

7-1-1992

Exiled in the Desert: The Bisbee Deportees' Reception in New Mexico, 1917

Richard Melzer

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr>

Recommended Citation

Melzer, Richard. "Exiled in the Desert: The Bisbee Deportees' Reception in New Mexico, 1917." *New Mexico Historical Review* 67, 3 (1992). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr/vol67/iss3/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in *New Mexico Historical Review* by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.

Exiled in the Desert: The Bisbee Deportees' Reception in New Mexico, 1917

RICHARD MELZER

On July 12, 1917, Sheriff Harry C. Wheeler and 1,197 armed deputies rounded up 1,186 workers in Bisbee, Arizona, and forced them out of town on board an eastbound freight train to New Mexico. Wheeler and his cohorts justified their action by declaring that the deported men were members of a feared labor union known as the Industrial Workers of the World, or IWW. The IWW reportedly had organized local copper miners in a dangerous strike against Bisbee's major employers, including the powerful Phelps Dodge Corporation. Actually only about a third of the deportees were members of the IWW, and the miners' sixteen-day strike had all but fizzled out by July 12. But this made no difference to those who had ordered or led the mass deportation.¹

Richard Melzer is assistant professor of history in the University of New Mexico—Valencia campus. He holds a doctorate from the University of New Mexico and has published several articles and a book on New Mexico history.

1. News that the copper strike had all but ended by July 12 was reported in such newspapers as the *Raton Range*, July 10, 1917, and such periodicals as *The Miners' Magazine* 18 (July 1917), 3. For the events of July 12–13 see *ibid.*; Fred Watson, "Still On Strike! Recollections of a Bisbee Deportee," *Journal of Arizona History* 18 (Summer 1977), 171–84; James W. Byrkit, "The I.W.W. in Wartime Arizona," *Journal of Arizona History* 18 (Summer 1977), 149–70; James W. Byrkit, *Forging the Copper Collar: Arizona's Labor-Management War of 1901–1921* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982), 187–215; James W. Byrkit, "Life and Labor in Arizona, 1901–1921: With Particular Reference to the

Once en route, the accused workers traveled in twenty-three box and cattle cars on one of the hottest days of the summer season. Standing in manure over their shoes, they were given little food or water. After a terrible journey of more than 170 miles, their train eventually stopped in Hermanas, New Mexico. There they were left to fend for themselves until soldiers from the Twelfth Cavalry arrived to escort them to nearby Columbus, New Mexico. Columbus had, in fact, been targeted as the deportees' original destination because, as one of Wheeler's deputies put it, American troops were stationed there "and it was thought [that] the Army would take the Wobblies off our hands."²

The Bisbee deportees were kept at Camp Furlong in a stockade recently abandoned by refugees from the Mexican Revolution. The surrounding desert resembled the wasteland that Paul Horgan so aptly described as a place where "nothing lives but creatures of the dry and hot; and nothing grows but plants of thirsty pod, or wooden stem, or spiny defense."³ Cavalrymen guarded the exiles in this desolate terrain, and experienced only minor incidents in the following weeks. The deportees lived more or less comfortably with supplies and shelter furnished by the United States Army. Most of the workers insisted that the federal government had a responsibility to escort them safely home. Many of them hoped that the American public would be so outraged by their unceremonious deportation that they would win sympathy for their plight in Columbus as well as support for their aborted strike

Deportations of 1917" (doctoral dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1972), 1-34, 355-65; Philip Taft, "The Bisbee Deportation," *Labor History* 13 (Winter 1972), 3-40; John H. Lindquist and James Fraser, "A Sociological Interpretation of the Bisbee Deportation," *Pacific Historical Review* 37 (November 1968), 401-22; Saul Landu, "The Bisbee Deportees: Class Conflict and Patriotism During World War I" (master's thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1959); Annie M. Cox, "History of Bisbee, 1877-1937" (master's thesis, University of Arizona, 1938), 173-90; *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, July 13, 1917; *Deming Headlight*, July 13, 1917; *Bisbee Daily Review*, June 27 to July 22, 1917; *New York Times*, July 13, 1917. For a historical novel on the deportation see Stephen Vincent Benet, *The Beginning of Wisdom* (New York: Henry Holt, 1921), Book IV. On early union activity in Bisbee see James D. McBride, "Gaining a Foothold in the Paradise of Capitalism: The Western Federation of Miners and the Unionization of Bisbee," *Journal of Arizona History* 23 (Autumn 1982), 299-316.

2. Quoted in Samuel Morse, "The Truth About Bisbee" (Unpublished manuscript, Special Collections, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona [hereafter cited as SCUA], n.d.), 13. Also see Nelson C. Bledsoe, "The Bisbee Deportation" (Unpublished manuscript, Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum, Bisbee, Arizona [BMHM], n.d.), 1. Members of the IWW were nicknamed Wobblies as early as 1911. For different explanations for the origins of this term see Patrick Renshaw, *The Wobblies: The Story of Syndicalism in the United States* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1968), 2-3.

