

# Defenders



*A RALLY in St. Paul's Rice Park, in support of workers striking  
Twin City Rapid Transit Company, 1917*

# Of Business

## The Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association Versus Labor During W.W. I

William Millikan

WHILE the general populace of Minnesota read about the Kaiser's armies in France and worried about German spies at home, the businessmen of the Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association (CCA) perceived a very different threat. They were "facing a menace such as the campaign now being waged to throw control of the state, politically and industrially, into the hands of the Socialist-I.W.W.-Non-Partisan combination." The Minneapolis labor movement completed the unholy quartet of traitorous groups that had expressed policies "that *no loyal American can subscribe to.*" Although the conspiracy was exaggerated in business publications, the threat that these groups posed to the CCA's domination of Minneapolis industry was real and immediate.<sup>1</sup>

The Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association was formed in 1892 as the Minneapolis Commercial Club. Over 5,000 business and public figures were represented by the organization, whose membership ranged from giants—First and Security National Bank and the Pillsbury and Dayton Dry Goods companies—to smaller concerns like Gardner Hardware Company. Many of the group's civic and industrial goals were similar to those pursued today by its organizational offspring, the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce. In 1903, however, in response to labor difficulties, the Commercial Club formed the Citizen's Alliance of Minneapolis, which managed to crush every strike through the outbreak of World War I.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Citizen's Alliance Bulletin*, Oct., 1918, p. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Information on the early years of the CCA, here and below, was compiled from the Commercial Club's annual reports for 1903-08 and those of the CCA, 1912-18; *The Union* (Minneapolis), July 29, 1904, p. 4; *Citizen's Alliance Bulletin*, April-May, 1932, p. 1-3. Although historians have frequently considered the Citizen's Alliance an autonomous organization, considerable evidence suggests that it was an arm or committee of the Commercial Club. Twelve of the 14 original members of the Citizen's Alliance were prominent in the Commercial Club, including the first president, E. J. Phelps, who had also headed the Commercial Club. Even after adding new recruits the vast majority of Citizen's Alliance membership came directly from its parent group.

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In 1911 the Commercial Club merged with two lesser civic groups to form the Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association, to which the Citizen's Alliance turned over its work. When labor difficulties re-emerged in 1916 "it developed that the maintenance of the open shop was something that had to be treated as a specialty." The Citizen's Alliance was reconstituted, but many of the paramilitary and intelligence functions that would later make it famous were retained by the CCA for the duration of World War I. In addition, the membership of the Citizen's Alliance continued to be derived almost entirely from the ranks of the CCA, which was determined to maintain its domination of the city's labor force with whatever means were necessary. Labor unions were considered traitorous, un-American, and unconstitutional. There was to be no accommodation.

THE Nonpartisan League (NPL), a radical farmers' organization, had taken over both the executive and legislative branches of North Dakota in 1916 and was successfully implementing its socialistic programs. In February of 1917, the league moved its national headquarters from Fargo to St. Paul and intensified its efforts at infiltrating both the Democratic and Republican party processes. Minneapolis businessmen feared that league progress in northern Minnesota could imperil their firms in the Twin Cities. Fred B. Snyder, an influential member of the CCA, felt that "Unless something is done to counteract this movement. . . I fear that our State offices and the control of the Legislature will pass into the hands of that organization." The association had little doubt that the Nonpartisan League policies of state ownership and taxes on excess profits would destroy its dominant position in Minneapolis.<sup>3</sup>

While the Nonpartisan League threatened to take over Minnesota's political system, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) was determined to destroy it. The IWW constitution stated that "a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system." During 1916 and 1917 IWW strikes for higher wages, shorter hours, and union recognition had swept through western states. Headquarters for the Agricultural Workers Organization, a division of the IWW, and the National Industrial Union No. 490, which represented iron-ore miners, had been established in the Minneapolis milling district. Violent strikes erupted on the Mesabi Iron Range in 1916, and there were reports that the disorder and destruction of property would continue in 1917. The Minneapolis business community was well aware that the labor conditions in its city were a perfect medium for the work of the IWW. Yet in comparing the NPL and IWW threats, prominent CCA leader John F.

McGee stated, "It's [IWW] un-American and against all government, but it is not as dangerous as the Nonpartisan league or the Red Socialists." Apparently a real political threat was more frightening than a potential revolutionary one. The association took both seriously.<sup>4</sup>

The western advances of the IWW were paralleled nationwide by the considerable progress of trade unions. World War I had created an abnormal demand for labor while the armed forces reduced the supply. In Minneapolis the Teamsters' Union, with an organized membership of 1,200, had struck the year before war was declared. The strike quickly accelerated into violence: nonunion men were assaulted, van loads of furniture were overturned, and attempts were made to burn storage barns. Control of the streets proved to be the determining factor of the strike. When local police were unable to handle the situation, the Citizen's Alliance hired special deputies to drive Chicago-based agitators out of town. The CCA feared that if the teamsters were allowed to apply the closed-shop conditions they demanded they would control all the industries of the community.<sup>5</sup>

The labor situation became critical in the fall of 1916 when Minneapolis elected Thomas Van Lear, a Socialist, as mayor. His opponent, Hennepin County Sheriff Otto S. Langum, who was a member of the Civic and Commerce Association, also appears to have been closely linked to the Citizen's Alliance; his campaign committee was "laced with leading Minneapolis bankers and businessmen who had close ties with the street-car company through the Northwestern Bank." During the campaign of 1916 Van Lear had promised that "every Socialist elected will use all the power of the office he is elected to in combatting [*sic*] the evils of the present day, and the final disappearance of these evils

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<sup>3</sup> *Commercial West*, Feb. 3, 1917, p. 7-8; Snyder to Senator Knute Nelson, Aug. 18, 1917, Knute Nelson Papers, Minnesota Historical Society (MHS); *Citizen's Alliance Bulletin*, Oct., 1918, p. 2-4. There are a number of excellent studies on the Nonpartisan League, especially Robert Morlan, *Political Prairie Fire: The Nonpartisan League, 1915-1923* (1955; reprint, St. Paul: MHS Press, 1985) and Charles E. Russell, *The Story of the Nonpartisan League: A Chapter in American Evolution* (New York: Harper, 1920).

<sup>4</sup> *Citizen's Alliance Bulletin*, Oct., 1918, p. 2; Paul F. Brissenden, *The I.W.W., A Study of American Syndicalism* (New York: Russell and Russell Inc., 1957), 57-82; Michael R. Johnson, "The I.W.W. and Wilsonian Democracy," *Science and Society* 3(Summer, 1964): 257-261; Minnesota Commission of Public Safety (CPS), *Report* (St. Paul: CPS, 1919), 37; *Minneapolis Tribune*, April 20, 1918, p. 2.

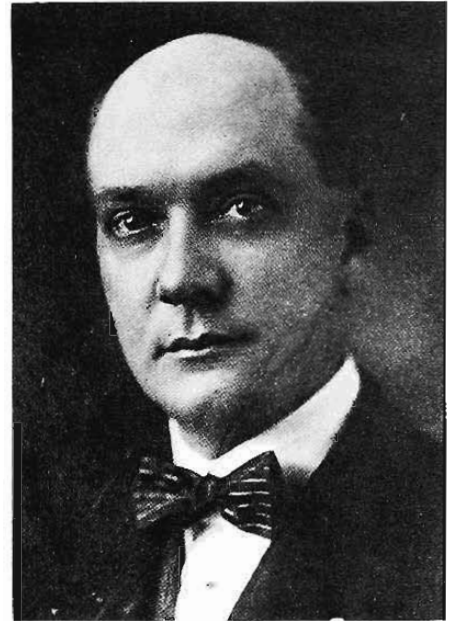
<sup>5</sup> Joseph G. Rayback, *A History of American Labor* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 273-279; A. J. Hain, "Citizen's Alliance Has Kept Minneapolis Open Shop," *The Iron Trade Review* (Cleveland), Mar. 17, 1921, p. 764; Citizen's Alliance, "Law and Order and The Open Shop," undated, Citizen's Alliance Papers, MHS.



