



Where the Fraser River Flows

Film Summary: Named after the famous song written by IWW singer and activist, Joe Hill, this film is inspired by his words and IWW organizing efforts amongst railway workers in the interior of BC.

**Curriculum
Application**
Social Studies 10

The Essential Question: What values, if any, do you or our society share with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)?

Summary of the Lesson Activities

1. Focus questions for the vignette provide a short lesson option. (15 minutes)
2. Small group activity.
3. Mini-conference on the early days of the IWW.
4. Using songs as historical sources of information.

Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate skills of collaboration and co-operation
2. Compare mechanisms whereby public policy can be changed (e.g., elections, petitions, strikes, protests, lobbyists, special interest groups, court actions, media campaigns)
3. Analyze how workers have expressed their concerns through music
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the history of labour struggles
5. Assess the contributions of particular individuals and groups who are identified with the struggles for social justice.

Materials and Resources Provided

- ["Where the Fraser River Flows" Episode 2- Working People – a History of Labour in British Columbia](#)
- Appendix 1- Historical Background Reading on the IWW.
- Lesson Activity 1- mini conference backgrounders
- Appendix 2- Conference Data retrieval sheet

Additional Suggested Materials

- ["Bows and Arrows" Episode 2- Working People- A History of Labour in British Columbia](#)
- [History of the IWW- History Link](#)
- [The Labour Movement in British Columbia 1840-1914](#)

Vignette Questions

1. Why did the workers walk off the job?
2. How were workers in other North American cities able to help the striking workers?
3. How was the strike broken?
4. Where there any positive outcomes from the strike?
5. Can you name contemporary music that has a social justice message? (fairness and /or equality)

Lesson Activities

1. Read and discuss the historical backgrounder on the IWW as a class. Follow the reading with a viewing of the vignette, *"Where the Fraser River Flows"*. Assign the vignette questions above for the students to complete while viewing the film.
2. If the teacher decides to only show the short vignette, and does not assign the six readings mini/conference-unit, a brief discussion using the vignette discussion questions should follow the reading on the historical background and the viewing of the vignette, *Where the Fraser River Flows*.
3. Prepare the class for the mini-conference activity by dividing the class into six small groups of 4-5 students. Each group should be given one of the readings and a data retrieval sheet. Students will read their articles giving their opinions (on the five most important or interesting facts/information, with special focus on what values they share or do not share, with the person or event. (If these six readings are handed out for homework and the students arrive the next period ready to share information (their opinions) the conference seems to work better).
4. Students will then move into their small/expert groups and attempt to come to a consensus on what they found the most interesting about the event or person, and/or what values they share, or do not share ,with the IWW. Their five point consensus should then be put on chart paper or the board for the whole class to view. All groups should report/summarize their reading to the class as they would in a conference setting. (Panel discussion or presentation.) Playing of each group's assigned song is recommended in the presentation, or perform it!
5. When students have completed the group activity the teacher will facilitate a discussion on the values, of the IWW, and the legacy that the Wobblies have, or have not, contributed to the social, cultural, economic and political fabric of our society.

Credit: Teaching Activities and Lesson Plan developed by Scott Parker

Episode 2-“Where the River Flows”

Appendix 1- Historical Background Reading on the IWW

Background Reading:

Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a revolutionary industrial union organized in Chicago in 1905. The aim of the IWW was to unite into one big union (OBU) all skilled and unskilled workers, regardless of sex and race, for the purpose of replacing capitalism and rebuilding society on a cooperative socialist basis. The methods were: direct action, workers control, education, the boycott, strike and the General Strike. By 1910, the IWW was a major force in the labour movement especially in the Pacific Northwest. Members were called, among other nicknames, Wobblies. Prior to the IWW, union organizing was dominated by all white craft unions that ignored workers that did not have a highly skilled trade. These early craft unions often organized against Asian workers. The Wobblies organized all workers: immigrants, loggers, city labourers, miners, longshoremen, railway, construction, Black, First Nations, and Asian workers. The capitalist class viewed the IWW as a major threat to their power and launched a campaign to ‘silence’ the IWW. Wobblies were jailed, beaten, blacklisted, deported and murdered. The Wobblies were active in a variety of social justice causes from free speech fights, anti-war activities, to improving the economic conditions for all workers. IWW influence and membership grew rapidly between 1906-1914. Their slogan, “An injury to one is an injury to all,” inspired workers to join this new labour movement in the hope of improving social and economic conditions. It was going to take a major international crisis to silence the IWW. The crisis came in 1914(in the USA 1917) with the outbreak of World War One. The war divided the labour movement, some workers supported the war, and others like the IWW denounced the war as a clash between the ruling classes of the capitalist/imperialist powers. The IWW urged workers to resist and not allow themselves to be used as pawns for the profits of the capitalist class. Needless to say, the capitalist class was not divided and looked forward to the enormous profits to be made through war production. The jingoism that surrounded the war allowed the government to repress the labour and the anti war movements. The IWW, and other socialist organizations were banned and their property confiscated. Peace activists, socialists, and the Wobblies were arrested, and many were deported. The IWW, never fully recovered from this repression. In the USA, not only was World War One a major blow to the IWW, it was also the end of a viable socialist alternative to the American two party capitalist system. Nevertheless, the IWW continued and has been an inspiration to the labour movement, especially in their democratic values, direct action, militancy, and songs that are still sung today.

