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"No Other Agency": Public Education (K-12) in Washington State during World War I and the Red Scare, 1917-1920

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“NO OTHER AGENCY”: PUBLIC EDUCATION (K-12) IN WASHINGTON STATE
DURING WORLD WAR I AND THE RED SCARE, 1917-1920

A Thesis
Presented to
The Graduate Faculty
Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
Jennifer Nicole Arleen Crooks
May 2017

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

“NO OTHER AGENCY”: PUBLIC EDUCATION (K-12) IN WASHINGTON STATE DURING WORLD WAR I AND THE RED SCARE, 1917-1920

by
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This paper examines the impact of World War I and the Red Scare upon public education in Washington State. Schools, expected to be the instruments of governmental policy, played an important role in the everyday lives of people on the American homefront. Although many helped in the war effort willingly, this wartime drive included both instilling nationalism and loyalty to American political and economic institutions as well as the assimilation of immigrants. While these forces existed well before World War I and the Red Scare, they strengthened and became more publicly acceptable in 1917-1920 as more people grew convinced that these ideas were a means to protect national security, especially in Washington State where radical activity was particularly significant. These triplet forces of instilling patriotism, hunting radicals and assimilating immigrants characterized three critical school issues that affected Washington State, and indeed the nation during World War I and its aftermath. The issues, in a rough but overlapping chronological order, were opposition to the war by both teachers and students, instruction of the German language, and saluting the American flag. This intensity allowed conservative forces to express and gain support for their long-standing nativism and anti-radicalism.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: SCHOOLS IN A WORLD AT WAR

On April 9, 1918, the Seattle School Board fired C. J. Jacobs from a janitorial position at the Webster School for leaving Socialist literature in the teachers' room.¹ At South Bay, near Olympia, teacher Charles R. Carr, a Christian pacifist and a Socialist, lost his teaching license in February 1918 for publicly calling the war unholy, unrighteous and for "commercial purposes."² In the face of World War I and Red Scare hysteria, administrators and a significant proportion of the population, viewing the school as a critical part of the homefront war effort, created often severe consequences for school workers who they saw as negative political influences on children. In the words of George Creel, Director of the Committee of Public Information, reflecting on the work on the United States' official propaganda agency's work two years after the end of the war and in the midst of the Red Scare,

We foresaw a time when, perhaps, if the war with its burdens and losses continued, the national morale would need the support of a message that went without fail into every home. For this purpose there was no other agency so effective, so sure, as the public schools with their twenty millions of pupils.³

This was as true in Washington State as in the nation at large. American education during World War I and its aftermath was nearing the end of a period of intense reform and reorganization as part of the larger Progressive movement (1890-1920). Washington was no exception. The state offers a microcosm of these trends because of its active involvement in Progressive-movement reform and politics, as well as its particularly strong reaction during the

¹ "Oust Janitor Propagandist From School," *The Seattle Star* (Seattle, WA), April 9, 1918, 4.

² "Decision in Carr Case Still Pending," *Washington Standard* (Olympia, WA), February 8, 1918, 1.

³ George Creel, *How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1920), 111. The title of the chapter is, appropriately, "The Fight for the Mind of Mankind."

Red Scare against the prominent presence of radical political movements, particularly the International Workers of the World (I. W. W.). Indeed, Washington State Department of Education administrators and local school administrators used World War I and the Red Scare as a chance to instill patriotism, purge the school system of radicals as well as assimilate immigrants. These triplet forces of instilling patriotism, hunting radicals and assimilating immigrants characterized three critical school issues that affected Washington State, and indeed the nation, during World War I and its aftermath. The issues, in a rough but overlapping chronological order, were opposition to the war by teachers and students, German language instruction, and the use of the American flag in the classroom. The intensity of the enforcement of pro-establishment ideas increased during the time of World War I and the Red Scare. This intensity also allowed conservative political forces to express long-standing nativism and anti-radicalism. Using the rhetoric of patriotism and support for the war effort and American values, thereby politicizing education, they were able to generate more support for their ideologies.

Remembering the Era's Impact

Historian Alan W. Garrett has pointed out that while World War I occurred during a “formative period of American public education,” only a handful of historians have written about the topic. Garrett blames this both upon America’s short involvement in the war and the public’s quick forgetfulness of the period. Part of this was the public backlash against the excesses of the war period and against Progressive reform in general, of which education was an important part.⁴ This “forgetfulness” of the effects of World War I—and the Red Scare—upon education has largely not changed since Garrett wrote the article in the early 2000s despite centennial

⁴ Alan W. Garrett, “Remembrance and Disregard: American Schools During World War I,” *American Educational History Journal* 30 (2003): 79-83, 79.

commemorations of World War I and is even truer of Washington State than the United States as a whole.

The study of educational history in Washington has tended to focus on the “pioneer” period (from early American settlement through the 1880s at the latest). This is despite the fact that many primary sources from the Progressive era onwards have survived, including official reports, bulletins, official correspondence, school board minutes and newspaper articles.

A few historians have turned their focus upon Progressive educators in the state. Works that do exist emphasize specific educators. Seattle Superintendent Cooper was the focus of a history on the Seattle School District that included a chapter on World War I. The author interprets Cooper as a typical Progressive educator, advocating for reforms that strengthened the role of the school in the lives of children. He also argues that conservative educational forces, after the Red Scare cast Progressivism as dangerously close to political radicalism, dismantled much of Cooper’s legacy.⁵ Existing in isolation and with an urban focus, the study ignores the role of the Washington State Department of Education in promoting Progressive reforms throughout the state, particularly in rural districts. Analyzing Department of Education actions, gives this thesis a more nuanced view of how the war affected Washington’s largely rural population.

Historians have written very little about Superintendent of Public Instruction Josephine Corliss Preston other than short biographies, which usually depict her as a Progressive reformer. For example, Lynette L. Febler’s article on Preston’s program promoting rural teacher housing,

⁵ Bryce E. Nelson, *Good Schools: The Seattle Public School System, 1901-1930* (Seattle, WA: Seattle School District, 1988).

depicts her as a reformer working for improved rural education.⁶ However, Gary Gordon Rude's 1985 dissertation remains the only major work on her. Rude analyzes her leadership abilities but downplays her nationalist leanings, while still discussing her paranoia about radicalism in the school system.⁷ While being remembered as a groundbreaking female politician since she was Washington State's first female superintendent of public instruction and as a reformer, this paper challenges Preston's legacy by discussing her role in the repression of radicals and Germans in the school system. Instead of being a maverick going against the system, this paper argues that Preston was largely following national trends and contemporary conservative political ideology.

The roles of the State Department of Education and the Washington State Legislature, which met in 1917 and 1919, in educational policy are also important. Books on opposition to the war often briefly mention education, but tend to concentrate on universities. Historian Albert Gunns, writing about opposition to the war in the Pacific Northwest, briefly examines the persecution of German teachers in Seattle as well as the school board recall of Anna Louise Strong, a prominent Seattle radical activist. He also includes a section about new flag laws and the case of Russell Tremain, a young child temporarily removed from his parents' custody because his family's religious beliefs forbade him from saluting the flag.⁸ The most extensive study of the Russell Tremain case is Jennifer Henderson's who examines it in the light of later Supreme Court cases. Henderson argues that the divided, localized nature of religious resistance

⁶ Lynette L. Febler, "Talking Points: The Debate About Teachers' Cottages and Women's Place in Education, 1905-1920," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 103 no. 1 (Winter 2011/2012): 25-35.

⁷ Gary Gordon Rude, "Josephine Corliss Preston: A Study of Educational Leadership" (PhD dissertation, Seattle University, 1985).

⁸ Albert F. Gunns, *Civil Liberties in Crisis: The Pacific Northwest 1917-1940* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983).

to mandatory flag salutes delayed a national challenge to the law.⁹ The small number of identifiable cases of students and teachers punished for their religious beliefs against flag saluting would seem to bear this out.

This paper, focusing upon the role of the Washington State Department of Education, offers context to show how these cases of persecution were not isolated incidents and reflected trends such as anti-immigration and anti-radicalism that were stronger in Washington than nationally. Also reflected in this thesis are common themes about German Washingtonians. Dale R. Wirsing's study of German Washingtonians provides an overview of German-American history in the state, but contains only a brief section on World War I, that focuses on public use of German rather than in schools.¹⁰ Robert Branom's 2006 master's thesis about German language teachers in Seattle, both at the University of Washington and Seattle high schools, offers a detailed study of how the war affected individual teachers as well as overall district policy, reflecting popular anti-Germanism.¹¹ However, by looking at the Washington State Department of Education, this paper examines how a coalition of nativist and nationalistic forces outside the educational system, waged a similar campaign against German language instruction on the state level.

Although concentrating upon the Washington State Department of Education has its limitations, it serves as a good framing device for future historical inquiry. The State Department of Education served as a guide for local schools, seeking to influence them and reflecting their

⁹ Jennifer Jacobs Henderson, "Conditional Liberty: The Flag Salute Before *Gobitis* and *Barnette*," *Journal of Church and State* 47 no. 4 (2005): 747-767.

¹⁰ Dale R. Wirsing, *Builders, Brewers and Burghers: Germans of Washington State* (Olympia: The Washington State American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, 1977).

¹¹ Robert T. Branom, "Against the "Hun": Anti-Germanism at the Seattle Public Schools and the University of Washington, 1917-1918" (master's thesis, University of Washington, 2006).

concerns. Departmental records are easily accessible and well preserved in Olympia, while discussions of the war are largely silent in local school board minutes and newspaper articles are often formulaic and scattered listing routine activities and statistics. Further study of schools at the county and local level would add additional nuance to the study of the effect of World War I and the Red Scare upon Washington Schools, but the Washington State Department of Education offers a useful lens for examining these effects.

Definitions

While scholars and the public often define patriotism more broadly as the love of one's own country, nationalism is a specific type of patriotism. Historian Benedict Anderson defines nationalism as the process that creates and sustains the "imagined community of a nation." Nations, which he defines as perceived both as limited and sovereign are "imagined" communities because despite shared history, culture and language, no one in a nation can know all its other members.¹² Elizabeth O'Leary argues that nationalism is not a neutral force but "creates, reflects, and reproduces structures of cultural power," as nations develop by unifying, dividing, consolidating, fracturing, remembering and forgetting.¹³ Nativism, an idea that America needed protection from foreign influences, reflected contemporary fears that immigrants were a challenge to American culture, security and even its genetic makeup.¹⁴ The answer of some was the "Americanization" of immigrants, which usually meant assimilation. Administrators based contemporary programs of the period on the idea that immigrants "must

¹² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. Revised Edition* (New York: Verso, 2003), 5-6.

¹³ Elizabeth O'Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 4.

¹⁴ Donald F. Tingley, "Immigration Restriction," in "Washington (State)" in John D. Buenker and Edward R. Kantowicz, eds., *Historical Dictionary of the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988), 210.

abandon their old-country heritage and loyalties and be assimilated, homogenized, and made over into Americans as quickly as possible.”¹⁵ Schools would prove a key component of this Americanization “movement.”

Despite having a long history in America, radicalism is difficult to define as politicians and school officials used the word to describe a wide variety of people during World War I and the Red Scare. Socialists argued for the replacement of the capitalist system with shared, public ownership of capital and the means of production. Supportive of unions, they enjoyed popularity among industrial workers and farm laborers. These ideas would throw suspicion upon the radicals during the war years, as “patriotic” conservatives saw challenges to the current political, social and economic system as a threat to the prosecution of the war and the survival of the United States. Socialists, anarchists, and even Christian or political pacifists were all considered potential “traitors” by patriotic forces. To be loyal, Peterson and Fite argue, these people had to abandon their causes for economic and social reform, and work with the capitalists and military for victory. Indeed most leading Socialists came to publically support the war effort after Congress declared war on Germany, to avoid persecution. However, many individual Socialists continued to oppose the war as a capitalist conspiracy that showed the hypocrisy of American calls for democracy abroad as they denied it at home to workers, making them one of the largest groups to continue to oppose the war after American intervention.¹⁶ A small but prominent segment of remaining Socialists were school teachers.

¹⁵ Raymond A. Mohl, “Americanization,” in Buenker and Kantowicz, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, 17.

¹⁶ H. C. Peterson and Gilbert C. Fite, *Opponents of War, 1917-1918* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1968), 45.

Educational Reform in the Progressive Era

The Progressive era marked a period of particular change and transition for the American educational system. Many historians cite the post-American Civil War period as the beginning of the nation's modern school system. Trends such as industrialization, urbanization, massive immigration and a larger acceptance of, in the words of Urban, a "majoritarian political sensibility" that accepted a more national ethos.¹⁷ Reflecting these ideas, compulsory education laws became more widespread. In 1890, at the dawn of the Progressive era, only twenty-seven states had such laws, but by 1918 all forty-eight states did. The first states to pass compulsory educational laws were in the North and Upper Midwest, where fears of the effects of urbanization, industrialization and immigration were strong.¹⁸ These laws proved largely symbolic, however, and lacked comprehensive enforcement. Even without these laws, between 1860 and 1890 school attendance among five to nineteen year olds in the United States rose from forty-nine percent to sixty-four percent and adult illiteracy rates fell from twenty to thirteen percent.¹⁹ School was thus becoming a unifying experience and part of the daily lives of the majority of America's children.

Besides increasing the number of students in school, Progressives also sought to improve the education that children received. Urban schools saw the most change over time. Called "the one best system" by education historian David Tyack, urban schools even in the Northwest developed into cohesive units. Adopting age-grading and separating grades by classroom, urban school districts adopted uniform curriculum and tests. Administrative changes included city

¹⁷ Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr., *American Education: A History* 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 185.

¹⁸ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 197.

¹⁹ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 199.

school boards elected at large, rather than by neighborhood and school superintendents to oversee the urban school district.²⁰ These goals also advanced more slowly in less urban areas. Other changes included a shift from having first through eighth grades in elementary school, to placing grades one to six into elementary school, seven through nine into junior high school and ten through twelve into senior high school, as more students than before were graduating from high school. Progressives also sought to expand and reorganize curriculum according to new pedagogical techniques and the new science of developmental psychology, increase vocational and industrial education, toughen teacher training, add extracurricular activities such as sports and student clubs, and improve the construction of school buildings.²¹ Much of the curriculum change remained theoretical at this point. Educators such as John Dewey pioneered ideas for child-centered education, but centralization and curriculum changes were a much more popular development over the period and most public schools remained teacher-dominated with a subject-centered curriculum.²²

Additionally, schools were centralizing, consolidating scattered districts that reflected small rural communities. This centralizing trend often resulted more from outside pressure than internal dynamics.²³ In turn, teachers to protect their jobs were beginning to organize into teacher associations, replacing earlier mutual aid societies. However, these associations remained rather weak during the period.²⁴

²⁰ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 199-200.

²¹ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 227-228.

²² Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 259.

²³ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 229.

²⁴ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 233.

Progressives put such an emphasis on schools because many of them believed these institutions could help cure society of its major modern ills, improving the next generation by teaching them a careful selection of ideas. It was in such a spirit of optimism that the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction's office could write that "This is the age of the school."²⁵ However, historians have argued that a negative side of this reform also existed. The reformed educational system tended to emphasize "moral, political, and economic order and conformity," regimented to "homogenize the school population" in the pretext of it being the only "long-term solution" to the class division, corruption, ethnic conflict, crime, and violence of urban society.²⁶ Such concerns also supported the formation of private organizations such as the Boy Scouts and YMCA, who argued that contemporary culture distanced children from opportunities to be outdoors and active, using a heroic imagination.²⁷

An important part of Progressive educational reforms was the assimilation of immigrants and ethnic minorities at a time that saw the largest influx of immigrants to the United States than any other period of history. Fear of foreigners and "un-American doctrines and beliefs" persisted throughout the era,²⁸ concerns long expressed in educational circles. For example, in 1891, a National Education Association report to the National Council of Education warned of the supposed dangers of foreign influence and advocated education for assimilation as the only "cure" for the problem.²⁹ This type of civic nationalism believed that education could make

²⁵ "General Educational Activities," in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Second Biennial Report for the Biennium Ending June 30, 1914* Mrs. Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction (Olympia, 1914), 17.

²⁶ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 203.

²⁷ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 248.

²⁸ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 267.

²⁹ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 13.

immigrants into “good Americans.” In contrast to this, many other people argued that certain “races” could not be properly educated into American citizens because they were unfit for it biologically. These racial restrictionists supported the National Origins Acts of 1924, which limited immigration of groups that these restrictionists felt were biologically incapable of being American citizens.³⁰ However, this promotion of often coercive assimilation education increased during World War I as education and politics further intertwined, and 1915-1920s was marked by what historians have called one of the “most important and extensive adult education movements in American History.”³¹ The War Emergency Education Commission also listed Americanization as a wartime goal.³² Besides the assimilation of immigrants and their children, the period saw a larger move towards cultural homogenization. Native American children faced intensive assimilation efforts, especially in off-reservation boarding schools.³³

Washington During the Progressive Era

Washington State was active in the Progressive movement, passing many reforms over a short period of time. A Republican-dominated state during the period, Washington saw a strong Populist movement in the 1890s, even electing Populist John Rogers as Governor in 1896, who won on a Populist, Republican and Democratic “fusion” ticket. Reelected as a Democrat in 1900, Rodgers died in office the following year.³⁴

³⁰ Jeffrey E. Mirel, *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization Education and European Immigrants* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 21.

³¹ Mirel, *Patriotic Pluralism*, 23.

³² “National Program of Education,” in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Sixth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction For the Biennium Ending June 30th, 1922 Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Olympia, 1922), 43.

³³ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 244.

³⁴ Carlos Arnaldo Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 265-266.

However, the reform movement remained strong. Beginning with the legislative session of 1907, a broad coalition of “insurgents” succeeded over the next several sessions in passing a wide variety of Progressive reforms. This group of urban reformers as well as labor and farming organizations, were successful in pushing through the initiative, direct primary, referendum, recall, local option prohibition, eight hour work day for women, industrial insurance, and a commission to establish a minimum wage for women. In national politics, the state elected progressive Republican Miles Pointedexter to the House in 1908 and Senate in 1910. Furthermore, in the 1912 Presidential election, the splinter Progressive party won the state. Democrat Ernest Lister won the office of governor by emphasizing his record of efficiency and economy under Rodgers’ Populist administration, themes that resonated with Progressive politics. He also depended on those who had voted Progressive in 1912 for his 1916 reelection.³⁵

Washington progressives also turned their eyes to education. Article IX, Section 1 of the 1889 state constitution declared that “It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste, or sex.” However, education often entangled in what progressives saw as outdated notions and politics and the system began to shift soon. In 1897 a board of higher education formed to streamline education between schools and universities and to coordinate teacher education. This began state examinations for teachers and in 1901 the grading of these exams moved from the county to state level. State-created eighth grade exams

³⁵ Robert D. Saltvig, “Washington (State),” in Buenker and Kantowicz, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, 508. Progressive leaders in Washington tended to come from the State’s five more urban counties as well as wealthy wheat-producing counties in Eastern Washington. Conservative politicians tended to come from poorer rural counties in western and central Washington. In addition, although Republicans made up the majority of the state legislature, half of them could be classified as progressives and nearly all the Democrats were progressives. Hugh D. Spitzer, “Pivoting to Progressivism: Justice Stephen J. Chadwick, the Washington Supreme Court, and Change in Early 20th-Century Judicial Reasoning and Rhetoric,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 104, No. 3 (Summer 2013): 107-121, 108-109.

began in 1903, which remained graded at the county level during the war and its aftermath. Another major reform, pushed by the Populists was the Barefoot Schoolboy Act. This law created a property tax to equalize spending on rural and urban schools.³⁶ The state legislative session of 1909 created the school system that was in place during World War I and the Red Scare.

At the top of the Washington State Department of Education system was the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education, which had overlapping duties. The Superintendent of Public Instruction had the power for “supervision over all matters pertaining to the public schools of the state.”³⁷ According to the 1889 state constitution, the superintendent was chosen in general elections for four year terms. Serving as ex-officio president of the governor-appointed State Board of Education, the Superintendent submitted biennial reports to the state governor, had an office in Olympia and executed school laws, being the first to decide cases of revocation of teaching licenses. They also prepared and disturbed manuals of curriculum and school laws, signed teacher certificates and student diplomas and prepared the state teachers and eighth grade graduation exams. Furthermore, they oversaw an annual convention of the county superintendents. Over 2,600 school districts in 1916 depended on the office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for all forms, legal blanks, school registers, printing, record books and special bulletins on selected topics. The Superintendent

³⁶ Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest*, 274-275.

³⁷ “Present Day State School System: Superintendent of Public Instruction,” in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Third Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Biennium Ending June 30, 1916 Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Olympia, 1917), 11.

would also conduct an annual survey of eighth grade graduates, usually obtaining the information from district clerks, so they were far from comprehensive.³⁸

The Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction during World War I and its aftermath was Josephine Corliss Preston. Preston was an active progressive political leader. She represented the professionalization of teaching. Beginning her teaching career at age fourteen in Minnesota, Preston later attended Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota for a teaching degree. Teaching in Waitsburg, Washington, she became active in various professional organizations such as the Inland Empire Teachers' Organization. In 1904 Preston received the appointment as the assistant county superintendent in Walla Walla County. She was then appointed deputy state superintendent when the current one resigned. She won election to this position five times. Appointed by the governor to the State Board of Education in 1911; Preston soon received a nomination for State Superintendent of Public Instruction because of her strong professional background and Republican partisanship and won the 1912 election. She would hold the position until 1928 when she lost the nomination.³⁹ Preston was active in World War I school activities on the national level, joining the National War Emergency Educational Committee, an organization that advised the federal government on how public schools could help build "patriotism" and aid the war effort. In addition, Preston served as president of the National Education Association from 1918 to 1920.⁴⁰

While earlier reformers had broken considerable ground, Washington's first female state superintendent placed a special emphasis on improving rural education. She also promoted

³⁸ "Present Day State School System: Superintendent of Public Instruction," in State Department, *Biennium 1916*, 11-14.