3. Paul Horgan, *Great River: The Rio Grande in North American History* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1984), 5.

in Arizona. One deportee went so far as to write to a friend in Colorado that "This is the finest thing that could [have] happened to us. [I]f we had [stayed] in Bisbee . . . the strike would have been broken. . . . [Now] all the country is watching the Wobbly camp at Columbus."⁴

But the Bisbee deportation never did elicit an outpouring of sympathy or support for the exiles in Columbus. Disappointed, but eager to get on with their lives, the men gradually left camp to seek employment opportunities elsewhere. Jobs were plentiful in the summer of 1917, as the United States hurriedly mobilized for its involvement in World War I. Four hundred seventy-six deportees were, in fact, drafted into the army, including Alexander Duarte, the first man to be drafted from Bisbee's Cochise County. With as many as a third of the deportees of Hispanic descent, some reportedly escaped their hostile surroundings simply by crossing into neighboring Mexico. By early September only 450 men remained in the Columbus camp. Eager to shed its responsibility for the remaining deportees, the U.S. Army announced that it planned to cut the refugees' food rations in half. By September 17, the stockade facetiously known as Camp Wobbly was abandoned.⁵

The tragic history of the Bisbee deportation has been thoroughly researched by scholars such as James W. Byrkit and Philip Taft. We know far less about the deportees' life at Camp Wobbly and their ultimate fate once they left Columbus. The purpose of this work, however, is not to focus on the now-famous deportation or the men who suffered this harsh treatment, but to consider how New Mexicans received the Bisbee exiles once these men appeared in New Mexico. Did New Mexicans react to the deportation like most Americans and withhold their support because they shared a common fear of the IWW and its anarchistic goals? Or did the fact that the deportees were dumped in Columbus and temporarily held in New Mexico cause different re-

4. Jack Norman to George Maddox, Columbus, New Mexico, August 7, 1917, Bisbee Deportations of July 12, 1917, Box 2, SCUA. Sympathizers called for the deportees' return to Bisbee in such published appeals as *Solidarity* (Chicago), July 21 & September 1, 1917; Leslie Marcy, "The 1100 Exiled Copper Miners," *International Socialist Review* 17 (September 1917), 160-62. For details on early conditions under military supervision see the *Arizona Republic*, July 15, 1917; *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, July 15, 1917; *New York Times*, July 14 & 15, 1917.

5. *Albuquerque Evening Herald*, August 23, 1917; *Bisbee Daily Review*, July 21 & August 24, 1917; Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on the Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 110. The deportees were automatically drafted into the army when they failed to report to the Cochise County Exemption Board, an impossibility given their dire circumstances. *Bisbee Daily Review*, September 9, 12, 14, 16, & 18, 1917.



Fred Fornoff, former captain of the New Mexico Mounted Police, was sent to investigate conditions in Columbus. Photograph from the Rose Collection, courtesy of the University of Oklahoma Western History Collections.

actions in the victims' neighboring state? The answers to these questions reveal a great deal, not only about the Bisbee deportation itself, but also about the highly charged climate of opinion in New Mexico during the first critical months of World War I.

Governor Washington E. Lindsey had had no warning that 1,186 accused radicals were to be deported into southern New Mexico on July 12, 1917. While some voices later argued that Lindsey was asleep on the job and should have prevented the deportees from entering the state, this was clearly an impossible expectation; there had never been a need to post armed guards around the clock at New Mexico's border with Arizona.⁶ Reacting as prudently as possible once he learned that a trainload of deported men had arrived in New Mexico, Lindsey telegraphed local authorities in Luna County and instructed them to apprehend the deportees, confine them in a suitable place, and provide food at the state's expense. Paraphrased, Lindsey's message was short and to the point: "Take care of them, but see that they do no harm."⁷ The governor also telegraphed Washington, D.C., to request that the Woodrow Wilson administration "take charge and dispose of the matter according to federal law and order."⁸ Washington responded so quickly that Luna County Sheriff Will Simpson never had time to carry out Governor Lindsey's initial orders. By Sunday, July 15, the U.S. Army had assumed responsibility for the deportees and had overseen the construction of their temporary living quarters in the vast desert west of Columbus.⁹

While pleased that the U.S. military had taken charge of the Arizona exiles, Governor Lindsey kept a watchful eye on events in Columbus. The chief executive became especially concerned when he received urgent reports from the Luna County Council of Defense in early August. A. W. Pollard, the council's chairman, wrote that many citizens of Columbus and Deming felt threatened by the deportees because the Army had not kept these "undesirables" adequately confined to Camp Wobbly. Convinced that the deportees were about "to start some trouble," several leaders from Columbus and Deming had already met with Sheriff Simpson and had gone so far as to send a

6. The *Las Vegas Weekly Optic* of August 4, 1917, criticized Lindsey. The *Santa Fe New Mexican* of July 14, 1917, defended his actions, saying that the governor "may have been asleep; [sic] but it appears he had one eye open." Also see the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 19, 1917.

