Industrial Espionage 1890s Style: Undercover Agents in the Coeur d'Alene Mining District

By Fritz E. Wolff

Even though railroads, statehood, and other talismans of civilization had reached the Pacific Coast by 1890, the twenty years that followed still contained a measure of raw, contentious, and sometimes dangerous living for settlers of the American West. This was especially true in mining outposts like Cripple Creek and Telluride in Colorado, Tonopah, Nevada, and Bisbee, Arizona, where upstart labor unions competed with each other to gain the attention and allegiance of the working man. Likewise, the discovery of rich lead–silver deposits in Idaho's Coeur d'Alene brought a rush of miners, capitalists, and union organizers alike, all hoping to cash in on opportunities made possible by the immense mineral wealth.

This collision of interests and agendas fostered the development of two adversarial organizations. First, a disparate collection of early labor unions combined in 1891 under the rubric "Central Executive Committee of the Miners' Union of the Coeur d'Alenes." Subsequently, this group gained strength by joining forces with representatives from seventeen Western mining camps at a meeting in Butte, Montana, in May of 1893. That organization became known as the Western Federation of Miners (WFM). Mine managers, preoccupied with the task of building profitable operations in a remote area with no infrastructure in the face of sagging metal prices, responded by creating their own, district–wide special interest group—the Mine Owners' Protective Association (MOA). Undeterred, the WFM resorted to dynamite and gunpoint coercion in a series of incidents, detailed below, intended to drive home their claim to represent the district's miners, and to send a message to mine management that the goal of unionization justified virtually any action. The MOA reacted with their own brand of tyranny—blacklisting union members with a "work by permit" system, and creating a virtual business bonanza for detective agencies in undercover agents, or "operatives," hired to infiltrate union ranks to gather the information needed to guide counter–union strategy.[1]

Fortunately for the companies, two competing detective agencies were located only a day's journey away in Spokane. The Pinkerton Brothers Agency had offices in a dozen cities besides Spokane. Its competition came from the Thiel Agency, run by an ex–policeman named William S. Swain—self-styled as "Captain" Swain. Written reports from operatives of these agencies provide eyewitness accounts across a century of mining and labor history. They yield a fascinating picture, not only of the hour–by–hour danger inherent in the job, but also of conditions underground, and of the ebb and flow of public opinion on labor issues within a community. In reading them one can obtain a sense of the man behind the report, his thoughts, and his dedication to duty.

The Players on the Stage

While violent labor disputes occurred in many mining camps in the West, the Coeur d'Alene's history of labor relations was particularly long and bitter, involving a conspicuous amount of bloodshed and destruction. The Coeur d'Alene Min-

ing District was a large area and the stakes were high. From Kellogg on its western edge, to Wallace, Burke, and Mullan thirteen miles to the east, the district employed nearly two thousand men. The list of principals among the capitalists and union organizers involved reads like an historical "Who's Who" of the industry. Magnates such as Simeon Reed, the Rockefellers, and the Guggenheims bankrolled the Bunker Hill and Sullivan, Frisco, Hecla, and the Hercules and Morning mines. Fred W. Bradley, Stanley A. Easton, Joe McDonald, Al Burch, and Frederick Burbidge led the MOA at various points in its development. WFM organizers included Edward Boyce, William D. "Big Bill" Haywood, Charles Moyer, George Pettibone, and L. J. "Jack" Simpkins.

The association and the federation fought each other with ploy and counter ploy for twenty-five years. That period saw the destruction of two mills by explosives, the Frisco's in 1893, and the Bunker Hill and Sullivan's six years later. Twice, Idaho's governors imposed martial law and called in federal troops to quell civil insurrection. Considerable violence occurred—including the assassination of one of those governors, Frank Steunenberg, several years after he left office. The sensational trial of the federation officials indicted for that crime captured the attention of the nation and pushed the role of the undercover agent into the spotlight. To better understand these disputes, and why the MOA resorted to using detectives to aid their cause, it will be helpful to briefly consider the viewpoints of the contestants, as well as to examine those of the federation's actions that bred ever–increasing dissension and distrust in the communities of the Coeur d'Alene.

