Teacher Reading: An Overview of the Bisbee Deportation of 1917

Abstract: A few months after the United States entered the *Great War* (World War I), a general strike of the copper miners took place in the mining city of Bisbee located in southeastern Arizona a few miles from the border with Mexico. While the strike from the miners' perspective was peaceful, it took place at a time and in an atmosphere when many conflicting social, political, and economic issues were present or emerging. The geography of Bisbee played an important role in how these issues and events came to impact this strike. On July 12, 1917, almost 2,000 men, organized and deputized by the Cochise County sheriff, arrested at gunpoint some 2,000 suspected strikers and supporters in the early morning hours. They were then marched some two miles to a local baseball field where the arrested men were asked to swear loyalty to the copper mine owners. The 1,186 men who would not swear loyalty were then loaded onto 23 railroad cars, shipped under armed guards and abandoned some 200 miles east in the desert of southern New Mexico, without food, water, or shelter. While this event has been characterized as the *deportation* of radical and subversive labor organizers of the Industrial Workers of the World (popularly called the *Wobblies*) and considered *un-American* by many, it has as accurately been considered an illegal kidnapping fueled by political intrigue, mass war hysteria, economic greed, and anti-immigrant sentiments.

Background Summary:
This is a story with many facets that are part and parcel of the American story of the 20th century. This strike was only one of over 4,000 strikes that took place in 1917. All twenty of the strikes in Arizona that year were in the mining industry. Labor unrest in the country was at an all-time high. The United States became embroiled in a world war which increased patriotic excitement as well as heightened anti-foreigner feelings. Mexico had been experiencing a civil war with revolutionary fervor and Pancho Villa's military excursions into the United States. In February of that year, the *Zimmerman* telegram from the German government to the Mexican government had created increased anxiety and outrage in Americans living along the border. The Russians were in turmoil and a socialist revolution was imminent. Arizona had just elected a new governor who was not labor union friendly as had been the previous governor. There was a pronounced tension between big business and the labor movement. Copper was the leading industry, and the Arizona economy was being supported by it. In addition, there is some historical evidence that more than three dozen of the leading newspapers in Arizona, including the *Bisbee Daily Review* and the *Arizona Daily Star* in Tucson, were either owned or controlled by the copper industry. The price of copper reached an all-time high and the industry was considered as vital to the American war effort.

Rich copper ore from Ajo had been shipped to Wales for smelting as early as the 1850s. The Clifton-Morenci area was producing rich ore in the 1870s. It had been primarily shipped to Kansas City by wagon – some 1200 miles until the company built a smelter at Clifton. After the 1880s copper mining became increasingly profitable with the advent of railroads and consequent branch lines and dirt roads. There had been little demand for copper until the electric motor, telephone, and electric lights created a lucrative and ravenous market for copper wire. Bisbee had one of the four largest copper deposits in the country and the Copper Queen was to become the single most important mine in the world of productive mining districts. Like other mining towns in the West, Bisbee had become by 1917 a company town:

owned and operated for the most part by the Phelps Dodge Corporation, and its leading rival, Calumet and Arizona Company.

In the 1890s Phelps Dodge Corporation constructed an industrial railroad known as the Arizona & Southeastern Railroad (AZSE) to carry copper ore from Bisbee northwards to join up with the Southern Pacific railroad and on east to El Paso, Texas. As demand for copper increased dramatically, Phelps Dodge built a new smelter in the area of what is now Douglas to replace the Bisbee smelter. In 1901 Phelps Dodge extended its rail line south to Douglas from Bisbee. It also formed the El Paso & Southwestern Railroad (EP & SW) and transferred to this company the assets of the AZSE. Plans were to extend the EP & SW across the southern edge of New Mexico to El Paso. Track was laid from Douglas east into New Mexico, passing the small settlements of Rodeo and Animas, and east into the wide valley that is the present site of Hatchita, a location chosen because of its ample water supply. Continuing east, the track reached a location where the town of Hermanas was built. Construction continued east from Hermanas, through the Mimbres River valley to the small border community of Columbus, thereafter following the Mexican border to the Rio Grande River valley and into El Paso in November of 1902. Columbus remained a small and generally unknown village other than as a port of entry into Mexico with a small U.S. Army camp known as Furlong. When Pancho Villa's army raided Columbus in 1916, U.S. Army General Jack Pershing increased greatly the number of troops stationed there.

