The IWW & the Search for an International Policy, 1905-1935

BY WAYNE THORPE

The Industrial Workers of the World, now a century old, by its very name suggests an international organization. Certainly its history is an international one: though founded in Chicago, its influence extended into Canada and Mexico. In countries further afield groups and organizations identified with it and often adopted its name. But to say that the IWW came into being with international ambitions is not to say that it regarded itself in 1905 as a self-standing world organization or a labor international. Founded as an industrialist rival of the craft-based American Federation of Labor (AFL), the new organization was, to be sure, prepared to support radical industrialism beyond the borders of the United States. Some delegates in Chicago in 1905 favored the name "The Industrial Workers of America" to indicate the continental character of the organization, while others favored "The Industrial Workers of the World" to symbolize the fact that the working class, rather than the organization founded in Chicago, was itself world-wide. Lucy Parsons preferred the name "The American Branch of the Industrial Workers of the World."

These pages focus not on the repercussions or outposts of the IWW in countries beyond the United States, but on the evolution of its international policy in the period 1905-1935. The main contours of that policy did not change markedly thereafter. One way to profile that evolution is to ask: did the IWW consider, seek or decline membership in the formal labor internationals that existed at its birth or subsequently came into being, or offer itself in lieu of them? What options did the IWW have?

The Socialist Option

In 1905 labor's international options consisted of the Second Socialist International, founded in 1889, and the International Secretariat of National Trade Union Centers (ISNTUC), founded in 1901 – the former in effect the political and the latter the trade union arm of the international social democratic movement. The IWW made a single appearance in the assemblies of each. Still debating its own views on political action, the IWW delegated Fred Heslewood to attend the 1907 congress of the Second International held in Stuttgart, Germany, where differences between the IWW (DeLeon faction) and the Socialist Party of America were aired. But the IWW's affirmation of its exclusive reliance on direct action and its independence from all political parties, which came in 1908, precluded further association with the Second International, which insisted that affiliates endorse political action. That left the Berlin-based ISNTUC, administered by Carl Legien, the head of the massive German trade unions. Although dominated by social democratic unions, the ISNTUC did not require a pledge of political action. This permitted the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) of France, its only revolutionary syndicalist affiliate, to advocate direct action and anti-militarism within it.

That its founders in 1905 directed it to enter into relations with the ISNTUC is an indicator that they did not consider the IWW itself to be a labor international. In August 1909 the IWW applied for membership in the ISNTUC, which admitted only one union organization from each country. In 1909, it had twenty national affiliates with nearly six million members, but as yet no affiliate from the United States. Legien had been courting the AFL. Its leader, Samuel Gompers, was deeply suspicious of the socialism of most ISNTUC affiliates, but also eager to secure international recognition for the AFL. He could take consolation, moreover, in the fact that the ISNTUC sidestepped contentious issues, deferring them to the Second International. It had thus refused the CGT's proposals to put the general strike and antimilitarism on its agenda, which had prompted the French to boycott the ISNTUC's 1905 and 1907 congresses. The French nevertheless agreed to host the 1909 congress in Paris, which Gompers attended as a guest. Having lingered in Europe to study the labor movement, Gompers reported that he found the CGT to be "the furthest possible remove ... in both organization and methods" from the AFL, the large, highly organized German trade unions the most similar to it. The AFL joined the ISNTUC in 1910. Its longevity and size (1 million members in 1909) favored the AFL's claim to represent American labor in the ISNTUC. But for Legien, the AFL had additional appeal: it was moderate, the IWW revolutionary; the AFL was an opponent, the IWW a potential ally, of the French CGT. The IWW's application to the ISNTUC had preceded that of the AFL, but Legien simply chose not to present it to the 1909 congress. The issue arose only at the next congress, in 1911 in Budapest, after the AFL had already been admitted as the ISNTUC's American representative.