7. *New Mexico War News*, July 17, 1917; *Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 28, 1917; *Albuquerque Evening Herald*, July 13, 1917.

8. Quoted in Byrkit, *Copper Collar*, 214.

9. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, July 14, 1917.

plea for help to President Wilson himself. The Luna County Council of Defense appealed to Governor Lindsey to act before local residents resorted to "[taking] this matter into their own hands" with "very serious" possible consequences.¹⁰

Governor Lindsey responded to Pollard's call for assistance by sending Fred Fornoff to conduct a firsthand investigation. A former captain in the New Mexico Mounted Police, Fornoff arrived in Columbus on Friday, August 10. By Saturday Fornoff wired Lindsey that all was quiet in town; there were no disturbances other than a "little bootlegging" which the local authorities and the deportees halted themselves.¹¹ On Sunday Fornoff wrote a more thorough report. He stated that "no alarm" was felt by "level headed [sic] citizens" in the area. Indeed, the number of deportees left at Camp Wobbly was declining each day. Those left in the encampment were known to "mingle and fraternize" in Columbus without causing undue fear. Sheriff Simpson was described as "steady as a rock" and "not [one to] be mislead [sic] into unlawful action." Even A. W. Pollard had admitted to Fornoff that conditions had "changed a great deal for the better. . . ." In Fornoff's judgment, the situation in Columbus would solve itself "if everybody [simply] sits steady."¹²

Fornoff's letter of August 12 proved interesting not only because it reported that there was no real cause for alarm, but also because it pinpointed where much of the false alarm had originated. Fornoff identified an official of the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad who had become nervous about the IWW's prolonged presence near his company's unguarded tracks and operations. The official had expressed his exaggerated fears to the Luna County Council of Defense in late July. Sheriff Simpson and others told Fornoff that if the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad was so concerned about the IWW it should have acted *before* the deportees were brought to New Mexico because, iron-

10. A. W. Pollard to Governor Washington E. Lindsey, Deming, August 1 & 4, 1917, Lindsey Papers, Washington E. Lindsey Papers, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico (hereafter cited as SRCA).

11. Fred Fornoff to Governor Washington E. Lindsey, Columbus, New Mexico, August 11, 1917, Lindsey Papers, SRCA; *Cuervo Clipper*, August 24, 1917. Fornoff served as a captain in the New Mexico Mounted Police from 1906 to 1914. His most famous case involved the investigation of Pat Garrett's murder of February 29, 1908, on a road outside Las Cruces. C. Hornung, *The Thin Gray Line: The New Mexico Mounted Police* (Fort Worth, Texas: Western Heritage Press, 1971), 92-93; Gary L. Roberts, *Death Comes for the Chief Justice* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1990), 131-32.

12. Fornoff to Lindsey, August 12, 1917, Lindsey Papers, SRCA. Only two deportees were arrested in Columbus in the period July 12 to September 17, 1917. The two were arrested for vagrancy on August 29. *Bisbee Daily Review*, August 30, 1917.

ically, the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad (a Phelps Dodge company) had supplied the train that had carried the men from Bisbee to Columbus in the first place.¹³

Fornoff identified the manager of a Columbus drug store as another resident who seemed particularly anxious about the men interned at Camp Wobbly. The manager's anxiety was understandable: it had become common knowledge that the Bisbee manager of the same drug store chain had played a "prominent" role in the mass deportation of July 12. Nervous about possible acts of retaliation by the IWW, the Columbus businessman went so far as to visit General George Bell, Jr., at Fort Bliss, Texas, to plead that additional troops be sent to restrain the Wobblies encamped in close proximity to his endangered business in Columbus. General Bell rejected the panic-stricken druggist's appeal with a "well merited rebuke," in Fornoff's words.¹⁴ Satisfied with Fred Fornoff's report and General Bell's decision, Governor Lindsey felt no great need to take additional action on behalf of those who had clearly allowed self-interest and undue paranoia to cloud their perception of public danger.¹⁵

It appears that the New Mexico state government reacted prudently in response to not only the initial deportation of workers from Bisbee, but also the exaggerated reports of potential danger in Luna County. The Lindsey administration can be praised for its calm judgment in the midst of an emergency that might well have escalated into a far graver crisis if the opinion of alarmists had prevailed. However, it is important to remember that the Lindsey administration had few resources to spare in dealing with the Bisbee deportation of mid-1917. Preoccupied with the demands of fighting a world war, few states in the nation could afford much for true emergencies at home. As one of the poorest states in the union, New Mexico was even less able than most. Governor Lindsey can thus be praised for his wisdom and restraint, but only while remembering that he was ill-prepared to do much else had the U.S. Army not taken charge of the deportees or if Fornoff had not reported that all was well in southwestern New Mexico.

