
The Seattle Riots:

Shown to Have Been Prearranged

by Capitalist “Patriots” —

IWW Gains As Usual

[events of July 17-18, 1913]

by Frank R. Schleis

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Column after column of editorial and news matter has been and is being written regarding the riots which occurred in Seattle on the night of Friday, July 18. Through the direct connection therewith of the Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, they have assumed a national aspect. Nor has this affair passed without leaving behind a stigma on the ranks of those who are supposed to be the protectors and guardians of our liberties.

On the other hand, while the organization was temporarily inconvenienced, still it has in nowise injured us here in Seattle, as subsequent events have shown. Our headquarters opened up finds the usual visitors, and propaganda meetings an unusual attendance. The *Seattle Daily Times*, a miserable imitator of the *Los Angeles Daily Times* is today practically a discredited sheet. Ream after ream of rot has been reeled off by that slimy sheet. But had it been the working class element of the city which they had been appealing to, instead of a lot of hoodlums from the army and navy, nothing would have occurred. But this sheet, seizing upon the fact that thousands of cheap patriots were in the city, and upon the fact that the Secretary of the Navy had seen fit to make an attack upon the champions of human liberty, combined the two in a skillfully prepared article carefully calculated to incite riot. Into this article were cleverly woven the distorted facts of the occurrence of Thursday evening [July 17, 1913] when a number of soldiers and sailors had received rough treatment at the hands of a crowd gathered about to hear a militant suffragette speaker, after the former had been seen to compel her to leave her stand and attempted to slap her face when she tried to recover it. Thus on Friday afternoon the *Times* blazons out in big headlines, “Daniels Denounces Tolerance of Red Flag,” sub-headlines read: “IWW Denounced by Head of Navy,” “While Daniels Arouses Patriotism

of Rainier Club Diners, Anarchists Attack Wearers of Blue.” Concluding the article the *Times* warns, “Trouble Brewing for IWW.”

To give the story of the affair as it occurred on Thursday evening, we herewith submit an affidavit made by the speaker herself. She belongs neither to the IWW nor to the Socialist Party, and her affidavit is borne out from others, scores of which could be obtained if necessary. These are her words:

Mrs. Anna Miller, being first duly sworn, on oath deposes and says: That on the evening of July 17, 1913, at about 9:30 pm, she borrowed a stand from which to speak, and began to talk on women's rights...; at the beginning of her talk a large sailor in uniform approached her and told her that she, as a woman, had always been a slave, therefore had no right to speak and had better stop trying. On starting to talk the sailor disappeared.... After the large sailor had been gone about 15 minutes affiant observed him coming up Washington Street, accompanied by other men in uniform. The crowd of uniformed men attempted to break up affiant's meeting by jeering, etc., to which affiant replied by advising them to be gentlemen and respect the rights of others. Perceiving their persistence affiant closed her meeting, whereupon the uniformed men took possession of the stand upon which affiant had stood and spoke therefrom. Affiant sent several men to get the box but without success; then affiant went to get the stand in order to return it to the owner, and on asking for it the large sailor originally mentioned raised his fist to strike affiant, whereupon a well-dressed man wearing a diamond ring asked him, “You'd hit a woman would you?” and therewith hit him with his fist a number of times. Affiant was grabbed by the other uniformed men but was successfully carried out of the crowd by members of the IWW.

Anna Miller.

Henry Borini, being sworn, corroborates the statements made by Anna Miller, adding that the “large sailor was sober, his companions drunk.” Frank Rask, in a sworn statement, corroborates the other two, after reading their statements, adding: “That affiant heard all of Mrs. Miller's speech while the soldiers were there; that she was talking on religion before they arrived; that she made no reference to the red flag, no reference to the IWW, and used no language insulting to the army and navy.”

Before the Thursday night affair [ended], witnesses say, a dozen or more soldiers and sailors were more or less injured by the crowd.

Seizing upon this affair as a pretext, and by carefully distorting and interweaving therein the speech of Secretary Daniels, the *Times* was able to raise a mob of hoodlums who made the attacks of Friday night. It is significant that at the head of the mob, for the most time, was a certain Mattison, political writer for the *Times*. That the whole affair was prearranged can be seen by the evident systematic method which was pursued.

But long before the attack was made the IWW had received word of the affair. We were notified that on that evening all the sailors who could possibly be given shore leave would come ashore and make the attack at 7:30 pm. This information later proved to be correct, as promptly at that time the hoodlums began to put in their appearance yelling and hooting. The headquarters of the IWW at 211 Occidental Avenue, where the larger part of the organization is, was first attacked. But as we had received word of the affair, all the books, records, and effects of the organization were carefully put away, the electric lights were put out of commission, and the entrance door barricaded. This precaution alone save the headquarters from total destruction. Entrance was made by means of a fire escape, and evidently the "noble defenders" had little inclination to perform any great physical labor, and so left the larger part of our effects intact. Reports have been made that many of the soldiers had bayonets under their coats, while the sign at the entrance was shot to pieces with revolver shots. The police, too, had little inclination to interfere with the work of destruction, and we expect took a secret satisfaction in seeing the work go on. One patrolman went so far as to boost a short sailor up the fire escape.

From here the mob marched to the upper end of town in search of more property to destroy. Missing the IWW headquarters, which had just moved to a new place, the 5th Ward headquarters of the Socialist Party was visited, the effects piled in the street and burned. Next the 4th Ward headquarters were visited and the same process undergone. These were the principle headquarters of the Socialist Party in this city. Following this destruction the other IWW hall was finally located and the mob continued their work of destruction and arson. Saturday night [July 19, 1913] we were threatened with a renewal of that attack, but nothing occurred. On Monday morning [July 21, 1913] our headquarters were reopened.

Saturday afternoon saw the issuance of a proclamation by the mayor closing the saloons and ordering all editions of the *Times* suppressed unless the matter was first submitted for approval. Against these orders both the saloons and the *Times* found speedy relief when Judge Humphreys issued an injunction. And so the affair came to a close. Thousands of persons who were in the city to celebrate the four days of the Golden Potlatch had an opportunity to witness some of the fine work of the "law and order" defenders. In the meantime they had also an occasion to hear a little of the IWW.

While investigations being carried on may produce sensational developments, the press of Seattle seem to be anxious to have the whole affair closed and forgotten. The *Seattle Star* in headlines announces "Let Us Forget It," while the *Post-Intelligencer* adds editorially, "We have had enough of the affair." Meanwhile the *Times*, in the issues of Tuesday afternoon and evening, sought to create another riot by running glaring full page headlines reading: "Stabbed by IWWs, Army Sergeant Dies" and "Murder Sequel to

Attack on Uniform.” Beneath these headlines was a carefully prepared story telling of the death of one of the wounded soldiers, even describing minutely the death agonies endured. The article failed of its purpose and the next day the other papers of the city announced the fake.

Today the *Times* is a thoroughly discredited sheet. The *Star* says editorially, “All the decent papers of this city are unanimous, and there is little to fear from the degenerate filth poured out from the *Times*.” The *Sun* under back flag with skull and crossbones says: “The time is opportune for Alden J. Blethen to pull down the American flag from the top of his editorial page in the *Times* and substitute therewith the Jolly Roger, with the crossbones and skull. The black flag is the only one under which it is proper for him to pursue his piratical newspaper career. The American flag is dishonored and disgraced by its use on the *Times*.”

And so ends another chapter in the history of the IWW in the West.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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