The national rivalry between the AFL and the IWW took the international stage in Budapest, dominating the 1911 congress. William Z. Foster spoke for the IWW. As he described it, Legien tried "to steam-roller me," but as "a 'wobbly' from the West and not so easily squelched, I took the floor and caused ... a hubbub." As AFL delegate James Duncan described it, the "misguided and vulgar IWW man" used "force and language too vile to repeat." Only the French CGT supported Foster's charges contrasting AFL complicity with employers with the IWW's repudiation of class collaboration. The CGT's argument that the interests of unity dictated that two affiliates be admitted from the USA fell on deaf ears. All remaining national affiliates rejected the membership of the IWW. Not only did the IWW suffer a rebuff in Budapest, but to add insult to injury its delegate, Foster, influenced by the example of the French CGT, returned to the United States to encourage the IWW to abandon "dual unionism" in favor of boring from within existing unions.

For the IWW, the option of pursuing its cause within the ISNTUC proved to be no option at all. The 1911 Budapest decision closed that door, which might have meant isolation for the IWW. But by 1913 another door appeared to be opening. Syndicalist organizations beyond France, barred like the IWW from the ISNTUC, were beginning to consider their own inter-

national options: the 100,000-strong Italian Syndicalist Union, the semi-clandestine National Confederation of Labor (CNT) in Spain with perhaps 15,000 supporters, smaller organizations in Sweden, The Netherlands and Germany, along with revolutionary unions in Latin America. Nearly all of them looked to the French CGT, perhaps 500,000 strong in 1910-1911, for inspiration – the French were as a Belgian put it "the older brothers" of the syndicalist movement – but they also saw the IWW as an American cousin. Embattled minorities in their own countries, they sought to overcome their domestic isolation and to enhance their own sense of legitimacy and purpose by deepening their ties with like-minded organizations beyond their borders. Some of them favored establishing a Syndicalist International, a major issue pondered at the First International Syndicalist Congress held in London in September 1913.

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Despite its earlier bid to enter the socialist-dominated ISNTUC, the IWW was much closer in spirit and outlook to the syndicalists who met in London. Along with them the IWW had helped support a journal, the *Bulletin International du Mouvement Syndicaliste,* published from Paris by the Dutch syndicalist Christiaan Cornelissen to keep the various syndicalist and similar organizations informed about one another. The IWW shared with the European syndicalists an insistence on the autonomy of workers, the importance of economic organization and direct action at the point of production, and the primacy and independence of revolutionary unions. In organizational emphasis they differed, with syndicalists favoring federations of unions to preserve local autonomy over the industrialism endorsed by the IWW, although in one form or another centralizing and decentralizing impulses coexisted within the IWW and many syndicalist unions as well before 1914.

Identifying syndicalism with craft unionism, the *Industrial Worker* observed in January 1913 that the IWW "represents a higher type of revolutionary labor organization." But "in international affiliations," it added, "the IWW is more closely allied with the revolutionary syndicalist than any other body." Three months later, speaking of the proposed London Syndicalist Congress, it wrote: "Let its most important work be the formation of a connecting link between the revolutionary syndicalists and industrialists of all countries." The IWW, noting the costs involved and its own almost simultaneous convention, did not send a formal delegate to London. But General Secretary Vincent St. John's letter to the organizers emphasized that abstention should not "be construed as opposition to the Congress or formation of a real international labor organization based upon revolutionary principles," which the IWW hoped soon to see and which it was willing to help finance. The IWW's abstention, moreover, did not prevent George Swasey, already campaigning in Britain for the IWW, from informally participating in the London Congress.

Nine European and three Latin American countries were more formally represented. The London assembly, still hoping to win French support – the CGT, committed to working within the ISNTUC, had boycotted the London Congress – postponed the question of establishing a specifically syndicalist international to a later congress. As for the IWW, between 1909 and 1911 it had sought to join the French effort to revolutionize the ISNTUC; in 1913 it lent its blessing to the contemplation of a separate revolutionary labor International.