Where the River Flows

Lesson Activity 1- Mini Conference backgrounders

The Six Readings:

The readings are short biographies, and events that were influential in developing the ideology of the IWW. Studying these reading will, assist students in understanding the historical times and the ideology that shaped the IWW. The six readings are to be used as a mini-conference on the IWW, Nevertheless, they could be read/discussed individually. Other personalities could be exchanged or added to the list, for example, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn or Big Bill Haywood. Readings five and six could be supplemented with other readings that address other communities; their historical connection with IWW. On the back of all six readings are songs written by members and supporters of the IWW. The teacher can use these songs to give the unit a cultural component. Web links, and short descriptions to the songs are supplied.

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|-----------------|--|
| 1. Emma Goldman | 4. Eugene Debs |
| 2. Mother Jones | 5. Victoria and Vancouver Free Speech fights |
| 3. Joe Hill | 6. The 1912 Canadian Northern strike |

Note to the teacher- Photocopy the personal profile and the accompanying information on the associated song for each student in the group.

Working People: A History of Labour in BC

Reading 1- Emma Goldman

Emma Goldman was born in Russia in 1869 but emigrated to the United States in 1885. Goldman was shocked by the poverty in her new home, the USA. She became convinced that only a redistribution of wealth and socialism could lead to equality and fairness. The form of socialism she supported, advocated mutual aid, a high degree of individual freedom; a very critical/negative opinion of the corrupting influence of power and authority. She called it anarchism. Even though Goldman was not a member of the IWW, she worked on IWW campaigns and many members were influenced by her social, economic and political views.

Goldman travelled through North America and eventually the world working for and making speeches on social justice issues: legalizing birth control, against corporal punishment in schools, freedom of speech, anarchism, labour rights, socialism, women's suffrage, the hypocrisy of Christianity, the rights of homosexuals and lesbians, modern literature and free love. Her ideals of revolution are often summarized in her famous quote, "If I can't dance I don't want your revolution."

Goldman was imprisoned numerous times for: inciting a riot, illegally distributing information about illegal birth control, urging the unemployed to steal the food they needed, anti-war activities and sedition against the government. In 1901, she became a household name in North America when Leon Gzolgosz, who assassinated McKinley, the President of the USA, claimed he had been influenced by the speeches of Goldman.

Goldman edited and published the journal, *Mother Earth*, between 1906-1917. Her journal, and lecture tours were enthusiastically welcomed by many in the IWW. Goldman became involved in the campaign to keep the United States out of World War One. She viewed the war as a conflict between the ruling classes of the world, and workers who had nothing to win and only their lives to lose. The repression brought on by the war led to mass arrests of those who opposed the war. Goldman was arrested for opposing forced military conscription and sent to jail. After the 1917 Russian Revolution, the American Attorney General, looking for an excuse to destroy American socialism and radical unionism, promoted a "Red Scare". Hoping to convince Americans that communist agents were planning to overthrow the American government. Goldman was accused by the head of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, of being the most dangerous woman in America. She was deported to Russia. Goldman spent two years in the new Soviet Russia. While in Russia her enthusiastic views about the new 'workers paradise' changed and she became convinced that the ideals of the Russian Revolution were dead. Soviet Russia had turned into a giant prison camp where freedom and equality did not exist. After leaving Soviet Russia she continued speaking and writing about socialism, anarchism and individual freedom. As European fascism emerged in the 1920's she became an outspoken anti-fascist lending her energy to democratic and anti-fascist struggles in Europe.