JOHN F. MCGEE, 1917



OTTO S. LANGUM, 1915



THOMAS VAN LEAR, 1917

of capitalism will be hastened by the introduction of social, political and economic measures, which have the effect of bettering the lives of the workers, and strengthening their position in society." The new mayor's radical ideology, however, had very little effect on the CCA, as Minneapolis' weak mayor system and a non-Socialist city council emasculated Van Lear's power. His appointment of a Socialist, Lewis Harthill, as chief of police in December of 1916 was a different matter. Van Lear had campaigned that his police would not be used to break strikes. This promise threatened to turn control of the streets over to the unions and destroy the business community's final defense.<sup>6</sup>

While the war created opportunities for the enemies of the Civic and Commerce Association, the patriotic fervor that swept over the country in 1917 produced a climate of hysteria that demanded the suppression of

all antiwar sentiment. The Minnesota Republican party and the CCA ruthlessly used this patriotic explosion to construct an institutional system that would virtually destroy the Nonpartisan League, the IWW, socialism, and the growing labor movement in Minneapolis. The first step was the creation of the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety (CPS) by an act of the legislature on April 16, 1917. The commission was empowered "to do all acts and things non-inconsistent with the constitution or laws of the state of Minnesota or of the United States, which are necessary or proper for the public safety and for the protection of life and public property or private property of a character as in the judgment of the commission requires protection, and shall do and perform all acts and things necessary or proper so that the military, civil and industrial resources of the state may be most efficiently applied toward maintenance of the defense of the state and nation." One million dollars was appropriated for the creation and use of the commission. For the duration of the war this dictatorial group governed Minnesota.<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of the CPS was quite clear from its inception: to maximize the prosecution of the war on the home front. The United States was "in the midst of the greatest war of which human history contains a record." In peacetime the industrial machine could be left to itself, "[B]ut when the country's life is at stake, the situation is different. . . . If our soldiers need food and munitions, the man who will not help to their supplying according to his ability, or who, by his conduct, interferes with others producing, is as much an enemy of the country as those in arms against it. . . . It

<sup>6</sup> *New Times* (Minneapolis), Oct. 21, 1916, p. 1, 4; David P. Nord, "Socialism in One City" (Master's thesis, University of Minnesota, 1972) and "Minneapolis and the Pragmatic Socialism of Thomas Van Lear," *Minnesota History* 45(Spring, 1976): 2-10.

<sup>7</sup> *Minnesota, Session Laws, 1917*, p. 373-377. There are a number of excellent sources on the CPS: William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, rev. ed. (St. Paul: MHS, 1956) 3:556-575; Charles S. Ward, "The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety in World War One: Its Formation and Activities" (Master's thesis, University of Minnesota, 1965); Ora A. Hilton, "The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety in World War I, 1917-1919," *Bulletin of the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College*, May 15, 1951, p. 1-44; Carl H. Chrislock, *The Progressive Era in Minnesota* (St. Paul: MHS, 1971), 130-181.

goes without saying that a state which has the right to use its strength to crush its foreign enemies can also protect itself against those at home whose behavior tends to weaken its war capacity." The Nonpartisan League, the IWW, socialists, and labor agitators all attempted to disrupt production and were therefore enemies of the state. The CPS considered it a logical and patriotic duty to suppress these groups.<sup>8</sup>

IT WAS NO coincidence that the fears and goals of the Public Safety Commission and the Civic and Commerce Association were identical. The idea for the commission supposedly originated in the St. Paul Patriotic League and was drafted into a bill by Ambrose Tighe, a member of the league's executive council. Several important CCA members, in addition to those from the Patriotic League, lobbied for the bill while it was still in committee. At the same time the *Minneapolis Journal* editorialized that "Minnesota will never have a responsible and efficient State Government until responsibility is focused in central control." Both Tighe and the *Journal* were closely associated with the CCA and were undoubtedly working in its interests.<sup>9</sup>

People in the "banking, grain and milling circles" in Minneapolis lobbied for the appointment of prominent CCA member John McGee, a former judge and attorney for the Chicago Great Western Railway, to the CPS. Historian Carl H. Chrislock points out that although "McGee was not a member of the legislature, his influence apparently shaped the Safety Commission bill and contributed to its passage." McGee vividly expressed his intentions for the commission a week before the bill was signed by Governor Joseph A. A. Burnquist: "if the Governor appoints men who have backbone, treason will not be talked on the streets of this city and the street corner orators, who denounce

the government, advocate revolution, denounce the army and advise against enlistments, will be looking through the barbed fences of an interment [sic] camp out on the prairie somewhere." Although Tighe's suggestion that Charles W. Farnham of the St. Paul Patriotic League be appointed to the commission was ignored in favor of McGee, Tighe himself was appointed as counsel. In fact, before being named to the commission McGee had confidently stated that "If I would say to the Governor that I would go on and that I wanted to go on, he would appoint me." The state of Minnesota, as represented by the commission, was ready to defend the business interests of the association.<sup>10</sup>

The influence of the CCA became apparent from the Public Safety Commission's first meetings when a delegation from the Civic and Commerce Association offered its entire resources—funds, facilities, and staff—to the cause. In response, the commission appointed Fred B. Snyder, a member of the CCA board of directors, to be war director of Hennepin County. The CCA then appointed Snyder to be its war commissioner, thus strengthening its position as the local arm of the Public Safety Commission. McGee's appointment to head the Military Affairs Committee was an even greater triumph for the CCA. From this position he created a system that proved vital in defending Minneapolis against the labor radicals that were shielded by a Socialist mayor. Fellow commissioner John Lind attributed McGee's successful manipulation of the commission to his "dominating spirit—poor Burnquist who I think is a good man at heart is weak and was absolutely

<sup>8</sup> CPS, *Mobilizing Minnesota* (St. Paul: CPS, 1917), 55 and *Report*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Minneapolis Journal*, Mar. 29, 1917, p. 14; *St. Paul Daily News*, April 4, 1917, p. 1. Tighe was a lawyer for the Twin City Rapid Transit Company, executives of which were all members of the Civic and Commerce Association. Vice-President E. W. Decker (also president of Northwestern National Bank), for example, was an influential member of the CCA's financial committee and the Citizen's Alliance board of directors. The executives of the Journal Printing Company (publisher of the *Minneapolis Journal*)—H. V. Jones, C. R. Adams, and W. S. Jones—were also CCA members. The *Journal* had actively supported the Citizen's Alliance as early as 1905: Willis H. Raff, "Civil Liberties in Minnesota: World War One Period" (Master's thesis, University of Minnesota, 1950), 41; *Minneapolis City Directory*, 1917.

<sup>10</sup> Citizen's Alliance, Minutes of 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th annual meetings, May 27, 1915, [?], 1916, Mar. 20, 1917, Feb. 19, 1918, and Lucian Swift to George K. Belden, April 11, 1905—all in Citizen's Alliance Papers; McGee to Nelson, April 11, 1917, Nelson Papers; Chrislock, *Progressive Era*, 132, 144; CPS, *Report*, 9; CPS, organizational chart and Minutes, May 21, 1917, CPS Papers, MHS; George M. Stephenson, *John Lind of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1935), 334; Tighe to Farnham, Mar. 29, 1917, and Farnham to James Clark, April 13, 1917, St. Paul Patriotic League Papers, MHS.



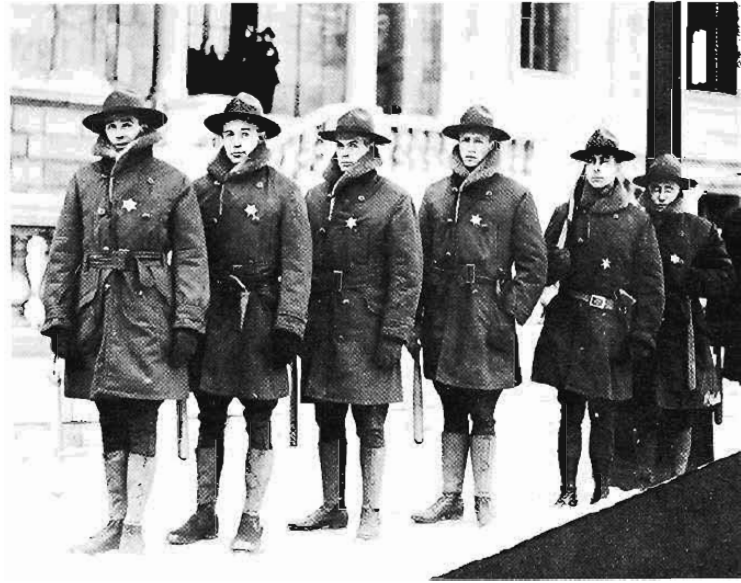
AMBROSE TIGHE,  
about 1915

under McGee's thumb." On April 25, 1917, McGee was assigned the job of planning the creation of the Minnesota Home Guard to replace the National Guard, which had been pressed into wartime service. Three days later came the commission's Order No. 3 in which Governor Burnquist appointed all officers and was named commander of the force of 11 battalions totaling about 4,400 men during the winter of 1917-18. The enlisted men were volunteers who had to furnish their own uniforms and were not reimbursed unless they served more than five days consecutively. The volunteer system, which was used extensively during the war, effectively limited membership to people of means—employers or employees who could receive a leave of absence. With the governor under McGee's influence and local units staffed by officers and enlisted men from the business community, the Home Guard became an effective force for minimizing labor disturbances on the iron ranges, intimidating strikers in Minneapolis, and suppressing riots in St. Paul.<sup>11</sup>