In the years between 1890 and Arizona's statehood in 1912, the Warren Mining District (which includes Bisbee) had experienced a remarkable economic boom. Besides the Warren district, there were four other major copper mining districts in Arizona: Jerome, Globe, Clifton-Morenci, and Santa Rita. During this time Bisbee became one of the largest cities in the West between Denver and San Francisco. Like other mining districts that developed in isolated settings, the settlements did not spread out too far from the mineralized areas, clustering close together and appearing as if it was haphazardly built. In geographical terms, this has been termed as *nucleation* or concentration of building activity. This closeness of building in Bisbee contributed greatly to a very destructive fire in 1908 that destroyed much of the downtown area. As a result, much attention was paid in rebuilding the downtown commercial using materials considered more fireproof such as brick and stone masonry.

By 1917 Bisbee was the third largest city in Arizona, with a diverse population that represented practically every ethnic group from Europe and Asia. Its proximity to Mexico contributed to a significant population of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. This diversity came about from the lure of the incredible wealth generated by Arizona's largest industry, the copper mines. Because of mining throughout the Western United States there was a constant need for immigrant labor. Some of the immigrants had extensive experience working as miners, like the Cornish, English and Welsh, and they assumed a higher place in the socially and geographically stratified community. This created a highly segregated community with clearly delineated areas for those ethnic groups to live: Italians, Finns, Swedes, Serbs, Montenegrins, Croatians, Greeks, and a score of others.

This social structure was not peculiar to Bisbee; it was found in practically every mining town, but it was undoubtedly more pronounced in Bisbee because of its geographic location and setting. An examination of topographic and aerial view maps of the Bisbee/Warren area

provide a graphic description of this geography. The town developed as a series of mining claims in a narrow canyon nearly a mile high in elevation in the Mule Mountains. Built around two main geographic features, the twisting stream courses of Tombstone Canyon and Brewery Gulch; Bisbee sits nestled on almost solid rock. Spread somewhat chaotically and precipitously on the sides of the varying shaped hills that rise from these two streambeds, the town's center lies at their confluence. Each hill was separated from the next by deep ravines that were (and are still) subjected to major flash flooding during the summer rains. The Chinese were not allowed to live in or own businesses in Bisbee. African-Americans were not permitted to work in the mining industry. It wasn't until the 1920s that Mexican mineworkers were permitted to work underground where most of the higher paying jobs were found.

This geographic pattern was influenced by the early days of mining in the Warren district; as new claims were developed miners would construct their houses and shelters nearby and soon a community would emerge. A "complex mosaic of neighborhoods" in and around what is now called *Old Historic* Bisbee were where the bulk of the miners lived. According to one writer, most of the mine foremen lived in an area called "Jiggerville," while the *muckers* and *trammers* lived in old Bisbee, Lowell, or Bakerville. The community of Warren was reserved for the mine managers, engineers, and executives. Meanwhile, doctors, lawyers, and successful merchants lived on Quality Hill. There was an outskirt community known as Don Luis. Hispanics generally lived in Tintown which was constructed just as it sounds, of scrap lumber and rusty tin sheeting. Mexicans lived on Chihuahua Hill. Laundresses and their families, mostly the Irish, lived on Laundry Hill. Others lived in South Bisbee, San Jose, Galena, Briggs, Saginaw; bartenders and gamblers lived along Brewery Gulch with prostitutes inhabiting the upper end of the gulch. The topography continues to influence the community today in its neighborhood names, among these being Miller Hill, Clawson Hill, Art Hill, School Hill, Tank Hill, Mason Hill, Bailey Hill, Williams Hill, Higgins Hill, and Warren Hill.

As a mining camp, Bisbee attracted large numbers of unrelated people. As the population grew, a smaller and smaller percentage of the population was actually mining underground. There was an increased need for people to supply goods and services. There was also a major shift in the technology of the processing of ore that served to create outlying communities from the original site of mining at the *glory hole* of the *Copper Queen* mine (where the first rich ore of an underground vein is mined). This seemingly complicated grouping of mining and processing communities is what constitutes the Warren Mining District, with each area in the district having a unique and distinctive look or feel, but all important to the character of the entire district.

