely" complete with a quarter page photograph, or features titled the "Workingman's Ticket" which outlined particular candidates at the state, district and county levels.[78] On political matters, the *Press* was almost strictly local or regional, avoiding any discussion of presidential or congressional issues and instead left that for its national publication counterpart.

For the years prior to the war, the publication would continue in very much the same manner, filling the gaps left by Gompers and the worker's news needs untouched by the *Oregonian*. The *Press*, though significantly more radical than the publication Gompers was overseeing, provided a good counterpart not too far removed from AFL policy. It covered the issues its readers wanted and cared about, and avoided those things it didn't.

When, America declared war on Germany in April 1917, most newspapers carried a full-page headline. Those monthlies, such as the *Federationist*, had to wait until their

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[77] McCartin, p. 58-63.
[78] OLP Jan 1915 - May 1917. These issues specifically, OLP May 26, 1917 p. 1; OLP April 11, 1914 p.1.

next printing date, but then flooded their pages with war coverage. The *Oregon Labor Press*, however, did not.

The *Press* did make mention of the war, yet the only real coverage was listed on page seven, buried in a corner next to gardening tips for women, was written by non-local contributors, and was little more than advertisements for the United States Navy's need for one hundred-thousand machinists in the Northwest areas.[79] The front page was reserved for more pressing matters, particularly the matter of an anti-conspiracy ordinance, or as the headline screamed in block print "VICIOUS CLASS LEGISLATION – UNCALLED FOR AND UN-AMERICAN," a topic that would appear for several consecutive weeks while the rest of the country, and indeed, the *Federationist*, was concentrating on war.[80] The *Press* felt that for "poor old Portland," the matter was of utmost urgency as the city was about to be the victim of the legislation's "terrific power for tyranny." The editors feared the ordinance would drive labor into secret meetings, as it curbed picketing and outlawed public display of union affiliation; the editors viciously attacked the "corrupt brain of gibbering maniac[s]" who conceived the idea. "Capital has tried for thousands of years to stop labor in its upward march," editor E.H. Misner claimed in his front-page story, the ordinance was one of "several other methods being used against the workers in this city."[81] News about the Anti-Conspiracy Ordinance ran on the front page for the next seven weeks, only to be replaced by news of the Liberty

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[79] OLP March 31, 1917, p. 7.
[80] OLP May 26, 1917, p. 1, AF April 1917- Aug. 1917.
[81] OLP May 26, 1917.

Picnic in August, property taxes, local IWW activity, and the campaign progress of Will H. Daly.[82] No mention of Germans, Belgians, or armed servicemen was made.

The news coverage inside the paper detailed the war no more extensively. An occasional piece by Gompers would appear, but again these would be lost in a sea of strike news and updates from the Sheep Shearers', Carpenters', and Caulkers' unions.[83] One exception to this trend was present on the publication's back page, the section devoted to women. As early as April of 1917, the OLP began including pieces on opportunities for women during the war. These covered a broad range of topics, from planting a Victory Garden, to reusing old socks for knitting sweaters, to keeping the home warm despite Portland's bleak employment situation; they seem to have been targeted more toward the spouse of a union man, as opposed to the woman worker.[84] Other than these small and graphical features, a reader could very well come away from the *Press* oblivious to the fact that America was at war.

Aside from the *American Federationist*'s increasing coverage of the war, another difference between it and the OLP was emerging on the issue of patriotism. Gompers had been quick to assert labor's patriotism as America entered the war and his calls to rally behind Wilson had flooded the pages of the *Federationist* with the hope his support of Wilson would spread to the regional branches of the AFL. As the war progressed, Gompers took his banner of patriotism to another level and began attacking those more

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[82] OLP May – Aug. 1917. News about the ordinance still appeared in the publication, but was moved to inside pages where it still outran any news about the war on average of three articles per edition.
[83] OLP March 1917 –Dec. 1917.
[84] Headlines such as "To the Wives of Union Men" and stories detailing successful child rearing suggest the coverage for women was aimed more toward their role as wives. The OLP did run occasional stories about organizing women, far more frequently than the Federationist. This may be, in part, due to the AFL's principles of organizing on the basis of "craft" or skill and the definition of women as inherently unskilled. See Ileen A. Devault, "To Sit among Men: Skill, Gender, and Craft Unionism in the Early American Federation of Labor," Labor Histories, ed. Eric Arneson, (University of Illinois Press, 1998), p. 259-262

radical within the AFL. *Federationist* articles petitioned to rid the unions of "Bolsheveki" who spinelessly critiqued Wilson and the war, and later Gompers would argue he had "tried very heard to put some stiffening into the backbone of the people… to make them stand behind their governments at least until after the war shall have been won."[85] This translated into a rather vociferous rally against socialism and particularly the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