The hopes of the syndicalists for more formal international bonds were derailed by the outbreak of war in 1914. The 1913 London Congress had reiterated syndicalist opposition to war and the European organizations represented there – from Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Sweden and Spain – refused to support the defensive or war policies of their respective governments. So did the IWW. In contrast, most of the national affiliates of the Second International and the ISNTUC (or, as it was known from 1913, the International Federation of Trade Unions) supported their governments during the war, including the French CGT. It is an irony worth noting that those labor organizations that honoured labor internationalism in the First World War tended to be those systematically excluded from the formal labor and socialist internationals of the period; those that were members of such organizations tended not to honor it. The high cost of the IWW's resistance to war is well-known.

The Communist Option

War brought with it the Russian Revolution, followed in 1919 by the founding of the Third or Communist International – or Comintern – and its bid to unite the revolutionary movement under its own banner. The reality of revolution in Russia, purportedly a workers' revolution, captured the attention of radicals everywhere, who made of it, as Armando Borghi of the Italian Syndicalist Union recalled, "our polar star. We exulted in its victories. We trembled at its risks. ... We made a symbol and an altar of its name, its dead, its living and its heroes."

The appearance of the soviets, seemingly a new institutional form of vocational representation, held inescapable appeal for those who had no sympathy for pre-war socialist parliamentarism. Some Wobblies could celebrate the early Comintern as the realization of the program and ideals of the IWW. As Big Bill Haywood said of it, "Here is what we have been dreaming about. Here is the IWW all feathered out." Enthusiasm penetrated the IWW's governing Board as well. It voted in 1919 to establish a Committee on International Relations to enter into fraternal relations with the communists and syndicalists of Russia and Europe and the industrial unionists of Canada and Australia and "to provide for the representation of the IWW as a constituent member of the Third International."

But the early enthusiasm for the Comintern soon yielded to caution and increasing skepticism within the IWW and among European syndicalists as well. The Second Comintern Congress in the summer of 1920 endorsed the primacy of political action, the necessity and preeminence of Communist parties, and repudiated "dual unionism." The hopes of most syndicalist delegates in Russia that an autonomous revolutionary labor international would emerge from Moscow ebbed. "All my beautiful illusions came to fall one by one," wrote Angel Pestaña of the Spanish CNT, "withered and dead, like the petals of the rose fall when they lack the sap of the plant." The IWW did not have a delegate in Moscow, but the congress results hopelessly divided its Board. Within it a motion that the IWW affiliate with the Comintern

failed, a motion that it not affiliate passed, as did another that it affiliate with reservations about engaging in parliamentary action. The Board decided to put this confusing compendium of motions to the membership, but such protest and uncertainty followed (all motions reportedly failed) that the Board declared the ballot void at the end of 1920.

To circumvent the resistance to Comintern policies by revolutionary-minded unions like the IWW that repudiated parliamentary action and political parties, Moscow proposed to establish a separate revolutionary trade union association, the Profintern, or Red International of Labor Unions (RILU). The syndicalists in turn summoned an international conference in Berlin in December 1920 to attempt to find common ground regarding the proposed RILU, whose founding congress would meet in 1921. The IWW delegate in Berlin, its General Secretary George Hardy, endorsed the "Berlin Declaration" requiring that the new revolutionary labor International be free of all political influence. Hardy wrote back to Chicago that the Berlin conference had been "a great success" and "that Russia will have to come into line" regarding the independence of the labor international to be established. But Hardy traveled onward to Moscow, where the spell of the revolution and its leaders led him to alter his views. He now assured Lenin that he accepted the necessity of a disciplined political party and would work for the communists upon his return to the United States.

But while Hardy's glowing report encouraged receptivity to Moscow's proposed trade union international, the RILU's 1921 founding congress changed the picture entirely. IWW delegate George Williams favored affiliation before he left for Moscow. There Big Bill Haywood, in exile in Russia, assured Williams that the RILU was not political. "This is really an independent movement. ... I see in this Red International the culmination of the aims and aspirations of the IWW." But the RILU congress rejected "dual unionism" generally, explicitly condemned the policies of the IWW, called for its dissolution into the AFL, and called for the national coordination of labor unions and communist parties and international coordination of the RILU and the CI. In response, the IWW Board at year's end declared affiliation with the RILU – which it dismissed as "the Communist Party, thinly disguised" – to be "not only undesirable but absolutely impossible."