Unfortunately, the press in New Mexico was seldom as prudent and restrained in commenting on the Bisbee deportation, if only be-

13. Fornoff to Lindsey, August 12, 1917, Lindsey Papers, SRCA.

14. *Ibid.* Fornoff reported that Army officers deeply "resented" accusations that they were "lax" in their handling of the deportees in Columbus. Fornoff to Lindsey, August 13, 1917, Lindsey Papers, SRCA.

15. His work completed, Fornoff left Columbus on August 14, 1917. Fornoff to Lindsey, August 14, 1917, Lindsey Papers, SRCA.

cause it enjoyed the freedom of speech without the added burden of direct responsibility. Many newspapers therefore showered Bisbee's Sheriff Wheeler with words of admiration for his bold action of July 12. The *Santa Fe New Mexican* ran banner front page headlines stating that "This Country Needs More Men Like The Backbone-Sheriff [sic] at Bisbee, Arizona."¹⁶ The *Albuquerque Morning Journal* described Wheeler as a "courageous" leader who was willing to use "whatever weapons" were necessary to crush the hated IWW. According to the *Journal*, members of this radical union had to respect the law or be "hunted down and killed [just] as . . . hostile Indians were hunted down and killed" in the last century.¹⁷ Other editors agreed with this extreme opinion. An editorial in the *New Mexico War News* reported that "Many good citizens hold . . . that the treason of a large number of [IWW] agitators had earned . . . them the inalienable right to face the firing squad."¹⁸ According to J. A. Haley of the *Carrizozo News*, if the law was not effective in dealing with labor, it might well be necessary to "kill a few of our enemies" as "this is no time for foolishness."¹⁹

Short of killing all Wobblies, many state newspapers praised deportation as an appropriate means to combat the IWW threat. While no editor favored Columbus or any other town of New Mexico as the best destination for future interstate deportations, the press did not hesitate to suggest a number of other potential locations. The *Glenrio Tribune-Progress* believed that "some island" would adequately serve the purpose, while the *Santa Fe New Mexican* specified the Aleutian Islands as an ideal destination.²⁰ The *Sierra County Advocate* offered an opinion that the IWW deserved exile "in cold storage" in Russia's Siberia.²¹ Favoring a much closer international destination, the *Roswell Daily Record* declared that "The best way to cure the I.W.W.'s is to ship them across the [border] into Mexico."²² The *Albuquerque Morning Journal* preferred the neighboring state of Texas because Texans knew how to treat outlaws and other such "undesirables."²³ Finally, the *Artesia*

16. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 12, 1917.

17. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, July 18 & 23, 1917. Also see the *Silver City Enterprise*, July 20, 1917.

18. *New Mexico War News*, July 17, 1917.

19. *Carrizozo News*, July 13, 1917.

20. *Glenrio Tribune-Progress*, July 27, 1917; *Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 21, 1917.

21. *Sierra County Advocate*, August 24, 1917.

22. *Roswell Daily Record*, July 26, 1917. Mexican officials, on the other hand, announced their intention to exile every IWW agitator found in Mexico. *Albuquerque Evening Herald*, August 6, 1917.

23. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, July 16, 1917.

Advocate had no particular destination in mind, but only knew that "something desperate must be done to suppress [the IWW]" even if it meant driving them "out of the country or to suicide."²⁴

Newspapers across New Mexico were ready to resort to the extremes of execution and deportation because they recognized the IWW not only as a radical labor union, but also as an ally of Germany and the Central Powers of World War I. The IWW reportedly accepted financial support from Germany as payment for treasonous acts meant to disrupt the American economy and sabotage the American war effort.²⁵ The copper miners' strike in Bisbee was therefore perceived as a poorly disguised attempt to disrupt the country's vital copper industry. As the *Bisbee Daily Review* put it, "There is a war on and we must have copper to win it."²⁶ The IWW's subversive tactics could simply not be tolerated.

Other newspapers also went to great lengths to slander the Wobblies. Several spread the rumor that the IWW planned to burn crops and poison American livestock in the fall of 1917.²⁷ The *Albuquerque Evening Herald* went so far as to blame IWW propaganda for causing a band of Apache Indians to go "on [the] warpath" in Arizona.²⁸ Front page headlines in the *Albuquerque Morning Journal* announced that the Wobblies encamped in Columbus represented a great "Menace to New Mexico" because their leaders advocated anarchy throughout the Southwest.²⁹ The *Roswell Daily Record* meanwhile spread the alarm that the IWW planned to launch a major revolution in the United States once the U.S. Army had departed for Europe and the country was left defenseless.³⁰ The *Daily Record* joined other newspapers in concluding that members of the IWW should be counted among Kaiser Wilhelm's "best friends" in the United States.³¹ Many Americans only half-facetiously believed that the letters IWW actually stood for "Imperial Wilhelm's Warriors."³²

24. *Artesia Advocate*, August 24, 1917.