Miners' Wages and Working Conditions

Miners in the nineteenth–century Coeur d'Alene earned between $2.50 and $3.50 for a ten–hour day spent hand drilling and mucking in hot, wet ground. Their wages depended on metal prices and on what management felt justified in paying. Wage rates were never guaranteed for any specific term and were subject to change overnight without notice. A miner's workweek lasted thirteen days and offered few chances for relaxation—an existence best typified as "eat, sleep, and work." Few mines offered the comfort of a dry house to change clothes or bathe. Company boarding houses often offered marginal food, were alive with lice and fleas, and charged exorbitant fees—sometimes amounting to a half–month's wages. A miner's life had a hard edge to it that only exacerbated its lesser discomforts. He also realized that some mines paid enormous dividends to their investors and owners. Frederick Burbidge reported the Bunker Hill and Sullivan's net profit for the single month of December 1900, to be $106,000. How did the wages of one hundred and fifty miners, at three dollars per shift, compare to a figure like that?[2]

Mine Management

A mine manager walked a narrow track, attempting to balance a multitude of operational demands against the cries for profit from investors, with the capricious nature of ore deposits as an added complication. To be successful, a manager had to acquire, train, and above all retain, a labor force with the right blend of skills and incentive to do the work. Taken in this context, wages were only one element among a list of concerns—such as miners' hours and working conditions, and their union's power and influence—which influenced the strategies and tactics of mine owners and managers. Who were the union's organizers? What did they ultimately want? For what would they be willing to settle? Would conciliation resolve differences better than confrontation? In the face of union activity, could companies retain complete control over their own operations after their immense expenditure of capital to begin mining? These were questions with little precedent, to which no one knew the

answers. But then as now, a steady supply of reliable information appeared to be the key to management's decision–making process.

Events and Rhetoric

On 29 April 1892, two hundred union men marched William Pipkin and George Wolff into the union hall at Burke in the middle of the day. When they refused to join the WFM, these men were driven at gunpoint up the mountain trail toward Thompson Falls, Montana, and warned that if they ever returned they would be shot on sight. On 11 July 1893, union men fired shots at non–union miners starting a day shift at the Helena–Frisco mine, then sent a case of dynamite down the penstock into the mill, which was completely destroyed when the explosives entered the crusher. Shortly thereafter, this same group commenced a fusillade on the Gem mine, but guards of that property returned the fire, killing two of the union men.[3]

On 3 July 1894, forty union miners, disguised with masks and coats turned inside–out, walked through the town of Burke to the Gem mine and pulled John Kneebone from his blacksmith shop. As the entire town looked on, Kneebone was escorted into the mine yard and gunned down. His crime, in the eyes of the federation, was testifying for the prosecution at the trial of the men indicted for the 1892 activities. Later the same day, the masked mob ran the Gem mine's superintendent and foreman over the line into Montana.[4]

On 30 July 1894, three mines—the Gem, Standard, and Helena–Frisco—signed a work agreement with the WFM written by Edward Boyce, a firebrand union organizer from Butte, and a leading figure in the organization's early development. According to the anonymous author of a manuscript entitled "A History of the Western Federation of Miners in the Coeur d'Alene" (1904), this agreement stipulated that "no men should be imported to work during strikes; men who were objected to by the union shall not again have employment in any of the mines;" and, "henceforth, *both parties to the agreement shall be friends.*"[5] In other words, the *union* would determine who worked at those mines and under what conditions, not the mining companies. Mine operations would cease during strikes of indefinite duration since replacement workers were disallowed. Non-union miners became *persona non grata*, ineligible for employment at mines run by the other parties to the agreement. And after several years of murder, coercion, and tyranny on its part, the WFM ironically insisted that friendship should prevail henceforth. In short, the three mines surrendered.

Violence underwritten and encouraged by the federation continued in the spring and summer of 1895, and the first dynamite strike at the Bunker Hill works, detailed below, occurred in May of the following year. It appears that the annual miners' picnics on Independence Day in 1897 and 1898 served more as rallying points for further acts of sabotage than for sharing good cheer and drilling contests.[6]

The words of union leaders themselves indicate the attitudes behind their organizing philosophy and confrontational policies. One operative took notes on the speeches made by various union officials at the 1906 WFM convention, which took place six months after ex–Governor Steunenberg's assassination, in which the federation had been implicated. The detective's report to Easton quoted guest speaker Charles Sherman as urging the miners to "stand pat and continue their organizing work at a greater speed than ever until the union was so strong that they would be able to lock out the companies and take possession of the entire mine operation." Sherman was president of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the radical labor organization that the WFM had helped to found the previous year, and with which it retained affiliation as the IWW's