The Home Guard, however, was slow to muster full strength and was primarily designed to deal with large disturbances. In order to guard property and deter "evil-minded persons plotting crime or destruction of property" the commission ordered the appointment of peace officers. Eventually 609 men were given constab-

<sup>11</sup> CPS, *Report*, 13, 57, 74, and *Mobilizing Minnesota*, 9; CPS, Minutes, April 24, 1917, CPS Papers; Franklin F. Holbrook and Livia Appel, *Minnesota in the War with Germany* (St. Paul: MHS, 1932), 2:228; Franklin F. Holbrook, ed., *St. Paul and Ramsey County in the War of 1917-1918* (St. Paul: Ramsey County War Records Commission, 1929), 221; Lind to William W. Folwell, received Dec. 12, 1924, William W. Folwell Papers, MHS; CCA, *Annual Report*, 1917, 112. Snyder also drafted the CCA constitution and was its first secretary; Marion D. Shutter, *History of Minneapolis, Gateway to the Northwest* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1923), 3:462. Cross-reference of the following sources indicates the preponderance of CCA members in these groups: Minneapolis Civilian Auxiliary, membership list, Edward Karow Papers, MHS; Minnesota Home Guard Motor Corps, membership list, Hennepin County in World War I scrapbook, Minneapolis Public Library; *Minneapolis City Directory, 1917*; CCA, *Annual Report, 1912, 7-18, 1913, 7-12, 1914, 11-16*. The Minneapolis Civilian Auxiliary became the 13th Battalion of the Minnesota Home Guard on Feb. 21, 1918, and then the 3rd Battalion of the First (later Fourth) Regiment of the Minnesota Infantry National Guard on July 1, 1918; Karow to Henry A. Bellows, Sept. 6, 1918, Karow Papers.

<sup>12</sup> CPS, *Report*, 13, 75-76, 215; CPS, List of State Peace Officers, List of Minneapolis Peace Officers. James Markham to Henry W. Libby, Mar. 5, 1918, R. A. Gantt to Libby, July 30, 1918, and American Protective League, membership lists—all CPS Papers; Minnesota, *General Statutes*, 1913, p. 1991; Operative No. 71, *Summary and Report of War Service* (Minneapolis: American Protective League, [1919]), 5; CPS, *Mobilizing Minnesota*, 10; CCA, *Annual Report, 1917*, 112, 1918, 13.



*WARMLY ATTIRED* members of the Home Guard posed with their riot sticks and rifle across the street from Rice Park, 1917.

ulary authority, enabling them to carry guns, make warrantless arrests, and break into private dwellings. Approximately one-third of these officers were appointed in Minneapolis, and 175 of them belonged to either the Minneapolis division of the American Protective League, a national organization devoted to suppressing antiwar activities, or the Hennepin County Public Safety Commission, which was created to enforce CPS orders locally—both of which were financed, organized, and staffed by the Civic and Commerce Association. Corporate members of the CCA, such as Northwestern Telephone Exchange Company, were also able to request peace officers to guard property. With the gold star as a seal, the commission bequeathed legal status and authority to members of quasi-official volunteer organizations, groups that were indistinguishable from the CCA and that were used to combat its enemies.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to its other functions the Public Safety Commission was also empowered to anticipate and prevent disloyalty. Judge McGee, recognizing that prevention requires intelligence, proposed a secret service system, but the CPS temporarily tabled his motion, deciding to rely on private detective agencies. This arrangement apparently failed to fulfill the commission's needs and on June 30, 1917, Thomas G. Winter, a Minneapolis grain dealer, accepted a post as superintendent of intelligence. Winter was a long-time member of the Civic and Commerce Association and would soon serve on its recruiting and draft committee. In a few short months of operation his agents, still working in conjunction with detective agencies, monitored Socialist

speeches, infiltrated IWW and Nonpartisan League meetings statewide, and tailed Minneapolis Socialists and suspected pro-German elements around the clock. Because of possible labor backlash, financial arrangements with the Pinkertons and other private detective agencies were concealed. The information flowed from Winter back to the commission and McGee. The results, particularly regarding the IWW, were spectacular.<sup>13</sup>

The work of enforcing CPS orders was also delegated to local units of government. By the end of May, 1917, every county had its own Public Safety Commission working under the guidance of the state body. On June 13, 1917, all these directors met in St. Paul to plan a cooperative effort of the entire state's defense organization. Although the county directors generally served as conduits for state orders, they also had subpoena powers for examining subversives. Hennepin County War Director Snyder, the man with ties to the CCA and the CPS, became involved in an unsuccessful attempt to influence the selection of juries, choosing only "men of unquestioned loyalty."<sup>14</sup>

The county commissions were particularly effective in suppressing the Nonpartisan League, calling out Home Guard units when force was necessary. Twenty-one counties banned league gatherings and in 27 counties there were reports of violence against that group. As the election campaign of 1918 heated up, the NPL was "isolated as the prime target of the Public Safety Commission." Although Judge McGee's suggestion that "Now we should get busy and have that firing squad working overtime" was rejected, the commission ignored mob attacks and beatings of league members all

around the state, thereby encouraging more violent harassment. Masses of virulent propaganda poured from the commission presses, league leaders were charged under state and federal sedition laws, and CPS member Charles W. Ames conducted a thorough investigation of league activities to determine if they were traitorous. Nonpartisan League pronouncements in support of the war had little or no effect on this rabidly patriotic campaign. The fact that anti-NPL forces eventually crushed the organization indicates the power that the Public Safety Commission Act had unleashed on Minnesota.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ambrose Tighe, "Legal Theory of the Minnesota 'Safety Commission' Act," *Minnesota Law Review* 3(Dec., 1918): 10; CPS, Minutes, May 21, 1917, CPS Papers; CCA, *Annual Report, 1918*, 9; Libby to Burns Detective Agency, July 14, 1917, Winter to John S. Pardee, June 30, 1917, Cavour Langdon to Winter, Dec. 31, 1917, G. R. Hatfield to Pardee, July 27, 1917, Winter to Pardee, Sept. 2, 1917—all CPS Papers. In addition, these papers contain a box of detailed agent reports with initialed signatures.

<sup>14</sup> CPS, *Report*, 10, 215 and *Mobilizing Minnesota*, 13, 54. The financial committee of the CCA and the Hennepin County Public Safety Commission both had the same five members. One of them, E. W. Decker, also raised the money for the guaranty fund of the Citizen's Alliance; Citizen's Alliance, untitled page interfiled with Minutes, 12th Annual Meeting, May 27, 1915, Citizen's Alliance Papers; CCA, *Annual Report, 1918*, 5; Snyder to Al P. Erickson, Jan. 24, 1918, CPS Papers.

<sup>15</sup> *Nonpartisan Leader* (St. Paul), Jan. 14, 1918, p. 14, April 1, 1918, p.1; Carol Jensen, "Loyalty As a Political Weapon: The 1918 Campaign in Minnesota," *Minnesota History* 43(Summer, 1972): 47, 50, 55; CPS, *Report*, 163-164; *Minneapolis Tribune*, April 20, 1918, p. 1.