25. *Glenrio Tribune-Progress*, July 14, 1917; *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, July 23 & August 8, 1917; *Albuquerque Evening Herald*, July 24, 1917; *Roswell Daily Record*, August 9, 1917; *Portales Valley News*, September 28, 1917.

26. Quoted in Landu, "Bisbee Deportees," 41.

27. *Roswell Daily Record*, July 20, 1917; *Carrizozo News*, July 27, 1917; *Raton Range*, July 6, 10, & 20, 1917.

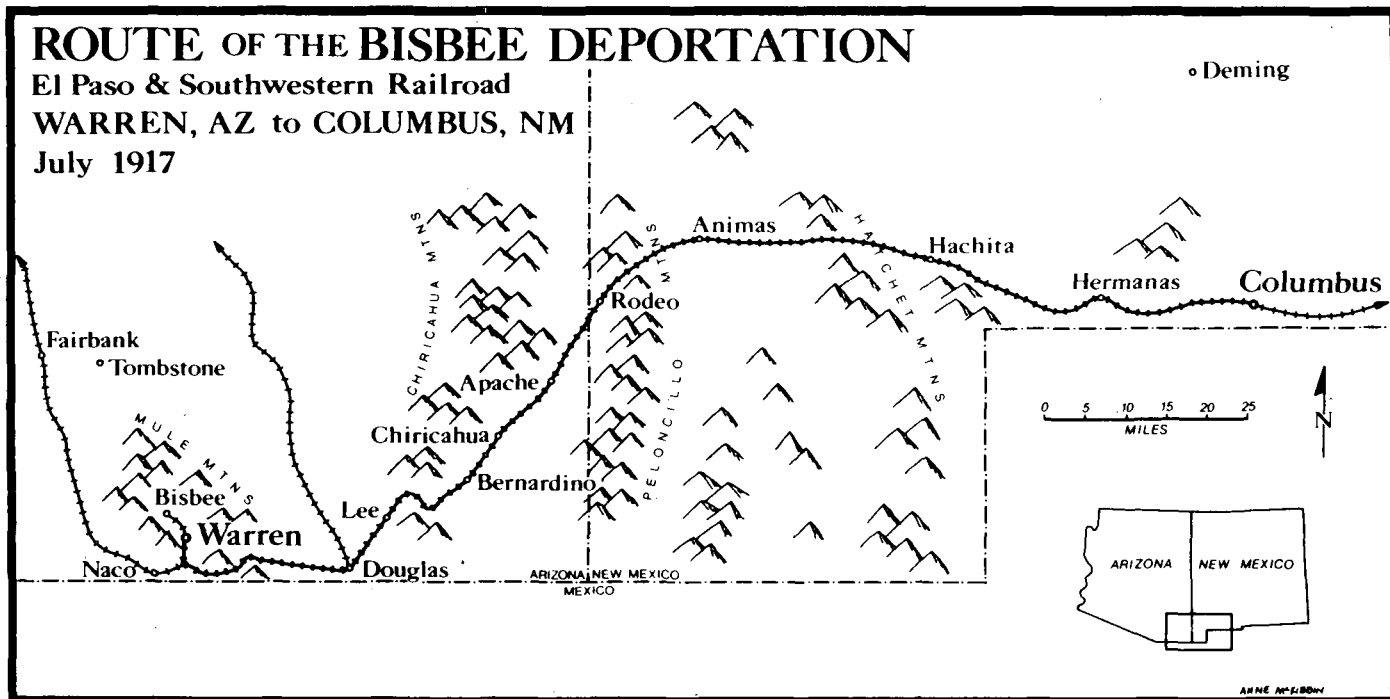
28. *Albuquerque Evening Herald*, August 8, 1917.

29. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, August 8, 1917.

30. *Roswell Daily Record*, July 23, 1917.

31. *Roswell Daily Record*, July 9, 1917; *Raton Range*, July 10, 1917.

32. Renshaw, *The Wobblies*, 2. Other Americans claimed that IWW stood for "I Won't Work." According to the *Artesia Advocate*, it was "getting so that the letters, I.W.W., [sic] startle one like the sudden sight of a snake. The fellows represented by these letters are about the vilest that ever happened. . . ." *Artesia Advocate*, August 24, 1917.



Map from James Byrkit, *Forging the Copper Collar: Arizona's Labor Management War of 1901-21* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982), artist Anne McKibbin.