"Mining Department." In another speech at the convention, Marion Moor, WFM board member from Arizona, said: "The Italian quartz miners will be in the WFM next year, and if trouble starts, I do not believe in giving them macaroni to fight with; but believe in giving them rifles to get what they are after."[7]

The Bunker Hill and Sullivan Takes a Stand

As one can imagine, the agreement Boyce negotiated with the Gem, Standard, and Helena–Frisco mines created a serious division in the MOA's unity of purpose, while it did very little to reduce tensions in the district during the last half of the 1890s. The federation blacklisted merchants for selling supplies to non–union operations, and even those mines agreeing to the contract were not free from WFM manipulation. Exasperated with the break in the ranks of the MOA, Fred Bradley, general manager of the Bunker Hill and Sullivan, continued to pursue that company's long–standing policy of maintaining a non–union shop—going it alone, if necessary.[8]

At 11:20 p.m. on 10 May 1896, a dynamite charge exploded beneath the Bunker Hill's mill flume and immediately thereafter a blaze was set against the mill itself. Bradley's report on the incident reads:

> *It was the intention of these firebugs to make a sure thing of burning up the mill by destroying the flume and thus cutting off our water supply. Very fortunately for us, the mill hands discovered the fire before it had made any headway, As the fire followed so closely upon the explosion, we all thought that we were surrounded by an army of dynamiters, but no cowardice was shown and all hands were ready to fight. I have telephoned to Spokane for a detective to come here today and work on the matter. If we find the guilty parties, they will be properly disposed of by the Kellogg citizenry. We can look for no aid in this matter from county authorities.*[9]

A few days later, after learning that the agent that Captain Swain proposed was a Scotsman, Bradley expressed some doubt as to the man's suitability, writing that

> *it may be that my [Thiel Agency] detective will do us no good. In that case, I will ask you to send us a good Pinkerton man. I think the Scotsman we have in view will not do—a detective to accomplish anything here must be an Irishman. He must also be physically [cap]able of holding a job underground. I will wire you to send me a Pinkerton Irish miner. If our Scot has an Irish brogue perhaps he will do—but in no event do we want a Cornish detective.*[10]

Union sentiment against the Bunker Hill and Sullivan finally boiled over three years later, on 29 April 1899, in the famous dynamiting of the company's new $250,000 mill, and the murder of one of three of its loyal employees who fled down a road in a hail of rifle bullets. At Bradley's request, Idaho Governor Frank Steunenberg declared martial law in the district and asked President McKinley to send federal troops to enforce that declaration. Those troops incarcerated seven hundred miners in a hastily–built, wooden stockade. Since those miners represented almost half of the local mine labor force, the MOA was put in the ironic position of wanting federal authorities to reduce the number of men imprisoned in order to help keep the mines open.

The spectacular violence and destruction in the Coeur d'Alene strike of 1899 did little to enhance the standing of the federation in the eyes

of the local population. The MOA took advantage of that situation by establishing a work–by–permit system, which only issued permits to non–union miners. While it may have been illegal, the blacklist was effective—keeping the mines operating while dispersing union miners to other camps in the West.[11]

Operating Undercover

A successful operative had to possess a complex and demanding set of skills. Intelligence gathering could only begin after gaining the trust and acceptance of the rank and file, but to do that one had to have the ability to overcome an atmosphere rife with distrust and extreme suspicion of newcomers. As Bradley mentioned, another essential qualification for the assignment was to possess credible mining skills—to look, act, and talk like a miner, not a detective. The operative also had to be able to write intelligible reports on his observations, and convey these to management undiscovered.

***Figure 1**. Stanley A. Easton, President and General Manager of the Bunker Hill Company from 1902 to 1954. University of Idaho Special Collections.*

Since the loose conversation held in local saloons was the wellspring of most information, operatives had to hold their liquor, guard their speech and simultaneously keep a close watch on the comments of others. This may have been a difficult balance to maintain, given an expense account and a local abundance of Kellogg's Old Bourbon and Perrywinkle Rye whiskey. Operatives were instructed to report both on organizing activities and on working conditions underground. Managers needed to know what was going on far below their offices, and realized that the truth did not necessarily emerge during their weekly tours through the stopes.