³⁹ Karen J. Blair, "Preston, Josephine Corliss (1873-1958)," HistoryLink File #9706, HistoryLink, March 27, 2011, accessed April 15, 2016, http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=9706.

⁴⁰ Rude, "Josephine Corliss Preston," 20.

higher teacher salaries, tougher teacher certification standards, more tax funding, consolidating districts for efficiency and teacher retirement funds, to name a few of her causes. She is perhaps most famous for advocating for the construction of teacher cottages to encourage teachers to work in rural districts. Many rural teachers had formerly boarded with district families, a potentially difficult situation that contributed to high turnover rates. The state had 105 teacher cottages in 1915 which increased to 452 in 1927.⁴¹

Alongside the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction was the State Board of Education. The 1909 School Code changed the structure of the State Board so that it consisted of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Presidents of the University of Washington and Washington State College, one principal of a state Normal school, one county superintendent and one principal of a fully-accredited four year high school. This larger State Board approved graduation requirements, listed teacher certificates and prepared uniform teacher and eighth grade examinations, inspected and accredited secondary schools, adopted codes to unify the public schools of the state, and had the final say in appeals over de-certification cases.⁴²

Next down was the county level. Washington's thirty-three counties each had one county superintendent, who managed day to day affairs of county education. They approved teacher contracts, and reported statistics and problems to the office of the State Superintendent. Below them were the many local school districts. In 1916, Washington had 2,605 school districts. Most of these districts were in small, rural communities. The Department of Education could designate only a handful of districts as large enough to be first class, having their own superintendents. These urban districts included Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane, Everett, Bellingham, North Yakima,

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² "Present State School System: State Board of Education," in State Department, *Biennium 1916*, 64-66.

Walla Walla, Aberdeen, and Hoquiam.⁴³ A combination of economics and an urbanizing population motivated school districts in Washington to consolidate at a rapid but steady pace during the period. Eight districts consolidated in 1913, seven in 1914, twenty-two in 1915 and ten in 1916.⁴⁴

Teachers, for the most part, were ill-prepared and underpaid. In 1915, a survey found that most one-room school teachers had little to no professional preparation for teaching, even Normal school. Moreover, most had been teaching for less than five years, were single and had fewer than two dependents.⁴⁵ Part of the Progressive reforms included strengthening teacher qualifications. In 1917, reformers pushed through the rule that teachers needed to graduate from four years of high school or the equivalent.⁴⁶

Underscoring all these reforms was the idea that the state had a key role to play in education. As Arthur Wilson, Assistant Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction, wrote in 1916,

The greatest problem before the people of the state today is the education of all the children of all the people...It is a modern conception of society that the young should be trained in accordance with rather fixed rules toward an accepted standard of citizenship, and it is a still more modern one that the state should assume a considerable share of the direct responsibility for this training...it is the inalienable right of each individual to be educated [and]...the state is best preserved by educating its citizens.⁴⁷

⁴³ "Present State School System: County Superintendent," in State Department, *Biennium 1916*, 131.

⁴⁴ "Consolidation of Schools," in State Department, *Biennium 1916*, 157.

⁴⁵ "Survey Report of Rural Teachers," in State Department, *Biennium 1916*, 159.

⁴⁶ "Certification, Qualifications for," in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Biennium Ending June 30, 1918 Mrs. Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Olympia, 1919), 37.

⁴⁷ Arthur Wilson, "Report of the State Bureau of Inspection: Responsibilities of the State," in State Department, *Biennium 1916*, 24.

The modern state, according to Wilson, was to educate its children to be an acceptable type of citizen. That such education would ensure the survival of the nation would become a common argument during the war and Red Scare years.

Casting a Giant Shadow: The War Creeps In

The World War I era would increase the presence of the state in local school districts, characterized by a constant stream of bulletins, letters and other communications. Schools offered an ideal disseminator for propaganda in a world at war. Called by some historians the “golden age of propaganda,” all belligerent nations in the conflict used propaganda to sway public opinion to support the war effort, convincing them to enlist in the military, donate money and participate in other war related activities. Radicals, isolationists, pacifists, German and Irish Americans tended to oppose the war. To “sell” a controversial war, official propaganda used a combination of bullying, threats, social pressure and “tedious repetition” (as Kingsbury puts it) to create an atmosphere of moral persuasion that would convince people to act in ways they would not normally.⁴⁸ People would see these propaganda messages throughout their daily lives—newspapers, post offices, storefronts, public libraries, and schools. War agencies such as the Committee of Public Information used posters, pamphlets, books and films to spread the pro-war message.

Children were frequently used as images to motivate support of the war, attempting to convince people that it was a war to protect ‘innocents’—women and children—from harm. Atrocity stories, based on facts but often distorted, fueled fears of rape, starvation and murder in the wake of the enemy “Hun” horde.⁴⁹ Still the war’s haunting images of drowned women

⁴⁸ Celia Malone Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 220.

⁴⁹ Kingsbury, *For Home and Country*, 227.

clinging to dead infants from the Lusitania and young girls dragged off from burning villages by brutish German soldiers were plastered all over popular culture and appealed to the public (especially parents) to support the war effort in order to protect their children. “Our Daddy is fighting at the Front for *you*,” two cherubic children waving an American flag reminded the public on a poster that read “Back Him Up—Buy a United States Gov’t Bond of the 2nd Liberty Loan of 1917.”⁵⁰

Accordingly, the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction office was very busy during the war years. Their 1919 biennium report estimates that they mailed out 50,000 pieces of correspondence on “war work” including 5,000 circular letters on war saving stamps, 27,000 for an essay contest during the United War Work Campaign, and 2,500 for book donations for soldiers. The office expanded their presence in other government departments, sending a stenographer to the Seattle headquarters of the war saving stamps committee.⁵¹ They also used their resources to try to quantify what students and schools were doing towards the war effort. For instance, the State Department of Education conducted a survey of eighth grade graduates from 1913 to 1918. Many of the men from the earlier classes were now soldiers.⁵²

Preexisting movements for a greater role for the school in communities made political inroads into schools by the government during World War I easier. Preston before the war was already promoting schools to be community centers, thus agreeing with Creel about schools being an ideal place to reach the public at large. Discussing in 1916 how districts could use schools as community centers, the Superintendent of Public Instruction’s office report stated that

⁵⁰ Kingsbury, *For Home and Country*, 185.

⁵¹ “Reports and Recommendations of Superintendent of Public Instruction: War Work,” in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 17-18.

⁵² *Ibid.*

There is no place where you can bring all of the people together, where you can talk things out, where you can discuss all the problems that many come up, excepting the public school building that is owned by all the people and controlled by them... The public mind that must stand back of everything that is done and this can only come through school house meetings.⁵³

As early as 1912, the Washington State Department of Education was aggressively pushing for schools as community centers. This in itself was not unusual, as communities were already using their schools. It was not uncommon for private groups to use schools for church services, literature clubs, fraternal lodges, political gatherings and other meetings.⁵⁴ The State Department heavily promoted special school events over the period and the number of these events increased dramatically. Two hundred districts held community contests in 1913 and five hundred in 1914, in agriculture and home economics, culminating in a state children's fair. At least two hundred districts held a minimum of three events the previous year, the most popular being agricultural and home economics contests, spelling bees and declamatory contests, community lectures, and field meets.⁵⁵

More than just the educational benefit of these community activities for children and adults, the school administration saw it as a way to get closer in touch with the public. "I consider that I did more good with these meetings than I shall be able to do with the entire institute," wrote Asotin County Superintendent W. J. Jerome of his PTA meetings at Community

⁵³ "The Wider Use of the United School Plant," in State Department, *Biennium 1916*, 87.

⁵⁴ "Enlarged Use of the School Plant," in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-First Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Two Years Ending June 30, 1912 Henry B. Dewey Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Olympia, 1912), 5.

⁵⁵ "Contests and Community Center Work," in State Department, *Biennium 1914*, 7-8.

Centers, “This is because it brought the work of the school and the ideals of the school directly in contact with the people.”⁵⁶

The State Department of Education promoted using schools as community centers as a solution to fears of rural collapse in the face of increasing urbanization and industrialization.

Writing from Eastsound on Orcas Island, Mrs. Harding Gow wrote of what they wanted to replace:

As I walked up to the large grounds, bare both of trees and play-ground equipment, but with a few cattle grazing about, and pushed open the door (there was no knob) to see 17 children of all sizes and grades sitting in dirty seats, with black boards glazed by ten years’ use, walls guiltless of pictures or kalsomine but with great holes showing the lath beneath, I marveled, for I had heard that the rural schools had waked up.⁵⁷

Making the school into a community center, Gow argued, had led to its renovation and revitalization by creating a community spirit. She (and the State Education Department) perhaps overemphasized the effect of school community centers on creating community spirit. Eastsound already had a private library at the Madrona Club, a church, Odd Fellows Hall, and a Grange that met in homes.⁵⁸

Washington’s “Melting Pot”

A popular term for assimilation in this time period was the “melting pot.” Originating with Israel Zangwill’s 1909 Broadway play, *The Melting Pot* (which depicted a Jewish-American immigrant’s vision of Americans as a composite of a multitude of European immigrants and their descendents), the melting pot idea became popular in debates about immigration. Some used it as a metaphor for cultural pluralism, arguing that immigrants should

⁵⁶“Activities of the State Department of Education: Contests and Community Center Work,” in State Department, *Biennium 1914*, 8.

⁵⁷ “Extracts from an article by Mrs. Harding Gow of East Sound, Washington, on the Rural Community Center,” in State Department, *Biennium 1916*, 176.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

keep their old cultures while others used it to argue that immigrants must become part of the mainstream Anglo-Protestant culture. Many nativists believed that the melting pot at the time was failing, making Americanization another important part of the educational drive of this period.⁵⁹

Washington's population grew exponentially over the Progressive era. A significant percentage of this population growth came from immigrants and their children. Although they formed an important part of the economic and social fabric of the state, Anglo-American Protestants often perceived these newcomers as a threat to the old order. The 1890 United States Federal Census recorded that approximately 25.2% of Washington's overall population was foreign born. That number remained fairly steady throughout the period. The 1900 and 1910 Federal Censuses recorded the population as being 21.5% and 22.4% respectively.⁶⁰ The demographics of the foreign born was also changing. In 1890, a quarter of the foreign born were Scandinavian, while the rest were British, German and Canadian. The Scandinavian proportion of the population would continue to grow at a more rapid rate than the overall population growth. For example, in 1910 Seattle was 31% Scandinavian.⁶¹ In 1920, the foreign born was 19.6% of the state's population, a 138.2% increase in overall number from 1900 to 1920. Second generation white immigrants were 27.1% of the overall white state population, a 177.3% increase.⁶²

⁵⁹ "The Melting Pot," in Catherine Cocks, Peter Holloran, Alan Lessoff, *Historical Dictionary of the Progressive Era* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2009), 272-273.

⁶⁰ "Foreign Born Population in the American West, by State and Territory, 1890, 1900, and 1910," in Elliott Robert Barkan, *From All Points America's Immigrant West, 1870s-1952* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 464.

⁶¹ Barkan, *From All Points*, 70.

⁶² "Foreign Born and Second Generation in Western States, 1920," in Barkan, *From All Points*, 468.

While a large number of immigrants worked in rural mining and timber industries, the immigrant population was very urban compared to rest of the state's population. In 1920, the United States Federal Census found that 55.2% of the total population in Washington classified as urban, but 59.9% foreign born were. This was not as large a difference than the United States as a whole, reflecting the importance of rural industries to the immigrant population. In 1920, the nation as a whole was 51.4% urban overall, with 75.5% for immigrants urban. Excluding the west, the nation was 52.2% with immigrants 78.6 % urban.⁶³

Political and educational authorities saw a dangerous link between immigrants and political radicalism. As A. S. Gist of Seattle wrote in 1918, describing a six week course for adults in "Americanism":

Immigrants coming to America often bring with them antagonistic feeling towards all governments because of a feeling of antagonism which their former government seemed to have towards them. The idea that the boy should say 'Cheese it here come the cop' should be changed to one of friendliness....[This would be done through educating children towards] a rousing civic State and National pride, and...developing and fostering virtues and ideas which will tend to make conditions more livable, because of this pride and because of a social consciousness.⁶⁴

Gist's program was one of many that targeted immigrants, adults as well as children, for assimilation. Viewing that "The problem of the foreigner in our midst has become a real and urgent one," for the illiterate was a liability and easily misled in a democracy, the 1915 Washington State legislature voted to fund more night schools. The number of night schools, concentrated in urban areas as only first class districts had the funds and resources for them, was

⁶³ "White Foreign-Born Urban Populations in the West, 1920," in Barkan, *From All Points*, 466.

⁶⁴ "Americanization by A. S. Gist, Seattle," in Washington State Education Association, *Thirty-Third Annual Session of the Washington Education Association for the Year 1919 Held in Seattle, Washington October 29, 30, 31, November 1 1919* (Seattle: Washington State Education Association, 1919), 76.

increasing. There were twenty-six night schools in 1915, increasing from a former mere five or six a few years prior.⁶⁵

Conclusion

With the United States declaration of war on April 6, 1917, the Washington State Department of Education was in a strong position to take the lead in moving schools into the war effort. The war, however, would have a larger effect on schools than many could have anticipated. These effects would continue and be cemented by the subsequent Red Scare. Above all, educational authorities argued that the war was a time where everything had to contribute to the effort. As the president of the Washington State Education Association put it in 1918 that:

in such a crisis all moral and intellectual as well as physical agencies are laid under claim and must make utmost contribution to the Nation's need, each in its way and according to its best light, and impressed as never before by a deep sense of responsibilities as the guides and guardians of youth, we here highly resolve to dedicate ourselves afresh to education which by reason of this enveloping and tragic conflict assumes new significance and new boundaries...⁶⁶

The Washington State Educational Association was not alone in arguing that schools must dedicate themselves to the war effort. What the Washington State Department of Education specifically expected schools to do and their responses to dissent among teachers and students will be the focus of the next chapter. The main theme of educational authorities, however, was American nationalism, using education to spread a specific political ideology. In Preston's words, "lessons of patriotism, loyalty to the flag and government are the lessons taught to the young. These are the lessons which should be carried home to the fathers and mothers."⁶⁷

⁶⁵"Americanization," in State Department, *Biennium 1916*, 50-51.

⁶⁶ "The Washington Educational Association," in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 153.

⁶⁷ Josephine Corliss Preston, "Stand Up and Be Counted," in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Fifth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Biennium Ending June 30, 1920 Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Olympia, WA: Washington State Department of Education, 1921), 182. This was a letter sent in December 1919 to state school teachers.

Outline

Chapter II, “Very Busy Times for All of Us”: Schools and Wartime “Loyalty” outlines the ideals and activities that teachers and students were encouraged to do to prove their loyalty to the war effort and to America. Using the war to push Progressive ideas to reform society through education, the Washington State Department of Education promoted old agendas like community centers and thrift education, casting them in a patriotic light. Many teachers and students did not support the war. In the name of assisting war efforts and protecting the children under their care from radical influence, the State Department of Education and school boards across the state used the war and the Red Scare as reasons to clear out radicals from the education system.

Chapter III, “Languages of Loyalty: Banning German Language Instruction,” looks at the wartime move against German language instruction. Although Germans had been a respected minority in the United States prior to the war, wartime hysteria led to increased anti-immigrant feeling against them. Scrutiny of teachers and textbooks intensified over the war, leading to a state-wide ban on German instruction that lasted through the conflict and permanently damaged German-American cultural vitality in the State.

Chapter IV, “Testing the Bounds of Liberty: The American Flag,” examines the importance of the flag as a symbolic centerpiece of patriotic education, which could teach students larger lessons about duty and love of country. Used as both a means of showing loyalty to the wartime cause and as a way of showing non-support, questions of political and religious liberty surrounded the flag. Additional legal requirements mandating flag saluting in schools put increased pressure on religious and political minorities that would last until the 1940s.

The conclusion, “Moving Forward,” shows how schools sought to remember the war, memorializing the conflict at the same time as trying to carry on themes and programs from the period, especially the Junior Red Cross. The 1920s saw an increased emphasis on

Americanization and civics education, reflecting wartime trends of nativism and concern over political radicalism. World War I and the Red Scare's effects still echo throughout the educational system.

Chapter II:

“VERY BUSY TIMES FOR ALL OF US”: SCHOOLS AND WARTIME “LOYALTY”

Charles R. Carr, South Bay, Thurston County, February 1918

Charles R. Carr had worked for Thurston County Schools since 1908 teaching at the South Bay School and nearby McLane School.¹ A Christian pacifist (a Christian who believes that war is against God’s commands) and a Socialist, he was accused in 1918 by his school board of being disloyal to the United States and the war effort. After the Board fired him, then reinstated him, and then fired him again, the Thurston County Council of Defense appealed to Josephine Preston, Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to rule on Carr’s case. They had three main charges against the teacher: calling the war unholy, unrighteous and “wholly for commercial purposes” at a Liberty Bond meeting, telling a few men that he would not assist in shipbuilding and other war activities and discouraging students from selling, buying or writing essays about the second Liberty Loan.²

At a hearing before Preston held in the Senate Chamber of the State Capitol in Olympia, Carr defended himself and had a lawyer. He argued that he meant only that the war had commercial origins, not that America had commercial interests for joining the war and that he was interested in helping in the homefront war effort, but not in killing. His pastor also defended Carr, arguing that he was a pacifist and not disloyal. Several members of the audience of the Liberty Loan meeting testified. The court swore in several of Carr’s students, aged eight to ten, but they did not testify and romped around the Speaker’s desk the entire time. A local woman brought a petition from district residents, 250 of them who attended the hearing, claiming that

¹ “New Teachers are Engaged,” *Washington Standard* (Olympia, WA), July 12, 1908, 1.

² “South Bay Teacher Declared Disloyal,” *Washington Standard* (Olympia, WA), January 25, 1918, 1.

Carr was an excellent teacher and urging his reinstatement and that the true issue was a conflict between Carr and the principal of the school.³

Preston revoked Carr's teaching license, arguing that his "un-American and unpatriotic remarks" were deplorable and "unprofessional"⁴ At first Carr tried to appeal to the State Board of Education, but he dropped the appeal in June.⁵ He later moved to Idaho for work, where, struggling with depression, he committed suicide in 1922.⁶

Loyalty

During the early years of World War I the United States was officially neutral. Although American public opinion favored the Allies (Britain-France-Russia), most saw the war as irrelevant and significant proportions of the population supported the Central Powers (Germany-Austria-Hungary-Ottoman Empire-Romania). Thus, the government needed to "sell" intervention in the war to the American people. Groups such as the Committee of Public Information⁷ and a myriad of other governmental and private organizations, spread pro-intervention information, shaping the news and sending messages of compliance ("loyalty") to such programs and ideas.

Overall, opposition to the war among American teachers and students was not widespread, even at the university level and much less at the primary level. Historians such as H. C. Peterson and Gilbert C. Fite have argued that teachers were used to following orders from

³ "Review Carr Case," *Olympia Daily Recorder* (Olympia, WA), February 4, 1918, 2.

⁴ "Revoke Carr's License," *Olympia Daily Recorder* (Olympia, WA), February 12, 1918.

⁵ "Carr Drops Appeal," *Washington Standard* (Olympia, WA), June 21, 1918, 1.

⁶ Death Certificate for Charles Carr, March 11, 1922, Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, State of Idaho.

⁷ The official propaganda department of the United States government formed to influence public opinion with filtered war news as well as running publicity programs for programs such as the Liberty Loan. They were also notable for their Four Minute Men speakers (some were women), who performed short pro-war speeches, particularly at movie theaters, where they got their name from the usual amount of time it took to change reels of film.

school boards and other administrators, and were economically dependent on their superiors. This made the job of disciplining nonconformists an “extensive, though not difficult job” and most teachers merely silenced their own objections for the time being.⁸

Schools, as state-run institutions, were the logical sites for wartime propaganda designed for children. Historians have argued that World War I brought the federal government into the classroom in unprecedented ways, especially through direct curriculum programs and information. Particularly notable was the *National School Service* bulletin, a free sixteen-page document with war news and information designed for the classroom, which targeted not only teachers and children, but also their parents. This “federal intrusion” into local schools would be precedent setting.⁹ Patriotic instruction as well as activities such as food conservation, War Savings Stamps/Liberty Loans and the Junior Red Cross raised support for the war. Administrators and the public often saw teachers and students who protested against the messages of received wisdom as threats to the greater student population and faced dismissal and expulsion respectively. While it is conceivable that they would be liable for prosecution under the Espionage and Sedition Acts, there is no evidence of any such cases in Washington actually going to trial.

A Patriot’s Guide to the Great War

When the war began, many administrators believed that it was very important for students to understand and participate in the homefront war effort. As Elmer L. Cave, president of the Washington State Educational Association, at his major presidential address put it:

⁸ H. C. Peterson and Gilbert C. Fite, *Opponents of War, 1917-1918* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1968), 102.

⁹ O.L. Davis, Jr., “School Gardens and National Purpose During World War I: The National School Service and American Schools During World War I,” *Journal of Midwest History of Education Society* 22 no. 1 (1995): 115-123, 123.