Events of July and August 1917 worked to further damage the IWW's already dismal reputation in New Mexico. In the most tragic of these events, an IWW organizer, Frank Little, was cruelly dragged from his boarding house and lynched by vigilantes in Butte, Montana. In typical vigilante fashion, Little's assassins pinned a sign on their victim's clothes with the ominous words: "Others take notice. First and last warning."³³ Rather than causing outrage in the country and sympathy for the Arizona refugees still languishing in Columbus, Little's death was applauded by many, including several editors in New Mexico. The *Glenrio Tribune-Progress* declared that "The Butte method of relieving the country of irresponsible agitators may be crude, . . . but it was certainly effective."³⁴ Other publications concurred. Two days following Little's murder, the *Albuquerque Morning Journal* offered the opinion that "Society is sure to take measures to protect itself by legal means if it can, but by illegal means [if it must]."³⁵

Given this editorial praise of the Bisbee deportation and Frank Little's lynching, one must wonder if *any* newspaper in New Mexico came to the defense of the IWW and American civil liberties in the summer of 1917. Fortunately, some members of the press kept level heads in these troubled times. A. Clauson was one such journalist. The editor of the *Fort Sumner Review* protested that most of his colleagues were "only publishing the mine owners' side" of the Bisbee story. "The bulk of the I.W.W.'s," according to Clauson, "are good, honest workingmen and only ask for living wages and decent treatment."³⁶ Indeed, a U.S. Army survey taken at Camp Wobbly had revealed that 468 of the refugees were American citizens, 433 were married, 520 were property owners, 205 had purchased Liberty Bonds, 472 had registered for the draft, and 62 had patriotically served in the American armed forces.³⁷ The *Columbus Weekly Courier* and the *Roswell Daily Record* agreed that not all those deported to Columbus were as bad as they were often portrayed by unkind observers.³⁸

33. *Albuquerque Evening Herald*, August 1, 1917; *Roswell Daily Record*, August 1, 1917; *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, August 2, 1917; *Clovis Journal*, August 2, 1917; Renshaw, *The Wobblies*, 143-63.

34. *Glenrio Tribune-Progress*, August 10, 1917.

35. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, August 3, 1917. The *Las Vegas Weekly Optic* was one of the few newspapers to declare Little's lynching unjust. *Las Vegas Weekly Optic*, August 4, 1917.

36. *Fort Sumner Review*, July 21, 1917.

37. Taft, "Deportation," 22; Cox, "History of Bisbee," 183n. An undated, similar survey was discovered in the Lindsey Papers, SRCA.

38. *Roswell Daily Record*, July 16, 1917; *Columbus Weekly Courier* as referred to in the

Some writers expressed their disapproval of the deportation with far stronger language. B. S. Rodey of the *New Mexico State Democrat* went so far as to condemn the deportation of July 12 as "a relic of European barbarism." According to Rodey, the deportation was "nothing but an impertinent and unlawful assumption of authority by a mob" driven by upper-class interests. Rodey only wished that he were president so that he could take action to "indict every mother's son who took part in the orgy, and have them punished for their crime."³⁹ H. B. Ryther of the *Portales Journal* meanwhile praised New Mexico and blamed Arizona for the deportation and its aftermath. Ryther wrote that New Mexico was

charitable . . . in giving a safe harbor to those 1,200 humans deported from Arizona. [The Wobblies] may have been wrong in their every action, yet they . . . could scarcely have transgressed the law more flagrantly than did the mob that robbed and deported them. At all events, the action of New Mexico is more commendable and more humane than that of the Arizona mob.⁴⁰

These were courageous words in an era when any defense of the IWW was recognized as an act of treason against the United States. However, just as it is necessary to temper our praise of Governor Lindsey's response to the Bisbee deportation, it is important to remember that the few newspaper editors who came to the Wobblies' defense usually did so in a limited and temporary fashion. Newspapers like the *Roswell Daily Record* may have cautioned their readers about jumping to conclusions regarding the radical nature of all deportees, but these same papers had few kind words to say about those among the refugees who were actual members of the IWW. By August 20 the *Daily Record* had declared that Wobblies, pacifists, suffragists, and Germans were "all enemies of the same class" that could hardly be tolerated in times of peace, no less in times of war.⁴¹ Only the *Portales Journal* remained consistent in its criticism of the deportation, if its silence on the subject for the balance of the summer is any measure. One can well imagine the pressure felt by newspaper editors to conform to popular opinion, especially when they justly feared losing valuable

Bisbee Daily Review, July 21, 1917. As might be expected, the *Daily Review* took exception to the *Weekly Courier's* characterization of the deportees. Unfortunately, no copies of the *Weekly Courier* from the period July 12 to September 17 have been uncovered.

39. *New Mexico State Democrat*, July 20, 1917.

40. *Portales Journal*, July 20, 1917. The exact number of deportees varies from source to source. Byrkit, *Copper Collar*, 371.

41. See, for other examples, the *Roswell Daily Record*, July 9 & 23, 1917.

advertisers and subscribers while clearly jeopardizing their own safety in perilous times.