*THIS certificate, dated May 18, 1917, indicates how quickly the commission set up its statewide network.*

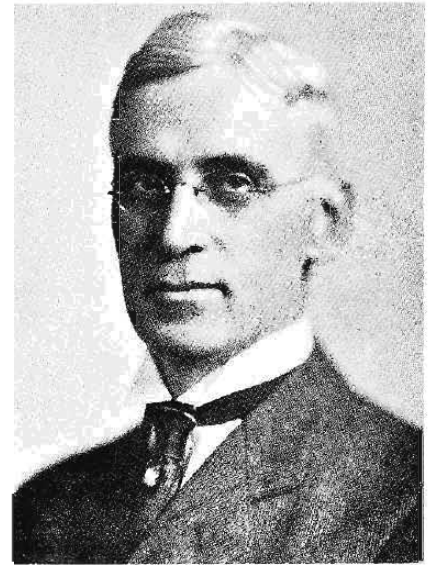
The IWW was a more difficult problem. The CPS had closed all Minneapolis saloons and loitering places in the district of IWW headquarters, prepared a vagrancy ordinance for municipalities to use against agitators, and encouraged all sheriffs and police chiefs to enforce the state syndicalism statutes that outlawed "advocating, advising or teaching the doctrine that industrial or political ends should be brought about by crime, sabotage, violence or other unlawful methods of terrorism." But the IWW, long accustomed to local and state suppression, survived and continued to operate in Minnesota. Commissioner Lind realized that the organization would have to be attacked on a national scale. He telegraphed United States Attorney General Thomas W. Gregory, appealing for assistance, but was turned down. The commission then pooled the evidence that Winter's Secret Service agents had gathered with data from the Chicago Bureau of Information and sent commission counsel Tighe to Washington to lobby for federal intervention. On July 31, 1917, Gregory, having received a signal from President Woodrow Wilson, finally conceded. On August 5 a federal Secret Service agent, Chicago's chief of police, a commission member, and Tighe met in Chicago to plan strategy. On September 5 agents of federal, state, and local bureaus raided IWW offices across the nation; as a result, 101 of the union's leaders were eventually convicted of violations of the Espionage Act and sentenced to prison terms of up to 20 years. Following the elimination of the IWW "threat" in September, 1917, the Public Safety Commission terminated its Secret Service. In Minneapolis, Winter's agents were transferred to the city's division of the American Protective League where they would continue their investigations.<sup>16</sup>

DESPITE the reassuring existence of a friendly and powerful dictatorship in the capitol, the Civic and Commerce Association realized that state interests might respond slowly to a disturbance that was purely

<sup>16</sup> CPS, *Report*, 37-38, 72, 153-154, 165; Minnesota. *Session Laws*, 1917, p. 311; *Minneapolis Tribune*, Sept. 6, p. 1, Sept. 7, p. 1, Sept. 29, p. 1—all 1917; Folwell, *History of Minnesota*, 3:568-569; Joan M. Jensen, *The Price of Vigilance* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968), 66-68, 74-75; Libby to Winter, Oct. 27, 1917, and Mac Martin to Winter, Nov. 24, 1917, CPS Papers.

<sup>17</sup> Sumner T. McKnight to Civilian Auxiliary Members, April 9, 1917, War Records Commission Records, Minnesota State Archives, MHS; Paul H. Struck to C. K. Michener, July 14, 1918, Karow Papers; Holbrook, *St. Paul . . . in the War*, 76; Return I. Holcombe, *Compendium of History and Biography of Minneapolis and Hennepin County, Minnesota* (Chicago: Henry Taylor and Co., 1914), 356; CCA, *Annual Report, 1917*, 33-34. The CCA's Civilian Auxiliary Committee included Sumner T. McKnight as chairman, George K. Belden, Cavour S. Langdon, and George N. McKnight.

<sup>18</sup> Struck to Michener, July 14, 1918, Karow Papers.



PERRY  
HARRISON,  
1915

local or that might be politically sensitive. Governor Burnquist was wary of alienating labor totally and might ignore McGee's advice regarding a local strike. The CCA planned accordingly and built its own system of defense.

Immediately following the declaration of war the association formed the Civilian Auxiliary. This "army of citizens" was purported to be engaged merely in military training for the intelligent backing up of the boys at the front. Most of the men recruited, however, were businessmen affiliated with the association and were well beyond the age of active military service. Their only conceivable use was in the defense of the home front. Colonel Perry G. Harrison, an association member and a former lieutenant colonel in the National Guard, was placed in command. Over 300 Minneapolis men attended the first drill sessions at the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul on April 11, 1917. This force rapidly grew to over 1,000 businessmen, divided into eight companies. The drills were then moved to the University of Minnesota, which provided Springfield rifles. According to the CCA there developed an "esprit de corps and discipline which made possible the most effective utilization of the Auxiliary in important community service."<sup>17</sup>

During the summer of 1917 the auxiliary's lack of usefulness led to a gradual decline in both numbers and enthusiasm. A great demonstration with marches and sham battles at the state fairgrounds in late May and running the Red Cross War Fund campaign in June were briefly exciting, but with the summer heat and vacation season the auxiliary rapidly dwindled. In August morale reached its lowest ebb and officers were considering a vote on whether or not to disband. Developments on the Minneapolis labor front were responsible for saving and reinvigorating the force.<sup>18</sup>





HORACE B.  
LOWRY,  
1923

The employees of the Minneapolis and St. Paul railway lines had begun organizing into trade unions in August. Poor wages, long hours, and the adamant refusal of Twin City Rapid Transit Company president Horace B. Lowry to consider union demands provided the impetus for the growth of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees of Minneapolis and St. Paul in September. Lowry and CCA leaders, with 14 years of union-crushing experience behind them, knew what to do: refuse to negotiate, clean out union agitators, and prepare to overwhelm strikers with superior military or police force. Officers of the Civilian Auxiliary met at the Minneapolis Athletic Club on September 6 and decided to reorganize into four companies of 150 men each. A letter to members stated that "the auxiliary should have a more definite object and duty" and to accomplish this they would all enroll as deputies to the Hennepin County sheriff. On Thursday night, September 13, Sheriff Langum swore in the Civilian Auxiliary. This step increased membership and morale, finally gave the CCA's essentially illegal private army an official status, and created a nominal governmental authority which the association could still control.<sup>19</sup>

With the association's paramilitary force at the ready, Lowry began discharging union men on September 22. On September 25 Sheriff Langum sent out special instructions to the Civilian Auxiliary, giving its members the same police powers he held, which included bearing arms and making arrests. Colonel Harrison would be in command in the field, but he would receive orders from Langum. Langum also told the organization "to perfect its system of mobilization at once, in order to enable it to promptly respond when called." Lowry finally offered a ten percent wage raise, but refused to reinstate the discharged men. The union rejected the offer and struck at 1:00 A.M. on Monday,

October 6. The Civic and Commerce Association was ready.<sup>20</sup>

WORD of the strike was rushed to Sheriff Langum, who immediately ordered the mobilization of the Minneapolis Civilian Auxiliary to protect the property and employees of the streetcar company. Colonel Harrison and Major Henry A. Bellows orchestrated the meticulously planned maneuvers from their headquarters in room four of the Minneapolis courthouse. In anticipation of the strike a "war map" of the city had been drawn and duties of notification and assignments of posts had been clearly defined for the 600 members of the force. Headquarters called Captain L. Merle Wilson of Company B who then notified lieutenants H. C. Mackall and Walter H. Newton and Sergeant P. H. Struck. For several hours the city telephone operators busily completed the chain for each of the four companies. The Civilian Auxiliary, armed and uniformed, rushed to protect the city's transportation system.<sup>21</sup>