In our schools we should carry on a propaganda that will have one effect at least—that it will visualize attention to the fact that we are at war. We should teach the true causes which have produced such a terrible war—and we should teach the causes fearlessly and in such a way that our children will clearly understand why the American people have chosen to join in with the Allies against a common foe. It is not necessary that our children shall be frightened at the war specter, but it is well that they understand that war means danger, suffering, self-denial, and sacrifice, and they must do their part in self-denial and sacrifice. Let me appeal to you teachers to do your utmost to encourage a strong spirit of patriotism among your children and among the children's' parents in your respective localities in this State.¹⁰

Cave argued for a specific type of attitude towards the war. He wanted children to learn the idealized, official reasons for American intervention and to participate in the homefront war effort as directed by state authorities. Schools were not only to teach these lessons to their children, he argued, but also to reach their parents and thus the wider community.

While the Committee of Public Information sent out the *National School Service* bulletin designed for teachers to use directly in the classroom, state and local groups also had their own publications. The Washington State Department of Education published *A Patriotic Bulletin* in 1917, a small book that was full of patriotic poetry, quotations, and speeches, including President Wilson's call for the declaration of war and his Fourteen Points.¹¹ Most importantly, the *Bulletin* told why the United States was fighting the war. Painting the war as a war of ideas, Preston's forward informed readers "that the principle of government of the people, by the people, and for the people, as opposed to the feudalistic world-domination policy of Germany, is the fundamental issue at stake in this war." With the sacred American individual rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in peril, she continued, Americans now demanded "world-wide

¹⁰ Elmer L. Cave, "Our Responsibilities to the Children of the State," in Washington Educational Association, *The Washington State Educational Association Addresses and Proceedings of the Thirty-First Annual Session of the Washington Educational Association Held in Tacoma, October 24-27, 1917* (Seattle: C. C. Bras, 1917), 24.

¹¹ "We Must Accept War (President Wilson's Address to Congress)," and "The President's Peace Principals," in Washington State Department of Education, *A Patriotic Bulletin No. 32 Published by the Authority of Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction*, (Olympia: Washington State Department of Education, 1917), 8 and 26.

democracy ... [and aim] to crush down the evil attempt at world-wide autocracy.”¹² Alternative explanations or more nuanced versions of these ideas for American involvement in the war would prove not to be tolerable.

Other pro-war groups made inroads on the regular school curriculum. The Committee of Public Information, United States Food Administration, and American Red Cross sought to influence classes through textbooks, pamphlets and manuals.¹³ Lessons and activities encouraged by these organizations soon permeated school life. These organizations portrayed them as absolutely necessary. An October 1918 Junior Red Cross teaching manual stated that while classroom activities might need to be modified in the short term in order to include Red Cross material, winning the war was more important than the potential disruption as “the urgency of the war makes it possible for our young citizens to become real and active participants in the great struggle for freedom.”¹⁴ The value of students to the war effort, such arguments concluded, was worth any potential disruption to their regular education.

Teachers could integrate some activities such as writing essays, readings, home economics, manual training projects and even raising gardens and livestock into the regular curriculum. Other programs could take time away from regular instruction, even though done by student clubs. The latter included fundraising events and craft projects for the Junior Red Cross. Still any of these activities could potentially disrupt the regular curriculum.

A few individuals publically raised concerns about this issue, and Superintendent Preston received an occasional letter of complaint. One example came from the small community of

¹² Josephine Corliss Preston, “Forward,” in State Department, *A Patriotic Bulletin*, 7.

¹³ Celia Malone Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 191.

¹⁴ Kingsbury, *For Home and Country*, 194.

Vader in Lewis County. Teacher Anna S. Walker wrote to Superintendent Preston that she was worried that Junior Red Cross work was limiting the ability of students to prepare for the upcoming state eighth grade exams. Seeking advice, she stated that

The children are willing to do anything they are asked to do and we are more than willing to lead them in the work, but where our school becomes arbitrators to lead junior red cross work and strives to out-do another school in garments, lbs of [illegible], etc. there will of necessity be neglect of regular work, or the children will be driven too hard. There is a limit to the ability of adolescent youth in this school. [W]e must of necessity make up the work that the grammar grades did not get in last year. We must carry the work as outlined in the course of study, and got in the N.S. S. [National School Service], red cross and various clubs and school activities.... We all want to do our utmost in war propaganda, but we do not want to be swamped with failures in the finals.¹⁵

Walker felt overwhelmed by all the special wartime demands made upon her students and was asking for some exemptions from activities. However, her viewpoint was not an acceptable attitude. Preston wrote back, telling Walker strictly that while

No one realizes better than I that these are very busy times for all of us. Every teacher, however, must make her own adjustment of War Work to the regular program. We must not lose sight of the value of the industrial activity and the service rendered by the children in this national crisis and the lessons of something worth while which has come so suddenly into the lives of us all. Nor must we sacrifice the academic side. If you will carefully go through your program, item by item, I have faith that you will know how to solve your problem without anyone's doing it for you—keeping in mind, always the definite results you are expected to attain.¹⁶

While acknowledging that the war put strains upon the regular school schedule, Preston echoed the majority view. The war effort and the political lessons it taught came first but teachers must still maintain educational standards.

¹⁵ Anna S. Walker, March 14, 1918, to Josephine Corliss Preston. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal and County Correspondence, Box 3 King-Lincoln 1913-1931, folder County Problems— Lewis 1918-1923. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

¹⁶ *Ibid*; Josephine Corliss Preston, March 27, 1918, to Anna S. Walker.

Support Through Activities

Having students participate in daily activities that at least in theory aided the war effort was an important part of making them support the war. It normalized a terrible conflict and raised morale, as the students thought they were doing something to help bring about a victorious, quicker end to the conflict. The activities would have likely been even more meaningful to children who had relatives in the military. Some high school students who participated in these projects would later join the military or serve in support agencies. The war-related activities of students varied but fell among three main categories—food conservation; selling and purchasing War Savings Stamps and Liberty Loans; and participation in the Junior Red Cross.

The first major activity of students was learning about and promoting “food conservation” programs, the partially voluntary system of rationing overseen by the United States Food Administration under future President Herbert Hoover. This included limiting the use of meat, sugar, fats, and wheat. Besides promoting “meatless Mondays” and other days of abstinence from certain foodstuffs, the United States Food Administration promoted the use of “substitutes” such as corn flour, rice, honey, and fish in place of the restricted items.¹⁷ Schools promoted food conservation was mainly through cooking practices and in growing “war gardens.” However, food conservation was not only a method for increasing the American food supply, but a means to an end—creating support of the war through active participation and changes to everyday life. Although laws that regulated consumption were rare, “patriotic” social pressures encouraged—or coerced—people into following conservation practices.

¹⁷ David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 118.

Teachers recruited students to be active participants in food conservation programs. Domestic science classes covered food conservation methods. Additionally, some students even distributed food conservation pledge cards to their homes for their mothers to sign.¹⁸ The school reached even further into these women's lives. Building upon the community center idea, schools became common sites for public "food demonstrations" of conservation methods—classes held to teach area women how to prepare food according to the new ideas of domestic science. For example, the Washington State College Agricultural Extension Service sent domestic science demonstrators on tours to show how to use substitutes for rationed items. From August 6 to August 10, 1918, these women held about thirty food conservation "schools" or short class programs (most often held at public school buildings.)¹⁹ This gave direct access to parents and community women. Similar programs continued throughout the war.

School-sponsored student clubs often augmented efforts integrated into the regular curriculum to support the war effort. Although the State Department of Education strongly supported and promoted agricultural clubs, designed to supplement agricultural programs in the curriculum, as part of rural revitalization movements, the war increased their number and painted them as fulfilling a duty to the country to increase food production. The Education Department appointed Elizabeth Jones as Emergency State Club leader from Washington State College, as well as ten other club leaders for the top ten agricultural producing counties of the state, to work on increasing food production.²⁰ These efforts included gardens at the schools, but educators

¹⁸ Robert Max Garrett, "Annual Report Junior Red Membership American Red Cross in the State of Washington For the Year Ending June 1, 1918," in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Biennium Ending June 30, 1918 Mrs. Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Olympia, 1919), 122.

¹⁹ "College Will Offer Canning Class Here," *Olympia Daily Recorder* (Olympia, WA), August 2, 1917, 2.

²⁰ "Club Work," in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 127.

placed more emphasis on having children do their own gardens at home or any available plot of “waste” land, from urban spare lots to backyards.

These war gardens were promoted as a vital part of the war effort as students enlisted in the “school garden army.” Students encouraged each other by noting how gardens brought victory nearer. At Vancouver High School students wrote that they should

Never forget that your ‘war garden’ received the name after it was realized that the food stuff grown on small plots must help win the war, as well as rifles and bullets. Keep in mind that there is an international concern in the success of every war garden. The ultimate ideal of patriotism is realized in the person who does his utmost to serve his country in whatever may be his task, whether it is going ‘over the top’ from the trenches of the front, conducting thrift campaigns to help finance the war, or bringing vegetables ‘over the top’ from the trenches of your garden.²¹

These students argued that planting gardens was a way to perform a duty to the war effort as important as soldiers, thus making the success of gardening into a political issue. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that planting war gardens appeared to have been popular. A survey of eighth grade graduates, conducted by the Washington State Department of Education in 1918 showed an increase from 1,772 gardens grown by students in 1917 to 10,264 in 1918. That year 76% of eighth grade graduates in the state reported having gardens, with a high of 88% in Pacific County and a low of 55% in Benton County.²² These numbers show a large percentage of students participating in food conservation projects, though they do not include students in other grades, drop-outs nor factor in who would have had gardens regardless of the war. Neither was garden size indicated.

²¹ “Your War Garden,” in *Vancouver High School Review* 7, no. 11 (April 15, 1918).

²² “War Work in the Schools: Number of Eighth Grade Graduates Having Gardens in 1918,” in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 95.

In addition to saving and growing food, students around the nation bought and helped to sell Liberty Bonds and War Savings Stamps. These were United States government loans that helped finance the costs of prosecuting the war.²³ The Washington State Department of Education conducted a survey in May and June 1918 of eighth grade graduates. According to their estimates, 54% of these graduates bought war savings stamps—7,311 stamps. Grays Harbor County bought the most (80% of students buying) and Ferry County the least (23%).²⁴ Students also bought Liberty Loan bonds, but as the lowest denomination was \$50 (although it could be paid for on an installment plan), these bonds were often out of reach of many students—and adults. In 1918, 14.4% of eighth grade graduates owned at least one bond, a high of 21.8% in Walla Walla County and a low of 4.7% in Island County.²⁵ Though bonds were expensive, children were still saving money and buying them, showing that many were willing to sacrifice for the war effort financially.

These lessons of saving and sacrifice fit well into Progressive notions of the responsible use of money. Progressive reformers warned against chronic poverty, immigrants and the decadent society they feared that America was becoming.²⁶ Excessive consumption, even more than the war, they said, was responsible for the increasing cost of living and made it a “patriotic duty” to teach thrift so that the next generation would have a good character. They especially

²³ Edward R. Kantowicz, “Liberty Loans,” in John D. Buenker and Edward R. Kantowicz, eds., *Historical Dictionary of the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988), 254.

²⁴ “War Work in the Schools: Number of War Savings Stamps Owned by Pupils Graduating from the Eighth Grade in May and June, 1918,” in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 91.

²⁵ “War Work in the Schools: Number of Liberty Bonds Owned by Pupils Graduating From the Eighth Grade in May and June, 1918,” in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 96.

²⁶ Samuel Haber, “Efficiency,” in Buenker and Kantowicz, eds., *Historical Dictionary*, 131.

criticized “overly” well dressed high school girls.²⁷ “Extravagant ideas,” Superintendent Preston warned in an introduction to a short curriculum plan for thrift education, “that run to candy, ice cream, and toys in large amounts in the younger boys and girls; and movies, silk hose, and georgette blouses in young high school girls, should not be allowed to run riot.” This left out any mention of frivolous uses of money by high school boys, reflecting gendered notions of behavior.²⁸

Illustrating the lessons they had been taught, students at the Gold Bar school wrote short poems about stamps soon after the war. These poems show the ideas that they were learning. Mary Von Thun wrote that “I’m saving all my pennies/To help my Uncle Sam./I’ll buy Thrift Stamps,/As many as I can.” Echoing her themes of both saving money and contributing to the war effort to their fullest potential, Arnold Baker wrote that “I won’t spend my money/For candy and for play/I’ll put it in a Thrift Stamp/And that will make it pay.”²⁹

Finally, the Junior Red Cross, the children’s version of the American Red Cross, was another important national group active in schools. While Red Cross programs did make an impact on the war, from running recreation stations for soldiers at training camps to providing medical services to civilians and soldiers overseas, they also served to boost morale at home as people felt they could help the United States win the war. This gave political aims to an agency that sometimes claimed to be apolitical. Red Cross war work was to be more than mere busy work, but actually intended to teach students (and their parents and community) lessons in

²⁷ “W.S.S. Conference,” *News-Letter of the State Department of Education* 1, no. 5 (December 1919), 10.

²⁸ “Ten Weeks’ Intensive Course in Thrift Education,” *News-Letter of the State Department of Education* 1, no. 5 (December 1919), 24.

²⁹ “Thrift Rhymes,” *New-Letter of the State Department of Education* 1, no. 6 (February 1920), 8.

patriotic service. In the words of the Junior Red Cross Northwest Division director, Robert Max Garrett, the organization sought to make children learn

the ideal of loyalty to the principles of democracy, of whole-hearted service to our country and to our fellow men; that any work honestly done is a service to the nation—that a nation of honest workers is a great nation; that a pupil’s studies are his work and that his most important war work is to get his studies well so that the next generation will be well educated and ready to tackle the huge problems which will confront us after the war.³⁰

Thus Red Cross efforts were not just to help relieve suffering caused by the war, but also were intended to foster patriotism and nationalism among the general American population, making people understand the “true” (or official) causes of the war, and creating ideal future citizens. The Red Cross promoted these goals through lectures, readings, art projects and books like George Faulkner’s *Red Cross Stories for Children*.³¹

Students in Washington State responded to Red Cross propaganda by raising prodigious amounts of money and making supplies for the war effort. To be more specific, 1,393 Junior Red Cross auxiliaries and 164,045 pupils in 1918 collected \$29,539.06 in dues, \$224.69 from salvage (running junk shops of donated items) and \$5,865.85 from giving entertainments as well as \$2,521.77 from other sources. These auxiliaries directly donated part of this money to the national Red Cross and used the rest in local outreach projects and for administration costs. Furthermore, in an era where ready-made clothing was not yet dominant, the Red Cross sewed clothing for war refugees and soldiers. Washington children helped by producing thousands of pinafores, capes and hoods, trousers, shirts, dresses, chemises, house gowns, skirts, shoulder

³⁰ Garrett, “Annual Report,” in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 97.

³¹ Garrett, “Annual Report: [Washington State Junior Red Cross Chapters],” in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 100.

shawls, and towels for refugees.³² For soldiers, the students donated books and games and produced mittens, slippers, coat hangers, 749 layettes (sets of baby-related items and clothing for their children), property bags, sweaters, socks, wristlets, comfort kits, packing boxes and knitting needles.³³ Students also scoured the woods for sphagnum moss to make surgical dressings. This moss grows only in wet areas, so students in certain areas of Western Washington were able to collect it. For example, students in Aberdeen cleaned fifty-five gunny sacks of the moss.³⁴

Individual schools give a clearer picture of just how much students accomplished. Students at Krupp High School in Grant County created a newsletter of local events to send to soldiers from their town. Others sent items to local training camps. Across the state, students in Tacoma sent to nearby Camp Lewis eighty-six quilts, 650 Red Cross books, and 603 pounds of marmalade.³⁵ Additionally, vocational classes made 239 checkerboards, 9,748 checkers, ten game tables, and 769 cups of jam for the base's hospital. Students also spent 175 hours gathering and processing 125 ½ lbs. of sphagnum moss for the base hospital and made forty Red Cross room banners for city and Pierce county schools as well as 457 War Savings Stamp posters.³⁶

All these activities, food conservation, War Savings Stamps/Liberty Loans, and the Junior Red Cross required the efforts of thousands of students, and represented a major sacrifice of time and resources. The twenty-five cent dues of the Junior Red Cross could be a financial

³² Garrett, "Annual Report: [Refugee Garments Produced by Junior Red Cross Students in the State of Washington]," in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 101-102.

³³ Garrett, "Annual Report: [Camp Supplies Produced by Junior Red Cross Students in the State of Washington]," in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 103-104.

³⁴ Garrett, "Annual Report," in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 108.

³⁵ Garrett, "Annual Report," in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 108.

³⁶ "Junior Red Cross and War Activities," *News-Letter of the State Department of Education*, 1, no. 2 (December 1918), 12.

burden for families with several children on top of demands for buying bonds and stamps.³⁷ This money would come from parents as well as children. Their efforts and resources intertwined with the war effort and exposed families to the messages implicit in propaganda rhetoric. One major theme was anti-radicalism and Americanization. Students—but especially teachers—who contradicted official and popular ideas were in a dangerous position during the war and subsequent Red Scare. Issues surrounding Americanization are in chapters two and three.

Among Us Hide: Anti-Radicalism in the School System

The most feared radical organization in the Pacific Northwest during the period was the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a militant syndicalist union that called for the solidarity of working people to seek higher wages, better working conditions, and an eight hour work day. Additionally, some sought in rhetoric the overthrow of capitalism. A national organization, the IWW was particularly strong in the Pacific Northwest. They held a special appeal to alienated workers in the region's lowest paying and most dangerous jobs, including migratory harvest hands and timberworkers.³⁸ Anti-radicalism and anti-immigrant feelings were often closely because immigrants were seen as potential radicals and disloyal elements. Indeed, immigrants made up a significant percentage of members in radical labor organizations such as the I.W.W.³⁹

In World War I America, many people saw radicalism as particularly dangerous to the achievement of military victory. Seemingly out of place, the *Patriotic Bulletin* opens with a proclamation by Governor Ernest Lister who warns against labor strikes, calling them a threat to national security as they would take soldiers away from war. All must sacrifice for the national

³⁷ Kingsbury, *Home and Country*, 195.

³⁸ Carlos Arnaldo Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 339-340.

³⁹ Carl L. Bankston III and Danielle Antoinette Hidalgo, *Immigration in U.S. History* Vol. 2 (Pasadena: Salem Press, Inc., 2006), 584.

welfare because “unless every individual throws aside his monetary ambitions, he or his descendants will, sooner or later, surely feel the crushing heel of Autocracy. The National welfare now is solely the protection and perpetuation of Democracy.”⁴⁰ This viewpoint considered democracy incompatible with labor radicals, especially in wartime. Believing that these radicals were likely to strike, they concluded that they posed a threat to government and the economic order.

Even prior to the war, radicalism in the school system was a great concern to the administration across the state, particularly at the county and state level as the public debated on whether or not radicals, particularly Socialists, should have any role in the education system as teachers or administrators.

Well before the Red Scare, the administration tended to see Socialist plots to infiltrate the school system and corrupt the next generation. Only a few argued that Socialist “controlled” districts could be acceptable. For example, County Superintendent O.C. Goss of Thurston County reported in 1915 after the passing of the flag salute law that Socialist controlled schools in the county participated in the required flag salute and argued that Socialists were not essentially poor patriots.⁴¹

But that was not a popular opinion. Stevens County Superintendent Martha A. Boardman wrote to Preston in 1915, complaining about the situation at District 116 near Colville. W. E. Nelson, a Socialist who lost the fall 1914 election for county auditor, replaced Gladys Allen as a

⁴⁰ Ernest Lister, “Proclamation by the Governor,” in State Department, *A Patriotic Bulletin*, 9. Ironically Lister is the only foreign-born Washington governor to date, however he was from Britain, a favored source of immigrants by anti-radicals.

⁴¹ “Goss Finds That Socialists Are Not Such Bad Patriots After All,” *Morning Olympian* (Olympia, WA), November 13, 1915, 1.

teacher. Boardman alleged that the Board removed Allen because she refused to become a Socialist. Boardman did not want to approve Nelson's contract, blaming him for losing students at his old school and helping in the election of a Socialist director in Orin. Assuming Preston was "not in sympathy with such people," Boardman was concerned about the situation:

But I recently learned that in some cases, these Socialist School Boards require the applicant for the school to take out a Red Card, or more plainly become a socialist and teach the children socialism. What the teaching consists of I am not fully informed, however I do know that they do not believe in God, the flag, or in our country as it is, and in all these cases it is difficult to have the flag displayed as it should be. Also believe we will have trouble in getting the directors to enforce the law as amended, regarding the flag exercise and giving the salute....I have observed that in the districts where the socialists have control, the morals are not what they should be, and their teachings must lead to such conditions.⁴²

Boardman thus characterized Socialist teachers as both atheists and unpatriotic, who forced their beliefs onto their students, leading to social disruption against mainstream Anglo-Protestant values. Preston was not pleased with Boardman's report, replying that

Your letter regarding the socialist teacher gives me great concern because I must confess that I shall be unable to say anything to you which will particularly help you to solve the problem. All over the state there is a movement to get socialists on the [school] board and elect socialist teachers. The plan is not working as well now as it did a year or two ago because the socialists when elected on the board do not prove entirely satisfactory and this past we had a socialist board recalled and we have several defeated. I do not believe that you have a right to fail to approve the [teacher] contract for political reasons. Inefficiency, incompetency, immorality and such can be handled. I feel sure that it is a question of a year or two until a man like Mr. Nelson settles his own fate.⁴³

Although Preston felt that Socialist teachers and school boards were a growing problem, she believed that administrators could make no legal moves against them at the time. After World War I began, administrators found it easier to fire teachers for political reasons than they

⁴² Martha A. Boardman, June 15, 1915, to Josephine Corliss Preston. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal and County Correspondence, box 5 King-Lincoln 1913-1931, folder County Problems—Stevens 1913-1915. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

⁴³ *Ibid*; Josephine Corliss Preston, June 18, 1915, to Martha A. Boardman.

would have had before the war. In addition, public pressure against teachers who spoke out against the war or were Socialists grew as the government now considered them a legitimate threat. During the war, a teacher who “babbles and gabbles” against American involvement in the war and wanted immediate peace was now “doubly disloyal” for “undermining” the faith, confidence and loyalty of future citizens.⁴⁴ Questions of German language instruction and the use of the flag were key parts of many of these protests and firings, which later chapters will discuss. The most regionally famous case, the recall of Anna Louise Strong, who lost a Seattle School Board recall election due to her support of the I.W.W. and appearing as a friendly witness in the Louise Olivereau case is unusual but represents an important idea. “Seattle,” a Recall Committee pamphlet read, “does not want any suspicion of disloyalty cast upon its Public School System.”⁴⁵

In individual cases, when conflicts over loyalty arose, they were often wrapped up in personal animosity. A particularly nasty case involving two young students and a newspaper editor comes out of Oakville. W. H. Moore, editor of the *Oakville Cruiser*, wrote to Preston, explaining that he was a school bus driver. Two Socialist pupils tore off the Red Cross emblem on the door of his bus, but the school board dismissed the matter as trivial. Moore offered to send Preston information about “these German sympathiziyers [sic].”⁴⁶ Preston directed Grays Harbor County School Superintendent T. W. Bibb to investigate since the Department of

⁴⁴ “Fundamental,” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), January 10, 1918, 10.