Private citizens in New Mexico watched events unfold in Columbus with great interest and concern. Many shared the unhealthy intolerance expressed in newspapers across the state. Others, especially in the ranks of labor, watched with trepidation if only because they feared that they too might be falsely accused of affiliation with the IWW. This was certainly a concern in the coal mining camps of Madrid and Gallup where reports of "strenuous efforts" to recruit miners into the IWW had circulated both before and after the July 12 deportation from Bisbee.⁴² Although most of these reports were groundless, mine operators in Gallup soon plotted to exploit the volatile situation to their own best advantage when coal miners struck the Gallup American Coal Company in July 1917.

The tragedy unfolded on July 31. On that day members of the McKinley County Council on Defense ordered the roundup of thirty-four residents of Gallup based on the charge that they were either card-carrying members of the IWW or were known to have "inflammatory literature" in their possession. Marched to the Gallup train depot behind an armored truck, these newest victims of wartime intolerance were shipped by train to Belen, New Mexico, where they were held in custody just outside the town's railroad yards. The farce was quickly exposed: while twenty of the Gallup deportees were members of the United Mine Workers, none were members of the IWW, one was the pro-labor editor of the *Gallup Independent*, and the remaining thirteen were not even coal mine employees.⁴³

Outraged by this treatment of their fellow workers, over four hundred members of the United Mine Workers in Gallup and Madrid vowed to strike until the Gallup men were released from Belen.⁴⁴ Nationally, Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor was so distressed by the deportation that he protested the act to President Wilson directly.⁴⁵ The *Santa Fe New Mexican* denounced this latest deportation as "a high-handed piece of business" and cautioned that "if

42. *Raton Range*, July 10, 1917; *Roswell Daily Record*, July 11, 1917; *Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 12, 1917; *Las Vegas Weekly Optic*, July 14, 1917.

43. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, August 1, 1917; *Albuquerque Evening Herald*, August 3, 1917; *Tucumcari Sun*, August 3, 1917; Harry R. Rubenstein, "Union Activity in the Gallup Mines, 1933-35" (master's thesis, University of New Mexico, 1979), 17. Members of the McKinley County Council of Defense adamantly disputed these numbers. *Bisbee Daily Review*, August 4, 1917.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Byrkit, *Copper Collar*, 226-27.

deportations become a popular fad, undesirable [elements] as well as habitually law abiding [citizens] may take advantage of it."⁴⁶ Equally disturbed, Governor Lindsey took strenuous action to prevent additional deportations and greater labor turmoil in his state. On August 2 the governor expressed his disapproval of the Gallup deportation in a stern message to John R. McFie of the McKinley County Council of Defense.⁴⁷ By August 4 the deported men had been safely returned home to Gallup.⁴⁸

The mass deportation of labor "agitators" had thus ended in New Mexico. Unfortunately, the same could not be said of the general intolerance that had condoned such behavior in the case of Bisbee or encouraged it in the case of Gallup. Examples of intolerance and sudden indifference to American civil liberties abound in the history of World War I in New Mexico. With twenty-two cases from July 1, 1918, to June 30, 1920, New Mexico ranked as high as fifth among the forty-eight states in the number of cases per capita prosecuted under the infamous Espionage and Sedition Acts.⁴⁹ Individual incidents of intolerance were often brutal. In a typically extreme measure, Constantinus Koch, a German-born coal miner in Van Houten, New Mexico, was accused of boisterously favoring his fatherland in the conflict raging overseas. A vigilante committee of local men forced the suspected traitor to walk through Van Houten carrying the American flag, kneel down at the center of the coal camp, kiss the flag, and shout "To hell with the Kaiser." Koch was only released by his captors when he had sworn to suppress his misguided statements in the future.⁵⁰ Other suspected individuals received far more violent attention, ranging from tar and feathering to the brutal death of an accused traitor left hanging from a piñon tree at the end of a barbed wire noose.⁵¹

46. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, August 2, 1917. Also see the *Santa Fe New Mexican* for August 17, 1917.

47. *Albuquerque Evening Herald*, August 2, 1917; *Raton Range*, August 7, 1917; *Cuervo Clipper*, August 17, 1917. Governor Lindsey dispatched Fred Fornoff to investigate this deportation, just as he had done in the wake of the Bisbee deportation. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, August 7, 1917.

48. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, August 2, 1917; *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, August 7, 1917; *Weekly Cloudcroft*, August 10, 1917; *Bisbee Daily Review*, August 5, 1917; Rubenstein, "Union Activity," 17.

49. Calculated from Appendix, Harry N. Scheiber, *The Wilson Administration and Civil Liberties, 1917-1921* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1960), 61-63.

50. *Raton Range*, April 12, 1918.

51. Richard Melzer and Phyllis A. Mingus, "Art to Crush the Kaiser: World War I Poster Art in New Mexico," *El Palacio* 88 (Spring 1982), 28; Richard Melzer, "Stage Soldiers of the Southwest: New Mexico's Four Minute Men of World War I," *Military History of the Southwest* 20 (Spring 1990), 38-40.