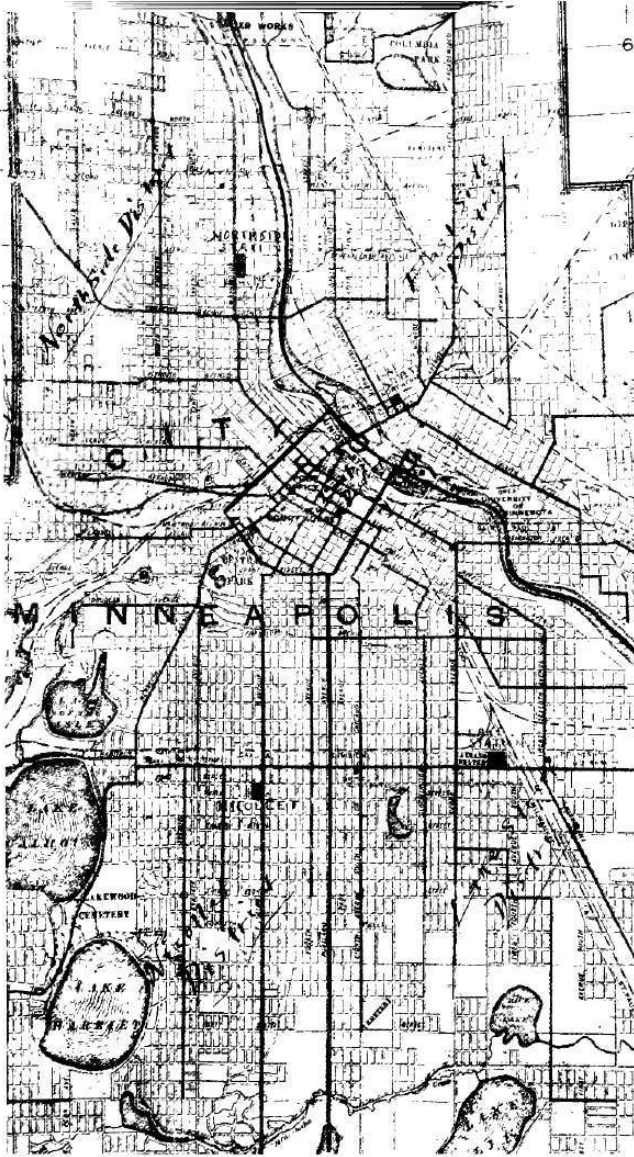
At 1610 West Franklin Avenue, Sergeant Edward Karow of Company B received a telephone call from Lieutenant Newton. Karow, an assistant to streetcar company president Lowry, notified the other men assigned to car No. 10: Arthur C. Asleson, president of Minneapolis Equipment Company; Edwin C. Brown, a Minneapolis lawyer; Paul M. Marshall, assistant manager of Shane Brothers & Wilson Company; and Edwin S. Pattee, an inspector at Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company. As soon as they were joined by a half dozen other cars at the parade ground, their preliminary mobilization point, they proceeded to Company B headquarters at the streetcar firm's northside

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<sup>19</sup> President's Mediation Commission, Report (in the form of a letter to Newton D. Baker, hereafter cited as Report), Feb. 14, 1918, p. 1, John Lind Papers, MHS; *Minneapolis Labor Review*, Sept. 28, 1917, p. 1, Oct. 5, 1917, p. 1. Materials in the Citizen's Alliance Papers indicate that the alliance and the CCA believed labor unions in general and the striking street railway one in particular were composed of radicals who must be suppressed. To this end the alliance had frequently used large forces of special sheriff deputies, most recently in the 1916 Teamsters' strike; Struck to Michener, July 14, 1918, and Civilian Auxiliary, letter to members, Sept. 11, 1917, Karow Papers; Nord, "Minneapolis and . . . Van Lear," 9; Stewart G. Collins to War Work Division, Civic and Commerce Association, Oct. 31, 1917, and H. M. Gardner to Collins, Nov. 6, 1917, War Records Commission Records.

<sup>20</sup> President's Mediation Commission, Report, Feb. 14, 1918, p. 1, Lind Papers; Langum to Minneapolis Civilian Auxiliary members, Sept. 25, 1917, Karow Papers; *Minneapolis Labor Review*, Oct. 5, 1917, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Langum to Burnquist, Oct. 7, 1917, Joseph A. A. Burnquist Papers, MHS; Minneapolis Civilian Auxiliary, Assignment of Posts, Oct. 5, 1917, and Location of Units, War Map, and Method of Mobilization, all Oct., 1917—all Karow Papers; *Minneapolis Journal*, Oct. 6, 1917, p. 1.



THE WAR MAP, which divided Minneapolis into four districts based on the location of carbarns

carbarn at 24th Street and Washington Avenue North. By 5:00 A.M. all 27 cars had arrived and the patrols were sent out to their assigned posts. A little over four hours after the strike was called, Sergeant Karow arrived with three companions at the intersection of north Plymouth and Sheridan avenues, armed and ready to defend the property of the streetcar company.<sup>22</sup>

Patrols found little to do in the early morning hours

<sup>22</sup> Minneapolis Civilian Auxiliary, Method of Mobilization, Oct., 1917, Assignment of Posts, Oct. 5, 1917, and Karow to Bellows, Sept. 6, 1918—all in Karow Papers; *Minneapolis City Directory*, 1917.

<sup>23</sup> Karow to Bellows, Sept. 6, 1918, Karow Papers; *Minneapolis Journal*, Oct. 6, 1917, p. 1; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Oct. 7, 1917, sec. 2, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Karow to Bellows, Sept. 6, 1918, Karow Papers.

of October 6, except chase a gang that had stolen a switch tongue. Later in the day a crowd of 150 union sympathizers gathered outside the northside barn. The crowd tried to dissuade carmen from going on their routes and occasionally threw rocks through the windows of departing streetcars. Despite these minor incidents, service continued on a normal schedule. The threat increased that evening when over a hundred sympathizers, both men and women, marched toward the barn armed with clubs, bricks, and stones. Sheriff Langum had said "Just let somebody start something." Despite the ominous gathering, he had reason to be confident. Company B boasted an armory of 66 Krag-Jorgensen rifles and 115 Springfields, 40 of which were in use guarding each carbarn. The crowd was dispersed, and one of the leaders was charged with attempting to incite a riot. The only significant difficulty during the Minneapolis strike was crushed.<sup>23</sup>

The Civilian Auxiliary remained on duty for the duration of the four-day strike, patrolling the streets while the cars ran and sleeping in the barns at night. The streetcar company furnished cots and blankets, meals and smokes. The only opposition was sporadic incidents of rock throwing. The highly organized and heavily armed force maintained order in what was potentially a highly volatile situation.<sup>24</sup>

In St. Paul, the *Pioneer Press* reported that "Wild rioting in which the police were unable to control mobs numbering in the thousands marked the end of the first day of the street car strike." For four hours the mobs roamed downtown St. Paul streets breaking windows and attacking whichever streetcars were attempting to move. Without a paramilitary force to protect its oper-

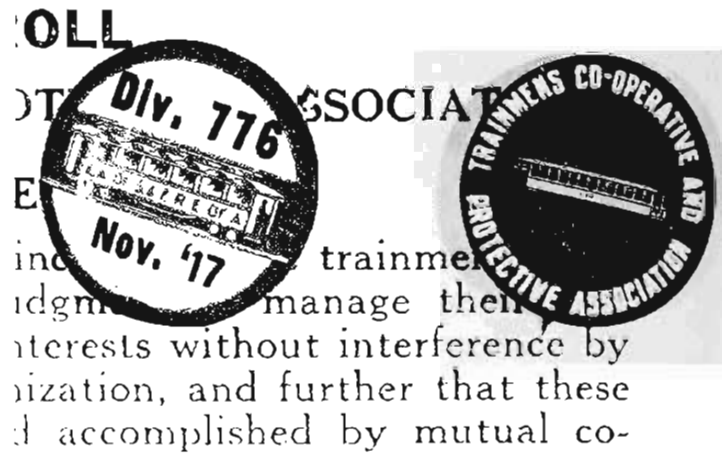
THE YARD of the northside carbarn, about 1920



ations the railway company was forced to shut down. In Minneapolis, Sheriff Langum posted heavy guards on all the bridges between the two cities to forestall an invasion by St. Paul strikers. On Sunday, over 500 federal soldiers from the First, Thirty-Sixth, and Forty-First Minnesota Infantry units patrolled the streets of St. Paul with bayonets and rifles. This show of military strength intimidated the rioters of the previous day and allowed Lowry to return his streetcars to a normal schedule. While an argument raged between Governor Burnquist, Adjutant General Walter F. Rhinow, and St. Paul businessmen on whether to call out the Home Guard or more federal troops, Sheriff Langum announced that he was opposed to any call-ups for Minneapolis. The Civilian Auxiliary had already proven itself capable of maintaining order and would continue to do so.<sup>25</sup>