⁴⁵ Recall Committee, “Why Anna Louise Strong Should be Recalled,” quoted in Albert F. Gunns, *Civil Liberties in Crisis: The Pacific Northwest 1917-1940* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983), 13.

⁴⁶ W. H. Moore, February 26, 1918, to Josephine Corliss Preston. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal and County Correspondence, Box 2 Ferry-Jefferson 1913-1931, folder County Problems—Grays Harbor 1913-1918. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

Education's policy was "America for Americans...and if any sentiment exists at this time, foreign to this policy, steps should be taken at once to suppress it."⁴⁷

Bibb's investigation found that many believed Moore to be a disliked troublemaker whom the Board wanted to fire. Bibb had been receiving complaints about him since the start of the school year. The young people involved were high school student Grace Couch and her twelve-year-old brother Charles. Additionally, a "reliable citizen of Oakville" told Bibb that Moore was angry at Grace Couch for spurning his not-well-intended infatuation for her and therefore was magnifying her and her brother's issues. Yet the Couches were Socialists "and have no more use for the present order of things than hundreds of other socialists in this country." The Red Cross incident was long past and Grace said that Charles did not do it. However, the girl at school had "made some remarks which are out of place at this time" but the administrators had put a stop to it. Moore had wanted Bibb to bring charges and have the siblings arrested. Bibb had told him that it was a federal matter and that he would have to bring his complaint to the federal court system, as it was out of his jurisdiction. He would write Grace that her school would expel her if she made any more unpatriotic remarks at school or on the bus, but he feared no further trouble.⁴⁸ Two months later, a petition of forty-six citizens demanded that Moore reform or leave town. A crowd would later force Moore himself to kiss the American flag at a patriotic rally. An unidentified newspaper article indicates that Moore refused to print a notice for an upcoming patriotic rally. "Mr. Moore is not charged with disloyalty, but is stated to have made himself unpopular by actions in matters which people of the community considered

⁴⁷ *Ibid*; Josephine Corliss Preston, March 1, 1918, to T. W. Bibb.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*; T. W. Bibb, March 11, 1918, to Josephine Corliss Preston.

not to concern him.”⁴⁹ Perhaps he was using his personal anger at Grace to deflect accusations towards himself. But that would not be enough to shield either Moore or Grace Couch from trouble.

In many cases, it was teachers and school board directors whom people identified as disloyal. Individuals made complaints to the school district, for example, against a Mr. Buchanan, head of the science and manual training departments at Outlook High School, accusing him of trying to “incite the student body to insubordination and riot.”⁵⁰ Yakima County school superintendent Anna R. Nichols investigated and sent Preston a short letter.⁵¹ In an accompanying private letter she elaborated. She called the issue a purely “socialistic dilemma.” Director Walter Price was a Socialist and the rest of the School Board was unaware Hansome was one as well when they elected him principal. “Mr. Buchanan is also a Socialist of an advanced type,” she wrote, “He had demonstrated his socialism in such a radical way that he has upset the calculations of the other two whom I mentioned.” Neither did he defer to them, forming his own student basketball team. “My impression,” she assured Preston,

is that the other members of the Socialist Party will come to a realization of the place occupied by law and order and authority in a democratic society. Mr. Buchanan is demolishing the theory of a pure democracy by his abrupt application of the ideas to the school in which he teaches. The two other socialist are getting an overdose of their own medicine.... It is said that he has encouraged the children to do a great deal of unnecessary thinking for themselves.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ U.G. Frantz (President Board of Education Outlook Public School District no.34), December 21, 1917, to Josephine Corliss Preston. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal Correspondence, Box 6 Whitman-Yakima, Legal Correspondence 1913-1922, folder County Problems—Yakima 1913-1918. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*; Anna R. Nichols, December 29, 1917, to Josephine Corliss Preston.

⁵² *Ibid.*; Anna R. Nichols, December 29, 1917, to Josephine Corliss Preston.

Thus the county superintendent concluded that the Socialists were only getting what they deserved. Socialist school boards and systems could not function and had no place in American society.

Sometimes a teacher was able to get the charges of disloyalty dismissed, but this was rare. An accusation was good enough in most cases to cause someone to lose their job. C. C. Hammerly, a teacher at the Gaines school (upriver from Entiat where his wife taught school) was forced to resign after an investigation accused him of making “pro-German” statements to his students. The school, lacking a teacher, then closed. This case was unusual in that the County Council of Defense presided over what ought to have been a matter of the School Board. About twelve of Hammerly’s students gave testimony of his statements—that he did not believe reports of German atrocities in Belgium; thought that Belgians got what they deserved due to their mistreatment of Africans in the Congo; had pupils sing the German national anthem; and failed to lead or participate in the flag salute. The Chelan County sheriff initially planned to turn over the testimony to the U. S. District Attorney. That Hammerly’s father had emigrated from Germany as a child was all the more evidence of the teacher’s guilt.⁵³ The case moved to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for a public hearing in August 1918.⁵⁴ At his August 15 hearing, Hammerly defended himself. He said students had misinterpreted remarks and that he was not pro-German. He had been leafing through a songbook and come across the German national anthem. He claimed that he had “permitted” the children to sing the first verse but had told them “This is the song our enemies sing.”⁵⁵ The evidence must have been strong to support

⁵³ “Teacher Held Disloyal,” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), May 4, 1918.

⁵⁴ “Teacher To be Put on Trial,” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), August 14, 1918, 15.

⁵⁵ “Disloyalty Case Up For Hearing,” *Morning Olympian* (Olympia, WA), April 15, 1918, 1.

Hammerly, because Preston ruled that he could keep his license.⁵⁶ This was an unusual case. Perhaps Hammerly's lack of recent German ancestry and any obvious radical connections worked in his favor.

Conclusion

By the end of the war, the war had permeated every corner of school life. Even the official Eighth Grade exams in June 1918 included questions that were war-related. In the grammar section students read that they were "imagine you are a soldier in France. You are anxious to come home. Write a short letter to your mother." In Geography students located three cotton areas and answered why cotton prices had risen in the last five years (hint: the war). The history section, naturally enough, had the most war questions. Students were to explain why America had entered the war (the Socialist answer of "capitalism" was unlikely to be an accepted answer). The students were also to explain the armistice and five points of the Versailles Treaty.⁵⁷ "Correct" answers for these later questions were politically charged. The right answers were not merely objective truths but what the system wanted them to believe. And nothing increases belief like repetition.

In such a climate many teachers wrote to Preston to defend their own patriotism, sometimes at the expense of their community. Writing for a first grade teaching certificate from attending the Bellingham Normal School over the summer, A. J. Dellplain from Edgewood defended her patriotism: "All my brothers are fighting in France and two of them have received D.S.C's for conspicuous bravery; two of them were school teachers." Thanking Preston for

⁵⁶ "Chelan Teacher Wins," *Bellingham Herald* (Bellingham, WA), August 26, 1918, 3.

⁵⁷ "[7th Grade Geography and Eighth Grade Exams." Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal Correspondence, Box 6 Whitman-Yakima, Legal Correspondence 1913-1922, folder Legal Correspondence—General 1919 A-Z #2. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

patriotic literature (perhaps the *Patriotic Bulletin*), she said “My school and the community need a patriotic stirring up, as many of them are pro-German in their views. I am doing all I can to teach the children their duty to their country.”⁵⁸

The climate generated by the enforced support of the war in the classroom and the expectations placed upon teachers and their students would lead to great tension. This produced further issues. One would be the investigation of German teachers and textbooks and the other, the elimination of the teaching of the German language in Washington State.

⁵⁸ A. J. Dellplain, December 29, 1917, to Josephine Corliss Preston. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal and County Correspondence, Box 4 Mason-Skagit 1913-1931, folder County Problems—Pierce 1913-1918. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

Chapter III

LANGUAGES OF LOYALTY: BANNING GERMAN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

German Lutheran School, Egypt District, Lincoln County, July-August 1919

On July 14, 1919, storekeeper A. E. Lewis of Miles, Washington, wrote Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction Josephine Corliss Preston. He accused an unnamed German Lutheran pastor in the “Egypt Country” district of Lincoln County (between Miles and the county seat of Davenport), of spreading pro-Kaiser propoganda before, during and after the recent war. More pressing was that, while he had quit teaching German to the children during the war, he had recently started up a private German language school next to his church. Lewis accused the pastor of sedition, including making statements that the current drought in Eastern Washington was God’s punishment for German abandonment of the Kaiser. Lewis stated the following in his letter to Preston:

This preacher is one among the many lowest species of so called human brute depravity that prevails among the [G]erman race. If there is no law or rule to prevent his operation of general propgandic [sic] cussedness among the rising generation of American citizens, the American Flage [sic] should be forced to wave over the school during sessions.¹

Lewis argued that the pastor was influencing his schoolchildren into being disloyal Americans, and suggested forcing them to fly the American flag as a means to teach them the true meaning of America. Receiving Lewis’ letter, Preston requested Lincoln County Superintendent W. S. Shelton to investigate the incident and report to her office.² After making inquiries, Shelton reported that the Lincoln County Prosecuting Attorney believed that no prosecution was possible due to the suspension of the Espionage Act. Shelton believed that the

¹ A. E. Lewis, July 14, 1919, to Josephine Corliss Preston. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal and County Correspondence, Box 3 King-Lincoln 1913-1931, folder County Problems—Lincoln 1913-1928. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

² *Ibid*; Josephine Corliss Preston, July 19, 1919, to W. S. Shelton.

issue was solvable and that the courts, not the school board, could handle the issue as they would a member of the International Workers of the World or a “ranting sicilist [sic].”³ Ignoring rights of freedom of speech and religion, Shelton then wrote assistant U.S. Attorney Charles H. Leary in Spokane, who wrote back on August 4, 1919 that no federal law prohibited German language teaching or speaking and that an Espionage Act prosecution would not be possible, as America was no longer at war, though he asked for more information, for possible further investigation.⁴

Although one could interpret these letters as a polite refusal to pursue the matter, A. E. Lewis persisted. The storekeeper wrote Shelton again in early August. Though he had heard of the “problem” from Germans who disagreed with their pastor, he accused the clannish community of not handling the issue themselves. Indeed, Lewis argued that

If they had the right kind of backbone, they would personally take the matter in hand and give him a proper chastisement of a number ten boot, but they have been under the thumb of the Kaiser propaganda...[they are terrified]...During the war, the German propaganda came through from this preacher down to the loyal subject of the Kaiser, and was spread among them with the instructions to go among loyal Americans and spread fear, etc. Se [sic] it was sent direct through and percolated to all alike. Now idea seems to keep alive the [G]erman superman idea, with a view of bringing the imperialistic [G]ermany back to life, and to prevent, if possible the indemnities being paid.⁵

Lewis alleged that the German Americans were weak and that the pastor used them as a conduit during the war to undermine American morale and now was keeping autocratic ideals alive. Having a German school, Lewis argued, proved their loyalty to German imperialism. They were terrified of Americans, he said, and had been scared into contributing to the war effort. They were disloyal separatists who nine years before protested the creation of a public school district on the grounds of increased taxes. A church school had operated for years taught by the

³ *Ibid*; W. S. Shelton, July 22, 1919, to Josephine Corliss Preston.

⁴ *Ibid*; Charles H. Leary, August 4, 1919, to W. S. Shelton.

⁵ *Ibid*; A. E. Lewis, August 6, 1919, to W. S. Shelton.

unnamed pastor, but they had never flown the United States flag. He could get evidence to Shelton, but argued that “In the meantime, if they are determined to hold German school, they should be notified that the American flag is the symbol of Liberty here, and practically all over the world and must be displayed as the law requires, to the pupils of the school and patrons.”⁶

Shelton then wrote to Preston on August 9, 1919. He told her that he thought the evidence was all hearsay, and legally inadmissible. However, he added, they still would like to prosecute it if they could get more information.⁷ Fortunately for the German community and the minister, that did not happen and no one filed any charges.

Overview

How did this happen? Why would the actions of a small town German minister be of concern to anyone outside the community? Why would the protest of a singular, small town shopkeeper be of note to anyone outside of Miles? The answer lies in World War I reactions to German Americans and most importantly, to the use of their language in schools.

Germans had formed one of America’s largest and earliest immigrant groups. In 1787, 8.6% of the whole population was of German descent. Many later immigrants were Catholic and founded German-language parochial schools. This link with Catholicism fanned nativist sentiment, which saw German schools as a Catholic plot that hampered the “Anglo-Protestant acculturation” of public schools. This concern led to various English-only school laws in the Midwest between 1889 and 1890, though state legislatures quickly repealed some of these.⁸

⁶ *Ibid*; A. E. Lewis, August 9, 1919, to W. S. Shelton.

⁷ *Ibid*; W. S. Shelton, August 9, 1919, to Josephine Corliss Preston.

⁸ Terrence G. Willey, “The Imposition of World War I Era English-Only Policies and the Fate of German in North America,” in Thomas Ricento and Barbara Burnaby eds., *Language and Politics in the United States and Canada: Myths and Realities* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 214-219. These states with such laws were: New York, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Kansas South Dakota, and North Dakota.

By the eve of World War I, Germans remained a large segment of the national population. The 1910 federal census showed 13% of the population being of German descent (2.5% first generation and 10.5% second generation). The outbreak of the conflict in 1914 brought a surge of ethnic pride and interest among German-Americans. The German language press in the United States largely supported Germany and urged American neutrality, some even arguing for compulsive German language training, as it would be a world language.⁹

The situation changed dramatically once America entered the war in 1917. Now Germany was the enemy. Arguing that school administrators were tolerating teachers' pro-German, pacifist or "un-American" ideas, nativists made language an issue over widespread concerns that teachers were sometimes promoting pro-German attitudes. These concerns of disloyalty resulted in increasingly intense scrutiny of textbooks and teachers, particularly German language teachers. However, nativists and nationalists also used the issue to promote their vision of a united and assimilated American nation which spoke English. Washington was unique in both its late movement to ban German and in the disproportionate (yet comparatively moderate) anti-Germanism in education without overt violence. The situation was different elsewhere. For example, anti-Germanism in Texas (with only the fourteenth largest German-descent population of any state) was strong and more violent due to the state's vigilante heritage, including numerous incidents of Germans facing beatings, floggings and attempted lynchings for failure to participate in the war effort, such as refusing to join the Red Cross. Vigilantes flogged one Lutheran minister for holding a German language service the same night as a Liberty Bond meeting.¹⁰ Similar incidents were much rarer in Washington.

⁹ Wiley, "Imposition," in Ricento and Burnaby, eds., *Language and Politics*, 221.

¹⁰Mark Sontag, "Fighting Everything German in Texas, 1917-1919," *The Historian* 56, no. 4 (August 2007): 655-670, 667.

Washington German-Americans Before the War

Prior to World War I, Germans formed one of the largest white ethnic minorities in the Pacific Northwest. In Washington, German-born persons formed 2.6% of the population of the state in the 1910 federal census. However, there were few noticeable German “colonies” except for German-Russians in the eastern Washington counties of Lincoln and Adams.¹¹ While an important immigrant group, they were not significant in overall numbers. Individual Germans were however, noticeable in Washington society, business and politics. Despite their small numbers, Germans also formed ethnic societies and fraternal orders in the largest communities.¹²

Moreover, German was a popular language to study nationwide. Washington numbers bear this out. In 1914, 6,572 high school students enrolled in German compared to 6,173 in Latin or Greek, 1,462 in French and 824 in Spanish.¹³ However, there was already a movement against foreign languages prior to the war from nativist “Americanizers” who emphasized linguistic uniformity. In the *State Course of Study* for 1901, a sample of a recommended flag exercise, the Turner pledge urged students to recite “We give our hands, our heads and our hearts to God and our country. One country, *one language*, one flag” (emphasis added.)¹⁴

¹¹ Dale R. Wirsing, *Builders, Brewers, and Burghers: Germans of Washington State* (Olympia: The Washington State American Revolution Bicentennial Commission), 18.

¹² Wirsing, *Germans of Washington*, 61-62.

¹³ Edwin Twitmyer, “High School Inspector’s Report: Enrollment in High School Subjects from Reports of 330 High Schools,” in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Second Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Biennium June 30, 1914*. Mrs. Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction (Olympia, 1914), 52. These numbers are more useful as proportions, as widely varying numbers of high schools reported each year. Also these were only accredited high schools and did not include private high schools as well. Additionally, this year only counts German enrollment for years one through three. Levels usually divide by semester, for six level altogether.

¹⁴ Washington State Department of Education, “Course of Study for Common Schools: Flag Salute,” in *Fifteenth Biennial Report Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Washington Published by Authority* (Olympia, 1901), 228.

During World War I, Americanizers, usually from conservative members of the middle class, especially patriotic societies, would use the conflict as a way to attack immigrant communities, to eliminate German culture and unify America as an Anglo-Protestant nation. The moves against German language instruction largely came outside of the school system, as German had a secure place in the pre-war curriculum. As language historians argue, “Language polices have rarely been implemented strictly as ends in themselves; rather they have been used as a means to archive other purposes.”¹⁵ Wartime Americanizers believed that eliminating German language instruction would protect the coming generation from un-American and disloyal ideas, creating a unified American nation against a common enemy.

However, despite these moves, German was a popular language to take, beyond the cold facts and figures. In a circa 1915 *High School Manual*, German is the first modern language listed, and uses an outline made from ideas originating at two conferences of institutions of higher learning in Washington. The program encouraged teachers to have their students learn to think in German and to use a “Realien” (a German phrase) methodology by using “maps, pictures, lantern slides, models, games, songs, etc., in fact every thing that helps illustrate foreign life, character, customs, institutions, etc.”¹⁶ By the end of World War I, nativists and nationalist would find the idea of teaching German culture and to think in German suspicious at the least and seditious at the worst.

¹⁵ Wiley, “Imposition,” in Ricento and Burnaby, eds., *Language and Politics*, 211-212.

¹⁶“German,” in Washington State Department of Education, *High School Manual*, (Olympia, WA: Washington State Department of Education, c. 1915), 25-30. There is no date on the report. It cites 1913 publications, so it must be published between 1913 and the 1918 German ban. The Washington State Library lists 1915 as a likely publication date.

Scrutiny of Teachers and Textbooks

When the war began, there were only limited moves to restrict German instruction. Many in the educational establishment initially supported continuing to teach the language. On July 17, 1917, the Washington Education Association meeting in Portland, instead of passing a proposed resolution to ban German instruction during the war, approved a resolution that said, “It is the patriotic duty of the schools of America to teach the German language even better than before.”¹⁷ Furthermore, when the group’s Language section met on October 27, 1917, their main speaker was a Lieutenant Fellow of Camp Lewis, who argued that it was “absurd” to stop teaching German language as the military would need German speakers.¹⁸ While it made sense for classes to not include praise of the Kaiser, the speaker added, “let’s keep hate out of the language and the schools so far as we can... We can fight the kasier without hating all things German.”¹⁹

Although moves to ban German instruction were limited, concern about “pro-Germanism” in the schools was widespread. These concerns centered around two main issues: German textbooks and teachers. While the public placed suspicion on all teachers of German, those of German descent, the majority of instructors, received the most scrutiny. This reflected national trends.

Concerns about possible “pro-German” textbook content were widespread and continued throughout the period. In historian Frederick Luebke’s words, it was thought that a child could not learn to “hate the Kaiser, as proper patriotism required” if they were being subjected to

¹⁷ “Oppose Abolition of German Class,” *Tacoma Times* (Tacoma, WA), July 12, 1917, 1.

¹⁸ “Big Teachers’ Meeting Ends,” *Tacoma Times* (Tacoma, WA), October 27, 1917, 2.

¹⁹ “Strafing the German Tongue,” *Bellingham Herald* (Bellingham, WA), October 30, 1917, 4.

positive statements about German institutions and culture and thus all of that had to be done away with.²⁰ The content of German language textbooks aroused the most serious scrutiny and public acrimony. One book that caused intense controversy was *Im Vaterland* by Paul Valentine Bacon. The book took students on an imaginary tour of Germany, using simple conversations to teach students about German locations, history, literature, culture and leaders. Published in 1910, well before the war, some schools of Washington and hundreds of classrooms around the nation used the book.