At first glance, the OLP appears to have done the same. It did carry Gompers's "support Uncle Sam" features, though lost in the "other news" sections at the back of the publication," and often chided socialists or the "deluded followers of the IWW" in its own editorial sections. In line with Gompers's "pure and simple" ideology, the OLP generally scoffed at labor philosophies that advocated any sort of overthrow of the state, particularly as IWW activity in Portland began to heat up in the months following America's declaration of war. On the surface, these more radical factions were dismissed as "degrading to labor" and warned, "the French Revolution was a pink-tea party compared to what would probably transpire in the event of [IWW] ascendancy."[86] Though Gompers had outright denounced these groups from within the AFL, the editors of the OLP managed to remain more sympathetic. "These men have a just grievance," argued a front page reaction to local IWW movement, "they would be no more than docile beasts of burden did they not protest… the blame for all these disturbances must be placed at the door of those employers and their supporters."[87] Through sympathies such as this, the OLP was putting itself closer to the unacceptable radical path that the

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[85]Articles rallying against socialism began to appear as early as summer of 1917 and continued more or less throughout the war. AF April 1917-December, 1918. His statement regarding his mission came out after the war had more or less ended and AFL politics had dramatically changed. Dec. 1918, p. 1085.
[86] OLP July 21, 1917, p. 1.
[87] *Ibid.*

heightened sense of patriotism would crack down on. During this same year, IWW offices were shut down, publications stopped, and Socialist leaders like Debs was thrown in jail for their activity.[88]

But these sympathies extended beyond just reports of local activity. Editorials frequently commented how strange it was "that union men and women – can't see that the concern of one should be the concern of all."[89] Each edition of the OLP also saw at least one guest column from Reverend Charles Stelzle or Scott Nearing, two prominent labor advocates from the East Coast. Their columns were integrated into the paper with other editorials or commentaries from the OLP's own editors, and, prior to the war, were generally given a place as any other guest commentary would. Stelzle's weekly sermon called for unity in the labor movement and cooperation between labor and employers, while Nearing's column tended to focus more on the financial burdens placed upon the workers of America. In both cases, the content was generally more left wing in its ideas, and the decision to carry both columns indicates some affinity on part of the editors.[90]

After war was declared, however, the tone of the editorials, both by guest and resident columnists, changed dramatically. Whereas Gompers and the *Federationist* increasingly emphasized labor's need to support the war and asserted its vital role in victory, the *Press* was not so sure. "For what are young men to die?" asked C.E.S. Wood, a prominent and progressive local lawyer. His questions were reiterated often by the editorial board – none of whom seemed to have a definite answer. Wood's Commentary "Ave! Caesar. Imperator. Morituri te Salutant" offered some semblance of an answer

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[88] McCartin, chapter 3.
[89] OLP June 16, 1917, p. 4.
[90] OLP April 1914 –Dec. 1916.

claiming "our President has said we have entered this terrible war for Democracy and Humanity." Wood, and others, noted a serious problem with this reasoning:

> Democracy means equal opportunity for all and special privilege to none in either the natural resources of the land nor the communal services to society… the truth is the United States is a democracy only in theory in so far as it is a democracy at all. It is in fact a plutocracy, and the worst exploited country on earth… The United States system automatically produces kings, lords and barons at one end and dependents at the other.[91]

Democracy, they argued, could hardly be attained in Europe if it could not be secured at home. Wood continued to rally for peace, but claimed, "Our efforts for peace must be efforts to change our plutocratic system here and now."[92] And while the *Federationist* spoke of victory for labor in the war, the OLP saw an all too costly and dangerous situation. "The toilers throughout the world are sacrificing their lives," Stelzle's April commentary began, "and the worst is yet to come."[93] Nearing's pieces were no less optimistic: "For the bulk [of society], the workers, the present situation is full of peril."[94] As time passed, the language spoke increasingly of workers as a whole, not as a powerful force in winning the war, but as the shoulders upon whom "the burden of the war will rest heavily upon."[95] The *Press* made little mention of Wilson, let alone any idea of supporting him. They left that for Gompers and his monthly editorials, which it buried on the back pages among lesser news.