Maintaining cover was a life–and–death matter for operatives, who resorted to code names such as Number 15, Number 66, Z, or B108 to avoid identification through their written material. Such a betrayal might occur accidentally or intentionally, since suspicious mail and telegrams were commonly opened and read by post office employees sympathetic to the union. Operatives' reports often identified union members or sympathizers employed by the mines. But in a report to Stanley A. Easton (Figure 1), who assumed management of the Bunker Hill and Sullivan in December of 1902, operative BI08 expressed the need to move cautiously when firing these men. "In the matter of protecting my cover," he wrote, "I must ask you to withhold immediate action on some of the parties who will be named [as] soon as my investigation—now underway, is complete. I rather think there are parties looking out for me in Wardner, . . . that a trap can easily be laid [for me]."[12]

Photographs of operatives on assignment are virtually non–existent unless accessible in declassified Pinkerton Agency files. This is not surprising, since a picture appearing locally, captioned "Pinkerton Operative, Hecla Mine, 1906," would

earn the agent involved a fast ride out of town or a cold plot in the local cemetery. The photo of Charles Siringo (Figure 2) is something of an exception, though it was taken on a 1907 assignment as a bodyguard to the chief of Pinkerton's Denver office rather than while working as an operative. In the photo, Siringo displays his trademark Colt .44 pistol and a carved walking stick that concealed a twenty–inch throwing knife. Siringo achieved fame as Pinkerton agent "C. Leon Allison," who infiltrated the WFM local at Burke so completely as to be elected its secretary.[13]

A Murder, A Manhunt, and Reports from the Inside

Detective agencies did a land–office business with the Bunker Hill and Sullivan after the sabotage of its mill in 1899. The company hired as many as twenty-four operatives over the course of several years to monitor activities in the district. But even that effort was eclipsed in drama and importance by the activities following the assassination of ex-governor Frank Steunenberg at the end of 1905. On the snowy night of 30 December 1905, Steunenberg set off a trip–wire bomb attached to the gate in front of his home in Caldwell. Before Steunenberg died, he reportedly said "they finally got me," implicating the Western Federation of Miners in his murder. Authorities quickly apprehended a convicted felon named Harry Orchard, who admitted to constructing and planting the bomb, but alleged that federation officials Bill Haywood, George Pettibone, Charles Moyer, and Jack Simpkins had paid him to do so. The assassination launched substantial and far–reaching operations by both the Thiel and Pinkerton agencies. Their operatives played major roles in removing the federation's indicted officers from Denver to Boise, and in supporting the prosecution's case in the subsequent trial.[14]

Figure 2. *Pinkerton agent Charles Siringo photographed during the trial of WFM officers in Boise in 1907. He holds a silver-plated Colt .44, and a carved walking stick which conceals a twenty-inch knife. The inscription reads: "To Harry Orchard, Compliments of Yours Truly Chas. A. Siringo." Idaho State Historical Society.*

A report filed on 25 October 1905 provides a good example of how an operative infiltrated the union and gathered incriminating evidence two months prior to the assassination. Operative 15 wrote that

> *there is a girl here in the dance hall who is next to all of them. She seems to be a favorite of the union men as she has been in all the union camps in Montana. She is German and speaks all of the Scandi-*

navian languages. She told me that all the Swedes and Norwegians belong to the union. She pointed out three to me. I gave them the signal and they came over and shook hands and we had a drink.[15]

The following day, Number 15 indicated to Easton his need for better accommodations and more privacy than that available in his lodgings in Kellogg.

I am staying at Page's Hotel. It costs $1.50 per day. I have a small room with no table, or anything that I could use for writing. I am writing this on my knee. The rooms in which I could get a table would cost me $1.75. The rooms which is [sic] used for miners have from 2 to 4 men in them and I could have no privacy at all. I am going to try and find a room on the outside if it is satisfactory with you. If it is not, let me know by Saturday. Jack Simpkins is not in town. He has gone over on the St. Mary's river to a homestead he has over there. He is, I learn, deputy district organizer for the union.[16]

This report also indicated that the Pinkerton men had been tipped off that the WFM had a plot in the works against someone, and that Jack Simpkins was involved and needed to be watched.

