

THE CLASS STRUGGLE

Vol. I SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER, 1917 No. 3

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THE NEW LABOR MOVEMENT OF THE WEST

By AUSTIN LEWIS

Wider and more deep grows the industrial agitation in the Far West, bringing into its scope forces which have hitherto been recognized as outside of the pale of organization, and welding the masses of labor into a unified and coherent body. The Industrial Workers of the World, formerly a mere outlaw organization, looked at with contempt by large numbers of members of the American Federation of Labor, "regular" union men, is now in possession in more than one place of an industrial power which will render its future much more secure. With a curious sort of fatuousness the government and the various state officials have advertised this movement as pro-German and anti-war, and have stated that its funds came from German sources, an accusation which they have been obliged publicly to withdraw and have thereby increased both the publicity and the standing of the Industrial Workers. The organizer of one of these unions in a district where hitherto its activities had not been remarkable informed me that their membership had increased sevenfold within a few months as the result of the advertising and the agitation directed against them.

A concrete example of its progress I found in the City of Portland, where the organization had long had a hard fight to maintain itself. To my astonishment I saw an entirely different condition of things than ever before in such a headquarters.