Despite these examples, commentary and coverage of the war remained minimal; the preponderance of its columns was devoted to reactions to property tax laws or "anti-

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[91] OLP Sept. 15, 1917. p. 2.
[92] *Ibid.*
[93] OLP April 21, 1917 p. 7.
[94] OLP March 31, 1917, p 2.
[95] *Ibid.*

democratic" legislation.[96] Editorials spoke of a new slavery that was emerging in the United States, that is, that "the ownership, by one man, of the resources and capital with which other men must live, places those other men, who must take the job in order to live, in a position of economic inferiority."[97] Further, Portland union-men expressed in their letters to the editor a frustration with being slaves of capital.

Altogether, the opinions expressed in the *Press* began to show signs of a class-consciousness among the workers of Portland that differed greatly from the acquiescent union posture promoted by the AFL president. This became particularly evident by 1918 when the *Press* began reacting to Gompers's increasing support of Wilson. Long before Gompers launched his "No-strike" campaign in May of 1918, the *Press* clearly anticipated that workers would be hard pressed to not strike:

> When American workers have been asked to sacrifice the degree of industrial rights which they have so far attained, they have been asked to sacrifice something which the nation itself could not spare. They might as well be asked to sacrifice their health, their honesty, and their virtue.[98]

The unsigned commentary further attacked anyone who dare suggest workers give up that right, calling them "shortsighted enemies of their own countrymen."[99] Portland workers were clearly operating on a different page than their AFL president. Interestingly, as the war progressed, the *Press* began running more *Federationist* features. However, for every *Federationist* piece attempting to secure labor's support of the war and detailing how Germany enslaved Belgian workers, a larger section of the publication was devoted to a

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[96] OLP Feb. 1917- Dec. 1917.
[97] OLP Feb. 17, 1917, p. 1.
[98] AF May, 1918, p. 386-386; OLP Aug. 4, 1917, p. 2.
[99] OLP Aug. 4, 1917, p. 3.

critique of the workers situation at home.[100] Calls by Gompers to be patriotic and supportive were met with OLP pleas "to get a square deal" in return from employers who they felt were not criticized by Gompers for a lack of patriotism.[101] Numerous articles also attacked the United States government as "an invisible government responsible for the lynching of Frank Little," and a "moneyed interest breaking down the safeguards of the efficiency and rightful happiness of American workers." They further criticized Wilson, claiming his administration was led by "guiding principles as those of Machiavelli's Prince."[102]

By the end of 1918, the *Press* had hardly backed down. But with the end of the war, their focus switched from struggling against Gompers to a struggle to find labor's place in a new world, shaped by the loss of millions in the name of democracy.[103] The OLP described a precarious situation at home: the wartime labor councils, the boom in production, the available work would all grind to a halt with the return of American soldiers. "We shall be playing with fire if we do not look out," the editors warned.[104] The *Press* suggested that the greatest of these problems was the competition for work, claiming that this problem would be easily remedied by "jarring loose" the "obstructive

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[100] OLP April 6, 1918, printed also in the April edition of the *American Federationist*. The feature, written by Matthew Wool, detailed how Belgian workers were being "worked to death" by German "slaveholders" and appealed for "assistance in the name of the international solidarity of workmen." The OLP responded with its own commentary detailing the plight of American workers as slaveholders to Big Business.

[101] OLP Jan. 5, 1918, p.4. Editors of the OLP were concerned that Gompers's quest for patriotism was one sided, asking "If cessation of work at this time is unpatriotic, is it not unpatriotic for the employers to discharge men for union activities?" This theme carried through three consecutive issues, and reappeared at various times throughout the year.

