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# William D. Haywood, Communist Ambassador to Russia.

by David Karsner

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Instead of going to the Federal prison at Leavenworth, Kan., with his convicted conferrers of the Industrial Workers of the World to complete his 20-year sentence for violation of the Espionage law, as he was recently ordered to do by the Supreme Court, William D. Haywood, erstwhile leader of the IWW, is now supposed to be in Moscow, an American Communist delegate to the Red Republic, where he may round out his career in the cause of industrial and social democracy, thus fulfilling the dream that he has harbored in his heart for 16 years, the age of the IWW. There are some people here, however, who see in Haywood's departure the crowning glory of a tempestuous career. There are many, many more people, however, who, while yielding nothing of their sympathy and ardor for radical social change, subject Haywood's escape to stern and severe criticism, basing it upon the hypothesis that he, as the leader and spokesman for the IWW, deserted his army in the darkest moment of battle and left the remnants to their fate, while the general, supposedly in the hands of friends, boarded Henry Ford's former peace ship, glided out of New York bay, and fell to dreaming happy dreams of freedom across the seas. In other words, "Big Bill" Haywood has been called a quitter, not only by the capitalistic press of the country, but by counsel for the IWW who assisted the defense of the organization during its celebrated trial in Chicago in 1918, which resulted in the conviction. Another criticism, less severe, is that Haywood broke faith with his fellow convicts, and is also guilty of moral turpitude in that he refused

to accept the punishment fixed by American public opinion speaking through the Supreme Court.

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Haywood's official connection with the American labor movement began in 1900 when he was elected a member of the executive board of the Western Federation of Miners, and in the 20 odd years that followed there has not been one blight or blemish upon his labor record. Stern and



inflexible principles of an organization never kept a man straight if his inclinations were to be crooked. On the other hand, strong character and expression of will of individuals have often straight-

ened an organization whose bent was toward compromise, if not crookedness. Haywood won his way to the forefront of the American labor movement by absolute fidelity and unflinching courage to the cause of radical social change through the process of industrial unionism. His course was harder to pursue because industrial unionism is more difficult to obtain in America than political solidarity of the workers and we are still a long way from anything approaching political unity. Any labor leader knows the temptations that beset him at every hand to betray his cause and his fellows. Many a sagacious labor leader has betrayed the cause with one hand and kept faith, after a fashion, with the other. No one has ever had cause to suspect Haywood of dishonesty, unfaithfulness, disloyalty, or compromise in the labor cause. One need only look upon the face of Haywood to realize what integrity to his ideals have cost him. Scars here and there on his head; a deep cleft slanting his brow; a red wound on his breast; three twisted fingers on one hand; a sightless eye, a steady glint in the other, which at times softens to tenderness; a flinty firmness around his mouth, and a heavy jaw tenaciously set; his road has not been rosy, nor his bed soft. He has suffered with the labor movement and the blows rained upon the heads of his fellow workers have not missed him. He has felt the bayonets and the billys swung by labor thugs, who shoot men in the back and become foremen and superintendents as reward for their crimes. One may not agree with Haywood's methods, but one must respect the man.

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Any attempt to understand his going to Russia must give first premise to an attempt to understand the man and the habit of his mind. Haywood believes in social revolution. It is more than a matter of mind with him. It is a habit of heart and soul. He breathes its spirit, and his own life has been a sign and a symbol of its purposes. Haywood has been intensely enthusiastic about the Russian revolution and he has not been frightened