By the end of October, Number 15 had made friends with the saloon crowd and gained the confidence of the bartender. Number 15 reported

Captain Link, who runs the Armory Saloon is one of the most dangerous men, as he is shrewd and has some very catchy arguments. He is one of Simpkins [sic] advisers. Tomorrow I will give you a list of names of men who are members of the union, and which are the most ardent. If any of them are let go for that reason— please do it in a manner not to bring suspicion on me.[17]

Unfortunately for historians, the operatives' reports filed during the remaining weeks of November and December 1905 are missing from the Bunker Hill and Sullivan manuscript collection. Perhaps they were extracted for use as evidence in the Steunenberg trial or to protect certain operatives.

Operative B108 was sent to Kellogg a week after the Caldwell bombing. He may have been one of the top Pinkerton agents, for his reports are extraordinary documents, displaying precise handwriting, a fine command of the English language, and an eye for detail as depicted in the following entry:

We have a man–stranger from Butte selling shoe strings. Description: A. 40, ht. 5 ft. 8 inches, L. Br. Hair, medium mustache, same color. Blue eyes and left hand badly crippled. Evidently burned or crushed at one time. No. 8 shoes, wearing ordinary high rubbers. Wears on left coat lapel, blue emblem of United Mine Workers of America. Says he is a union man and in hard luck."[18]

B108's comments on working conditions underground are interesting; they come down forcefully on the side of the working man and appear to be aimed at providing impetus and enlightenment to management on the need for change. "Spent my time from 5:30 p.m. until 3:30 a.m. in the mine," he recorded,

and from 12:45 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. around town at the various drinking resorts. There is nothing occupying the attention of the men so much as payday. Several of the men in the same stope with me, who are muckers, are

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REPRESENTING THE AMERICAN BANKERS' ASSOCIATION.

$2,000.00 REWARD

Governor Frank R. Gooding, of the State of Idaho, will pay a reward of Two Thousand Dollars for the arrest, or information leading to the arrest of

L. J. SIMPKINS, alias J. SIMMONS

Simpkins, alias Simmons, is charged with the murder of Ex-Governor Frank J. Steunenberg, of Idaho, at Caldwell, Idaho, on the evening of December 30th, 1905, and a warrant has been issued for his arrest.

L. J. SIMPKINS

DESCRIPTION:

Name	L. J. Simpkins.
Alias	J. Simmons.
Age	40 years.
Height	5 ft. 8 1-2 or 9 in.
Weight	180 pounds.
Build	Heavy, thick chested, slightly stoop shouldered.
Eyes	Blue, with decided cast, shifty glance, very peculiar look.
Nose	Large, slightly crooked.
Teeth	Large, prominent upper front teeth.
Hair	Dark.
Mustache	Heavy, dark and tawny.
Beard	Dark and heavy; may be smooth faced.
Complexion	Medium.

L. J. SIMPKINS

When last seen wore dark gray coat; gray trousers of cheap appearance; black fedora hat with high crown and large brim; long black overcoat; white lay down collar; medium colored four-in-hand tie.

Is member of the Executive Committee of the Western Federation of Miners.

If located, arrest and notify any of the above listed offices by telegraph or telephone.

Pinkerton's National Detective Agency,
306 Rookery Building, Spokane, Washington.
Day Phone Main 234. Night Phone Main 6647.

Or

G. J. HASSON, Superintendent.

Spokane, Wash., April 5, 1906.

***Figure 3**. The wanted poster issued by the Pinkerton Agency for L. J. Simpkins, a WFM executive committee member implicated in the murder of former Idaho Governor Steunenberg. Idaho State Historical Society.*

greatly dissatisfied with the wet places. Their argument is for more wages. The grievance is pretty well founded and they cannot be severely criticized, as the water is streaming down.[19]

A week later, on 15 January 1906, B108 wrote

this morning I met my friend Garrity— had several drinks with him and pulled him for all I could safely. He does not believe Orchard guilty, and if on the jury would not convict him on circumstantial evidence no matter how strongly it pointed toward the accused. He thinks the miners here could enjoy the same comforts of dry houses, bathrooms, gum clothes for wet places, and eight hour

shifts as in Butte.[20]

B108's writing on the last page of a lengthy report in February suggests a depth of knowledge and perspective on the entire labor movement in the West, one reaching far beyond the boundaries of a temporary assignment in the Coeur d'Alenes.