[102] OLP June 8, 1918 p. 4. Frank Little was a labor organizer for the International Workers of World who, during a 1917 attempt to recruit miners in Butte, Montana, was taken from his hotel room in the middle of the night, beaten and lynched on a railroad trestle. Though the event did little to recruit members to the IWW, it spurred outrage from workers across the country, angry that a labor messenger could be so violently silenced.

[103] Though America lost a very small fraction of men compared to European nations, the OLP believed the allied casualties also fought and died in the name of democracy. OLP all issues Dec. 1918.

[104] OLP Dec. 21, 1918, p. 6.

owners of natural resources and wealth" to create jobs. Nonetheless, they warned these conditions would "bring [workers] on the verge of unrest, to discontent." And if nothing was done, the *Press* explained they may result to more radical extremes and "become revolutionsts, bolshevists, IWW's… they will become what the Industrial and political system compels them to become."[105] According to the editors of the *Press*, a decision had to be made as to which course labor should follow to secure democracy following the war. "Justice, or Revolution?" they asked. But the answer, to the editors of the *Press*, was obvious.

When the Bolsheviks staged a successful revolution against the provisional Russian government in November 1917, the OLP ran a few editorials commenting on winds of change that would take authority by surprise.[106] "The world is changing around you," they wrote to the Mayor, "and you and your kind don't know it any more than the czar knew what was happening to him and Russia until it was all over."[107] Other articles suggested that conflict was coming, and moreover, "the kind of conflict that becomes revolution."[108] But these, like many of Gompers's pieces were buried in the back before almost disappearing from the paper. Little mention of Russia was made during the rest of the war, but by the end of 1918 it was brought back into the center of the paper as a possible example to help solve America's ills.[109]

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[105] *Ibid.*
[106] Russia held to its own calendar at this time; what to them was the "October Revolution" occurred in November by the American calendar.
[107] OLP Nov. 3, 1917, p. 4.
[108] OLP Nov. 10, 1917, p.7.
[109] This lack of coverage may be due to Gompers's crackdown on socialism and radicalism during the war, in addition to the implementation of Espionage and Sedition Acts which closed IWW and Socialist offices, stopped their publications, and even threw leaders like Eugene Debs in prison for seven years. McCartin, chapter 3.

Despite various attempts by the "kept press" to "do its utmost to defeat democracy in Russia" by reporting the struggles of the new regime, the OLP contended that this was "colored to meet the needs of propaganda."[110] Newspaper accounts of events in Russia, they claimed, were "conflicting" and "unreliable." They stated with certainty that America was far more in turmoil and that "the conditions in Russia, and in many other land, are far more peaceful."[111] At first glance, it would appear the now radical publication would be first in line to embracing a system similar to Russia's Bolshevik regime, which they viewed as successful and fair.

The reaction the OLP had to Bolshevism, though, was mixed. On one hand, they viewed Bolshevism as a movement demanding democracy, political and industrial, and the paper applauded it for those efforts. Further, they took small punches at the "covert support of counter-revolution," by allied governments.[112] Revolution, on the other hand, was not an option. "Which shall it be?" the *Press* asked, "Democratic justice with peace and good will, or reactionary ignorance with bolshevism and revolution?"[113] Democracy, they claimed, should emerge victorious since the last few years were spent fighting for a world in which it was safe.[114] As for the "ruling" employers, the *Press* told workers to be tolerant. "Let us make America a land in which the high ideals of democracy shall be safe," the editors asked, "Let us not be intolerant of the tories, the reactionaries, the

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[110] OLP December 28, 1918, p. 4.
[111] *Ibid.* See also: OLP June 15, 1918, p. 4. Though they claim certainty, this comment by the OLP is actually false. The USSR was experiencing much turmoil, counter-revolutions and civil war in 1919.
[112] OLP Dec. 28, 1918, p. 4. In some cases the support of counter-revolution by allied governments was hardly covert. The United States intervened in the Soviet Union quite overtly in 1918. Palazollo, Christopher, "American Intervention in Russia: A Study of Wilsonian Foreign Policy," *Rhodes Student Journal of International Studies,* Rhodes College, Spring 1997, http://www.is.rhodes.edu/modus/97/1.html.
[113] OLP Dec. 21, 1918, p.6.
[114] OLP Dec. 28, 1918, p. 4.

bourbons: they are ignorant."[115] Articles also suggested, though, that patience was only temporary until workers "learned how to get along without kaisers and junkers and bourbon employers."[116] Most of all, the events in Russia provided a wake up call to authorities, while provided the working class with a greater sense of the need for democracy. "There is one important truth that the ruling class has not yet appreciated," they wrote, "the working classes will not accept after the war the kind of life they tolerated before the war… The Russian Revolution has spread this sense among working classes at home."[117] In short, the *Press* maintained that workers in Portland were not yet ready for any sort of revolution or Bolshevism, but that the Russian Revolution did compel the need for change and reform forward.