AFTER four days the Public Safety Commission, concerned about the violence and loss of service in St. Paul, decided to intercede. On October 9 Lowry, George Lawson, secretary of the State Federation of Labor, and other representatives of the company and the union were questioned by the commission, which ordered the strike to cease and all strikers reinstated. The CPS would investigate the status of the 57 fired men and rule on each case. The strike was over. By October 12 all but 13 of the men were back at work. The unions claimed a victory—they had received a ten-percent pay raise, better working conditions, and the reinstatement of their men. They had also demonstrated their power to shut down public transportation in St. Paul. Lowry thanked Colonel Harrison profusely for the actions of the Civilian Auxiliary in Minneapolis and quietly agreed to abide by the CPS order. The upheavals in St. Paul might have eventually forced Lowry to capitulate, thereafter swinging the balance of industrial power to the unions. The commission, by its action, had saved Lowry and the CCA from what might have been a bitter defeat. But the war was far from over.<sup>26</sup>

Twin City Rapid Transit reacted quickly to the growing union threat and organized the Trainmen's Co-operative and Protective Association. Lowry was the constitutionally decreed president of this company union with final arbitration power over its various worker committees. The membership card pronounced the ability of carmen "to manage their own affairs and represent and look after their own interests without interference by or affiliation with any other individual or organization." Each member was given a button to wear on his lapel or cap. The campaign backfired. The workers' amalgamated issued its own buttons to its members and stepped up recruitment. One hundred and sixty men from the eastside barn abandoned the transparent protective association and swelled the un-



*BUTTONS from the rival organizations attached to a membership card of Lowry's company union*

ion's ranks. The buttons readily identified the two camps as tension rapidly increased. Company foremen intensified a campaign of insult and intimidation against union members; verbal abuse, beatings, and work harassment became daily events. The company and the protective association made a determined effort to force the amalgamated into retreat, but instead, on November 1, the union once again appealed to the Commission of Public Safety.<sup>27</sup>

The commission declared that all agitation should cease and named Samuel F. Kerfoot, president of Hamline University, Robert Jamison, a Minneapolis lawyer, and Norman Fetter, a St. Paul businessman, to a special committee to investigate the allegations of both sides. The biased nature of these appointments became apparent three days later when Jamison resigned because he owned Twin City Rapid Transit stock. He was replaced by CCA member Waldron M. Jerome. Although rumors that Fetter also owned stock and that Hamline had been endowed by Thomas Lowry (Horace's father and the first president of the transit company) were denied, the fact that the president of Hamline's board of trustees was also a director of the

<sup>25</sup> *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Oct. 7, sec. 2, p. 1, Oct. 8, p. 1, Oct. 9, p. 2—all 1917; *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 10, 1917, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> CPS, Report, 38-40; CPS, Minutes, Oct. 9, 12, 1917, CPS Papers; *Minneapolis Labor Review*, Oct. 12, 1917, p. 1; Lowry to Harrison, Oct. 10, 1917, Karow Papers; *St. Paul Daily News*, Nov. 11, 1917, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Trainmen's Co-operative and Protective Association, membership card and *Constitution and By-Laws*, 1917, and proceedings of a meeting between Governor Burnquist and union representatives, Nov. 1, 1917—all CPS Papers; *Minneapolis Labor Review*, Nov. 9, 1917, p. 1; CPS, Report of Special Committee, Nov. 19, 1917, p. 6-7, Jean E. Spielman Papers, MHS.

Citizen's Alliance and a CCA member suggests a likely bias on Kerfoot's part. The special committee's final report confirmed these suspicions, stating that it "felt it necessary in discretionary cases where the evidence was evenly balanced to resolve doubts in favor of the company." The union's fate had already been decided when the hearings began on November 7.<sup>28</sup>

WHILE the special committee deliberated, the streetcar company prepared for the next battle. Edward Karow, now a staff lieutenant and ordnance officer, was dispatched to St. Paul to train the St. Paul Civilian Auxiliary. Although newspapers proclaimed that the St. Paul unit was fully equipped and armed, Karow's effort was frustrated by the interference of commission member C. W. Ames. He and Ramsey County Sheriff John Wagener assured the business community that all was being taken care of when nothing was actually being done. Karow returned to Minneapolis to write a manual for the use of the Civilian Auxiliary's 600 new riot sticks. The organization's general service manual stated that while the stick was to be the primary weapon for riot control, each company would also have ten men with loaded high-powered magazine rifles in case the commanding officer decided to shoot the leaders of a mob. The unions complained to Governor Burnquist that the Civilian Auxiliary was essentially a private army for employers and that wearing army uniforms and carrying rifles were illegal. They wanted the auxiliary disbanded. The only response was the issue of new steel-gray uniforms that could not be mistaken for United States Army khaki.<sup>29</sup>

On November 19 the special committee recommended "total disuse and abandonment of buttons or other insignia symbolizing the Union or the Non-union organizations." It further stated that both sides had

EDWARD KAROW,  
promoted to  
the rank of  
captain, 1918



agreed to this stipulation. However, the committee also recommended that all union solicitation and propaganda "shall cease on the company's property, in and above [*sic*] stations, and upon the cars." The streetcar company was to enforce these rulings. The next day the CPS adopted these recommendations in full, and Lowry immediately posted an order that all buttons be removed. Most of the union men, who had not yet voted on the agreement, refused to comply. After discussions with the commission the union agreed to vote on November 26, but word was leaked to the company on the 24th. On November 25 Lowry issued an ultimatum that any men wearing buttons or agitating on company property would be fired. The amalgamated saw this as an attempt to destroy its organization; approximately 800 men considered themselves locked out. The union contended that the commission's recommendation was unenforceable and gave Lowry no authority of dismissal. The CPS firmly backed the company and issued Order No. 16 on November 27, giving its recommendations the force of law. In hopes of averting a crisis the order also allowed for reinstatement of the 800 men. The union adamantly refused to comply, playing into Lowry's hands. Instead of merely striking the company, the workers were now in direct opposition to an order of the commission. The dispute would move to the streets and the transit company would be backed by all the force of the state of Minnesota.<sup>30</sup>

While Lowry led the CCA's battle with the unions, Citizen's Alliance Commissioner Otis P. Briggs quietly lobbied for a "status quo" ruling. In early May, United States Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson had stated that "this is no time to take advantage of emergencies to force recognition of the union. It is the height of disloyalty to force or bring about a stoppage of our industries in order to force the establishment of standards they have not been able to force during normal conditions." The Citizen's Alliance interpreted this to

<sup>28</sup> CPS, Minutes, Nov. 2, 6, 1917, and Robert Jamison to Minnesota Commission of Public Safety, Nov. 5, 1917, CPS Papers; CCA, *Annual Report*, 1912, 9, 1913, 152, 1914, 127; undated newspaper clipping, Citizen's Alliance Papers; list of Hamline Board of Trustees, undated, Hamline University Archives, St. Paul; CPS, Report of Special Committee, 2, Spielman Papers.

<sup>29</sup> Karow to Bellows, Sept. 6, 1918, H. A. Bellows, *General Service Manual* (Minneapolis: Civilian Auxiliary, 1918), [3], and Harrison to Civilian Auxiliary members, Nov. 12, 1917—all Karow Papers; Leslie Sinton to Burnquist, Nov. 24, 1917, Burnquist Papers; *Minneapolis Labor Review*, Nov. 16, 1917, p. 1; undated newspaper clipping, Citizen's Alliance Papers.

<sup>30</sup> CPS, Report of Special Committee, Nov. 19, 1917, p. 7-8, Spielman Papers; CPS, Minutes, Nov. 20, 27, 1917, CPS Papers; President's Mediation Commission, Report, Feb. 14, 1918, p. 2, Lind Papers; Statement of St. Paul labor unions, Dec. 2, 1917, Spielman Papers; *St. Paul Dispatch*, Nov. 26, 1917, p. 1; CPS, *Report*, 39, 90, 145-147.

mean "that there shall be no attempt of Organized Labor to further unionize the country." Although the status quo would also apply to employers, this was not a disadvantage for the alliance because Minneapolis was already 95 percent nonunion. There were to be no strikes or lockouts; the open shop would be preserved for the duration of the war.<sup>31</sup>

Briggs lobbied the CPS tirelessly for his principles while he represented the employers in strike discussions with the commission. On November 20, in the middle of the controversy, McGee moved that the commission adopt a status-quo resolution. The passage of this resolution, which denied the right to begin or unionize further any open shop for the duration of the war, probably precipitated the union's noncompliance with the button order. While Order No. 16 would halt organization of the streetcar workers, McGee's resolution attempted to stop all such activity statewide. The unions could not accept measures that outlawed their activities on this scale.