Although this judgement of December 1921 would never be reversed, the issue of relations with the Communists, domestically and internationally, continued to reverberate within the IWW. While some Wobblies who converted to communism simply left the organization, others campaigned to convert the IWW. This was the tactic of the Red International Affiliation Committee, which worked to reverse the IWW's decision about the RILU and further urged it to recognize the Communist Party as an entirely new and revolutionary body, described in the Communist *Daily Worker* in Wobbly-friendly terms as "founded upon shop nuclei organized at the point of production." Some communists, on the other hand, found it more effective to work behind the scenes rather than openly, as did Vern Smith, the editor for nearly three years in the mid-1920s of the IWW's weekly, *Industrial Solidarity*.

The Syndicalist Option

But on the heels of the Communist option another quickly appeared, which became for a time inextricably intertwined with it. The IWW was not alone during 1921-1922 in seeing both the reformist IFTU, now sitting in Amsterdam, and the politicized RILU in Moscow as unpalatable. Syndicalist organizations proceeded to found a syndicalist international, the International Working Men's Association (IWMA – now the International Workers' Association AIT), headquartered in Berlin from its birth in December 1922 until 1933, when the Nazis came to power. With the founding of the IWMA, the choice for revolutionary unions was no longer "Moscow or Amsterdam," but "Moscow or Berlin." Organizations in fifteen European and fourteen Latin American countries eventually affiliated with Berlin. The IWMA's hope to win the affiliation of the IWW as well seemed realistic. The IWW had identified with the syndicalists already before 1914 and its immediate postwar conventions also specified them as potential partners in a revolutionary labor international. In December 1920 the IWW had participated in and embraced the "Declaration" of the International Syndicalist Conference in Berlin. Now that the IWW and most syndicalist organizations had rejected the RILU as Communist-dominated, the way seemed clear for them to come together in the new IWMA.

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But that union, urged by the IWMA and pondered within the IWW for over a decade, never came. In the early 1920s, the IWW faced an array of profound challenges: continuing repercussions of the efforts of federal and state governments to cripple it through mass trials and ongoing criminal syndicalist legislation; changing economic conditions and ebbing membership in once major sectors of support, notably among lumber and harvest workers; attempts to assist large numbers of IWW prisoners; increasing divisions between centralizers and decentralizers; and pressure from Communists outside and within the organization. Competition between supporters of the RILU and the prospective syndicalist international only exacerbated matters. The IWW's 1922 convention sought to defuse the issue. Noting the emergence of two nuclei of revolutionary workers' internationals, in Moscow and Berlin, whose differences mitigated against consolidation and neither of which the IWW could enter "without forfeiting fundamental principles," the IWW adopted temporary neutrality, while maintaining "friendly intercourse with both." The issue of international affiliation had become a lightning rod, threatening the fragile internal unity of the IWW, and neutrality appeared to pose a lesser danger than affiliation with either international. In language less measured than that of the convention, the *Industrial Worker* asserted that the American industrial unionists would join neither the Communist nor the syndicalist "circus."