by any dictatorial methods of its leaders. Indeed, it may not be a far guess to say that Haywood approves of absolutism, at least during the transition period of social experiment. Haywood is also an internationalist, not in theory, but in fact. His conduct as Secretary-Treasurer of the IWW indicates his internationalism beyond cavil. He is frankly and openly disinterested in political governments. Accepting the Russian revolution as it is, Haywood has also accepted the methods of its leaders. Since Russia is the one country in the world that is seriously trying to put into practice the principles of social and industrial democracy, Haywood defers to what he thinks is Russia's right to set the standard of social and industrial endeavor for the world. Haywood looks upon Lenin as the generalissimo of revolutionary thought and activity, and he must have considered himself a lieutenant in this country. As an internationalist, disbelieving in arbitrary political boundaries; as an industrial revolutionary, it follows that Haywood, as a subordinate, placed himself in a position where he was beholden to whatever call of duty Russia might select for him. If internationalism is more than a word used to cheer jaded workers in a meeting, then internationalists must put aside personal choice and habit and answer the call of duty, no matter from where it comes, and no matter at what risk of being misunderstood by one's own fellows at home. It is a matter, then, of how deep is the faith in internationalism, and how devout is one in his worship of the ideal. To believe in a thing is one matter, and to be mistaken in that belief is quite another, which has nothing to do with the manner in which a man may exercise himself while holding a belief, regardless of its wisdom or its fallacy.

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It might have been an act of self-abnegation for Haywood to march back to Leavenworth with his convicted fellow workers singing "Hold the Fort, For We Are Coming," and putting from his mind any further care or concern about the ideal

to which he had pledged his life. He would have been loyal to the wishes of the executive authority of the American Federation of Labor, American public opinion reflected through the capitalistic press, Judge Landis, who heard his trial, and the Supreme Court, who ordered him to prison, but he would have been disobedient, if not disloyal, to Soviet Russia, who called him to council. Haywood went all through the four months of trial with the IWW. His word was good with Judge Landis for the release of at least a dozen defendants who could not get bail. For some of these he found employment in the general offices during the trial. His testimony during the four days he was on the witness stand was absolutely consistent with the methods, purposes, and ideals of the IWW. A number of times he went out of his way to clarify a revolutionary point obscured by legal verbiage. He went to prison September 2, 1918, and remained until July 1919. A number of men with families came out on bail before Haywood's release. When he did come out he took full charge of defense work, routing released men over the country for the defense, and went on the road himself appealing for bail money for men still imprisoned. In this enterprise he was arrested several times, taken off a railroad train in the West at least once and held in jail all night so he could not address a meeting in behalf of his fellow convicts. Haywood was not idle one day in this defense work until he came to New York about three weeks before he sailed for Russia. Apparently he became convinced that he could not help the IWW merely by going to prison with them. If the matter of general amnesty for political prisoners in this country depends upon an appeal to the tender mercies of the Republican administration instead of an organized demand from a unified working class, then, surely, Haywood assisted the cause for amnesty by departing, because his presence in any

industrial community was viewed with alarm and no hard-fisted soul-grinding employer slept comfortably with the thought of Bill Haywood stalking across the land. They would have resisted to the uttermost his release, and his fellows would have suffered in consequence.

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We do not know Haywood's intentions in Russia, but we can be assured that they are revolutionary. The thought of the class struggle is not pretty, and one who seriously entertains it will have a more comfortable time, mentally and emotionally, if he first divorces from his mind conscious appeals to those bewildering shibboleths that possess sentimental rather than practical value and which do not usually square with ordinary human conduct, irrefragable facts of life, raw life. Time alone will affirm or negate the wisdom of Haywood's going to Russia. We are not so much concerned with that now. The pages of radical history run red with foolish enterprises of its devotees, and the names of many of these are spoken with reverence and evoke cheers from newer recruits. If Haywood, with his remarkable organizing ability, can assist Lenin in stabilizing the industries of Russia and getting them to work and producing useful things for the Russians, and giving work to those now at war, he will have helped in a very definite way to put on its feet the Russian Soviet Republic.

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*The New York Times*, commenting recently upon Haywood's departure, wished him bon voyage, and observed that Russia is where he belongs, adding that Russia is made up of men like Haywood. *The Times* never came nearer the truth. It is spirit and grit like that of Haywood that has permitted the Red Republic to live four years against the wishes of organized imperialism like that to which *The Times* is beholden.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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