While the second decade of the 20th century was a time of prosperity for some, immigrant workers increasingly felt exploited by a culture which used their skills and labor, but which segregated them in their communities because of prejudices and discrimination and then asked them to move on when they were no longer needed, and generally treated them poorly. Many immigrant workers felt victimized by an industrial system that made great wealth for the owners and corporations, but increasingly exploited the workers. As improvements in technology and mining equipment were made, the high demand for skilled immigrant labor declined, but an increasing number of unskilled laborers made their way to the booming copper town of Bisbee. The price of copper almost doubled from July 1914 to July 1916. In fact, by March 1917, the price had climbed even higher with high demands for copper being

created by the growing war efforts. However, during this same time period consumer prices had risen more than 40 percent while wages increased less than 15 percent. It was not surprising, therefore, that workers in many industries continued to organize in increasing numbers. From the late 1890s to 1920, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) grew from somewhere less than a half million members to almost four million. For the most part the AFL found its strength in the skilled trades and not in the areas (unskilled labor) where most immigrants worked.

American involvement in World War I created both opportunities and problems for the American labor movement. As unemployment levels approached zero because of the significant increase in war orders for manufactured goods, labor unions struck to make gains for their members, President Wilson initiated new programs to maintain labor peace. Shortly after April 1917, he created a National War Labor Board (WLB) to investigate and resolve labor disputes. The WLB adjudicated major gains for American workers, among them wage increases, the eight-hour workday, collective bargaining for union members, and representation of non-union workers through what were called *shop committees*. Nationally, mine workers were able to organize a variety of strikes and other work stoppages that served to publicize their grievances about working conditions and wages.

Many of the miners who were not part of the AFL found a way to gain a voice through organized labor unions such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Organized in 1905, the IWW, or “Wobblies” as they were called, drew most of its members from the immigrant workers of the West. Unable to gain enough members or popular support to organize strikes and collective bargaining, the Wobblies’ grievances were voiced on street corners and market squares. Through their radical talk and predictions of coming revolution, alarmed citizens quickly passed ordinances prohibiting sidewalk speeches. Their cause was also weakened by a countrywide patriotic fervor that created a fear of industrial sabotage. By their own admittance, the IWW was a subversive group, often preaching the need for revolution. While progressivism is generally believed to be a political response to industrialization and the social by-products of it, such as urban growth, the concentration of corporate power, immigration and the widening of class divisions, radicalism in the labor movement never really attracted a large membership. The IWW probably never attracted more than thirty thousand members in the American West, most of them miners, fruit pickers, migrant workers, and lumbermen. As a result of their ardent advocacy for “one big industrial union” and the widespread nature of their organizing efforts among transient workers, they stirred up much trouble, and many consequently were arrested, beaten up, or run out of town.

In 1915, the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) and other unions organized a series of strikes that marked the first time the Mexican and Anglo workers joined together for common goals. While initially supporting miners’ demands, the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers (IUMMSW) was quick to disavow any connection to the IWW strike and, in fact, often worked with management to minimize the impact of the IWW organizers. However, the strikes in Arizona marked the beginning of a counteroffensive by the copper companies led by Walter Douglas of Phelps Dodge. At the outbreak of WWI, copper companies fired many union members even before they went out on strike. By the end of the strike, Phelps Dodge succeeded in rejecting the WFM and began a campaign to destroy the power of organized labor in Arizona. Because of the distrust among the copper companies and the geographic

isolation of the copper towns, the copper companies were unable to develop a united front until the taxation policies of the Arizona state legislature created a common enemy, resulting in an assault on labor and its progressive allies. The combined strategies of helping to elect politicians sympathetic to the corporations, purchasing newspapers to turn public opinion against anti-company forces, influencing public school curriculums, manipulating lawyers and doctors, and intervening in church politics to eliminate liberal ministers who stood up to the copper companies, finally broke the unions in the mines. While this combination of tactics virtually eliminated organized labor in Arizona, nationwide the American Federation of Labor and affiliated unions grew rapidly by the end of World War I, totaling more than 4 million workers.

World War I had intensified the anti-immigrant climate throughout the country, but it was especially prevalent in Arizona with all foreigners being suspect. Linguistic and other aspects of ethnicity were either suppressed or monitored by authorities or *vigilante* organizations. Vigilante action first appeared in Jerome earlier in 1917 when several hundred men scoured the area seizing 104 suspected members of the IWW at gunpoint. They held a "trial," and a three-man review found most of the accused guilty of "menace," herded them into two cattle cars, and shipped them more than 160 miles away to Kingman (some reports claim it was Needles, California). The vigilantes deemed "emergency volunteers," disregarded any need to be deputized, due process was ignored, and the Jerome police neither opposed nor participated in the roundup. While vigilante justice is much older than the fears that Arizonans had of foreigners disrupting or destroying the American war effort, the West was its major locale. Their version of justice was quick and sure, and they were quite willing to put up with the errors of judgment and action committed.