Beset by external challenges and profound internal differences, the postwar membership of the IWW peaked at around 45,000 in late 1922. Many supporters saw the IWW's most pressing need as that of organizational rebuilding and the international issue as important but highly divisive and best deferred. A friendly but candid letter of May 1923 from the IWW Board to Rudolf

Rocker of the IWMA Secretariat is revealing in several respects. First, it reiterated that neutrality vis-á-vis Moscow and Berlin was temporary. "You can depend on it that international affiliation has occupied our attention very much. It is an important ... [issue], and we know that sooner or later we will have to take some step towards this end." Second, it noted that the issue was explosive, both because of wider public suspicions about the loyalty of the IWW and because within the American labor movement "every international has its partisans who are continually and severally condemning the other." Prudence required minimizing such disputes. Third, it frankly acknowledged that the IWW needed to concentrate on rebuilding at home. "To do this, we think it advisable that there be no unnecessary wrangles on internationals that would give those who are waiting to disrupt us a chance to retard our progress in this country. We hope you can understand this important point." In such difficult circumstances, it added, the affiliation of the IWW with the IWMA "would lend little more than a moral significance to your organization." The Board suggested that the IWMA should similarly concentrate on strengthening its own European components. Building an effective and genuine international required the absorption of the working class through "contact and experience," rather than "the theoretical and promiscuous affiliation, of indefinite bodies, presently operating quite wholly and insufficiently in a local field."

The Board was right to note that the IWMA was itself beleaguered by 1923. Its largest affiliates had fallen victim to right-wing governments in Spain and Italy and its affiliates elsewhere, except in Sweden, could not sustain their membership levels of 1919-1920. Syndicalists were pressed, moreover, by new rivals on the left, the Communists, themselves organized in the Comintern and the RILU. But such circumstances accentuated rather than diminished the symbolic or "moral significance" of the membership of national syndicalist organizations – and they hoped that of the IWW – in a wider family, in a revolutionary labor international.

The next several years, after a virtual split in 1924, witnessed a precipitous decline in membership and ongoing infighting in the IWW, which clung to its policy of non-alignment. Its conventions of the mid-1920s had sometimes agreed to hear representatives speak on behalf of the RILU (James P. Cannon in 1923, Harrison George in 1925), and sometimes refused to hear such appeals (1924). The IWMA had simultaneously but inconclusively corresponded with the IWW's Board and saluted its conventions. In 1926 Rudolf Rocker of the IWMA Secretariat visited IWW headquarters in Chicago. But the international issue remained unresolved. The work of undeclared Communists within the IWW muddied the waters. Vern Smith, the editor of *Industrial Solidarity,* could not openly support the RILU but he could work to discredit the IWMA. In October 1923, for example, Smith asked C.E. Payne, the editor of the *Industrial Worker* in Seattle, to publish a denunciation of the IWMA, including charges that it endorsed scabbing. This, Smith explained, would "avoid serious injury" to the IWW, "which at present seems to be lined up too much with the... outfit in Berlin. ... I think this is a pretty bad outfit, but will admit that they had me fooled too, for a long time." Payne's reply: "You go to hell!" Refusing to publish the material Smith sent, Payne demanded: "Who put you up to sending it out here, anyhow?"

In August 1924 Smith attacked the Berlin International more directly in *Industrial Solidarity.* Smith accused the IWMA of "treacherous and underhanded attacks" on the IWW in Mexico and also, although he offered not a shred of evidence, of fiscal malfeasance. "What kind of a bunch is this anyway, that slanders us among our Mexican fellow workers, steals our money, and then scolds us for not sending them more?" His editorial, Smith later claimed, elicited "a revulsion of opinion" against the IWMA. The "astonishment" in Berlin at these charges in an official IWW journal was great. IWMA Secretary Augustin Souchy, suspecting Communist "machinations," asked the IWW Board to either sanction the editorial or repudiate it. The Board did neither, nor did *Industrial Solidarity*'s attacks on the IWMA end there. Smith was removed as editor only in July 1926, when Communist Party leader Earl Browder, a former Wobbly himself, inadvertently revealed in the French journal *La Vie Ouvrière* that Smith was a Communist mole in the IWW.