Emma Goldman was in Toronto assisting anti-fascist refugees, when she died in 1940. The USA government gave permission for her body to be buried in Chicago.

Adapted from www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAgoldman.htm

Working People: A History of Labour in BC

Bread and Roses to be photocopied on the back side of Reading 1 Emma Goldman

The slogan "**Bread and Roses**" originated in a speech; a line in that speech ("The worker must have bread, but she must have roses, too.") inspired the title of the poem Bread and Roses published in 1911. The slogan is commonly associated with the 1912 Lawrence Massachusetts textile strike, which united dozens of immigrant communities under the leadership of the Industrial Workers of the World, and was led to a large extent by women. The popular mythology of the strike includes signs being carried by women reading "We want bread, but we want roses, too!" The workers won pay increases, time-and-a-quarter pay for overtime, and a promise of no discrimination against strikers. The slogan appeals for both fair wages and dignified conditions. Adapted from
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bread_and_Roses

Bread and Roses

As we come marching, marching, in the beauty of the day,
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts grey,
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses
For the people hear us singing,
"Bread and roses, bread and roses!"
As we come marching, marching, we battle too for men.
For they are women's children and we mother them again.
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes,
Hearts can starve as well as bodies,
"Give us bread and give us roses!"
As we come marching, marching, unnumbered women dead
Go crying through our city their ancient song of bread.
Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew-
Yes, it is bread that we fight for,
"But we fight for roses too! "
As we come marching, marching, we bring the greater day,
The rising of the women will show us all the way!
No more the drudge and idler,
Ten that toil where one reposes,
But a sharing of life's glories,
"Bread and roses, bread and roses!"

Judy Collins sings Bread and Roses

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mK3MqwsqnPY>

Reading 2: Mother Jones

Mary Jones was born in 1830 in Ireland, but she lived her early years in Toronto, Canada. She worked as a teacher and a dressmaker after emigrating to the Americas. After Jones lost her four children and husband to a yellow fever outbreak in the southern USA, she started to work as a labour activist. Joining the Knights of Labour in the 1870's, giving speeches on picket lines, street corners and at union meetings. Around this time, she started to travel across America to numerous strike sites. The way she cared for the workers inspired them to nickname her "Mother". Known as the miner's angel, Mother Jones became an active campaigner for the United Mine Workers Union. In 1898, she was one of founders of the Social Democratic Party of America. Also, in 1905 Jones helped establish the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). For her social reform and labour activities, she was considered by government officials as one of the most dangerous women in America. Famous quotes include, "Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living. My address is like my shoes. It travels with me. I abide where there is a fight against wrong."

Jones was ideologically separated from many of the other female activists of her day due to her strong opposition to abortion and votes for women. She was quoted as saying, "You don't need the vote to raise hell!" In 1903, upset about the lax enforcement of the child labour laws in the Pennsylvania mines and mills, she organized a children's protest march from Philadelphia to the home of the president of the USA. She became known as a charismatic social justice speaker throughout her career. Her methods to educate the workers were: profanity, props, visual aids, dramatic stunts, name-calling, and comedy. Nothing could dissuade Mother Jones from her work. At the age of 82, she was arrested for her part in a West Virginia strike that turned violent. She was sentenced to 20 years in jail. Her supporters rallied and convinced the governor to grant her a pardon. Jones, undeterred, immediately returned to organizing workers. In 1930, at the age of 100 she died, still a rebel and a socialist.

Adapted from www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAjonesM.htm

Ballad of Mother Jones to be photocopied on the back side of Reading 2

Gene Autry, the iconic singing cowboy and singer of seemingly endless Christmas songs for children, from Frosty the Snowman down to Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer wrote and sang a labour protest song to celebrate Mary Harris "Mother" Jones, American labor organizer and co-founder of the Industrial Workers of The World. The generation who knew the realities of the Great Depression are disappearing, along with World War II veterans. There was a different reality in the USA in 1931, and the western and southern states were particularly hard hit. This song comes from a gritty reality not much remembered today.

BALLAD OF MOTHER JONES

The world today's in mourning
O'er the death of Mother Jones;
Gloom and sorrow hover
Around the miners' homes.