Discussion of Bolshevism further took the OLP to the edge of radicalism – to the far edge at that. But it also brought into light the dramatic differences between workers in Portland and AFL leadership. While Gompers was endorsing political parties and promoting strengthened ties with government, the OLP was discussing a political ideology that promoted the violent overthrow of the state. While it quite adamantly claimed it did not condone revolution, the mere fact the *Press* even discussed Bolshevism brought the publication in danger of violating the Sedition and Espionage Acts that had imprisoned radicals such as Debs.[118] Gompers was embracing the state; the *Oregon Labor Press* was treading close to defying it.

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[115] *Ibid.*
[116] OLP Dec. 21, 1918, p.6.
[117] *Ibid.*
[118] McCartin, chapter 3; also: OLP Jan. 5, 1918, p.4.

Conclusion

By 1920, the *American Federationist* and the *Oregon Labor Press* stood at opposite ends of a spectrum. Samuel Gompers had led the AFL in a direction abandoning his "pure and simple" unionism in favor of supporting the Democratic Party, turning his publication into a tool for gathering support in those aims. The OLP went the other direction, becoming increasingly radical over the course of the war, ultimately speaking favorably of Bolshevism in the light that it cast on Industrial Democracy. While the papers were hardly identical at the outset, the First World War provided the right sort of conditions – changes to working conditions, calls for patriotic, ceaseless production, and promises of a new world for democracy – to escalate preexisting differences, creating publications that end up as almost rivals, despite belonging to the same organization. This rift between the two publications, the national and the local, is also representative. The war would serve as a transition point for the newspapers writers and audience. The newspapers' changes in content, editorial, and political stances highlight the growing differences between the organization's president and the workers he represented.

Those differences between Portland workers and Sam Gompers are also significant in demonstrating that pockets of resistance did exist within the American Federation of Labor. The radicalism of workers in Portland was put forth in the ideas and arguments printed in their newspaper, despite the AFL logo on top of the publication. Workers in Portland were still operating within the AFL; their radical ideas remained and grew despite Gompers's attempts to rid the union of such resistance. This contradicts arguments by historians like Grubbs and Larson that AFL unions simply followed Gompers's lead or that he was able to successfully stamp out resistance. In addition,

Portland may be added to the growing number of localities put forth by historians like McCartin and Montgomery as examples of radical resistance in the AFL during the war.

Further, the fact that resistance was offered by workers in Portland, Oregon not only suggests that radicalism and discontent with Gompers did exist within the AFL, but that it existed without the common ingredients for it. The picture of Portland as "sleepy and conservative" by historians like Schwantes hardly matches up with the ideas workers in Portland put forth in their newspaper.[119] The editors' description of Portland's situation and the discontent with Gompers's brand of unionism suggests Portland workers were perhaps not as "cautious" or "conservative" as historians have thought. And without significant wartime industry, dynamic or radical leadership, or massive immigration, the conditions historians generally point to as typical of militant, radical activity, Portland was an unlikely breeding ground for radicalism. Nevertheless, it did flourish, as evident by the ideas put forth in the *Press.*

The respective labor newspapers of Sam Gompers and Portland workers became tools during the First World War. For Gompers, the *Federationist* had not only been a means to keep workers informed, but it had provided an outlet spread his ideas to readers and to promote Wilson and the state. For workers in Portland, the *Oregon Labor Press* became a tool for critiquing the ideas Gompers put forth, and to spread their ideas of resistance. Whether readers were actually influenced by the newspapers is not evident in the publications themselves, though history explains that workers did subscribe to the ideas. What is evident in the newspapers, though, is that when workers subscribed, those in Portland, Oregon wanted a different scoop.

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[119] For description of Portland, see Schwantes, p. 16.

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