WHILE association members sent a flurry of telegrams to Governor Burnquist congratulating him on his wisdom and integrity in handling the controversy, the unions appealed to the federal government. Fearing an outbreak of violence, officials in Washington appointed federal conciliator Robert S. Coleman to arbitrate. The unions agreed immediately. Lowry refused. Acting Secretary of Labor Louis F. Post urged Lowry to submit the point in dispute to fair arbitration. Lowry telegraphed "You surely do not intend to suggest arbitration whether the company shall obey or disobey an order made after full hearings by the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety." The commission order had effectively locked the union out; now Lowry, McGee, and the CCA could concentrate on defending the authority of the state. Burnquist had to join them. On

December 1 he wired Post, "Interference at this time will simply result in an attempt to defy a duly constituted authority of Minnesota. . . I shall use every power at my command to uphold the dignity of the State."<sup>32</sup>

On Sunday, December 2, the tense situation finally exploded on the streets of St. Paul. As the crowd dispersed from a labor rally in Rice Park, angry mobs began attacking streetcars. Fifty nonunion car operators were injured, and evening service was completely halted. With Sheriff Wagener refusing to provide protection, the police department was unable to control the situation. The Home Guard was finally called out at 6:00 P.M., and in two hours it had cleared the downtown area and established barricades around what was called a restricted area. Burnquist later removed the sheriff from office for his inaction. Wagener claimed that this action was politically motivated. Labor organizations gathered 20,000 signatures on a petition urging he be reinstated, but the governor refused to do so.<sup>33</sup>

In Minneapolis the situation was markedly different. Sheriff Langum called out the Civilian Auxiliary immediately after the St. Paul riots began. The heavily

<sup>31</sup> Here and below, see *Citizen's Alliance Bulletin*, Jan.-Feb., 1929, p. 1, Sept., 1917, p. 3-4, Oct., 1917, p. 2; CPS, Minutes, Nov. 20, 1917, CPS Papers; Harlow H. Chamberlain to Knute Nelson, July 3, 1918, Nelson Papers. Briggs lobbied unsuccessfully for a federal status-quo law, but the following year in Minnesota his efforts bore fruit; CPS, *Report*, 108-109.

<sup>32</sup> A. W. Strong to Burnquist, Post to Burnquist, and Burnquist to Post—all Dec. 1, 1917, Burnquist Papers; *St. Paul Dispatch*, Nov. 27, 1917, p. 1, Nov. 28, 1917, p. 1. Burnquist received over fifty telegrams from association members in what was clearly an organized campaign to reassure him.

<sup>33</sup> *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Dec. 3, 1917, p. 1, Dec. 8, 1917, p. 1; *Minneapolis Tribune*, Dec. 3, 1917, p. 1; *Minneapolis Journal*, Dec. 4, 1917, p. 1.

*STRIKERS and supporters stopped streetcar service in downtown St. Paul. December, 1917.*



armed patrols of the auxiliary's four companies rushed to protect the transit line's property. Downtown streets were swept clean of any potential troublemakers by columns of riot-stick-touting men. Scattered fights broke out as auxiliary members prodded people coming out of downtown union meetings, but these aggressive tactics prevented any large crowds from forming. In their recently issued moleskin uniforms and sheepskin-lined overcoats, the businessmen easily withstood the 25-degree-below-zero temperatures. With increasing violence threatened, the Northwestern National Bank donated 66 more .30 caliber rifles with bayonets. The CCA had thoroughly prepared its army and once again controlled the streets of Minneapolis.<sup>34</sup>

Although the Civilian Auxiliary and the Minnesota Home Guard had temporarily quelled the rioting in St. Paul, a massive labor convention was scheduled for December 5, and the possibility of a general strike was threatened. In Washington, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker entered the controversy. A general strike would halt Twin Cities war production and tie up vital rail traffic. Baker wired Governor Burnquist that "the serious situation which would exist if widespread sympathetic resistance to these orders occurs" must be avoided. Baker suggested that the order be suspended and the entire situation reopened. The federal government would then assist the commission in adjusting grievances. McGee and the streetcar company were appalled. Federal intervention could be disastrous to the CCA's position. McGee immediately wired Baker, Secretary of the Treasury William G. McAdoo, and Senator Knute Nelson that the trouble was practically over and interference from Washington would only revive it. The matter could not be reopened "without impeaching the integrity, intelligence and competency of the Public Safety Commission." Once again Burnquist was

forced to defend both himself and the business interests. He told Baker that "Reopening of the decision as matters now stand would be a surrender of government by reason of riots and agitation and would be an incentive to further riots and agitation." The federal government wavered and waited for further developments.<sup>35</sup>

On Wednesday morning, in zero-degree weather, 15,000 unionists stopped work and gathered at the St. Paul Auditorium. All pledged support for the streetcar unions and demanded that Ames and McGee be fired. Minneapolis Mayor Van Lear vehemently denounced the CCA and the CPS and declared labor in accordance with the principles of President Wilson. The convention decided to wait for federal intervention until December 11, at which time it would reconvene and vote on a general strike. Burnquist, in a public attempt to convince Washington that he was not antilabor, fired Ames. In fact, Ames had been in Washington counseling with Baker on federal intervention and therefore had infuriated McGee and Burnquist. McGee, of course, maintained his position on the commission. While the Civilian Auxiliary continued to patrol Minneapolis streets both sides waited for a decision from Washington, where Post, Baker, and President Wilson vacillated between the necessity for intervention and the inevitable problems that it would create for the state of Minnesota.<sup>36</sup>

DURING the lull, the CCA's private intelligence service continued its investigations of all suspected disloyalty. On November 27, the association had reorganized the Minneapolis division of the American Protective League, the mission of which was to "maintain constant vigilance in an effort to discover plotters and evaders engaged in undermining the morale of the nation." Herbert M. Gardner, who was in charge of the association's war activities, persuaded local contractor Charles G. Davis to become chief of the local protective league. The CCA's secretary, Edward C. Hillweg, then assisted Davis in recruiting more than 400 agents, virtually all from the ranks of the CCA. The league, nominally operating under the direction of the Bureau of Investigation (later to be renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigation), set up headquarters in room 306 of the Federal Building with equipment and staff paid for by the association. Every agent was investigated by a secret recruitment committee for loyalty and patriotism. With the co-operation of the Public Safety Commission, the chosen men were sworn in as peace officers and authorized to make arrests and carry guns.<sup>37</sup>

On December 7, following up on a tip, agents investigated a suspected headquarters for antigovernment propaganda in the Upham Building at University and Raymond avenues in St. Paul. The site turned out to be the office for a faction of the machinists' union. Agents

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<sup>34</sup> Karow to Bellows, Sept. 6, 1918, Karow to Harrison, Dec. 19, 1917, Karow Papers; *Minneapolis Labor Review*, Dec. 7, 1917, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Baker to Burnquist, A. M. Robertson to Nelson, Nelson to Robertson, all Dec. 4, 1917, and Burnquist to Baker, McGee to Nelson, both Dec. 5, 1917—all Nelson Papers; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Dec. 5, 1917, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Minneapolis Labor Review*, Dec. 7, 1917, p. 1, 2; Resolutions of Trade Unionist Convention, Dec. 5, 1917, Spielman Papers; *St. Paul Daily News*, Dec. 4, 1917, p. 1; *Minneapolis Journal*, Dec. 4, 1917, p. 1; St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly, *The Truth About the Street Car Strike*, undated pamphlet, 4, CPS Papers; Hilton, "Minnesota Commission of Public Safety," 22.