This grand old champion of labour
Was known in every land;
She fought for right and justice,
She took a noble stand.

O'er the hills and through the valley
In ev'ry mining town
Mother Jones was ready to help
them
She never turned them down.

On front with the striking miners
She always could be found
And received a hearty welcome
In ev'ry mining town.

She was fearless of every danger,
She hated that which was wrong;
She never gave up fighting
Until her breath was gone.

This noble leader of labour
Has gone to a better land;
While the hard-working miners,
They miss her guiding hand.
May the miners all work together
To carry out her plan;
And bring back better conditions
For every labouring man;

Adapted from www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pHwtIQ1FyI

Reading 3: Joe Hill

Joe Hill was born in Sweden in 1882. He arrived in the USA in 1902. Hill became a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). In 1912 he was beaten up and permanently scarred during a free speech campaign in San Diego. Hill was also a songwriter and his socialist songs such as *The Preacher and the Slave* and *Casey Jones* - became internationally known folk songs. Hill travelled the Northwest Pacific lending his talents to union organizing. When hearing about the striking railroad workers in British Columbia in 1911 he wrote the famous song *Where the Fraser River Flows*. Hill's trade union activities made him a marked man. Unable to find work in California, he moved to Utah. When he was in Salt Lake City organizing construction workers into a union, a former policeman and his son were shot dead by two masked gunman in a grocery store. On the night of the murder, Hill visited a doctor with a bullet wound in his left lung. The police already knowing about Hill's union activities decided to arrest him. Hill said that the wound came from a quarrel over a women. The police chief of San Pedro, California who had once held Hill for thirty days because of his efforts to organize longshoremen, wrote to the Salt Lake City police, "I see you have under arrest for murder one Joseph Hillstrom. You have the right man... He is certainly an undesirable citizen."

The IWW's lawyers, argued that Hill had been framed as a warning to others considering trade union activity. The Governor of Utah admitted that he wanted to use the case to, "Stop street speaking" (free speech) and to clear the state of lawless elements. At Hill's trial none of the witnesses were able to identify Hill as the murderer. This included thirteen-year-old Merlin Morrison, who witnessed the killing of her father and brother. The bullet that hit Hill was not found in the store. Nor was any of Hill's blood. However, Hill was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death.

The IWW launched an international campaign to halt the execution and force a retrial. In July 1915, 30,000 members of the Australian IWW sent a resolution calling on the Governor to free Hill. Similar resolutions were passed at trade union meetings in Britain and other European countries. Woodrow Wilson, the President of the USA contacted the Governor of Utah and asked for a retrial. This was refused and plans were made for Hill's execution by firing-squad on the 19th of November, 1915.

When Hill heard the news, he sent a message, **"I die like a true blue rebel. Don't waste any time in mourning. Organize!"** An estimated 30,000 people attended Hill's funeral. Joe Hill's legacy and songs are famous and still sung today.

Adapted from www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAhillJ.htm

Working People: A History of Labour in BC

Power in the Unions to be photocopied on the back side of Reading 3, Joe Hill

"**There Is Power In A Union**" is a song written by Joe Hill in 1913. The Industrial Workers of the World (commonly known as the Wobblies) concentrated much of its labour trying to organize migrant workers in construction, railroad and construction camps.

Utah Phillips sings "**There Is Power In A Union**"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmPX9cJHXyl>

Chorus:

There is pow'r there is pow'r in a band of workingfolk
When they stand, hand in hand,
That's a pow'r, that's a pow'r
That must rule in every land—One Industrial Union Grand.

Would you have freedom from [Wage slavery](#),
Then come join the grand Industrial band;
Would you from mis'ry and hunger be free,
Then come, do your share, lend a hand.

Chorus:

Would you have mansions of gold in the sky,
And live in a shack, that's a way in the back?
Would you have wings up in heaven to fly,
And starve here with rags on your back?

Chorus:

If you like sluggers busting in your head,
Then don't organize, all unions despise.
If you want nothing before you are dead,
Shake hands with your boss and look wise.

Chorus:

O come all ye workers from every land
And come join the grand industrial band
Ah then we our share of this earth shall demand
Then come, do your share, lend a hand.