In the late summer of 1917, communities across the nation began to condemn the book as being pro-German.²¹ The controversy came to Washington in the fall. However, the state would adopt virtually the same arguments as used nationally. An incensed September 1917 article from *The Tacoma Times* (its introduction taken nearly word-for-word from national articles)²² criticized the book, which one of Tacoma's high schools used, as lauding the Kaiser and teaching German Americans to favor Germany over America, even paraphrasing translated statements from the book. These opponents of *Im Vaterland* were critical of what they saw as an overly positive view of Germany and particularly of its Kaiser and military establishment, pointing out that the book had an imperial eagle emblazoned on its cover and a picture of Kaiser Wilhelm II as a frontispiece. They further argued that the style of the book would have students "assimilate German kultur in the same way as on an actual tour." The critics were also insulted that students

²⁰ Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 250-251.

²¹ There are many articles on this topic. "Germany Lauded in School Book," *Oregonian* (Portland, OR), September 27, 1917, 5; "No Action Taken Relative to the German Text Book," *Wilkes-Barre Times* (Wilkes-Barre, PA), November 10, 1917, 5; etc.

²² The article nearly matches word for word and picture, though adds a Tacoma ending, with "German Propaganda Found in School Books," *Salt Lake Telegram* (Salt Lake City, UT), October 21, 1917, 40. The Utah article cites it as being from the "Special News Service."

seemed to enjoy German. Miss Grace Liddel, head of Languages Department at Lincoln High School, reported in 1917 that over a hundred students enrolled in German that year, though a few less than last year and that she had received no complaints about the book. Arguing that England and France maintained German classes in preparation for post-war commercial connections, she reported that “We have a large beginning class and they are all enthusiastic.”²³

The controversy did not quiet as *Im Vaterland* had support from the non-German school administration. Principal Parker of Lincoln High School, when interviewed by a Tacoma paper, thought the book was “a rather good [one] of its class,”²⁴ and while admitting that he had not read the book, he did not know what people objected to in it. The editors of the *Tacoma Times* were incensed and demanded that he learn “the drivel that is being taught in your German classes” or immediately denounce what he said in the interview and have the book banned,²⁵ which Tacoma eventually did.

While the controversy swarmed around teachers of German descent, controversy and suspicion especially focused on those who taught German. Initially, these investigations were mild in comparison to what would come later, as historian Brandon Bransom argues.²⁶

Despite this, there was some support for the continuance of German at all levels. Newspaper editorials supporting the language reflected current policy. “We did not go to war to destroy the German language,” *The Pullman Herald* argued on August 9, 1917, “but to wipe out the German system of militarism. Yet some people are arguing that the United States should end

²³ “Text-Book Says Kaiser a Fine Fellow,” *Tacoma Times* (Tacoma, WA), September 20, 1917, 1.

²⁴ “Informing Mr. Parker,” *Tacoma Times* (Tacoma, WA), October 10, 1917, 4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Robert T. Branom, “Against the “Hun”: Anti-Germanism at the Seattle Public Schools and the University of Washington, 1917-1918” (master’s thesis, University of Washington, 2006), 21.

the use of the German language, but adopt the system of universal military training upon which German militarism is based. This is a case of straining a gnat but swallowing a camel.”²⁷

A creeping wave of anti-Germanism among students themselves is more difficult to see as they left fewer records and student writing published in student newspapers and annuals most likely would have to be acceptable to administrators for publication. Student humor, which often used the names of actual students and teachers, is one barometer of student (and staff) changing views. Reflecting earlier times when anti-German feelings were less intense, jokes tended to be milder. “The Junior class members are looking glum,” Leavenworth High School members joked in the local newspaper, “The German teacher won’t let them laugh.”²⁸ Others made fun not of the German language but the students themselves. “The first year German class has become so patriotic,” Oroville High School students joked in April 1917, “that they at times refuse to study. We notice, however, that those attacks usually come the day after the night before.”²⁹

Still anti-German humor became increasingly popular in student publications. Yakima High School’s “Wigwam” 1918 annual included anti-German jokes. In “Wit and Humor,” the editors had many war-related jokes, mainly about food conservation. However, there was also anti-German humor against the language, or at least seem anti-German in the light of contemporary feelings:

Miss Sanders (in German): ‘Is egg masculine or feminine?’
Mae Treisch: ‘Have to wait til it’s hatched to know.’³⁰

²⁷Editorial, *Pullman Herald* (Pullman, WA), August 9, 1917, 6.

²⁸ “Social Breezes,” *Leavenworth Echo* (Leavenworth, WA), September 29, 1917, 1.

²⁹ “A Tangled Web,” *The Oroville Weekly Gazette* (Orville, WA), April 6, 1917, 1. The newspaper published this article on the very day Congress officially declared war on Germany.

³⁰ “Wit and Humor,” *The Wigwam: Published by the Students of the Yakima High School Edited by Senior Class June, 1918. Commencement Number VII*, no. 14, 71.

Scrutiny Intensifies

Nationally, the middle of the 1917-1918 school-year was the height of anti-German-language feeling. Washington State was slower than many states in implementing anti-German rules, reflecting the invisibility of Germans in Washington.³¹ Gustavus Ohlinger, a leading American opponent of German culture, wrote during the early war years that Germany had a Kulturpolitik for years to pacify the world and make people obedient to Germany, an idea that became popularly accepted. However, historians argue that this feared “Conspiracy in education” was used as an excuse to unify the nation in the face of a common enemy.³² Nationalists and nativists were at the forefront of these arguments.

In this climate of increasing tension, both textbook and teacher scrutiny intensified. Etta V. Leighton, the Civic Secretary and Chairman of the Committee on Citizenship in Elementary Schools of the National Security League, wrote Preston from New York on May 13, 1918, asking her to remind teachers to remove “dangerous” books that spread German or un-American ideas, when cleaning out at end of year (or remove objectionable sections).³³ Leighton was very glad to receive the *Patriotic Bulletin* from Preston and warned her that even with German gone, propaganda could creep into English books.³⁴

German teachers now faced scrutiny and dismissal at all levels. Civil Liberties groups, such as the fledging American Civil Liberties’ Union, were much too busy with defending

³¹Wiley, “Imposition,” in Ricento and Burnaby, eds., *Language and Politics*, 228.

³² Paul J. Ramsey, “The War against German-American Culture: The Removal of German Language Instruction from the Indianapolis Schools, 1917-1919,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 19, no. 4 (December 2002): 285-304, 285-287.

³³ Etta V. Leighton, May 13, 1918, to Josephine Corliss Preston. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal and County Correspondence, Box 6 Whitman-Yakima, Legal Correspondence 1913-1923, folder Legal Correspondence—general 1919 A-Z. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

³⁴*Ibid*; Etta V. Leighton, May 23, 1918, to Josephine Corliss Preston.

conscientious objectors and defendants of the later Centralia trials to defend the isolated German teacher. Defending teachers was not their priority.³⁵

The pace of teacher investigations and firings intensified. For example, the Minute Men, a Seattle business men's surveillance organization that later affiliated with the semi-governmental American Protective Association (not the Committee of Public Information's Four Minute Men speakers), took detailed evidence from colleagues against Seattle German teachers. Historian Gunn described the reports as "grotesque compendiums of professional antagonism, half truths, guilt by association, guilt by omission and otherwise incompetent testimony" that no professional investigator could take seriously, but the Minute Men did.³⁶

The reports particularly focused on German teachers and moreover, accused the school district of harboring German teachers at the expense of other teachers. The Minute Men even investigated Superintendent Frank B. Cooper of Seattle for pro-German conspiracy as he had long supported the continuance of German instruction. The accusations could be ridiculous and off the wall. An informant accused Cooper of sending out invalid contracts, that signee teachers would "serve at the pleasure of the Board" rather than "for the ensuing year." The author likely saw this as part of a German conspiracy.³⁷

The informants also accused of the Seattle School District and administrators were of sheltering German teachers and sympathizers. An informant accused Edna Fieks (Queen Anne High School, German and English) of making pro-German remarks while other faculty and

³⁵Albert F. Gunns, *Civil Liberties in Crisis: The Pacific Northwest 1917-1940* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983), 13-14.

³⁶Gunns, *Civil Liberties in Crisis*, 16.

³⁷"Subject: Frank B. Cooper," Report of the American Protective League, The Minute Men Division, Box 33/7, Thomas Burke Papers, Acc. 1483-2, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, WA.

administration had shielded her by putting her in charge of war activities while other teachers did the work.³⁸ The Minute Men even went so far as to write the Bureau of Naturalization to inquire if Rupert Eichholzer, a foreign language teacher at Ballard High School, was a naturalized citizen or not. They must have been disappointed, as he was born in the United States. Undeterred, they wanted to plant or recruit a teacher to “check up and report on Eichholzer. Make a tabulation of dates, places and exact statements regarding the war.”³⁹

But the most vehement attack of the “patriotic” spies centered upon Lillian V. Johnson, whom an informant taught with. Johnson, a woman of Swedish descent, served as the head of Foreign Languages at Lincoln High School and taught German for eleven years prior to 1918. Using testimony from former landlords and colleagues, the report portrayed her as anti-American and pro-German. The informant was upset and blamed her for conspiring to never fulfill French or Spanish book orders or keep a proper number of books they already had in storage. Johnson’s accuser saw a deep conspiracy, as many German teachers had been retained, teaching another language and at a higher pay, even serving as heads of departments.⁴⁰

Most of the time, the press applauded the firings of “unpatriotic” instructors. When “Professor “ H. F. W. Killian of Seattle’s Broadway High School was fired, *The Leavenworth Echo* praised his students for constantly pressing him for his opinions about the war and sending notes to a government agent who then turned it over to the school board.⁴¹

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*; “Subject: Rupert Eichholzer.”

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; “Subject: Lillian V. Johnson.” With disgust the informant complained how “Revamped German teachers will teach with a heavy accent the language in place of the competent and experienced teachers who are being let go in order that the valuable German teachers may not be lost to the corps.”

⁴¹ “Seattle News Letter,” *The Leavenworth Echo* (Leavenworth, WA), January 4, 1918, 1.

Against the Language

The move against German language instruction was also part of a larger movement to ban German in all public places, and even to abandon the language entirely. This sentiment was popular at all levels of society. Transfixed between two flag banners, a Tacoma paper told readers “SPEAK ENGLISH//IF YOU DON’T KNOW HOW LEARN//THIS IS AMERICA.” This message they argued would make “a thoroughly American nation” and as “good advice” warned all Germans who:

cling to the German language, German words, German thoughts and German customs while enjoying American liberty, freedom and privileges....If you don’t want to speak English; if you don’t want to learn how, America is no place for you. You should go to Germany where the German language is popular, even tho[ugh] it is the language of the kaiser, bombers, U-boat crews, hospital wreckers, baby killers.⁴²

These editors were far from alone in believing that something was intrinsically wrong with the German language because the enemy spoke it and this could translate into attitudes against German language instruction. Although there had been some voices against German language instruction from the beginning of American involvement in World War I, these voices became more intense and listened to over time. Organizations outside the schools also banded together to fight instruction and now they received more attention as the war hysteria intensified. Nationally, the middle of the 1917-1918 school year was the height of anti-German-language feeling.⁴³ For example, the Tacoma Home Guards⁴⁴ held a public meeting in 1918 where they

⁴² “Speak English,” *Seattle Star* (Seattle, WA), September 12, 1918, 6.

⁴³Wiley, “Imposition,” in Ricento and Burnaby, eds., *Language and Politics*, 228.

⁴⁴ Home Guard units, building off the American tradition of local voluntary militia units, were very common throughout the war. These semi-official voluntary organizations of draft-exempt men were to defend against internal unrest, such as strikes and other labor disturbances. While somewhat comparable to right-wing militias of today, local governments sponsored the units.

voted (unanimously) for a resolution against use of German in schools, public meetings and newspapers.⁴⁵

Voices among the educational establishment also began to speak out more loudly against German instruction. Some tried to mask their prejudice in pseudo-science.⁴⁶ R. J. Klemme, head of the rural department of the State Normal School in Bellingham, a department that had nothing to do with German, argued that all schools should bar German. Not only did books and teachers spread propaganda, the very language itself “contained the very elements of autocracy—class distinction,” and was vital to militarism. It did not belong in America. “English,” he concluded “is good enough for any red-blooded American...”⁴⁷

In this climate, persons who continued to support the language were becoming increasingly lone voices in the wilderness, as the popular view was that patriotic teachers must only teach English.⁴⁸ As historians Ricento and Burnaby put it, only a “stubborn minority of educators argued against basing educational policy solely on [the] contemporary political situation.”⁴⁹ Many editors expressed outrage at even mild support for the language. Editors of the

⁴⁵ “Vote to Bar Hun Language,” *Tacoma Times* (Tacoma, WA), June 4, 1918, 8. One German speaker at the gathering protested and the crowd “politely” forced to stay and listen to the entire meeting. The Guards planned to report him and wanted to press charges. The paper accused the man of saying that he spoke and would continue to speak German and that “Americans do not distinguish between the various nationalities using the German tongue” and shook his fist at the crowd. The paper did not record what ethnic affiliation the man had, but it is conceivable that he was Swiss, or some other group such as from German controlled provinces of Alsace and Lorraine.

⁴⁶ Wiley, “Imposition,” in Ricento and Burnaby, eds., *Language and Politics*, 226.

⁴⁷ “Normal Teacher is Opposed to German,” *Bellingham Herald* (Bellingham, WA), June 4, 1918, 10.

⁴⁸ Wiley, “Imposition,” in Ricento and Burnaby, eds., *Language and Politics*, 227-228.

⁴⁹ Wiley, “Imposition,” in Ricento and Burnaby, eds., *Language and Politics*, 227.

Seattle Star were outraged that P.P. Claxton was in support of German in the schools, demanding President Wilson fire him as U.S. Commissioner of Education.⁵⁰

It is perhaps remarkable that any support of German language teaching in schools continued as long as it did. In April 1918 the editors of the *Bellingham Herald* noted that the war department now wanted German speaking telephone operators for the Front. Arguing that the language was separate from “Prussianism” and books were free of propoganda, having German as an elective was “good policy” as Americans should understand what the “alien enemy” says.⁵¹ Others were less tolerant but maintained support. The *Olympia Daily Recorder* editors alleged that “hyphenates” (a phrase coined by former president Theodore Roosevelt to describe ethnic Americans of possibility divided loyalty) planned to “Germanize” the nation with the “little Huns in this country and their friends the pacifist and conscientious objectors.” However, they pleaded for language tolerance, arguing that as they drove out German “kultur,” they should “not make the mistake of discontinuing the teaching of the German language in the schools, but let’s burn up every pro-Hun textbook and teach children the truth about Germany. We do not and will not tolerate the teaching of German as it has been taught in far too many instances—by Germans who idealized everything German and with a ‘made in Germany’ mark.”⁵²

However, these voices accepting German instruction became easier to ignore as time went on. Facing this increasingly hostile climate, local districts around Washington State began to discontinue German instruction in their schools. Sometimes schools emphasized their

⁵⁰ “In Belgian Schools,” *Seattle Star* (Seattle, WA), October 3, 1918, 6. In his letter, Claxton wrote that: “We cannot afford to eliminate the German langue entirely....I want it definitely understood that my opinion is not influenced by the entrance of the United States into War. I do not believe our present relations with the German empire should affect in any way the policy of our schools in regard to German instruction.” Quoted in Wiley, “Imposition,” in Ricento and Burnaby, eds., *Language and Politics*, 227-228.

⁵¹ “The Hun and His Language,” *Bellingham Herald* (Bellingham, WA), April 18, 1918, 4.

⁵² “Kultur’s Scheme for the Conquest of America,” *Olympia Daily Recorder* (Olympia, WA), February 25, 1918, 2.

discontinuation of German classes as motivated more by economics than anti-German feeling. For example, Lynden High School cut German for the 1918-1919 academic year, citing less student demand rather than concerns about German being unpatriotic.⁵³

These anti-German steps also occurred in larger, urban districts where support had originally been stronger among Progressive administrators. At a meeting the Bellingham School Board, approved a loyalty oath for school employees and voted for Whatcom High School to drop German. The district reported only eleven students enrolled for German for the 1918-1919 academic year (twenty-seven ended the last term) compared to 115 in Spanish and enough to start a French class.⁵⁴ Even though citing numbers as the main reason, Elmer L. Cave, state director of the Washington Educational Association and Superintendent of Bellingham schools, repeated common arguments against the teaching of the German language. He declared that German as currently taught promoted German ideals and would need revision after the war. In the meantime, such instruction needed to stop “until German imperialism is killed, and Germany shows a sincere willingness to become a law-abiding, law-respecting nation.”⁵⁵

To do a ban, many districts reversed earlier positions. At a Seattle school board meeting, based on a new report from the city superintendent that German classes were a dangerous source of propaganda, the board made a motion to ban German. With no opposition from the floor or

⁵³ “Lynden Has No Use for German Tongue,” *Bellingham Herald* (Bellingham, WA), July 5, 1918, 7.

⁵⁴ “French will be Taught in High School,” *Bellingham Herald* (Bellingham, WA), September 5, 1917, 8.

⁵⁵ “German Barred in Local Schools; Teachers Must Take a Loyalty Oath; Department of Health is Planned,” *Bellingham Herald* (Bellingham, WA), August 6, 1918, 1. The breakdown of German classes shows the decline. Three students were enrolled in German 1, seven in German 2, and seven, twelve and one in German 3, German 4, German 5 & 6, respectively.

board recorded, the motion passed. The newspaper credited students for ending German as five hundred out of eight hundred in the district had dropped the subject.”⁵⁶

State Ban

The Washington State Board of Education moved gradually, in two main stages, to ban the teaching of German in public schools in conjunction with popular opposition to the language. That Washington would eventually move against the use of German language in schools was not surprising. Nationally, various patriotic organizations such as the National Defense League and American Defense Society called for the banning of German not just as an elective in public schools but also as an elective in private schools and as a language of instruction in any schools. They also attacked churches that conducted services in German as well as German-speaking private social clubs. There was no coherent federal policy about the issue and in comparison to some states Washington would be more moderate in its bans. Nebraska forbade the use of German in churches and banned its use in public, private and denominational schools. South Dakota further banned German from all public and private gatherings, even its use over the phone. By mid-1918, half of the forty-eight states had put at least some limitations on the use of German. Although Americanizers had opposed foreign languages being the language of instruction in public and private schools, they had not been against elective study of such languages.⁵⁷ In fact, the Washington State Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution as late as May 1918 passed a resolution recommending that only schools that offered multiple languages should teach German.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ “Oust German From City Schools,” *Seattle Star* (Seattle, WA), April 29, 1918, 2.

⁵⁷ William J. Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home: Civilian Mobilization, Wartime Federalism, and the Council of National Defense, 1917-1919* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), 81-82.

⁵⁸ Annette Glork Rowland, May 2, 1918, to President Henry Suzzallo. Papers. Governor Lister Subject Files Second Term 1917-19, folder Council for Defense 1918. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

In Washington, the State Board of Education acted in 1918. The President of the Pend Oreille County chapter of the Patriotic League (a national patriotic organization) attended a State Board meeting in Spokane to read a letter calling for a total statewide ban on German language instruction. His was not the only letter.⁵⁹ On April 2, 1918, the State Board passed a resolution that German could remain an elective in high schools, as preparedness for possible overseas service, so long as the teachers who taught it were clearly loyal and supported the American war cause and not the Germans. Still the Board went on to state:

That while we appreciate the fact that we are at war with the German nation and not with the German language, we, nevertheless, believe that the teaching of German in the elementary schools serves no essential educational purpose and disprove its retention as an elementary school subject.⁶⁰

After banning instruction of German in all but high schools, things escalated quickly. The next day the Board went further and banned the teaching of German as the sole modern foreign language option in schools. Only French or Spanish could hold that position now. On June 17, the Board voted to consult with the State Council of Defense on its policy concerning teaching German. On August 10, 1918 the Council informed the Superintendent of Public Instruction that they had voted on July 24 to ask the State Board of Education to “request” local school boards to ban German as a language elective in public and *private* schools, arguing that “the sentiment of our citizens is now such that this may be done without rousing resentment in any part of the

⁵⁹ “Minutes of the Meeting of the State Board of Education Held At The Davenport Hotel, Spokane, Washington, April 2, 3, 4, and 5, 1918,” in Washington State Department of Education, “Proceedings of the State Board of Education, Volume III, February 1915-June 1926,” 1 (151). Superintendent of Public Instruction Papers, Washington State Archives (Olympia, WA).

⁶⁰ “State Board of Education Proceedings: High School,” in Washington State Department Education, *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Biennium Ending June 30, 1918 Mrs. Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Olympia, 1919), 52.

state” and that it was in the nation’s “best interest” to ban it quickly.⁶¹ Consequently, without a vote by the Board of Education, on August 10 the Superintendent sent a letter to teachers with the resolutions, telling them to discontinue German language instruction “until further notification from the State Board of Education.”⁶² This vague ruling raised the possibility of a permanent ban.⁶³ However, in 1918 banning the German language was not enough and on September 19, 1918, the Board appointed a committee to inspect textbooks currently used in the State for alleged pro-German content.⁶⁴

Newspapers were almost universal in their support of the state ban after it happened. The *Olympia Daily Recorder*, for example, applauded the wartime ban as the “Huns” had used the language to spread propaganda, hurt the “Americanization of the American people.... There is no fanaticism about it,” they assured readers “.... Just now we are too busy with the war to lick the Germans to take time to fumigate the German language teaching business. Hence, we will throw it all out and let it wait.”⁶⁵

After the passing of the ban, Preston received many letters in support of the Board’s decision. Sometimes, they asked for more extreme action than she had the power to do. These actions would have made Washington language policies as repressive as those in the Midwest. E. LeGrande Cherry (Superintendent of Odessa Public Schools, School District No. 105) wrote Governor Ernest Lister on September 9, 1918, to ask that all businesses (and churches) be required to use English, arguing that it would give recent high school graduates, after German’s

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ “High School,” in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 53.