<sup>37</sup> Operative No. 71, *Summary Report of War Service*, 1-3; CCA, *Annual Report, 1918*, 13; Davis to C. W. Shirk, Sept. 18, 1922, Hennepin County War Records Committee Papers, Minneapolis Public Library; American Protective League, undated booklet, 9, War Records Commission Records; Mac Martin to Winter, Nov. 24, 1917, and CPS, List of Minnesota Peace Officers, CPS Papers.

listening in on conversations from adjoining rooms learned that the machinists were making plans for a statewide general strike in the event that union leaders failed to defeat the streetcar company. Chief Davis then wrote to Commissioner Henry W. Libby, who had replaced Ames, to report on the incident and ask for further instructions. The league would be glad to assist Libby in any way, Davis assured him, and it would be easy to watch the union office secretly to obtain additional information.<sup>38</sup>

A sympathy strike of all union men in Minneapolis and St. Paul was finally called for 10:00 A.M., December 13. Adjutant General Rhinow announced that martial law might have to be declared to handle the 30,000 men that the union estimated would stop work. Burnquist ordered all liquor stores closed and instructed Sheriff Langum and the acting sheriff of Ramsey County to maintain order. More than 10,000 workers had left their jobs by noon, when Washington finally decided to act. Secretary of War Baker, on President Wilson's authority, telegraphed William B. Wilson, chairman of the President's Mediation Commission, that because of "federal interests" the commission should stop in the Twin Cities and look into the controversy. As a result state Federation of Labor president E. G. Hall called off the strike at 1:30 P.M.; it had lasted less than four hours with no reports of violence. Governor Burnquist, however, accused the president's commission of "creating an opportunity for further agitation" and of undermining "a wholesome respect for law and order and for state and national government." Although the governor agreed to meet with the mediation commission, he insisted that "the matters in dispute . . . have been decided, and the decision can not now be reopened."<sup>39</sup>

After hearing testimony at the Radisson Hotel from union representatives, Lowry and Edward W. Decker of the streetcar company, a delegation from the Civic and Commerce Association, and members of the Public Safety Commission, the president's commission left for Washington, having first obtained a written agreement from the unions not to strike. Whether they feared losing a strike or simply misunderstood the issues that were now paramount is unclear, but for whatever reason, the unions had signed away their last chance. The CPS continued to insist that the issue was closed and, given its record, there was certainly no reason to doubt its convictions. Lowry felt that the issue was "so serious that no matter who signs the communication from Washington, it will be necessary for us to refuse to comply." Governor Burnquist remained just as adamant. The unions refused to believe the obvious: Lowry and the CPS fully intended to ignore any federal intervention.<sup>40</sup>

While the workers waited through January for the



*UNION marchers in St. Paul demonstrating their loyalty, December, 1917*

findings of the mediation commission the streetcar company began advertising in the smaller agricultural towns of the state in order to recruit a new labor force that had no connection with Twin Cities unions. Lieutenant Karow placed ads in rural papers offering "healthy outdoor, interesting work." The CCA was also instrumental in setting up the State Employment Bureau in Minneapolis, which was active in finding clients railway jobs. The new employees were assured that their positions were permanent. Lowry had no intention of ever rehiring union men.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Davis to Libby, Dec. 8, 1917, CPS Papers. American Protective League records from the states were turned over to the Bureau of Investigation after the war. In the 1950s the FBI gave these to the National Archives where materials from all but five states were destroyed, including those from Minnesota. Records that might detail further involvement of the American Protective League in the streetcar strike were therefore lost.

<sup>39</sup> *Minneapolis Journal*, Dec. 12, 1917, p. 1; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Dec. 14, 1917, p. 1; *St. Paul Daily News*, Dec. 13, 1917, p. 1; Burnquist to Baker, Dec. 13, 1917, Nelson Papers; *Minneapolis Labor Review*, Dec. 14, 1917, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Minneapolis Journal*, Dec. 20, 1917, p. 12; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Dec. 19, 1917, p. 1, Dec. 20, 1917, p. 1; Lowry to Nelson, Dec. 21, 1917, Nelson Papers.

<sup>41</sup> President's Mediation Commission, Report, Feb. 14, 1918, p. 4, Lind Papers; CCA, Summary of War Activities, [1917], 3, and State Employment Office, Records, 1917, War Records Commission Records; "Twin City Rapid Transit Is Charged With Hampering the War," union pamphlet, Feb. 14, 1918, p. 1. Lowry to CPS, [late Feb., 1918?], CPS Papers.

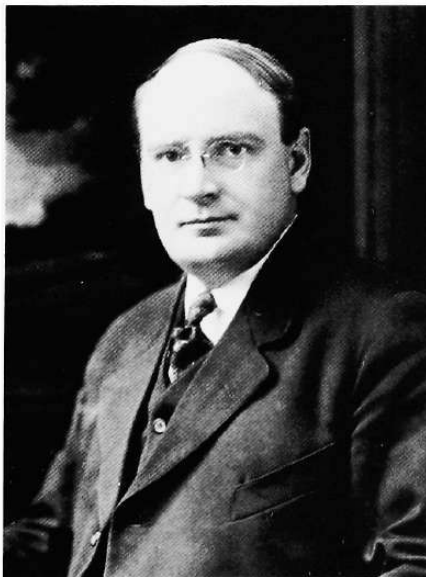
ON FEBRUARY 14, 1918, the President's Mediation Commission recommended that the streetcar company should re-employ union men at their prestrike wages and status and should not discriminate against members of trade unions. Secretary of War Baker requested that the CPS urge the company to comply. Lowry replied that compliance "would be imposing a gross injustice" upon the men who had remained loyal and operated the public service throughout the controversy. The CPS continued to consider the issue closed, and the federal government had no power to force compliance. J. H. Walker of the president's commission wrote in frustration to the unions that despite the approval of the National Council of Defense, "The company has positively refused to agree to the findings of the commission. . . . They have thus put themselves squarely on record in opposition to the war policies of our government at this time." Briggs of the Citizen's Alliance, echoing the CCA's opinion, concluded that Walker was just as much a Socialist as Mayor Van Lear.<sup>42</sup>

The antigovernment stand taken by Lowry and Burnquist was a publicity bonanza for the unions, which accused the company of aiding and abetting the enemy. The *Minneapolis Labor Review* said that Lowry "still stands, as does the Kaiser of Germany, opposed to the wishes of the Government." This campaign,

<sup>42</sup> President's Mediation Commission, Report, Feb. 14, 1918, p. 5-7, Lind Papers; Baker to CPS, Feb. 15, 1918, Lowry to CPS, [late Feb., 1918?], CPS Papers; Walker to Joseph Colgan, Mar. 13, 1918, Spielman Papers; Briggs to Nelson, Mar. 18, 1918, Nelson Papers.

<sup>43</sup> "Farmers and Unionists Will Appeal to Washington if Change Isn't Made," union flier, Feb. 14, 1918, CPS Papers; *Minneapolis Labor Review*, Mar. 1, 1918, p. 1; CPS, Report, 108, 109; Hilton, "Minnesota Commission of Public Safety," 24.

JOSEPH A. A.  
BURNQUIST,  
1917



however, failed to modify the commission's stance. Instead, on April 16, that body issued Order No. 30 establishing an industrial status quo. Thus, with the help of the Public Safety Commission, the CCA had managed to defy the federal government and eliminate any possible advances of union labor. In accordance with Order No. 30 the State Board of Arbitration tried to settle the controversy, but the streetcar company refused to discuss the situation. When the Board of Arbitration agreed with the findings of the President's Mediation Commission and the transit company again refused to comply, the unions requested that the case be transferred to the National War Labor Board. On April 10, 1919, this board dismissed the case. The union men had lost the final battle.<sup>43</sup>

IN THE FACE of labor shortages and the growing radical movements of the World War I era, the Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association had organized an effective military defense on both the local and state levels. In the brief span of 21 months the association and the Commission of Public Safety managed to neutralize the IWW, the Nonpartisan League, Minneapolis Socialists, and Twin Cities labor unions. The combined efforts of the commission and the association also revealed a dark side of American culture: in the face of imagined threats the basic rights of American citizens were trampled at will. An unconstitutional dictatorship governed Minnesota while a private army patrolled the streets of Minneapolis. The interests of business became the interests of the state. Fortunately, the extraordinary circumstances that created these unusual institutions died with the end of World War I. The Public Safety Commission and the Civilian Auxiliary were disbanded.

The aggressive antilabor activities of the Civic and Commerce Association, however, continued to dominate Minneapolis industry for another 16 years. The American Protective League officially ceased to function but continued to spy on unions and suspected Communists into the 1920s. Eventually this intelligence network and other antiunion activities were turned over to the Citizen's Alliance. Through the use of propaganda, court cases, and special sheriff deputies, the Citizen's Alliance successfully carried out the CCA's agenda until the now-famous Teamsters' strike of 1934. While the association had realized the importance of the transportation industries, it had underestimated the strength that a unified union movement could command. Without a heavily armed force like the Civilian Auxiliary, the association lost control of the streets of Minneapolis in 1934 and with it control over the industrial work force.

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