Of the approximately 4,700 copper miners who lived in the Bisbee area, only 300 to 400 were members of the IWW. By July 12th, the vast majority of those who had been on strike had already returned to work. It is likely the Jerome deportation was encouraging to Bisbee's vigilante sanction of some two thousand "deputies" who broke down doors and pulled strikers from their beds at gunpoint. It is also significant that Cochise County Sheriff Harry Wheeler was in close contact with the owners of Phelps Dodge and the mine owners in Jerome. Some of the strikers were beaten, robbed - one who resisted was shot dead. They were finally forced to march to the Warren ballpark where 800 of the strikers renounced the strike so they could return to work. Twenty-three boxcars pulled into the station, and 1,186 men were herded aboard. Armed vigilantes lined both sides of the tracks through southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico as the train carried its human cargo. After nearly fifteen hours of travel and no water, the deportees were abandoned in the middle of the New Mexico desert with only the clothes on their backs.

Appalled by these actions, the federal and state governments sent rations and set up a camp for the men, of which a large number were *aliens* or *foreigners* from twenty different nations. For the vigilantes, these figures supported their belief that they were rounding up alien saboteurs. Even though a Federal investigation took place later that year in 1917, and charges were brought against the perpetrators, including the owners of the mines; defense attorneys argued that no Federal laws were broken, so the case could only be heard in state courts. All of the defendants were acquitted in state court. The county sheriff, while indicted, was serving with the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in the war effort and avoided prosecution

altogether. A year later, many copper companies (based on a successful one of Phelps Dodge) created their own unions, shattering independent unionism. Even the leaders of the copper companies were surprised at how thoroughly they had vanquished the unions and set up an order stronger than before the strikes.

The resulting exodus of mine employees following the incident of the Bisbee deportation might have been the end of the town as families were divided and many businesses collapsed. In 1929, the county seat was moved from Tombstone, Arizona to Bisbee, where it remains today. Still, as the county seat, the city's economy soldiered on. By 1950, boom times were over and the population of Bisbee had dropped to less than 6,000, but the introduction of strip mining and continued underground work would see the town escape the fate of many of its early contemporaries. However, in 1974-1975, the Phelps Dodge Corporation finally halted mining operations in its massive Bisbee mine, the Lavender Pit.

THE STRUGGLES OF LABOR

The life of a 19th-century American industrial worker was hard. Even in good times wages were low, hours long, and working conditions hazardous. Little of the wealth that the growth of the nation had generated went to its workers. Moreover, women and children made up a high percentage of the work force in some industries and often received but a fraction of the wages a man could earn. Periodic economic crises swept the nation, further eroding industrial wages and producing high levels of unemployment.

At the same time, technological improvements, which added so much to the nation's productivity, continually reduced the demand for skilled labor. Yet the unskilled labor pool was constantly growing, as unprecedented numbers of immigrants -- 18 million between 1880 and 1910 -- entered the country, eager for work.

Before 1874, when Massachusetts passed the nation's first legislation limiting the number of hours women and child factory workers could perform to 10 hours a day, virtually no labor legislation existed in the country. It was not until the 1930s that the federal government would become actively involved. Until then, the field was left to the state and local authorities, few of whom were as responsive to the workers as they were to wealthy industrialists.

A judiciary backed the laissez-faire capitalism that dominated the second half of the 19th century and fostered huge concentrations of wealth and power that time which ruled against those who challenged the system. In this, they were merely following the prevailing philosophy of the times. Drawing on a simplified understanding of Darwinian science, many social thinkers believed that both the growth of large business at the expense of small enterprise and the wealth of a few alongside the poverty of many were "survival of the fittest," and an unavoidable by-product of progress. American workers, especially the skilled among them, appear to have lived at least as well as their counterparts in industrial Europe. Still, the social costs were high. As late as the year 1900, the United States had the highest job-related fatality rate of any industrialized nation in the world. Most industrial workers still worked a 10-hour day (12 hours in the steel industry), yet earned less than the minimum deemed necessary for a decent life. The number of children in the work force doubled between 1870 and 1900.