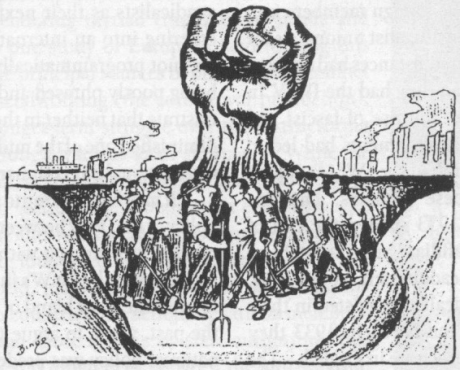
The IWMA also tried to deal with more substantive issues that might work against the IWW's affiliation, especially that of the IWW's industrialism. The IWW, in responding to the RILU, had described itself as supporting direct economic action, as "an economically militant organization, which acts upon the theory that the workers learn to fight by fighting," as placing "no reliance upon political action," and as "an economic working-class organization, in which the unit is the industrial union." The IWMA Secretariat responded that this self-characterization of the IWW fit syndicalist views and aims "almost to a tee." While syndicalism had originally developed on a craft basis, it added, this was not a matter of principle, as syndicalists increasingly advocated industrial organization and the IWMA included national affiliates, like that in Chile, which were explicitly industrialist.

The Industrialist Option

Socialist, Communist and syndicalist strands had all been woven into the fabric of the IWW's international policy by the mid-1920s without having produced a clear or dominant pattern. But a fourth strand – an industrialist strand – must be considered as well. By the industrialist strand is meant here not simply one that highlights the industrialist form of organization but one that also emphasizes the role of the IWW itself in the capacity of a world organization or a labor international. This returns us to our starting point: that the IWW's name itself implies a labor international. After all, there were organizations outside the United States – for example in Canada, Mexico, Australia, Chile, Sweden, Germany, Czecho-Slovakia or Hungary – that were deemed to be IWW "administrations." The Canadian IWW even operated from the Chicago headquarters until 1931, when it established offices in Canada.

Reviewing 25 years of international policy, Board Chair Joseph Wagner wrote in 1930 that "from its very inception, the IWW was international in sentiment and scope." The claim that the IWW was itself an international organization, moreover, provided one means of defense against the labor internationals in Moscow and Berlin that sought to win its allegiance. Responding to the RILU in 1922 the IWW observed that it was "an international rather than a national movement. It has often been referred to as 'the first real international of the proletariat.' Industrial Workers of the World – not of the United States, or America."

But the vocabulary of world organization and labor international long existed simultaneously and ambiguously in the IWW and some qualifications and complications should be noted here. First, the conception of the IWW as a labor international did not predominate in the early association. As we have seen, the IWW repeatedly pondered bringing itself under the umbrella of a wider international organization, be it socialist, communist or syndicalist. Second, the labor unions outside the USA that bore the IWW name did not necessarily regard themselves as members of an international organization. By far the largest of them, the Chilean IWW, identified with and immediately joined the new IWMA. Third, the existence of IWW supporters in other nations sometimes compelled the IWW to try to clarify its own policies or complicated relations with otherwise sympathetic foreign labor organizations. In Sweden, for example, when maritime workers founded a branch of the IWW, the Swedish syndicalist organization objected. The IWW's Executive Board responded by ruling in 1920 "not to issue industrial charters in countries where there are already organizations in existence with a program similar to ours." Later Boards did not observe the same policy. In Mexico a new General Confederation of Labor emerged in 1921 with some 36,000 members. Based on decentralized principles, it soon joined the IWMA. Some former Wobblies were influential within it. Other members of the Mexican IWW, having failed to convince the new organization to accept centralism and industrialism, chose to continue to maintain their own smaller organization. The two could announce an alliance and both opposed the government and resisted the influence of the AFL in Mexico, but they could not wholly eliminate resentment and friction between them. Fourth, the IWW union most active internationally, notably in Latin America and Europe, the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union (MTW), urged the IWW to enter the IWMA and would eventually break ranks to do so itself.