⁶⁴ “High School,” in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 53.

⁶⁵ “German is Barred from the Schools,” *Olympia Daily Recorder* (Olympia, WA), July 26, 1918, 2.

ban, an opportunity for “equal chance” with German speakers, though Cherry was in favor of the ban.⁶⁶

This would have been a disaster as clerks, bookkeepers, stenographers in Odessa, a German-Russian area, needed to know German.⁶⁷ Despite, Lister’s attempt to make Cherry drop the issue by insisting that it was under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Cherry insisted that it was within the governor’s responsibilities, adding that it was unfair “Some of our boys have left school and offered their lives in France to put down this German domination and if they come back home they cannot get positions in their hometown because they cannot speak the German language.” Other states had done so, but “Why cannot this be done in Washington?”⁶⁸

That a state-wide ban of German instruction would happen was not unexpected. Enrollment in German language classes had been declining in response to the war, though not in all areas. Since the early 1900s the federal government had been urging states to pass English-only instruction laws. Between 1913 and 1917 seventeen states put such laws on their books, but the number grew to thirty-four by 1923. The war increased the numbers as during the 1917-1921 period thirty-one states passed new or additional English-only instruction laws, but only fifteen made an explicit link to restriction of other languages.⁶⁹ Many states made it illegal to teach as

⁶⁶ E. LeGrande Cherry, September 9, 1917, to Ernest Lister. Papers. Governor Lister Subject Files Second Term 1917-19, Box 3: Detective Agencies-Fair/Fairs Commission 1917-18,” folder Education, Board of. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*; E. LeGrande Cherry, September 17, 1918 to Ernest Lister. Washington State Archives does not have Lister’s reply to Cherry’s letter of the 9th.

⁶⁹Wiley, “Imposition,” in Ricento and Burnaby, eds., *Language and Politics*, 228.

elective a foreign language below a certain grade, usually between Sixth and Eighth. As educational policy belonged to the states, local districts also had much discretion over policy.⁷⁰

Aftermath

Anti-Germanism remained a potent force in the years after World War I. Many wartime “superpatriots” wanted restrictions on the German language to continue. The Red Scare strengthened the idea that aliens must assimilate for the sake of national security. Though on the whole decentralized and underfunded, these assimilation programs largely succeeded in “stigmatizing cultural and linguistic diversity.”⁷¹ Kenneth Fraham’s “The Oath,” a popular poem of the time, clearly expressed this thought. He called people to avoid all German products, business or dealings with Germans. Language was an important part of this, as it stated, “I will not breathe where God’s clean air is soiled by a German tongue.”⁷²

Moreover, there was also strong support for English-only education in the nation and in Washington State, even though only a few private religious schools taught classes in German. The National Education Association lobbied Congress to pass the Smith-Towner Bill, which denied federal funds to states if they did not enforce English only policies,⁷³ and the Washington Educational Association passed a resolution in 1919 that:

We demand that the English language be the only recognized medium of instruction in all our public and private schools and playgrounds of the land. As one means, all teachers in private as well as public schools should be certified by the State.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Wiley, “Imposition,” in Ricento and Burnaby, eds., *Language and Politics*, 229.

⁷¹ Wiley, “Imposition,” in Ricento and Burnaby, eds., *Language and Politics*, 231.

⁷² Kenneth Fraham, “The Oath,” *Morning Olympian* (Olympia, WA), November 26, 1918, 3.

⁷³ Wiley, “Imposition,” in Ricento and Burnaby, eds., *Language and Politics*, 226.

⁷⁴ Washington State Education Association, *Thirty-Third Annual Association Annual of the Washington Education Association for the year 1919 Held in Seattle, Washington October 29, 30, 31, November 1919* (Washington Educational Association, 1919), 24.

This demand for English-only instruction indirectly continued to affect the recovery of German instruction in the post-war years. Numbers of students learning German at schools in the post-war years do however, show a slight recovery from the wartime low—and challenge the notion that students were refusing to take that language. In 1916-1917 and 1917-1918 German numbers show a slow decrease: German I at 3,394 and 2,188; German II 3,394 and 2,188; German III 464 and 408; German IV 32 and 18.⁷⁵ In 1918-1919 and 1919-1920 the official number of German students in state accredited public high schools amounted to four for both years. Exactly twice as many students (eight) were taking Norse, making German the least enrolled language in the state. But this is not unexpected, as the State School Board banned the language.⁷⁶

Statistics from the Washington State Superintendent's office show that the German language would never recover to its pre-war levels of students, although it saw a steady increase throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In 1920-1921 official statistics listed just four students taking German in the state and only eight the next school year.⁷⁷ In 1923-24 and 1924-1925 German numbers were small: German I at 157 and 265, German II 173 and 157, totaling at 330 and

⁷⁵ Edwin Twitmyer, "High School Inspector's Report: Number of Pupils Resuming Different Studies During the Years 1916-17 and 1917-18," in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 79. There is no indication of how many high schools these numbers cover, but most likely not all schools reported.

⁷⁶ Edwin Twitmyer, "Report of the High School Inspector: Numbers of Pupils Pursuing different Studies During the Years 1918-1919 and 1919-1920," in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Fifth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Biennium Ending June 30, 1920 Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Olympia, 1921), 106. 1918-1919 figures are from 392 high schools and 1919-1920 are from all accredited public high schools.

⁷⁷ Edwin Twitmyer, "Report of the High School Inspector: Number of Pupils Enrolled in High School Subjects," in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Sixth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction For the Biennium Ending June 30th, 1922 Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Olympia, 1922). 393 high schools reported for the 1920-1921 school year and 431 high schools reported for 1921-1922.

422.⁷⁸ That there were no German levels 3 and 4 listed indicated that most schools had not re-implemented a German program until at least 1922. In 1927 only 814 students enrolled in German. The following year showed a little rise in German enrollment. But this year offers a break-up by year of study that shows that the German language revival was of recent origin. Year One had 1,589 students in 1927 but 684 in 1928. Year Two stood at 222 and 173 and Year Three at twenty-three and twenty-one.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, numbers are unavailable during the 1930s and onward. However, a 1936-1938 report indicates a decrease in overall foreign language enrollment from 26,046 in 1931 to 18,715 in 1936. The report adds that while Latin, French and Spanish declined, German actually saw a slight increase.⁸⁰

Numbers do not tell the complete story and this data is woefully inadequate. However, they do show an overall decline during World War I and its immediate aftermath in the number of German students from a position of pre-war favoritism and a very slow, piecemeal recovery. Languages also suffered a decline when high schools changed to include more vocational and life skill rather than focusing on college preparation.⁸¹ Nevertheless, German enrollment suffered a permanent impact from wartime anti-Germanism. Indeed, today, German is far from the most

⁷⁸ Edwin Twitmyer, "High School Inspector's Report: Number of Pupils Enrolled in High School Subjects," in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Eighth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction For the Biennium Ending June 30th, 1926* Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction (Olympia, 1927), 131. 1922-1923 is 383 High schools and 1925-1926 is 366 High Schools. That the numbers increased even with fewer high schools gives the numbers more creditability as representing an overall trend. There is no high school inspector's report in the 1924 biennial report.

⁷⁹ Edwin Twitmyer, "High School Inspector's Report: Number of Pupils Enrolled in High School," in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Ninth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 1928* Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction, (Olympia, 1928), 90-91. 339 accredited public high schools reported for the 1926-1927 school year report and 367 in the 1927-1928 school year report. In 1928, Latin had 13,084 students with 8,207 in French and 9,328 in Spanish.

⁸⁰ "Our High Schools," in State Department, *Biennial 1928*, 36-38.

⁸¹ Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr., *American Education: A History* 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 227-228.

popular language to study in school in Washington. Spanish has become the language of choice to study, especially with an increasing Hispanic population.

Legal moves to overturn German language teaching bans were largely ineffective in bringing back the language and set weak precedents. In the case of *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S.390 (1922), Meyer taught in a German Lutheran School in Hamilton County, Nebraska. He used a German Bible history book. Fined and convicted, Meyer's appeal eventually reached the Supreme Court. The Court voted seven to two that Nebraska's harsh law was not justified in peacetime and violated the Due Process clause of the 14th amendment. However, the verdict was considered by many to be a "shallow precedent" since the decision ruled on individual not language rights, and the majority of legal opinion affirmed that "the power of the state to compel attendance at some school and to make reasonable regulations, including a requirement that they shall give instructions in English, is not questioned."⁸²

Today this conflict over the German language in schools seems distant and forgotten. Except for a few tourist-oriented urban enclaves and in small rural communities, a significant part of the American population no longer speaks German.⁸³ Still historians see the German language conflict of World War I and the Red Scare as prefiguring the World War II treatment of Japanese Americans, although the Japanese situation would be more extreme. Others note that it is a sign of America's long history of a "propensity to bury the bill of rights."⁸⁴

Nativists and nationalists made this situation possible by using wartime concerns about German-American loyalty to promote their vision of a unified and culturally homogenous

⁸² Wiley, "Imposition," in Ricento and Burnaby eds., *Language and Politics*, 232-233.

⁸³ Wiley, "Imposition," in Ricento and Burnaby, eds., *Language and Politics*, 218.

⁸⁴ Wiley, "Imposition," in Ricento and Burnaby, eds., *Language and Politics*, 235.

American nation. Although banning German was not unique in Washington, its relatively small, dispersed and disorganized German population shows that numbers were not important in creating bans on the language. Opposition to restrictions on instruction came mainly from urban, Progressive school administrators and from the Germans themselves. Nationalistic Americanizers within the school system and outside it, particularly those in patriotic societies were determined in their opposition to German. While it is perhaps hard to understand now how a language ban could exist in the United States, the proponents of the ban used patriotism and Americanization as strong arguments for its support in what Paul J. Ramsey calls a “patriotic war” against German instruction⁸⁵ at a time when being German “was to be unpatriotic and undemocratic.”⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Ramsey, “War against German-American Culture,” 285.

⁸⁶ Ramsey, “War against German-American Culture,” 293.

Chapter IV

TESTING THE BOUNDS OF LIBERTY: THE AMERICAN FLAG

Douglas County, Washington, Spring 1920

On January 19, 1920, Douglas County Superintendent of Schools Eva Greenslit Anderson wrote Superintendent of Public Instruction Josephine Corliss Preston, asking her and the state attorney general for advice “on the hardest problem that has come to me since I have been in the office.”¹ A group of Russian immigrant families had refused to observe the school flag salute as mandated by law. Anderson thought that she had gotten the Russians to agree after talking to them for two days about the meaning of the Pledge of Allegiance, but their children had again refused to salute the American flag at school. “You see,” she wrote, letting her biases show, “they claim religious exemption—stubborn brutes too—and have been causing trouble in that part of the county for two years....They say that they understand perfectly the meaning of the pledge and that is why they will not permit their children to give it for ‘they won’t stand by the Flag.’”² The federal authorities in Spokane had been no help as mandatory flag saluting in schools was a state law. County residents were pressuring Anderson to act, lest other pupils in the same school and area became “demoralized” that they were exempted. She asked Preston what she could do to remedy the situation.³

Preston replied, giving the attorney general’s detailed opinion from the existing School Code, since no outside laws applied. “Willful disobedience” to rules and regulations of the state board were sufficient grounds for expulsion or suspension. Corporal punishment was also

¹ Mrs. L. O. [Eva Greenslit] Anderson, January 19, 1920, to Josephine Corliss Preston. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal Correspondence, Box 8 County Superintendents, folder Legal Correspondence—County Superintendents 1918-1927. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

acceptable, to keep order in the classroom. The parents lost authority over children at the schoolhouse gate, so were not legally culpable for their insubordination. The attorney general suggested that the “mildest” punishment to meet this situation would be the most appropriate.⁴

The Russians identified themselves as “Honest Christians” or “Spirit Jumpers” (Molokans), a pacifist, spiritual offshoot of the Russian Orthodox Church.⁵ The Molokans are a splinter group of the more famous Dukhobors and fled the Transcaucasus region of Russia, settling mostly in California between 1905 and 1917.⁶

The county sheriff brought eleven Russian schoolchildren before the Douglas County Superior Court on February 3rd with O. R. Hopewell acting as judge. The Court charged the children, all from a school in the third district in the northeast part of Douglas County between Mansfield and Saint Andrews, with “disloyalty and disobedience.” They had refused to salute the flag a few weeks prior, though then they did salute after Anderson had talked to them, but had refused to do so again. Blaming the parents, the children were “severely reprimanded by the judge and given a suspended sentence pending good behavior.”⁷

The issue was not over. On February 27, Judge Sam Hill held an all day session. The Court charged five heads of families under the delinquency laws for ordering their children to not salute the flag. Hill told the parents they could either have their children salute the flag as part of the regular school program or the court would send children to the training school at

⁴*Ibid*; Josephine Corliss Preston, January 31, 1920, to Mrs. L. O. [Eva Greenslit] Anderson. Papers.

⁵ “Judge Hill Persuades Religious Fanatics They Must Obey Rules,” *Douglas County Press* (Waterville, WA), Thursday, April 1, 1920, 1. The audience was shocked at the enthusiasm and Pentecostal nature of their prayers.

⁶ Jerry Bergman, “The Modern Religious Objection to Mandatory Flag Salute in America: A History and Evaluation,” *Journal of Church and State* 39, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 215-237, 216.

⁷ “Refuse to Salute the Flag; Sentenced,” *Douglas County Press* (Waterville, WA), February 5, 1920, 1. The regular judge (Sam Hill), who would hear the case, was home with the flu.

Chehalis where administrators would force them to salute. After praying and singing hymns the parents agreed to the salute. The newspaper insinuated that this was more because they feared that the training school would force their children to break religious rules like eating pork rather than the separation.⁸ Other accounts were even harsher:

Monday witnessed a scene in Judge Hill's court which was full of pathos—and even tragedy, if the dwarfing of the human intellect be a tragedy. It was a case for the serious minded and opened up a page of life which exists, even in our own country, which is a dark page and calls for our best endeavor, and shows what a strain is put upon our laws and the melting pot sat up into which is poured the undigested, ignorant and century old peoples of Europe which have been and are allowed to enter our country to be made citizens and amendable to our laws and customs. It is a living testament to what is to be gone through to make them fit for citizens of our western civilization and progress...Judge Hill explained to them the workings of the law and that it guaranteed to them, as well as to all others, full religious freedom such as they were permitted to enjoy here. All that was demanded of them was compliance with the law and its support....The boy interpreter was a bright and intelligent youth and has made his way credibly in school. In fact, all the children are average in intelligence, and with the privilege of our public schools will make good, American citizens. But the home teachings has come from oppressed Europe where real freedom has never existed. This coupled with a religious teaching common to oppression under monarchy has made it almost impossible for parents to realize what it is to become a citizen and enjoy real liberty. The talk and explanations by the court will, undoubtedly, have a good influence and may serve to drive away the superstitions surrounding the case.⁹

The court system and school authorities saw the case as a chance to Americanize people through the enforcement of flag saluting laws. They believed that education had the power to assimilate immigrants, but that this assimilation was under great stress from parental ideas. Only by brining the parents into obedience, could school administrators seek to assimilate the next generation into patriotic, loyal Americans.

⁸ "Russian Children Will Salute the Flag," *The Big Bend Empire* (Waterville, WA), April 1, 1920, 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*

The Flag and Patriotism

Controversies and consequences aside, just what did this “cult of the flag” entail and mean? The American flag was a ubiquitous symbol during the World War I era. This red, white and blue banner is one of America’s oldest, most enduring, recognizable symbols, especially at American schools. Educators used the flag as a powerful object of nationalism. As some historians have suggested, flags draw their power not only from their symbolism, but their use as “physical expressions of political agency.”¹⁰

The flag would be an important tool of the patriots and Americanizers during the war and its aftermath. Building upon the Progressive-era Schoolhouse Flag Movement and patriotic education, intense wartime feeling increased and sharpened their beliefs and actions. Most prominent among these were using the flag as a tool to teach loyalty to students, especially immigrants. In addition, a growing concern over political radicals led to a firmer place for the flag in curriculums, stricter flag laws, and a legal and social intolerance to those who would not salute the flag. Legal challenge to this intolerance was not successful until the 1940s.

The national flag was not always an essential physical or curricular part of American schools, but during the Progressive Era it came to perform, in the words of some historians, a role in forming the idea of the state in children, its constant presence a way of making the state acceptable and a fact of life.¹¹ However, in the 1890s, concern over immigration and post-Civil War reunification combined with imperialism led to an increased emphasis on the teaching of patriotism in the American schools. This also reflected a wave of militant, jingoistic nationalism that developed in the wake of the Spanish-American War, America’s first major post-Civil War

¹⁰ Forrest D. Pass, “‘Something Occult in the Science of Flag-Flying:’ School Flags and Educational Authority in Early Twentieth-Century Canada,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 95, no. 3 (September 2014): 321-351, 321.

¹¹ Pass, “Something Occult,” 330.

military operation. Patriotic groups such as the Grand Army of the Republic and its female branch, the Woman's Relief Corps, promoted using the flag as a tool to teach patriotism.¹² One member, George T. Balch, an educator, and GAR spokesman, wrote a pledge and ceremony for students to use: "I pledge my head, my hands and my heart to God and my country. One nation, one language, one flag." Emphasizing American ethnic unity and the flag, the Balch pledge would prove quite popular.¹³

The Schoolhouse Flag Movement dramatically pushed this pro-flag effort. At the urging of the *Youth's Companion*, a massive publicity campaign promoted by government officials, reformers, and educators urged thousands of schools around the United States to purchase and prominently display the American flag. Also at this time, the flag salute ceremony became popular. As part of the celebration of the Columbian Exposition (1893 Chicago World's Fair) Francis Bellamy wrote the famous pledge that read: "I pledge allegiance to my flag and the republic for which it stands, one nation indivisible with liberty and justice for all." Educators largely ignored the fact that a Christian Socialist with utopian ideals wrote this "Bellamy pledge." However, a variety of pledges would remain popular until after World War I. It was only in the 1920s that the Bellamy pledge became the dominant version. In the 1950s Congress modified the oath with the addition of "under God." In any case, the use of a pledge to the flag, in the opinion of O'Leary "represented a critical step in transforming schools into machines for political socialization."¹⁴

¹² Elizabeth O'Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 150.

¹³ O'Leary, *To Die For*, 151.

¹⁴ O'Leary, *To Die For*, 171.

The Flag in Pre-1917 Washington Education

Washington was not immune to the waves of nationalism sweeping the country in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. After all, the 1889 state constitution declared, when it established in Title IX the Department of Education, that it was the “paramount duty” of government to educate the children of the state. Thus, it was important, as School Code required that:

It shall be the duty of all teachers to endeavor to impress upon the minds of their pupils the principles of morality, truth, justice, temperance and patriotism; to teach them to avoid idleness, profanity, falsehood; to instruct them in the principles of free government, and to train them up to the true comprehension of the rights, duty and dignity of American citizenship.¹⁵

In practice, school administrators mixed this sentiment, seemingly incongruously for modern readers, with sentimentality and an imperialistic jingoism, especially after the Spanish-American war (the Washington State National Guard had seen service in the subsequent Philippine-American War, and this was a mark of state pride). In a sample letter, the State Board of Education urged in 1901 that schools send the following message to patrons and neighbors on patriotic holidays:

We love our country because we have our homes here. We follow the flag into battle to protect our country from dishonor just as we would fight to protect our homes from destruction by enemies. Our schools will be patriotic just in proportion to the spirit of HOME that pervades the schoolroom. By making all your friends feel at home with you in your work you will show that the schools belong to the people, and upon them depends the safety of the people.... The boys and girls wish the encouragement of your presence and co-operation in their work for HOME and country.¹⁶

¹⁵ “Course of Study for the Common Schools: Good Citizenship,” in Washington State Department of Education, *Fifteenth Biennial Report [of the] Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Washington Published by Authority* (Olympia, 1901), 226.

¹⁶ “Course of Study for the Common Schools: Patriotic Memorial Days,” in State Department, *Biennium 1901*, 227-278. Holidays included Thanksgiving, Christmas and patriotic anniversaries, usually related to the American Revolution.

This equated the country with home, encouraging students to see the state as their larger home. Unsurprisingly, the Board of Education urged that a flag salute ceremony be an important part of such celebrations. Recommending the Balch pledge, the Board instructed students to salute by extending the right arm, palm to the flag as they recited the pledge with “the attitude of INTENSE EARNESTNESS,” ending with “great force.”¹⁷

Washington Flag-Salute Resistance Before the War

Prior to World War I, opposition against certain uses of the American flag concentrated on mandatory flag saluting and was unsuccessful in doing more than delay the passage of “patriotic” laws. In 1913, the legislature proposed a law that would mandate flag salutes in classrooms.¹⁸ This law would not pass until the next legislative session in 1915.

However, a controversy that began in 1913 when schoolteacher J. E. Sinclair of Foster, Washington published an editorial in *The Commonwealth*, a Socialist newspaper, against a proposed law that would require flag salutes in all classrooms,¹⁹ shows just what strong emotions were simmering below the surface ready for the war to set into a blaze. Lizzie Jones, Superintendent of Snohomish County, told Preston she did not want to not approve Sinclair’s teaching contract for lack of patriotism, as “We don’t want anyone who is opposed to the principles of the government at the head of the schools of our county,” though she worried that overt action might hurt Preston politically.²⁰

¹⁷ “Course of Study for the Common Schools: Flag Salute,” in State Department, *Biennium 1901*, 229. A popular form of salute. Due to its resemblance to the Nazi salute, schools abandoned this salute during World War II.