The first major effort to organize workers' groups on a nationwide basis appeared with the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor in 1869. Originally a secret, ritualistic society organized by Philadelphia garment workers and advocating a cooperative program, it was open to all workers, including African Americans, women, and farmers. The Knights grew slowly until its railway workers' unit won a strike against the great railroad baron, Jay Gould, in 1885. Within a year they added 500,000 workers to their rolls, but, not attuned to pragmatic trade unionism and unable to repeat this success, the Knights soon fell into a decline.

Their place in the labor movement was gradually taken by the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Rather than open membership to all, the AFL, under former cigar union official Samuel Gompers, was a group of unions focused on skilled workers. Its objectives were "pure and simple" and apolitical: increasing wages, reducing hours, and improving working conditions. It did much to turn the labor movement away from the socialist views of most European labor movements.

Nonetheless, both before the founding of the AFL and after, American labor history was violent. In the Great Rail Strike of 1877, rail workers across the nation went out in response to a 10-percent pay cut. Attempts to break the strike led to rioting and wide-scale destruction in several cities: Baltimore, Maryland; Chicago, Illinois; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Buffalo, New York; and San Francisco, California. Federal troops had to be sent to several locations before the strike was ended.

Nine years later, in Chicago's Haymarket Square incident, someone threw a bomb at police about to break up an anarchist rally in support of an ongoing strike at the McCormick Harvester Company in Chicago. In the ensuing melee, seven policemen and at least four workers were reported killed. Some 60 police officers were injured.

In 1892, at Carnegie's steel works in Homestead, Pennsylvania, a group of 300 Pinkerton detectives the company had hired to break a bitter strike by the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers fought a fierce and losing gun battle with strikers. The National Guard was called in to protect non-union workers and the strike was broken. Unions were not let back into the plant until 1937.

In 1894, wage cuts at the Pullman Company just outside Chicago led to a strike, which, with the support of the American Railway Union, soon tied up much of the country's rail system. As the situation deteriorated, U.S. Attorney General Richard Olney, himself a former railroad lawyer, deputized over 3,000 men in an attempt to keep the rails open. This was followed by a federal court injunction against union interference with the trains. When rioting ensued, President Cleveland sent in federal troops, and the strike was eventually broken.

The most militant of the strike-favoring unions was the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Formed from an amalgam of unions fighting for better conditions in the West's mining industry, the IWW, or "Wobblies" as they were commonly known, gained particular prominence from the Colorado mine clashes of 1903 and the singularly brutal fashion in which they were put down. Influenced by militant anarchism and openly calling for class warfare, the Wobblies gained many adherents after they won a difficult strike battle in the textile mills of Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1912. Their call for work stoppages in the midst of World War I, however, led to a government crackdown in 1917 that virtually destroyed them.

<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/histryotln/reform.htm>

Bisbee Deportation of 1917 (T-Chart)

Main Idea	Detail
A. Who	Industrial Workers of the World _____ Mineworkers, and Strikers Vs. Sheriff of Bisbee, Leaders of the Phelps Dodge Corporation, Worker's Loyalty League (_____) Citizen's Protective League _____ and Posse Comitatus (Deputized Townsmen).
B. What	The Bisbee Deportation started as labor dispute between _____ _____. The issues focused on working rules, safety regulations, and the requirement for a physical examination. Tensions increased as the Wobblies' demands in Bisbee called for _____, and a strike was called by 1,000 resident miners. The Sheriff, the Leadership of the mining companies, the WLL, and the CPL opposed the strike. The opposition asked for _____ assistance but were rejected. A Posse Comitatus of 1,200 were deputized on June 26th and 27th. On July 11, the Sheriff announced the decision to deport non-working agitators, accusing them of treason and vagrancy. By sunrise on July 12th, the _____ assembled, and the Western Union Telegraph Office was urged _____ outgoing telegrams until further ordered by the mine managers. An hour later the posse began rounding up the more than _____ for refusing to cross picket lines or because of sickness. They were taken to the ballpark where the mining officials urged them to return to work. About 100 agreed to do so. More than an hour later _____ from El Paso arrived, and those who were rounded up were loaded on the train destined for Camp Furlong.
C. When	_____ Dispute between mining companies and union workers begins. _____ Hundreds of IWW sympathizers arrive. _____ Sheriff deputizes 1,200 men. _____ Sheriff announces decision to deport unionists _____ 1,500 begin roundup at sunrise. _____ Train loaded with 1,200 men sent to New Mexico.
D. Where	Deportation _____ Train travels _____ Deportees _____ dispersed to _____

ARIZONA GEOGRAPHIC ALLIANCE

Bisbee Deportation of 1917

E. Outcomes

Wobblies return to Bisbee and told that there were no jobs left in the mines.
Some chose to join the Army.
Bisbee citizens raised $86,000 for families of deportees.