But New Mexico's wartime intolerance was hardly unique in the United States. In reacting to the Bisbee deportation, newspapers from across the nation supported Sheriff Wheeler and his "Bisbee system" by as much as a two-to-one margin. Editorials in the *Boston Transcript*, the *New York World*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Los Angeles Times* cheered the deportation and damned the IWW with phrases that echoed the sentiment of most newspapers in New Mexico.⁵² Many national leaders reacted in much the same fashion. No less an opinion maker than former President Theodore Roosevelt heaped praise on the "decent citizens" of Bisbee who had dealt forcefully with "men precisely like the Bolsheviki in Russia, who are murderers and encouragers of murder, who are traitors to their allies, to democracy, and to civilization. . . ." ⁵³ Roosevelt joined the growing number of Americans who argued that German sympathizers should be shot on sight without the benefit of a legal hearing, no less a courtroom trial.⁵⁴ The IWW remained among the primary targets of this intolerance and mistreatment throughout the First World War.⁵⁵

Isolated from a distant enemy in Europe but caught up in the fury and sacrifice of war, Americans sought out domestic scapegoats and imaginary adversaries to vent their pent-up anger during World War I. Corporations like Phelps Dodge meanwhile exploited the nation's loyalty frenzy to strike a major blow to radical labor forces. It hardly

52. Byrkit, *Copper Collar*, 224–26; *Bisbee Daily Review*, July 19, 1917.

53. Theodore Roosevelt to Felix Frankfurter, Oyster Bay, New York, December 19, 1917, BMHM; Michael E. Parrish, *Felix Frankfurter and His Times: The Reform Years* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 101–2. Frankfurter served as the secretary and counsel of a federal mediation commission sent to investigate the Bisbee deportation. Felix Frankfurter, *Reminiscences: Recorded in Talks with Dr. Harlan B. Phillips* (New York: Reynal & Company, 1960), 135–37; H. S. McCluskey, "Correspondence and Agreement at Bisbee," *The Miners' Magazine* 18 (December 1917), 2; Meyer H. Fishbein, "The President's Mediation Commission and the Arizona Copper Strike, 1917," *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 30 (December 1949), 175–82.

54. Melzer and Mingus, "Art to Crush the Kaiser," 28.

55. Renshaw, *The Wobblies*, 143–94; Patrick Renshaw, "The IWW and the Red Scare, 1917–24," *Journal of Contemporary History* 3 (October 1968), 63–72; Philip Taft, "The Federal Trials of the I.W.W.," *Labor History* 3 (Winter 1962), 57–91. IWW arrests were common across the United States. According to the *Artesia Advocate* of October 5, 1917, "When a newspaper has a little space left before going to press it can safely be filled by inserting: 'More I.W.W.'s arrested.' . . . This would hit the bull's eye every day in the week." At least one historian contends that "By September, 1917, the Wilson Cabinet had determined to crush the I.W.W., using both the Army and the Justice Department in its attack. The prominence of . . . I.W.W. leaders among the opponents of the war, the pressure from reactionary local patriotic organizations, and fear of further vigilante violence probably combined to produce the Cabinet decision" (italics added). Scheiber, *The Wilson Administration and Civil Liberties*, 48.

mattered that labor's threat was more imagined than real. Business leaders and their allies had successfully manipulated the course of events in a climate of opinion that tolerated, and to a large degree, encouraged a "harvest of violence."⁵⁶

Historian Gary L. Roberts has observed that similar "harvests of violence" have occurred in United States history under more or less similar circumstances. According to Roberts, this tragic pattern of American violence often unfolded when men were made to believe that local acts of violence were crucial to the defense of their "threatened" communities and cherished beliefs.⁵⁷ What may appear in retrospect as harsh acts of aggression were thus perceived at the time as essential acts of defense by local residents (and similarly conditioned onlookers) manipulated by malicious private interests. To Roberts' list of unfortunate victims of such private warfare, including the massacred Indians of Sand Creek, the lynched Black citizens of many Southern towns, and the guiltless subjects of Western vigilante haste, we must add the 1,186 deportees of Bisbee, Arizona, although the latter suffered mercifully less bloodshed—if no less loss of liberty—in mid-1917.⁵⁸

Products of their age and its intense hatred of the enemy in his several forms, many New Mexicans had developed a predictable tolerance for violence by the time the destitute men of Bisbee were literally dumped in Columbus. Victims of their age and the American tradition of violence, the Bisbee deportees received little sympathy or support during their long, tedious months spent exiled in the desert.

56. See Roberts, *Death Comes*, 127–57.

57. *Ibid.*, 141–42. For other discussions of violence in the West see Robert V. Hine, *The American West: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 300–316; Robert V. Hine, *Community on the American Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 88–89; Richard Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

58. Bloodshed during the Bisbee deportation was limited to two killings (IWW member James Brew and vigilante member Orson P. McRae) in addition to the beating of several men and women in Bisbee. Byrkit, *Copper Collar*, 194–99.