¹⁸ “Legislative,” *Morning Olympian* (Olympia, WA), February 22, 1913, 1, 2.

¹⁹ J. E. Sinclair, “Message to Socialist Children,” *The Commonwealth* (Everett, WA), April 11, 1913. Sinclair indicated in the article that the law had passed, but it had not.

²⁰ Lizzie Jones, May 31, 1913, to Josephine Corliss Preston. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal and County Correspondence, Box 5 Skamania-Whatcom 1913-1931, folder Skamania-Whatcom 1913-1931. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

Preston wrote back “I think it involves a serious question,” foreshadowing the traumas that would mark the latter half of the decade, “and one that we shall have to face squarely within the next five years.” She did not care how the matter would affect her personally. However, Preston felt that although Jones could decline the contract on the grounds of “a crime against the state,” that it would be

wise for both of us to be very conservative about any action until we have weighed the matter very carefully, because there is nothing that a socialist likes better than to be made a martyr for the cause, and if we were to dismiss him for any utterances such as you sent me, it might send him down through history as one of the greatest heroes ever presented to the world by the socialists. Just keep quiet until I hear from the attorney general and have time to think a little bit more about this.²¹

Preston warned Jones to be careful until Preston had a clearer idea what course to take, lest Sinclair cast himself as a martyr to the Socialist cause. Meanwhile, Jones kept Sinclair’s contract on hold, wanting Preston to make a decision. However, during the first week of June a petition signed by forty-seven “prominent citizens” protested the article by Sinclair and called for the county to void his contract.²²

The Socialist Sinclair, however, used the more tolerant pre-war climate which gave him more freedom to protest. He described himself as an activist, secretary of the Socialist Educational Bureau and even claimed to have been at the Hoquiam Free Speech protests of the prior year. Writing from Cowiche, Washington, he wrote a lengthy defense for the local paper. Calling the flag talk, “silly,” he accused the district’s “aspiring capitalists” of ignoring the plight of the poor and baiting Socialists to attack the flag. The law was unjust, as “compulsory respect is no respect at all,” and that students would have to honor a lie that “liberty and justice” existed

²¹ *Ibid*; Josephine Corliss Preston, June 3, 1913, to Lizzie Jones.

²² “Teacher Charged with Unpatriotic Utterances; Want Contract Revoked,” *The Arlington Times* (Arlington, WA), June 7, 1913, 1.

for all in the nation. Only working class solidarity could make the beloved flag a true symbol of freedom.²³

But the controversy did not quiet. By late July, a 150 area citizens signed a second petition, only sixteen of which had students in Sinclair's Garfield School (Consolidated District 301). The Board agreed to fire Sinclair if he further broke any rules and regulations.²⁴ This conflict also showed social fault lines as Preston received numerous letters of support from Socialists in the area.²⁵ However, they were not powerful enough. The conflict eventually resulted in the successful recall election of the two Socialist members of the Snohomish County School Board and the new board soon dismissed Sinclair.²⁶

World War I Flag Lessons: "A Patriotic Bulletin"

While the flag was a key part of the pre-war patriotic curricula of Washington State public education, the war strengthened its role as the symbolic center of this type of education. Adding an impetus of wartime anxiety, nationalists sought to create unity and loyalty in common cause against a common enemy. The Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction's "Patriotic Bulletin," published in 1918 as a text for teachers and students made flags a key part of its educational efforts. Even on the book's colorful cover, battle flags from Washington's National Guard were printed and a sketch of a United States flag adorned the upper corners of

²³ "J. R. Sinclair Stoutly Defends His Position," *The Arlington Times* (Arlington, WA), June 7, 1913. 1, 6.

²⁴ "Sinclair Controversy Entering New Phase," *The Arlington Times* (Arlington, WA), July 26, 1913, 1.

²⁵ Dora P. McKee, October 25, 1913, to Josephine Corliss Preston; Mrs. W.A. [illegible], October 28, 1913 to Josephine Corliss Preston, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Farrell, October 29, 1913, to Josephine Corliss Preston. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal and County Correspondence, Box 5 Skamania-Whatcom 1913-1931, folder Skamania-Whatcom 1913-1931. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

²⁶ "Results of Recall Election," *The Arlington Times* (Arlington, WA), December 13, 1913, 1.

each page. The publication contained patriotic speeches, poems, songs, maxims and even a few history lessons.

Much of this patriotism was flag-centered with definite political aims. In “Flag Phrases” children learned flag terms and symbolism as well as how to properly display and care for the flag. The Red Cross flag, students read was “the banner of the great and humane Red Cross Society respected by all civilized nations.” The society goes “wherever they are needed, with ambulances, hospitals, etc., for those suffering in war, plagues or any great calamity.” In contrast, “The ‘red flag’ was first used as an auction sign, then as a danger signal. It is now a sign of defiance and is the flag of anarchists or people who do not believe in government, and threaten to break up society.”²⁷ By conflating all radicals together into anarchists, the department made them all the more threatening and dangerous in the minds of children.

An updated flag salute was also included, that used the now more popular Bellamy pledge. The bulletin also taught a flag ceremony. Drawing from the 1917 *Course of Study*, the booklet described the flag salute as follows:

At a given hour in the morning, the pupil rises in his place while the flag is being brought forward from the door to the stand of the teacher. Every pupil gives the flag the military salute, which is as follows: The right hand uplifted, palm in front, to a line with the forehead, close to it. While thus standing in the attitude of salute, all the pupils repeat together, slowly and distinctly the following pledge: I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the republic for which it stands one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.’ As the words, pronounced in this pledge, ‘to my flag,’ each one extends the right palm to the front, toward the flag until the end of the pledge of affirmation. Then all hands drop to the side. The pupils, still standing, may sing together in unison, the song ‘America.’²⁸

²⁷ “Flag Phrases,” in Washington State Department of Education, *A Patriotic Bulletin No. 32 Published by the Authority of Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction*, (Olympia: Washington State Department of Education, 1917), 62. Holidays include: New Year’s Day, Emancipation Proclamation Day, Lincoln and Washington Birthdays, meeting of first congress, British evacuate Boston, Arbor Day, Peace Day (first meeting of Hague arbitration court), Memorial/Decoration Day, Bunker Hill, Independence Day, bombardment of Fort McHenry, Thanksgiving, and Forefather’s Day (Pilgrims Land).

²⁸ “The School Flag Salute,” in State Department, *A Patriotic Bulletin*, 64.

Beyond the flag salute ceremony, the State Department of Education gave children specific lessons about what the flag meant. Such as that the flag symbolized liberty, but only liberty through the law and nothing that broke the law.²⁹ “Today,” a section on the history of the flag opened, “probably several million American flags are waving serenely in the varied breezes of our spacious land, significant of the calm and dignified, yet deep and lasting, patriotism of the American people. Be this our native land or adopted country, we pledge allegiance to that flag, uncover we pass, and wear it in miniature as a token of our loyalty.” These ideas combined Americanization at the same time as making no room for nonconformists.³⁰

Therefore, the flag and the school were intimately connected:

Ye who love the Republic, remember the claim/
We owe to her fortunes, ye owe to her name/
To her years of prosperity past done/
A hundred years behind you, a thousand years before!
The blue arch above is Liberty’s dome,
The green fields beneath us is Equality’s home;
But the schoolroom today is Humanity’s friend,
Let the people, the flag and the schoolhouse defend!
’Tis the schoolhouse that stands by the flag;
Let the nation stand by the school!
’Tis the school bell that rings for our Liberty old,
’Tis the school boy whose ballot shall rule.”³¹

In the American cultural landscape, the school ensured the survival of the American state, as it prepared the coming generations for civic life.

Wartime Reaction: Missing Flags Accusations

Besides a firmer place in the curriculum, World War I increased the importance of the physical presence of flags in schools, particularly in the early days of the war. Centralia is a good example. On April 11, 1917, only days after the American declaration of war, the Centralia school board voted to recommend that all teachers, principals and janitors wear “small flags”

²⁹ “Our Flag (adapted from a speech by Henry Ward Beecher),” in State Department, *A Patriotic Bulletin*, 71. Beecher (1815-1887), was a famous abolitionist minister and reformer. His exact address is not indicated.

³⁰ “The American Flag,” in State Department, *A Patriotic Bulletin*, 67.

³¹ Frank Treat Southwick, “The Schoolhouse and the Flag,” in State Department, *A Patriotic Bulletin*, 70.

when at school. At the same meeting they also voted unanimously that all schools in the district must hold a flag salute ceremony every school day.³²

In the early days of the war, members of the public flung accusations back and forth against teachers and schools for not flying the flag. These cases often proved an opportunity for local busy-bodies and people with grudges to use the flag as a weapon to solve old grievances. Parents of schoolchildren almost never wrote to Preston about missing flags.

A good example of these factors is the events that unfolded in Foster, Washington, soon after the war declaration. Mrs. L. M. (George) Washburn, a neighbor of Foster High School, wrote Preston that Principal L. N. Dimmitt of Foster High School had been “careless” about raising the flag, especially after the start of the war only days before. Neither was the flag up at the nearby Yantes school the day Washburn wrote the letter. She insinuated that Dimmitt was a bad teacher, revealing previous biases. He was a quarrelsome teacher who drove out male students over the age of fourteen.³³ Preston asked county superintendent Durham to investigate the issue³⁴ and he quickly reported that the flag was raised on fair days and moreover, “Mr. Dimmitt is a law abiding, loyal American and is as patriotic as any of us.”³⁵ Preston wrote Washburn to tell Durham if she observed any “carelessness in the future” about the flag.³⁶

Writing back, Washburn was insistent. She complained that Dimmitt was an incompetent teacher and Durham had been no help. Good students had to go to Seattle to receive a good

³² “Centralia, Wash., April 11, 1917.” Papers. Centralia School District Superintendent School Board Minutes. Box 1. Folder Board Minutes 1917. Washington State Archives, Southwest Regional Branch (Olympia, WA).

³³ Mrs. L. M. (George) Washburn, April 12, 1917, to Josephine Corliss Preston. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal and County Correspondence, Box 3 King-Lincoln 1913-1931, folder King 1913-1917. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

³⁴ *Ibid*; Josephine Corliss Preston, April 16, 1917, to M.E. Durham. .

³⁵ *Ibid*; M.E. Durham, May 4, 1917, to Josephine Corliss Preston.

education. She lived “only a few minutes’ walk from the school” and thus knew if the flag was up or not. She further alleged that “They sent out a squad of soldiers from Seattle on complaint but the teacher heard of it in time from the scholars, so he ran it up just before they got here.”³⁷

Soon many more no-flag accusations poured into Preston’s office, as the flag was a symbol that the school offered patriotic instruction, as if the flag were some sort of talisman that would drive away disloyalty. One teacher, who appeared to suffer from mental illness, was accused of being pro-German, not flying the flag (District #52 in Columbia County), and not letting the students sing the Star Spangled Banner. The County School Superintendent appointed a student to have the flag flown and students learned patriotic songs. The teacher soon resigned at the request of the Board.³⁸

Some schools took great effort to prove their patriotism with the flag. N. B. Davis wrote Preston that a school at Stratford in Grant County had only raised its flags a handful of times, alleging the pacifist director broke “common custom” and asked her to write to them to make them raise it immediately and properly as “a special care of our country’s flag. . . at this time may create an impression of respect. . . .” Davis also stated that the role of public schools was “to make U.S. citizens and this neglect [at Stratford] is breeding contempt for the flag that protects them.”³⁹ However, the accused school did not take these accusations lightly. The school

³⁶ *Ibid*; Josephine Corliss Preston, May 7, 1917, to Mrs. L. M. Washburn.

³⁷ *Ibid*; Mrs. LL. M. Washburn, received May 17, 1917, to Josephine Corliss Preston. She also tried to use the fact that she had once lived only a block from Preston’s aunt and uncle in Pelican Rapids (Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Kinney) and wanted to visit Preston sometime.

³⁸ W. W. Henderon, March 8, 1920, to Josephine Corliss Preston. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal and County Correspondence, Box 1 Adams-Douglas 1913-1931, folder Country Problems Columbia 1913-1926. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

³⁹ R.L. Blackburn, April 16, 1917, to N.B. Davis. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal and County Correspondence, Box 1 Adams-Douglas 1913-1931, folder Country Problems Columbia 1913-1926. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

collected affidavits to refute this claim, signed by a director, teacher and director-clerk and patron of the district affirming that the school regularly flew the flag in good weather the past two years. After receiving these affidavits, Preston told Davis “There may have been some misunderstanding about the information you received, to the contrary, because, surely all patriotic communities do want their school flag displayed.”⁴⁰

Some schools took pre-emptive measures to protect their patriotic reputation in a climate of suspicion. The clerk of School District No. 20 in Douglas County wrote Preston in 1918, worried that people had sent complaints to Preston that their school did not display the flag. She explained that the flag was badly torn and they were afraid to fly it, citing two arrests in Spokane County for flying torn flags. The teacher had a flag dutifully draped over a wall inside the school, and the clerk had pledged to get a new flag as soon as the director authorized the funds. However, a neighbor had been threatening to write Preston’s office. The clerk claimed that the school was patriotic and the neighbor only wanted to prevent it from operating.⁴¹

Saluting

In this atmosphere, school officials did not tolerate refusals to salute the flag for political or religious reasons. Many historians argue that in the decades before World War I, administrators often informally tolerated those who refused to salute, but the war ended much of this tolerance. Much of this resistance came from religious groups. Although most Christian denominations had no issue with the flag salute, various groups (and individuals) did. These groups included Jehovah Witnesses, Jehovahites, Mennonites, Christodelphians, the Elijah Voice

⁴⁰ *Ibid*; Josephine Corliss Preston, April 25, 1917, to N. B. Davis.

⁴¹ Mrs. J. D. Gillis, October 28, 1918, to Josephine Corliss Preston. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal and County Correspondence, Box 1 Adams-Douglas 1913-1931, folder Country Problems Adams 1914-1926. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

Society and Molokans. They typically argued that flag saluting was idol worship or overly militaristic.⁴²

Administrators often treated students and teachers who refused to salute the flag poorly, expelling and firing them from school or their jobs. Those who were old enough to drop out of school were the lucky ones. Leon Aller, an eighteen year old senior at Stadium High School in Tacoma, dropped out to avoid mandatory flag saluting. Administrators could file no charges against him or his parents. The son of a leading Tacoma Socialist, Leon's mother spoke to reporters, emphasizing their American patriotism:

My son feels that it is hard to give up school, but he does not believe it is possible for him to continue as long as his belief differs from the other students. He thinks it is a shame that some liberty cannot be had in this country. He could explain it better than I why he does not wish to salute the flag....We do not believe in war or in killing. We are not in favor of this war. If it were a matter of the Germans coming to this country we would be among the first to rise in defense, but we do not feel like sending our manhood over to Europe to fight for graft. There is no real fight for humanity in this, you know that. We do not treat our citizens here with humanity let alone fight for it in Europe. The majority does not rule here. The majority is not in favor of this war.⁴³

Leon Aller quit school because of his political pacifism. A Socialist, he and his family believed that the war was a capitalist venture and that America's fight for "democracy" was hypocritical. Because of this, he would not salute the flag, breaking school rules and given no chance at exemption, dropped out rather than be expelled. Later laws could have changed the outcome of his case considerably.

Post-War Crisis Management

The post-war period brought new impetus for flag-laws in the nation—and Washington. Nationally, patriotic societies, spearheaded by the American Legion, held two flag conferences

⁴² Bergman, "Modern Religious Objection," 217.

⁴³ "Youth Refuses To Salute Flag," *The Morning Oregonian* (Portland, WA), February 23, 1918, 2.

that gave detailed guidelines for flag use. These rules were widely disseminated, even into Washington.⁴⁴

Across the nation, laws banning radical flags increased. In 1919, reflecting the tensions of the concurrent Seattle General Strike, the Washington State Legislature passed a law banning flags that were “suggestive of, any organized or unorganized group of persons who, by their laws, rules, declarations, doctrines, creeds, purposes, practices or efforts, espouse, propose or advocate any theory, principal or form of government antagonistic to, or subversive of the constitution, its mandates, or laws of the United States or this state” Ownership or possession of such flags was a felony, as was helping those with illegal items. Banned banners were subject to confiscation and destroyed, though flags of nations with official representatives in the country were allowed, as well as items in “historical museums of recognize standing.”⁴⁵ The law passed easily, with only serious debate in committee about whether or not simple refusal to display the flag was good enough grounds for the law.⁴⁶

At the same legislative session, legislators passed the Uniform Flag Law. It ruled that American flags could not have advertisements on them and that “no person shall publically mutilate, deface, defile, defy, trample upon or by word or act cast contempt upon any such flag.” Violation of such provisions was a gross misdemeanor. The law intended to unify existing state

⁴⁴ Washington State Department of Education, *State Manual of Washington (eleventh edition) 1923 Complied by Mrs. Josephine Corliss Preston, Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Olympia, WA: Washington State Department of Education, 1923), 205.

⁴⁵Richard J. Ellis, *To the Flag: The Unlikely History of the Pledge of Allegiance* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 75.

⁴⁶ Ellis, *To the Flag*, 75.

flag laws and did not “apply to any printed or written document or production, stationary, ornament, picture or jewelry whereon shall be depicted said flag...”⁴⁷

The 1919 Legislature did not forget the schools, reflecting the continued importance of the flag in schools, especially during the Red Scare, as they renewed the 1915 law (now unique for having penalties) that required the following:

Every board of directors of the several state school districts of this state shall procure [an] United States flag which shall be replaced with a new one whenever the same becomes tattered, torn, or faded, and shall cause said flag to be displayed upon or near each public school building during school hours, except in unsuitable weather, and at such other times as the said board may deem proper and shall cause appropriate flag exercises to be held in every school at least once in a week at which exercise the pupils shall recite the following salute to the flag: ‘I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the republic for which it stands. One nation indivisible with liberty and justice for all.’⁴⁸

While reaffirming the requirement for saluting and displaying the United States flag, as a change the new law had penalties for non-compliance. “Any member of any board of directors of any schools in the state, or any person employed by any board of directors of any school district willfully refusing or neglect to comply” with the law “shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction shall be fined a sum not to exceed \$1000, providing that any person so convicted may be discharged from further service by the said school board.”

In addition, the legislature tightened teacher qualifications:

No person, whose certificate or diploma authorizing him or her to teach in the public schools of the this state shall have been revoked on account of his or her failure to endeavor to impress upon the minds of his or her pupils the principles of patriotism, or to train them up to the true comprehension of the rights, duty and dignity of American citizenship, shall teach or be permitted or qualified to teach in any public school in the state and no certificate or diploma shall be issued to such a person.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Chapter 181, S.B. 137, in Washington State Legislature, *Session Laws of Washington 1915* (Olympia, WA: 1919), 246.

⁴⁸ Washington State Legislature, *Session Laws of Washington 1915*, 246.

⁴⁹ “State Board of Education: For Failure to Teach Patriotism,” in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Fifth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Biennium Ending June 30, 1920*

This law made it legal to fire teachers on the grounds of being “unpatriotic,” rather than by more general categories such as unprofessional behavior. It made firing teachers for political reasons much easier.

In this atmosphere, the Washington State Department of Education continued to promote the flag as a critical part of the physical makeup of the public school. In 1923, as part of a promotion for the “Standardization of Rural Schools,” a report listed model circulars for rural school districts, all of which emphasized the importance of the flag at the school. Lewis County’s first requirement concerning a school was that a flag fly in good weather outside the building and one in each classroom for saluting. Whatcom County asked if “#9 Has the flag been displayed regularly? Have you had the ‘Flag Salute’ as required by law? 10. Have you had fire drills? Have you complied with the compulsory attendance law? Have you taught patriotism, morals, manners, temperance, hygiene and humane education?”⁵⁰

This concern with the flag showed continuing political concerns that now focused on radicals in the Red Scare. Vivian J. McGill of the Rainier Consolidated District in Thurston County went before the Superintendent of Public Instruction for a hearing about his teaching license. He was accused of smoking and not teaching students to avoid tobacco, his “philosophic” instruction including telling students that although the law required all students to salute the flag, that he disagreed with the law as wrong in principal, thus teaching children to disrespect the flag. Preston found it shocking the support McGill received from eminent professors at the University of Washington (where he had gotten an emergency teaching

Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction (Olympia, 1921), 32. The law was Section 2, Chapter 38.

⁵⁰ “Standardization of Rural Schools,” in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Third Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Biennium Ending June 30, 1916 Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Olympia, 1917), 181-184.

certificate). William Savery (professor of philosophy) said McGill had “highly original metaphysics” and majored in philosophy. W. L. Parring (head of English department) called him an idealist and a “speculative musician”. J. G. Fletcher (vocational secretary) defined him as having “Quixote tendencies” but patriotic though he had “original methods of exemplifying it” that would not be appreciated by “hard-headed practical farmer folks about Rainier.” Nor it seems, by the urbane Preston, who declared before she passed judgment on McGill that she would investigate the University of Washington to see how much they were responsible for his ideas, and what they taught about morals and teacher qualifications. Preston felt it was inconceivable that they could advocate for such a man as McGill. The Superintendent of Public Instruction court was decidedly against him and did not allow him to “philosophize” about the situation.⁵¹

A more extreme case came out of Bellingham, which had the potential to become a Supreme Court case but never reached outside the local court system. Eight-year old Russell Tremain’s parents, members of the Elijah Voice Society, kept their son out of school to avoid mandatory flag saluting. Eventually, the Children’s Home Society of Seattle took Russell into their custody and scheduled him for adoption. The American Civil Liberties’ Union, more concerned with the Scopes trial and Sacco and Vanzetti trial, were involved in the early part of the case, although the family refused to hire any lawyers, objecting to all secular courts. Eventually, the state allowed the boy to return home in exchange for attending school where he would not have to salute the flag. It would take until the 1940s for United States Supreme Court

⁵¹ “State Superintendent to Investigate Washington University Professors,” *Morning Olympian* (Olympia, WA), February 8, 1920, 1.

cases to protect the rights of children not to salute the flag and until the 1960s for teachers.⁵²

Washington would prove slightly more tolerant. In 1940, however, the new state attorney general reversed an earlier decision that allowed Jehovah Witness students to be exempt from the flag salute, keeping in line with national policy and public pressure.⁵³

Conclusion

During the World War I years and its aftermath, the United States flag became a symbol used by nationalists to enforce patriotism and as a tool to Americanize immigrants. Schools became a battleground for “patriots” and those who for one reason or another would not salute the flag. Religious minorities, often immigrants, were the most vulnerable victims of this conflict.