Labor Commission Findings:

Closing of Western Union Office illegal.
Deportation action was illegal.
Violations of Selective Service laws had been violated.

Cited the illegal blockade, the refusal to recognize a union and the lack of a grievance process.

Although none of the three superintendents of the mine thought the criticism warranted, they immediately set up grievance committees and abolished the physical examination requirement. In 1917, the Bisbee wages were the highest in the Western copper camps; those wages were 50% higher by the summer of 1918.

200 deportees filed for relief and damages in Federal Court.
Case dismissed on the grounds that it was not a Federal issue.
Federal Grand Jury Indictment against Sheriff Wheeler and 20 Bisbee men was also dismissed.

It would be another decade before interstate kidnapping was made a Federal crime.

Took no action against the Deportation

County Criminal Court

Only one case went to trial: H.E. Wooten was not a member of the CPL, nor was he deputized, but he made a citizen's arrest and escorted a man named Brown to the train. His defense focused on the law of Necessity, saying that if a citizen or a community felt threatened, they could take action to relieve the perceived threat. A jury of predominately Sulphur Springs ranchers acquitted Wooten in only 16 minutes.

One hundred six members of the IWW, found guilty of sabotage, treason, and inciting to riot, were sentenced to prison terms in a lengthy Chicago trial in 1919.

The combination of a partial shift to pit mining, the casualties of WWI, stricter immigration policies and the world–wide flu epidemic of 1918-1919 led to a 20% reduction in the Bisbee work force by 1920.

Bisbee Deportation Documents
Contributed by Cochise County Clerk of the Superior Court

About the Bisbee Deportation Documents
By Wes Patience and Judy Tritz

The Bisbee Deportation documents are comprised of about 1,600 court documents filed in 1919 and 1920 in Cochise County Superior Court, pertaining to Cochise County Case number 2725, entitled, State of Arizona, Plaintiff, vs. Phelps Dodge Corporation, A Corporation, et als., Defendants. Two hundred twenty-four men were also named as defendants who were allegedly involved in the Bisbee Deportation of July 12, 1917. The Bisbee Deportation started as a labor dispute between some members of the International Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union and the three mining companies in early June of 1917. The issues were focused on working rules, safety regulations and the requirement for a physical examination, rather than wages and benefits. With the arrival of hundreds of Industrial Workers of the World sympathizers in late June who were vowing to shut down all the copper mines from Montana to Mexico, the conflict intensified and culminated in a community action on July 12, 1917.

There was a great deal of tension in Bisbee before the arrival of I.W.W. sympathizers since the United States had declared war on Germany in April of 1917 and the Foreign Minister of Germany had offered financial assistance to Mexico if they chose to invade the United States. In March of 1916, Columbus, New Mexico was attacked by supporters of Pancho Villa and there were citizen militia forces posted along the border from Warren to west of Naco to guard against further incursions.

Tensions were further increased by frequent front-page stories in the *Bisbee Daily Review* about Wobbly activities. Deportations of the I.W.W. ("Wobblies") were carried out in San Diego, California; Everett, Washington; Ajo, Arizona; and most notably Jerome, Arizona in early July of 1917.

The I.W.W. was founded by William Haywood in 1905 as a conventional labor union which successfully won wage demands in Lawrence, Massachusetts and Paterson, New Jersey. By 1912 the I.W.W. had grown more militant and political in the struggle to take over the Western Federation of Miners. Such a stance alienated their most famous member, Eugene V. Debs, who left to form the American Socialist Party. Debs won over a million votes in the 1920 Presidential election but he refused to endorse government takeover of western mining interests.

The Wobblies' demands in Bisbee were briefly economic ones then called for takeover of the mines. Within a day of the Wobbly leadership's arrival in Bisbee a strike was called, although no vote was ever taken. About 1,000 Bisbee resident miners acknowledged the strike and many others refused to cross the picket lines. Secretary Moyer of the International Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union proclaimed publicly that any worker who crossed the picket line was not a scab, since the strike itself was illegal.