> *At a convention of the AF of L held in San Francisco, the WFM refused to continue any affiliation unless Socialistic principles were adopted. Mr. Gompers used his axe and repudiated the socialists and also the side affiliation with the United Mine Workers of America. This bill passed and for the last year the WFM have been losing ground every day. During this time the WFM members were permitted to eventually break the coal miners strike and cripple their organization in Colorado. Recently in Nanaimo, B.C., they joined alliance with the Western Fuel Co., and broke up a nice organization of the UMW of A, thus completely wrecking organized labor on Vancouver Island.*
>
> *The fight between these two organizations has waged on for a year, results being about even with each other. It seems now the UMW of A is aggressive and fueling the fight, and the WFM puts up a flag of truce. But the former organization with its 400,000 members & million dollar treasury, . . . is considered by the [mine] operators a godsend, good for both men and operator, insuring tranquility for each and every year a contract is signed, and using conciliation as the basis for settling grievances. It appears to me that it is a fight to the death and you can rest assured that there will be no affiliation unless the WFM comes under the name of UMW of A, and this band of dynamiters, styling themselves; 'The head of the Western Federation,' are depleted and come down off their perch and take up a pick and shovel the same as their fellow man who has been robbed to keep them fat.*[21]

B108 advised Easton that in order to be more effective, he needed to move from the Bunker Hill and Sullivan to the Hecla mine located north of Wallace on Canyon Creek. His reasoning was sound; the Hecla, Frisco and Tiger–Poorman mines had a strong federation presence in their workforces and continued to serve as organizing sites, permit system or not. While advising the change, he wrote, "I have instructed Mrs. G to move here from Spokane . . . we have our establishment near the Mace schoolhouse. I would be pleased if you would give me a box number or some blind address in the Post Office. The reasons are obvious."[22]

Operative 24 worked in Kellogg during the same period. His report of 31 January 1906 conveyed some of the hazards associated with being a part–time miner and a full–time spy. He reported "the Bunker Hill and Sullivan is on fire. How serious I cannot learn, but will report as soon as I find out. I went to work last night at 6:30 p.m. and after being in the mine half an hour, was made deathly sick with gas, and had to come out and go home. I have been ill all day today, scarcely able to move, but will report for duty as soon as possible."[23]

By mid–February, Jack Simpkins, indicted for Steunenberg's assassination along with Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone, had suspiciously disappeared. Operative 24 reported "as requested, I am watching very closely for L. J. Simpkins to put in his appearance in camp. None of the men appear to know where he is." Authorities issued a warrant for Simpkins' arrest and the Pinkerton agency circulated a reward poster (Figure 3). During the ensuing manhunt, C. Harry Williams, a deputy sheriff of Shoshone County doubling as

an operative for the Thiel agency, was assigned to track down and capture Simpkins. Williams followed his quarry on a baffling trek through the snowbound Northwest. Simpkins was first reportedly seen boarding a train at Tekoa, Idaho, then disembarking at Chatcolet only fifty miles away. Williams then followed the trail to Simpkins's homestead near the town of St. Maries. Unable to find Simpkins there, Williams made his way back to the Simpkins' family residence in Spokane—only to be told that two days earlier a wagon had arrived under cover of darkness and spirited Mrs. Simpkins away. While in Spokane, Williams obtained a search warrant to enter the cabin of a friend of Simpkins on the frozen shores of Wolf Lodge Bay on Lake Coeur d'Alene, but he left that cabin empty–handed. Here, exhausted on his snow shoes, deputy and operative Williams lost the trail and ended his stout-hearted, determined search. It would appear to a casual observer that Simpkins's five changes of address in six days do not suggest the behavior of a man with a clear conscience.[24]

Simpkins had gone somewhere to lay low in the spring of 1906, but where? A logical possibility would be a hideout in a union-friendly area, with supporting resources nearby, but away from centers of commerce where the threat of recognition was greater. The high–country forest near the Hercules mine, which contained more than a few vacant prospectors' cabins, was such a location. A tantalizing clue, left unresolved in recorded history, was offered by B108 in a report written from his new post near Burke. He spotted a man "who claims to be an electrician, but never works," and had a very odd daily routine. B108 observed:

> *A peculiarity about this man is that he travels by himself almost exclusively—he makes frequent trips into the mountains, presumably to hunt. But there is no game of any kind in season now, and he carries a .22 caliber Quackenbush target rifle. I have grave suspicions. . . . There is another man boarding at Mrs. Fox['s] restaurant—Dan O'Connell, formerly Chief of Police at Republic, Washington. Commonly known as Okanogan Dan, a union trustee . . . he is a one day prospector—goes out in the evening and back in the morning—(prospecting in the dark) and at other times out in the morning and back in the evening. Both parties['] usual trail is over the divide in back of the Hercules mill. I have also noted that one woman—a Mrs. Clark—also does some "prospecting" in that same direction. Her reputation for virtue is only moderate. This information is given after carefully considering them for some time and as the outcome of my instructions to attempt to locate Simpkins ... I candidly believe there is enough in this to warrant a quiet investigation. Extreme care must be used not to divulge the presence of any strangers in the country. Time and caution alone will give results—the Montana line affords a perfect avenue to evade capture.*[25]

Neither the law nor the Pinkertons ever caught up with L. J. "Jack" Simpkins. He and his wife quite successfully dropped out of sight. But Haywood, Moyer, and Pettibone were incarcerated in the Ada County jail at Boise for sixteen months awaiting trial. A rising young defense attorney named Clarence Darrow argued for the defendants. William Borah assisted with the prosecution just prior to taking his seat in the U.S. Senate. Pinkerton and Thiel agency operatives 9, 10D, 21, and 24A, among others, moved about Boise spying on potential witnesses or digging up support for the prosecution. The trial attracted the attention of the entire nation, not only be-

cause of the charges against the Western Federation of Miners, but also because of the celebrities who briefly visited the scene. The actress Ethel Barrymore attended courtroom proceedings after a week's performance as Madame Trentoni in "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines." Charles Siringo served as a bodyguard for James P. McParland—the cigar-chomping, never-say-die, chief of Pinkerton's Denver office.[26]

After ninety days of testimony in a blisteringly hot courtroom, the trial concluded with a "not guilty" verdict for Haywood. Freedom for Moyer and Pettibone soon followed. But to paraphrase a comment in Norman MacLean's novella, *USFS 1919: The Ranger, the Cook, and a Hole in the Sky*, being acquitted of murder by a jury in Idaho at the time is not at all the same thing as being innocent. The editor of the Idaho Daily Statesman, Calvin Cobb, called the result "a good hanging spoiled."[27]

The Mine Owners Move—The Outlook Changes

On the evening of 7 July 1906, the Mine Owners' Protective Association convention met in Wardner, site of the original Bunker Hill and Sullivan discovery, with delegations attending from all of the mining companies in the Coeur d'Alenes. Herman Rossi, a prominent Wallace politician and an owner of the Amazon–Dixie Mine, offered a motion, unanimously approved, which granted workers the eight–hour day at all mines in the district. That same night the association made concessions to their workers on wages and working conditions, thus undercutting the federation's agenda in a bold stroke.

Operative B108 reported on the miners' reaction the following day, indicating to his superiors their success in nullifying the Western Federation of Miners in the Coeur d'Alene. He informed Easton that he had

> *spent today in the Hecla mine, and made inquiries as to what the men think of the eight hour shift, and the WFM. A majority hate the leaders of the WFM for being such radical fellows. The opinion is general now that the WFM will have to vacate the field. Everything being granted voluntarily, and there being no other condition for them to demand—even if organized. It can be argued by the non–union miner as: "What's the use, the union costs money to keep up."*[28]

No move by the Mine Owners' Association could remove all the tensions and conflicts miners experienced from their work and their relations with their co–workers and managers. But granting the eight-hour day certainly helped, giving miners and millmen immediate relief and hope for future improvements. A semblance of peace replaced two decades filled with suspicion, fear, and bloodshed. Still, memories are long and some union supporters continued to resent the defeat of the Western Federation of Miners and its expulsion from the district. That organization lost influence after 1907, changing its name and agenda to reflect an evolving industry when it became the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers in 1916.[29]

It is difficult to say whether the violence and property destruction recounted here delayed or accelerated improvements in working conditions in the Coeur d'Alene's mines and mills. Either way, reports from undercover operatives provide a captivating, eyewitness view of the labor wars fought in one of the West's richest mining districts. But Operative 5 indicated in his last report, filed on 19 July 1906, that even after the labor war, life's labors and sorrows continued for the average hardrock miner, as did its joys. "The men are in good spirits and satisfied when going off shift this evening. They were so happy that they sang songs all the way out the [Kellogg] tunnel. I am going to my room now. In bed at 9:45 p.m."[30]