Despite the ambiguities complicating the notion of the IWW as a labor international, the industrialist strand periodically recurred in the pattern of the weave of the Wobblies' international policy. Prior to World War I the IWW, without precluding joint participation in a new international, had pointed to industrialism as distinguishing it from what it regarded as its nearest allies, the syndicalists. When in 1920 the Board reported to the IWW convention that "the international field has never looked better for a realization of a World International of the Industrial Workers of the World," it expressed optimism that a world organization could be built around its principles but also recognized that the IWW based in Chicago was not itself – or not yet – that international.

The unifying principles to which the Board alluded, moreover, were less those of industrialism than of non-political direct action, for the immediate post-World War I IWW conventions named communists, syndicalists and industrialists elsewhere as supporters of direct action and prospective partners of the IWW in a larger revolutionary labor international. But the emergence of the communist-oriented RILU and the syndicalist IWMA in 1921-1922 changed the situation markedly and had a double effect on the IWW. Internally, it left supporters of these internationals dueling within it. Externally, it drew off many revolutionary unions elsewhere, potential partners of the IWW, circumscribing its international focus considerably. Both effects encouraged an increased inwardness or at least self-sufficiency. Against this backdrop, the IWW's 1925 convention struck the industrialist note more clearly than hitherto. The goal of the IWW was to provide the working class with "a properly integrated world-wide organization revolutionary in philosophy and industrial in structure." Noting the far-flung "administrations and branches" of the IWW – Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Australia and South America were mentioned – it instructed the Board to investigate the calling of "a world congress of the IWW."

This proposal, optimistic or desperate as it may have been, came to nothing in an IWW beset by problems and weakened by a nearly incapacitating internal split. The IWW had held seven conventions in 1919-1925, but managed only four from 1926 to 1935. A world IWW congress seemed unlikely. The 1925 proposal nevertheless signaled a new emphasis in international relations.

For the next ten years the industrialist and the syndicalist would prove to be the major strands in proposed international strategy. While each had its advocates, the international issue was not as fiercely contested as in the first half of the 1920s: the IWW felt rather than fought its way toward a resolution over the next decade. For one camp, industrialism and self-sufficiency were the guiding features in that they favored, at least for the time being, strengthening the IWW's ties with and supporting its "branches" elsewhere, particularly in Europe. In the early 1930s this position, promoted above all by Joseph Wagner, prevailed. Speaking to the 1932 convention, Board Chair Albert Hanson saw the international choice as that "of affiliation with existing labor unions which recognize the class war," that is, the IWMA, or Hanson's preference, "of establishing the IWW on a world-wide basis." As if to remove long-standing ambiguity on the point, the convention endorsed Wagner's proposal that it "go on record that the IWW is a Working Class Union of the World," and that its administrations and subdivisions are not "affiliates but integral parts of the General Organization." It also directed the IWW to improve contact with IWW groups outside the USA and to assist the European groups (in Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary and Sweden) in summoning a European conference of the IWW. At the same time, however, the convention also directed the Board to negotiate "establishing practical co-operation" between the IWMA and the IWW, presumably as the syndicalist and the industrialist versions of labor internationalism.

A second camp took the view, promoted above all by the MTW, that more formal international links beyond those with IWW outposts elsewhere were necessary, particularly in a period of world-wide depression. By the nature of the work it organized,

the MTW was the most active IWW union internationally and the existence of many foreign "administrations" was primarily the work of the seamen. But this union, for whom international policy had direct and immediate significance, had concluded that establishing IWW branches elsewhere was not an adequate international strategy. In 1931 the MTW petitioned the IWW to ally "with the existing syndicalist organizations of various countries who are of the same principles," whereupon the MTW would send its foreign members into the national syndicalist unions. As for the IWMA, circumstances had no more favored it than they had the IWW. In Europe alone, the rise of fascist and quasi-fascist governments had led to the suppression of the IWMA's Italian and Portuguese affiliates. The rise of Hitler in 1933 spelled the end of its German affiliate and the flight of the IWMA headquarters from Berlin. But the syndicalists persisted in their overtures to the IWW. In 1933 they published a brochure in English – *The International Working Men's Association (I.W.M.A.): Its Purpose Its Aim Its Principles* – which directly addressed IWMA relations with the IWW.