Sometimes an individual was able to use the flag as a defense instead of as a weapon. Alma D. Wagen, a German teacher at Tacoma’s Stadium High School who had spoken at a Washington Educational Association conference about German the year before, used the fact that she had (accidently it seems) grabbed only her flag when leaving her burning apartment in the early morning hours. A local newspaper complemented her for her “patriotic” deed at a time marked by increased anti-Germanism, which made demonstrating Wagen’s patriotism all the more important to her.⁵⁴ But more often school administrators and segments of the public used the American flag as a blunt weapon against the “disloyal,” metaphorically smothering students and teachers, while others, especially their accusers, used it as a shield.

⁵²Jennifer Jacobs Henderson, “Conditional Liberty: The Flag Salute Before *Gobitis* and *Barnette*,” *Journal of Church and State* 47, no. 4 (2005): 747-767.

⁵³“School Directors Must Suspend Children Who Refuse to Salute Flag,” *Bellingham Herald*, June 13, 1940, 1

⁵⁴“Saves Only Her Flag from Fire,” *The Tacoma Times* (Tacoma, WA), May 8, 1918, 1.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: MOVING FORWARD

In December 1919, following the end of the war, but keeping with wartime attitudes, Superintendent of Public Instruction Josephine Corliss Preston summarized the official position on what teachers were supposed to be like and to teach:

The day has come when every school teacher in this state must stand up and be counted. Are you 100 per. cent American? Are you inculcating the highest principles and the loftiest ideals of American citizenship in your pupils? Do you realize the full responsibility that rests on your shoulders for training future American citizens? Are you able to give this message of Americanism in such terms that the children understand and carry the words home to parents who perhaps are not so thoroughly imbued with American ideals?....If you are slighting this responsibility, there is no room for you in the public schools of our state, for you are a liability rather than an asset.¹

The State Department of Education was determined to continue the wartime drive for unity and civic preparation. Now they recast these goals to reflect the concerns of the Red Scare. Only “100% Americanism” could successfully oppose what they perceived as the radical political threat to the political and social status quo. Although World War I ended in November 1918, and the Red Scare by the end of 1920, the effects of these events would have lasting consequences for students, teachers, and the educational system of Washington. The war and its aftermath had brought a stronger motivation to existing ideas of instilling nationalism, Americanizing immigrants and hunting radicals as it sought to create support for the war and for American institutions. Using the opposition of some teachers to the war, German language instruction and refusals to salute the flag, the Washington educational system had pushed to eliminate all threats to its conception of state power. In a twist of Wilson’s claim that the war was one to “make the world safe for democracy,” the educational system in the nation and

Washington sought to make America safe for democracy. In the 1920s, as the state and nation sought to both remember and forget the war, these forces would continue with a push for an assimilation-focused naturalization education for immigrants and a revitalized civics curriculum for students.

Post-War “Reconstruction” Efforts

The immediate post-war period saw the continued presence and importance of war related activities and groups, such as the Junior Red Cross. Junior Red Cross continued to thrive in Washington, working alongside the adult Red Cross to provide post-war relief to Western Europe, returning veterans and public health.² It was also one of the groups the State Department of Education urged rural community centers based at schools to run.³

Over time, efforts shifted to memorializing the war. Armistice Day became a school holiday, and other activities commemorated the conflict. In 1921, to celebrate an official visit by Allied Commander Marshall Foch to the United States, American schools nation-wide raised money to construct two high schools in the former French war zone, to be named the Washington-Lafayette and Foch-Pershing High Schools. Washington schools collected a total of \$720.14. Twenty-one counties participated, with Lewis County raising the greatest amount of money at \$106.48 and the least at \$5.36 in Thurston County. Such low numbers could indicate a declining interest in the war now barely two years gone. They were more generous at commemorating their own war dead. Washington schools raised \$1,440.41 for the Marne

¹ “Americanization: Stand Up and Be Counted,” in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Fifth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Biennium Ending June 30, 1920* Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction (Olympia, 1921), 82.

² “Conference at Seattle Plans Red Cross Work,” *Morning Olympian* (Olympia, WA) August 17, 1919, 1.

³ “Community Center Plan,” in State Department, *Biennium 1920*, 121.

Memorial, a privately funded American memorial in France. Twenty-five counties contributed this time, the lowest of Clarke County at \$1 and the highest of Whitman County at \$36.93.⁴

Immigration

Americanization remained a potent force at the war's end. The Washington Education Association Americanization Committee issued a report at the end of 1919 that set the tone for the next period of time. They called for a census of "aliens, alien sympathizers and any disloyal inhabitants" of the state (lumping all of them together). In addition, the Committee demanded that all private schools be made public (which targeted Catholic schools as being immigrant), and all instruction be done in English with "principals of democracy...taught in school and out" to fight radicalism. Moreover, the schools ought to "teach that each has a civic duty to perform; that we teach the American's creed in each school."⁵

Night classes expanded into rural areas, part of a partnership with the Bureau of Naturalization. Schools held hundreds of Americanization classes across the state in small communities as well as urban areas. Statistics reported to the State Department of Education indicated that most students were male and schools held the classes on average about two days a week for about two hours at a time.⁶

Small communities held most of the classes which usually took the form of lessons and discussions in English. At the Pe Ell school in Lewis County, an average of nineteen to twenty-

⁴ "America's Gift to France: Schools Help Erect Marne Memorial," in State Department, *Biennium 1920*, 187.

⁵ "County Superintendents' Convention 1919, Annual State convention of County Superintendents, October 27-29, 1919: Report of the Americanization Committee," in State Department, *Biennium 1920*, 157.

⁶ "National Program of Education: Americanization: Data on 1921-1922 English and Citizenship Classes," in Washington State Department of Education, *Twenty-Sixth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction For the Biennium Ending June 30th, 1922 Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Olympia, 1922), 173-174.

six adult students went to a typical class. The people who attended these classes were immigrants who were applying to become citizens as well as those who were only learning English.⁷

Americanization/citizenship and English classes could often be condescending and insulting to the immigrant students. For example, at the Oneida school in Pacific County, parents from three families (in a school district of only seven students from five families) attended an Americanization class. Ignoring that a woman probably had no alternative than bringing her child to class, a teacher wrote that “even a one-year old child of one of the families is present to learn what its tiny baby intellect can grasp,” even including a photo of the mother and daughter in her report to the Superintendent of Public Instruction office.⁸

Sometimes more outright prejudice came in the guise of patronizing Americanization rhetoric. “Polish people are not a lazy people,” wrote Pe Ell school superintendent G. A. Russell in 1918, “but it is hard for them to put off their old way of living and take up with new things, but they are trying and that is very encouraging. These people have been ground down under the heel of the oppressor so long that it will take a long time to educate them away from it.”⁹ By this he inferred that while the Polish might not be stereotypically “lazy,” they were merely uninformed and slow to adjust to American culture in the ways he saw fit. The Polish immigrants remained stereotyped, even if the stereotype was seemingly less insulting. That they were probably Catholic and/or Jewish, thus not a part of mainstream Anglo-Protestant culture, was also an unmentioned issue.

⁷ G.A. Russell, “Reports on Americanization Work: Report of G.A. Russell, Superintendent of Schools, Pe Ell,” in Washington State Department Education, *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Biennium Ending June 30, 1918 Mrs. Josephine Corliss Preston Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Olympia, 1919), 185.

⁸ “Reports on Americanization Work: Americanization Work in Pacific County,” in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 183.

⁹ Russell, “Pe Ell,” in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 185.

The question remains—how much did the immigrants come to agree with this message of assimilation? While historians cannot peer into the individual lives and hearts of every immigrant in Washington, existing sources show mixed results. Naturalizations did increase and while German American culture remained damaged by the war, the following decades would see a push for a more pluralistic view of European immigrants, at least acknowledging and sometimes celebrating their impact on America, though this inclusion was often largely symbolic. Still prejudice remained, especially towards non-European immigrants.¹⁰ But despite this, many immigrants logically did not give up all love for their former homes, where if circumstances had been different they might still have been living. “The man should love the country where he gets his food,” wrote a Finnish-American student from Oneida, “but he shouldn’t forget the land where he spent his childhood.”¹¹ But to many Americanizers, one could either be Finnish or American, not both.

Citizenship Education

The wartime lessons of nationalism and national unity remained powerful after the war. Now having silenced or purged radicals from the school system, schools remained a place to inculcate patriotism and nationalism in children. At a flag raising at the 1922 Washington State Fair, Preston declared that

Every American citizen is seeking to become part of the great national whole so that he may add to the sum of national strength....The best educational system, and we have the best in this country, is not enough until it is joined to patriotism and then you have a national fiber that will resist all strain.¹²

¹⁰ Jeffrey E. Mirel, *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization Education and European Immigrants* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 99.

¹¹ “Reports: Pacific County,” in State Department, *Biennium 1918*, 184.

¹² Josephine Corliss Preston, “Flag Raising at Washington State Fair, 1921: Presentation of the Flag,” in State Department, *Biennium 1922*, 176. Schoolchildren donated the flag for the ceremony.

Preston argued that the state's school system would only function to produce a strong country when patriotism played an important role in the schools. While the flag remained a powerful symbol, there was a new emphasis on "citizenship education" for non-immigrant and immigrant children alike. Special events that supplemented the regular curriculum demonstrate this new emphasis. Constitution Day exercises in 1922 were organized by groups such as the National Security League, Sons of the American Revolution, National Association for Constitutional Government, Sons of the Revolution, National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution, Boy Scouts of America, American Rights League, and American Defense Society. The event's stated goal was to Americanize non-English speaking parents as "[o]ne of the needs in education forcibly brought out by the war is Americanization, not only of the children but of the grown people, the parent."¹³

Another effect was a new emphasis on an expanded civics and history curriculum. This idea was hardly new, but the war and Red Scare added a greater sense of urgency. In 1915, the State Manual could claim that for American history "pyrotechnical patriotism inspired largely by national prejudice is no longer the purpose of the study, but rather the understanding of American development and essential to civic activity"¹⁴ and that civics would "cultivate a finer patriotism" through the teaching of "civic ideals."¹⁵

Educators related other topics to civics. Urging that thrift be made part of the fall 1919 curriculum, the State Department of Education reminded teachers in alarmist tones that:

¹³ "Americanization: Constitution Day," in State Department, *Biennium 1920*, 182. The Sons of the American Revolution and Sons of the Revolution are two separate organizations, both of whom still exist.

¹⁴ "History," in State of Washington Department of Education, *Bulletin No. 22 High School Manual Second Edition, Revised* (Olympia: Washington State Department of Education, 1915), 47.

¹⁵ "Civics," in State Department, *High School Manual*, 49.

We are anxiously looking to the children to offset the propaganda of this generation against American ideals and institutions. Experience is teaching us that some vital force will be needed to start our thoughts and our actions back over the patriotic trails blazed by our forefathers, else we will be plunged into radical socialist doctrines imported from class-ridden Europe. Already this sort of thing has gained great headway. We are going to try to stop it with constructive rebuttal. Thrift is good, and the plastic minds of the children of the land is good soil on which to plant.¹⁶

Thrift education, thus, was a way to teach children larger lessons about patriotism and civic participation, teaching them political doctrines that would make Socialism, which they stereotypically portrayed as a foreign introduction, lose its appeal. An important symbolic part of this new civic focus was the American's Creed. It ran as follows:

I believe in the United States of America, as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in a republic; a sovereign Nation of many sovereign States; a perfect union, one and inseparable; established upon these principles of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes. I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it, to support its Constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies.¹⁷

William Tyler Page (1868-1942) wrote this creed as part of a 1917 nationwide contest for a "national creed" sponsored by the city of Baltimore, Maryland. From Friendship Heights, Maryland, he served as a representative to Congress from 1919 to 1931. Written to give a duty-driven version of American civic participation, it echoed the Christian Apostles' Creed. The statement soon spread through national publicity across the country.¹⁸ Educational officials considered the creed important enough to have a contest about it. In 1919, a national contest encouraged children to memorize and publically recite the pledge in assembly. Classes who memorized the pledge could earn a frameable copy of the pledge that they would be thus

¹⁶ "Lessons in Thrift," *News-Letter of the State Department of Education* 1, No. 4 (October 1919), 16.

¹⁷ National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, *The Book of the American's Creed Issued Under the Auspices of National Patriotic Organizations* (New York: The Country Life Press, 1921), 1.

¹⁸ Sons of the American Revolution, *Book of the American's Creed*, 56-64.

required to display in the classroom.¹⁹ The American's Creed was also a test question on the Washington State Eighth Grade exam for 1924.²⁰

The regular curriculum also changed as the State Department of Education expanded the civics units. A 1924 *Newsletter for the State Department of Education* offered a comprehensive civics curriculum for grades first to sixth entitled "Training for Citizenship." Teaching that an educated population made better citizens, the "aim of civics teaching" was "to arouse an interest in good citizenship"—including emotional manipulation with stories, to learn about government agencies and "to recognize civic obligations and to cooperate with community agencies" through school and civic organizations.²¹ The lessons started with home life, and ended in sixth grade with government of the entire nation. They gave a duty-oriented definition for patriotism:

Nature of Patriotism. A. love of Country's ideals and laws. B. Support of Country's ideals and laws. C. Ways of showing patriotism 1. Use of ballot 2. Electing good officials 3. Civil Service. 4. Protection for all classes. 5. Obedience to laws. 6. Personal service.²²

This version of "patriotism" emphasized the citizen's duty to the state and was seemingly silent to the duties of the state towards the individual and community.

Legal Changes

The State Department of Education used the law to push non-citizens out of teaching. At the September 1, 1917 State Board of Education meeting, the members voted that no teacher in Washington could be certified to teach in common schools or universities who was not a citizen (native born or naturalized) or declared their intention to become a citizen. The only exceptions

¹⁹ "The American Creed," *News-Letter of the State Department of Education* 1, no. 6 (February 1920), 8.

²⁰ "[Eighth Grade] Examination Questions [May] 15 and 16, 1924." Papers. Battle Ground School Minutes. Box 1. Folder Battle Ground School Dist. 119 Superintendent School Board Minutes Clerk Record Books." Washington State Archives, Southwest Regional Branch (Olympia, WA).

²¹ "Aims of Civics Teaching," *News-Letter of the State Department of Education* 2, no. 9 (February 1924), 6.

²² "Outline—Sixth Grade," *News-Letter of the State Department of Education* 2, no. 9 (February 1924), 27.

were exchange professors at universities or temporary instructors.²³ This became a law when the 1919 legislature passed a law (Legislature 1919, Chapter 38) that required all teachers to be American citizens. Those who had declared their intention to become citizens could apply to the Superintendent of Public Instruction office for a special permit to teach. The office could also revoke this permit without appeal.²⁴

Actually only a small minority of teachers were non-citizen immigrants, making the law more symbolic than effective. Still, it deeply affected individuals. A flurry of letters poured into Preston's office asking for exceptions and help. For example, Clara Hallborg, who had taught in Molson and Arlington six years prior, and who had just graduated from the Bellingham Normal School wrote Preston about her situation. She had married a Canadian and had moved to British Columbia. His health had declined and she sought employment, returning to Washington where she thought her license would work. She was sure the Blanchard school would employ her and the Whatcom County Superintendent had told her to write Preston with her situation: she had lost her citizenship upon marriage. Was there any way around this?²⁵

Preston wrote back, giving her an application for declaration of intention to become a citizen for Hallborg's husband if he had not declared yet. The law offered no other alternatives. It seems doubtful he had been in the United States long enough to do so.²⁶ Only in 1922 would the

²³ "Minutes of the Meeting of the State Board of Education Held At Olympia, Washington, April 19, 1917," in Washington State Department of Education, "Proceedings of the State Board of Education, Volume III, February 1915-June 1926," 2 (80). Superintendent of Public Instruction Papers, Washington State Archives (Olympia, WA).

²⁴ "State Board of Education: Certification of Teachers," in State Department, *Biennium 1920*, 47.

²⁵ Clara Hallborg, August 25, 1919, to Josephine Corliss Preston. Papers. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal Correspondence, Box 6 Whitman-Yakima, Legal Correspondence 1913-1922, folder Legal Correspondence—General 1919 A-Z #2. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

²⁶ *Ibid*; Josephine Corliss Preston, August 25, 1919, to Clara Hallborg.

Cable Act allow women to keep their citizenship upon marriage to an immigrant who was eligible for citizenship.

The state legislature also passed laws to reinforce the idea that teachers in the public school system must be loyal to the state. Most notable was the 1919 law that authorized the firing of “unpatriotic” teachers. Writing in 1919 to a Woodinville woman and reflecting lingering concerns, Preston wrote that “I feel that this problem [of pro-German teachers] will be carefully watched by our boards of directors. Every effort will be made to provide instructors whose patriotism will be above question.”²⁷ The Woodinville woman had told Preston that teachers were “getting so pro-german [sic] [that we should] lock a lot of teachers in a room and kill them.”²⁸

By the 1920s, overt radicalism was on the retreat. By 1922, criminal syndicalism laws were enacted in nineteen states (as well as Alaska and Hawaii), plus states with peacetime sedition laws bringing it to a total of thirty-five states. Idaho was the first state in the nation to pass a criminal syndicalism bill in 1917. The same year, Governor Ernest Lister vetoed a nearly identical bill, arguing in his veto statement that such a law would hurt civil liberties. Historian Gunns calls this act “courageous” for its unusualness. However, by February 1919, all three Pacific Northwest states had passed criminal syndicalism bills. While accurate data is incomplete, estimates indicate that by the mid-1920s there were 500 arrests, 200 prosecutions, and 100 to 150 convictions in the region resulting from anti-syndicalism laws. Two dozen

²⁷ Josephine Corliss Preston, March 5, 1919, to Mrs. A. S. Baunton. Papers. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, Legal and County Correspondence, Box 3 King-Lincoln 1913-1931, folder County Problems— King 1918-1923. Washington State Archives, Olympia, WA.

²⁸ *Ibid*; Mrs. A. S. Baunton, March 13, 1919, to Josephine Corliss Preston.

appeals to state supreme courts upheld all statutes. No case reached the United States Supreme Court.²⁹

Washington's criminal syndicalism bill banned participation in organizations that supported violence to affect social and industrial change or the dissemination of such ideas. The Washington law, like Oregon's law, theoretically also applied to right-wing patriots but in practice did not. Violations were a felony, eligible for up to ten years in prison and a fine of \$5,000. Idaho and Washington also made it a misdemeanor to provide a forum where groups and individuals expressed radical ideas. The enforcement of this law, Albert Gunns argues, shows that its intent was to protect industries rather than specific political institutions or individual politicians. According to Gunns, the law just punished the advocacy of particular ideas and actions, not the actual damage to life, property or political institutions that other laws covered.³⁰

Teachers and students would find themselves within strict political bounds in the years immediately after World War I. As Gunns put it "...pedagogy was a difficult business in the Pacific Northwest during the 1920s."³¹ Teacher unions found it tough to gain any sort of power as boards often bound teachers by "yellow dog contracts," requiring non-membership for eligibility for a teaching position. For example, the Seattle School Board banned any union member from teaching in the 1928-1929 school year. This decimated the Seattle American Federation of Teachers union as most members resigned in order to keep their jobs. A test case lost its 1930 appeal to the state supreme court, despite unions having state statutory standing.³²

²⁹ Albert F. Gunns, *Civil Liberties in Crisis: The Pacific Northwest 1917-1940* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983), 35-38.

³⁰ Gunns, *Civil Liberties in Crisis*, 35-41.

³¹ Gunns, *Civil Liberties in Crisis*, 61.

³² Gunns, *Civil Liberties in Crisis*, 68.

The nationalistic message of the war to students and teachers came across as very strong in the years after the war. Preston reminded them that it was important to “carry on” by promoting old Progressive-era goals such as consolidation, larger and better schools, transportation and increased funding. She told teachers that

This reconstruction period is but an echo of the world war and is equally important....If at time you feel that by performing your duties you are not filling as large a place in the world as you should, that perhaps your goal is gradually fading away, and that school teaching carries a tinge of drudgery, just remember ‘the future of America and all her interests are in the hands of those who have the children in their care’— and take courage. Make this year your best year of service.³³

Preston emphasized the importance of remembering that, as during the war years, the future of America depended on the education that students received. It would determine the future of America. This Progressive Era idea has never completely faded. A hundred years later, this legacy of nationalism in public schools still casts a shadow. As the World War I centennial occurs during an era of increasing tension over immigration and what it means to be an American, looking back at 1917-1920 offers many uncomfortable parallels and lessons. The question remains, just what lessons are we going to learn?

³³Josephine Corliss Preston, “Carry On,” in *News-Letter of the State Department of Education* 1, no. 4 (October 1919), 1.

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