The Cochise County Sheriff, the leadership of the mining companies, the Workers' Loyalty League and the Citizen's Protective League (CPL), opposed the strikers and Wobblies. The

Citizen's Protective League had announced its credo and published its membership in September of 1916 in the Bisbee Daily Review. Its membership included business and professional men, most notably the town's leading doctor, four attorneys, a dozen or more merchants, Mayor Jacob Erickson, upper level mining management and the *Bisbee Daily Review.*

On June 26th and June 27th Sheriff Harry Wheeler, after appealing to federal and state authorities for assistance and being rejected, deputized for the occasion some 1,200 men from Bisbee and Douglas comprised of miners, businessmen, merchants and lower level supervisors. Dr. N.C. Bledsoe, banker Mike Cunningham, mine owner Lem Shattuck and Mayor Jacob Erickson were among the deputies for the occasion who could more accurately be called a "Posse Comitatus" since their deputy status would expire once the situation was resolved.

There were no violent incidents recorded over the next two weeks although there was plenty of picket line taunts especially at the entrance to the post office. In a statement drafted late in the evening of July 11th, Sheriff Wheeler announced the drastic decision to deport an unspecified number of non-working agitators and accused them of treason and vagrancy. Women and children were urged to stay off the streets and strict instructions were issued to avoid violence. Although many of the members of the Posse Comitatus were armed, the hundreds of photos of the event show only a minority of deputies pro tem with rifles.

By sunrise the next morning (5:18 a.m.) some 1,500 deputies pro tem were assembled including about 200 from Douglas. They wore white armbands to distinguish themselves from the potential deportees. No federal or state officials were informed of the action and the Western Union Telegraph Office on Howell Street was urged not to send outgoing telegrams until further ordered by the mine managers. The roundup began in earnest an hour later with the Posse Comitatus fanning out throughout Old Bisbee and Lowell including Jiggerville where Jim Brew, a resident boilerman's helper, fired a gun through the screen door of his rooming house without warning. Orson McRae, a Calumet and Arizona shift boss and former councilman candidate was killed instantly by two shots. At least four deputies accompanied McRae who was the only man to set foot on the porch. Brew then fired another shot at the five to seven men assembled in the yard of Mrs. Stodgill's rooming house. Several men returned fire and Brew was killed, although a coroner's inquest failed to reveal who fired the fatal shots. Ironically Orson McRae's brother, Arthur, was a roomer at the same house although he was apparently not there at the time.

The posse rounded up more than 1,200 men – mainly unjustly since they were neither Wobblies nor active participants in the strike. Many were detained simply for refusing to cross picket lines or because of sickness. Brew himself had not been to work for five days but there is no evidence of active involvement in Wobbly activities. The three-mile march to the Warren Ball Park was an orderly affair with many citizens forming a gauntlet from the Junction mine southward. Once at the ball park most of the detainees sat in the stands. Their jeers and taunts were answered by mining officials urging them to return to work. Perhaps a hundred men agreed to do so. It took more than an hour for the train from El Paso to arrive, driven by a salaried employee since union employees refused to participate in the deportation. The cars were hastily assembled and were probably in varying state of hygiene. Water and food were

promised at Lee Station southeast of Douglas but those rations were inadequate for what was to come.

The train arrived at Camp Furlong by late afternoon, where the army officials there refused to accommodate the detainees because they had no orders from Washington to do so and there were insufficient sanitary and lodging facilities. The train reversed its route westward and spent the night in Las Hermanas while Sheriff Wheeler and the mining officials sought assistance from the Governor of New Mexico and the federal authorities.

The train returned to Camp Furlong where the army fed them, urged them to dig sanitary facilities and told them they were free to leave at any time. By this time the detainees had received legal counsel from attorney W.B. Cleary of Bisbee, who drafted a statement stating that the men would return to work if President Wilson would nationalize the mines and provide a military escort for the men returning to Bisbee.

By August 5th some two hundred men had left the camp. Some two dozen of them were arrested for vagrancy in communities from Lordsburg, New Mexico to El Paso, Texas. The army did a census of the remaining 850 men. They found that most of the deportees were foreign born, with the largest number of the deportees being Mexican (268), Balkan emigrants (179) and British (including Scots and Irish 149). Despite constant stories in the press about the Wobblies being financed by the German government only 50 detainees were listed as German. The census included questions about matrimonial status, registration for the draft and purchasing of Liberty bonds. Their answers were taken at face value, since most of the deportees brought no paperwork with them. Dozens of men answering “married” were listed as “single” in the 1916-1917 Directory.