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In 1934, with no visible progress with the overseas branches of the IWW and with the IWMA's brochure in hand, the IWW's convention resolved to put the question of affiliation with the IWMA to a ballot. It decided to disseminate the brochure for informational purposes, but when it ordered new copies, U.S. customs officials seized and destroyed the shipment as seditious material. The results of the balloting would disappoint the IWMA, whose 1935 report had noted "the constant improvement" in relations with the IWW. By a slight majority a first referendum supported affiliation, but a second – held because some unions believed the issue had not been fully discussed – failed. The 1936 convention, in reporting these results from 1935, hoped that "continuous cooperation and harmony will exist" between the IWW and the IWMA. The MTW, for its part, acting independently of its parent organization, entered the IWMA, bridging as it were the industrialist and syndicalist camps.

The decision in 1935 in effect completed the evolution of the IWW's international policy, at least in its major outlines. Warp and woof had for thirty years interlaced in the fabric of international policy before a clear pattern emerged. The socialist, communist, syndicalist and industrialist strands constituted the warp in the weave, each coming to the fore at one time or another. The evolving needs of the IWW constituted the woof: the need for an international policy that would 1) respect its organizational integrity; 2) harmonize with its own revolutionary goals, its industrialist aspirations, its commitment to direct action and to workers' autonomy; and 3) win something like a consensus from its membership, or at least not disrupt internal unity. The IWW's ambiguity about its own international role, moreover, inevitably colored the process.

The IWW tested the alternatives that were, or appeared to be, open to it for over a quarter-century. It had unsuccessfully sought a voice, a permanent and revolutionary one, in the councils of the largely social democratic ISNTUC before 1914. The Comintern and the RILU had aroused and then dashed powerful hopes and the contest over communism had severely shaken the IWW. Even before the First World War the IWW had viewed the syndicalists as their next-of-kin. Reservations, however, about entering into an international organization, the IWMA, which was not programmatically industrialist proved decisive. Despite being poorly phrased and conducted, referenda seemed to demonstrate that neither in the relatively robust IWW of 1920 nor the diminished one of the mid-1930s could communist or syndicalist internationalism command an indisputably clear allegiance.

It may be tempting to see the development of the international policy of the IWW between 1905 and 1935 as the natural unfolding of what was implicit within it from the start. But to say that the trajectory of the IWW's international policy was a possible one is to utter the most bland of truisms, that the present emerges from the past, while to argue that the trajectory of the IWW's international policy was predetermined is to read history backward, to project the end on the beginning. The strand of industrialism and self-sufficiency came to dominate in the pattern of the IWW's international policy, to be sure, but it took over a quarter-century to do so. That pattern was not predictable in 1905.

"We openly declare ourselves determined opponents of all ... patriotism"

We, the Industrial Workers of the World in convention assembled hereby reaffirm our adherence to the principles of Industrial Unionism, and rededicate ourselves to the unflinching prosecution of the struggle for the abolition of wage slavery, and the realization of our ideals in Industrial Democracy.

With the European war for conquest and exploitation raging and destroying the lives, class consciousness and unity of the workers, and the ever-growing agitation for military preparedness clouding the main issues and delaying the realization of our ultimate aim with patriotic, and therefore capitalilistic, aspirations, we openly declare ourselves determined opponents of all nationalistic sectionalism or patriotism, and the militarism preached and supported by our one enemy, the Capitalist Class. We condemn all wars and, for the prevention of such we proclaim the anti-militarist propaganda in time of peace, thus promoting class solidarity among the workers of the entire world, and, in time of war, the general strike in all industries.

We extend assurances of both moral and material support to all the workers who sufffer at the hands of the Capitalist Class for their adhersion to these principles, and call on all workers to unit themselves with us, that the reign of the exploiters may cease and this earth be made fair through the establishment of the Industrial Democracy.

Solidarity, March 24 1917