Notes

1. J. Anthony Lukas, *Big Trouble: Murder in a Small Western Mining Town Sets off a Struggle for the Soul of America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 98–104. Clark C. Spence, *Mining Engineers and the American West: The Lace Boot Brigade, 1849–1943* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1993), 182–86.
2. Patricia Hart and Ivar Nelson, *Mining Town: The Photo Record of T. N. Barnard and Nellie Stockbridge from the Coeur d'Alenes* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 45–47. Frederick Burbidge to Fred W. Bradley, 8 Jan. 1900, Bunker Hill Mining Company Manuscript Group 367, Special Collections, University of Idaho Library, Moscow (hereafter: Bunker Hill MSS).
3. Anonymous author, "A History of the Western Federation of Miners in the Coeur d'Alenes," Stanley A. Easton Papers, Apr. 1904, MS Group 5, File 14, University of Idaho Special Collections, Moscow.
4. Anonymous, "A History of the Western Federation of Miners," 6.
5. Anonymous, "A History of the Western Federation of Miners," 7. Italics mine.
6. Anonymous, "A History of the Western Federation of Miners," 9.
7. Unknown Pinkerton operative to Stanley Easton, "Notes from WFM convention, 31 May to 14 June 1906," Bunker Hill MSS.
8. Lukas, *Big Trouble*, 109.
9. Fred W. Bradley to John Hayes Hammond, 11 May 1896, Bunker Hill MSS.
10. Bradley to Hammond, 15 May 1896, Bunker Hill MSS.
11. Hart and Nelson, *Mining Town*, 57–67. Although an Idaho statute of 1893 prohibited employers from blacklisting workers because of union affiliation, this statute was being litigated at the time of the second Coeur d'Alene fight. It was eventually overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court, probably more for reasons of politics than jurisprudence. Idaho Governor Frank Hunt issued a decree to prohibit the practice of blacklisting in 1901, but the MOA established an "employment office" in Wallace that kept unions out of the Silver Valley until about 1949.
12. Al Burch to W. S. Swain, 30 Dec. 1901, Folder 1579, Bunker Hill MSS. "Answering yours of the 26th concerning the envelope that appears to have been opened, will state, that I have taken the matter up with the Post Office officials here, but am unable to determine at what point it could have been opened." Operative B108 to Stanley Easton, 3 May 1906, Folder 1578, Bunker Hill MSS.
13. Lukas, *Big Trouble*, 102.
14. Lukas, *Big Trouble*, 153–4.
15. Operative 15 to Easton, 25 Oct. 1905, Folder 1578, Bunker Hill MSS.
16. Operative 15 to Easton, 26 Oct. 1905, Folder 1578, Bunker Hill MSS.
17. Operative 15 to Easton, 30 Oct. 1905, Folder 1578, Bunker Hill MSS.
18. Operative B108 to Easton, 4 Feb. 1906, Folder 1578, Bunker Hill MSS.
19. Operative B108 to Easton, 5 Jan. 1906, Folder 1578, Bunker Hill MSS.
20. Operative B108 to Easton, 15 Jan. 1906, Folder 1578, Bunker Hill MSS.
21. Operative B108 to Easton, 15 Feb. 1906, Folder 1578, Bunker Hill MSS.
22. Operative B108 to Easton, 19 May 1906, Folder 1578, Bunker Hill MSS.
23. Operative 24 to Easton, 31 Jan. 1906, Folder 1578, Bunker Hill MSS.
24. Operative 24 to Easton, 17 Feb. 1906, Folder 1578, Bunker Hill MSS. Lukas, *Big Trouble*, 167.
25. Operative B108 to Easton, ? March 1906, Folder 1578, Bunker Hill MSS. Italics mine.
26. Lukas, *Big Trouble*, 224.
27. Norman MacLean, *A River Runs Through It and Other Stories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 126. Lukas, *Big Trouble*, 723.
28. Operative B108 to Easton, 8 July 1906, Folder 1578, Bunker Hill MSS.
29. James McBride, "The Bisbee Deportation in Words and Images," *The Mining History Journal* 6 (1999): 67, 76.
30. Operative 5 to Easton, 19 July 1906, Folder 1578, Bunker Hill MSS.