The anxiety of Wobblies returning to Bisbee, combined with Anti-German rhetoric and fears of the Mexican Revolution crossing the border led to a blockade around Bisbee, initiated by Sheriff Wheeler. When groups of men did make the pilgrimage from Columbus to Bisbee, Wheeler informed them that there were no jobs left in the mines. Some of the returnees had retained their eligibility for Selective Service and many chose to receive Army paychecks instead of poverty. The citizens raised some $86,000 for families of the deportees, but there were problems administering the program. Although the nation’s newspapers initially applauded the Bisbee action, the mood shifted with the input of the Wilson Labor commission which found that the action was illegal, that violations of Selective Service laws had been violated and that the action of closing the Western Union office was blatantly illegal. The commission, which included Felix Frankfurter, also cited the illegal blockade, the refusal to recognize a union and the lack of a grievance process. The commission cited members of the CPL, the sheriff and the mine superintendents for severe criticism. While none of the three superintendents thought the criticism warranted, they immediately set up grievance committees and abolished the physical examination requirement. Although the Bisbee wages were the highest in the western copper camps, the wages were 50% higher by the summer of 1918.

The State of Arizona took no substantive action against the deportation although former Governor Hunt was an admitted friend of the Wobblies. The new Governor Thomas Campbell was born in Bisbee, won the 1916 election by less than thirty votes, and thus was very

cautious in his criticism. The state legislators from Cochise County were split in half: Fred Sutter took the floor of the Arizona Senate to defend the action, while Rosa McKay condemned the action, even traveling to Columbus, New Mexico to meet with the deportees. While the mining companies made a tentative offer of compensation, it was rejected and over 200 deportees filed for relief and damages in Federal Court. The case was dismissed on the grounds that it was not a federal issue. A federal Grand Jury Indictment against Sheriff Wheeler and twenty Bisbee men was also dismissed. It would be another decade before the Lindbergh Law made interstate kidnapping a Federal crime.

Of the two-hundred, twenty-plus defendants in the Cochise County criminal court case only one went to trial; that of H. E. Wootton in April 1920. Wootton was a hardware store owner and not a deputy or member of the Citizens' Protective League. He had made a citizen's arrest of a man named Brown and escorted him to the train. There were dozens of witnesses for Wootton who claimed they felt threatened by the picketers and listened to foul and violent language on the streets in the 16 days leading up to the deportation. Brown's testimony and that of the other deportees focused on the rough treatment they received on the march to the ball park. The defense of Wootton focused on the law of Necessity, saying that if a citizen or a community felt threatened they could take action to relieve the perceived threat. Wootton was acquitted by a jury consisting of predominately Sulphur Springs ranchers in only 16 minutes.

Another trial occurred in Tucson in 1918 of A. Stuart Embree, the on scene leader in Bisbee. Embree was found not guilty of incitement to riot. One hundred and six members of the I.W.W. were found guilty of sabotage, treason and inciting to riot and sentenced to prison terms in a lengthy Chicago trial in 1919. The I.W.W. leadership formed the American Communist Party by 1920, and their founder William Haywood fled to Russia in April of 1921. Wobbly membership peaked nationally at 150,000 in 1917 but was reduced to less than 100 by 1920. Similarly, the number of mining employees in Bisbee peaked in June of 1917. The combination of a partial shift to pit mining, the casualties of World War One, stricter immigration policies, and the world wide influenza epidemic of 1918 - 1919 led to a 20% reduction in the Bisbee work force by 1920.

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In February 2006, this small collection of original court documents was discovered in a locked room containing primarily court clerk exhibits in what used to be the old Cochise County Jail in Bisbee. At this time, the location of the remainder of the vast collection of original Bisbee Deportation court documents is unknown although much of it had been microfilmed forty years ago.

Frequently descendents of those involved in the Bisbee Deportation come to Bisbee for genealogy searches. By digitizing these documents and making them available on the Arizona Memory Project website, a portion of their search has become more convenient.

This project was envisioned and coordinated by Denise Lundin, Clerk of Superior Court of Cochise County. Permission granted to Ken de Masi and Arizona Geographic Alliance to use for educational purposes, 2008.