Chorus:

Reading 4: Eugene Debs

Eugene Debs was born in Indiana in 1855. Leaving school at the age of 14, he began working on the railroad becoming active in the union movement. Debs believed that capitalism should be replaced by a new cooperative system, socialism. Although he advocated radical reform, through union organizing and electoral activities Debs was opposed to revolutionary violence.

Debs was a regular contributor to the journal *Appeal to Reason*, along with Jack London, Mother Jones, Upton Sinclair, and Helen Keller. They advocated for a new world order based on equality and fairness. By 1902 its circulation reached 150,000, making it the fourth largest weekly in the United States. Debs was present at the founding convention of the IWW in 1905, and remained active in the organization throughout its early years. During this period he focussed on lecturing and organizing the labour and socialist movements.

Debs ran for President of the United States, five times between 1900 and 1920, representing the Socialist Party, the last time from prison. His program included proposals for improved: labour conditions, housing, welfare legislation and an increase in the number of people who could vote. The election of 1912 was the high point for American socialism, winning 901,551 votes (6.0%). This was the most impressive showing of any socialist candidate in the history of the United States. However, in some states the vote was much higher: Oklahoma (16.6), Nevada(16.5), Montana(13.6), Washington(12.9), California(12.2) and Idaho (11.5).

Debs was a strong opponent of the First World War. He argued that the conflict had been caused by the capitalist/imperialist competitive system. In an article he wrote in September 1915, " When I say I am opposed to war I mean ruling class war, for the ruling class is the only class that makes war ... I would be shot for treason before I would enter such a war." Debs was arrested for his pacifist beliefs and sentenced to 10 years in jail for opposing World War One and praising others who had refused military service.

Debs was a lifelong socialist but not a supporter of Soviet communism. When he heard about the 1917 Russian Revolution, he was optimistic but quickly changed his mind. Debs's socialism could not condone the violence, bloodshed and tyranny that had engulfed Russia. Debs was pardoned in December, 1921. Eugene Victor Debs died in 1926.

Adapted from www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAdubs.htm

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Solidarity Forever to be photocopied on the back side of Reading 4 Eugene Debs

As the poet laureate of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Ralph Chaplin is probably remembered best for giving organized labor its fighting theme song, Solidarity Forever. In the 1960 Chaplin wrote: "Even at this late hour I am more grimly convinced than ever that neither the song itself nor the organization that sparked it could have emerged from any environment other than the Pacific Northwest in the afterglow of the rugged period of American pioneering". Adapted from www.iww.org

Pete Seeger sings Solidarity Forever <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ly5ZKjjxMNM>

SOLIDARITY FOREVER

Chorus: **"Solidarity Forever" repeated 3times.... "for the union makes us strong"**

When the union's inspiration through the workers blood shall run
There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun
Yet what force on Earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one
but the union makes us strong

Chorus: **"Solidarity Forever" repeated 3times.... "for the union makes us strong"**

It is we who plowed the prairies; build the cities where they trade
Dug the mines and build the workshops, endless miles of railroad laid
Now we stand outcast and starving 'mid the wonders we have made
but the union makes us strong

Chorus: **"Solidarity Forever" repeated 3times.... "for the union makes us strong"**

They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn
But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn
We can break their haughty power, gain our freedom when we learn that
The union makes us strong

Chorus: **"Solidarity Forever" repeated 3times.... "for the union makes us strong"**

In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold
Greater than the might of atoms magnified a thousand-fold
We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old for
But the union makes us strong

Chorus: **"Solidarity Forever" repeated 3times.... "for the union makes us strong"**

Reading 5. Victoria and Vancouver Free Speech Fights

Free speech has not always been a right in British Columbia. One hundred years ago, city authorities in both Victoria and Vancouver attempted to ban free speech. The ban was directed towards certain labour /political organizations, especially the IWW and socialists from speaking in the streets and parks. The labour movement pointed out the hypocrisy of a law that allowed religious organizations (Salvation Army...) the right to free speech but denied others. It seemed that the civil authorities were more concerned with silencing the message from the radical street orators of a 'paradise' on this earth, rather than the 'promised paradise' when you die. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), message of a society based on cooperation and equality for all, was a direct challenge to the economic and political elite. The IWW and the socialist denounced the law as discriminatory and undemocratic. Mass free speech demonstrations were organized in both Victoria and Vancouver.

In Victoria crowds of over 2000 defied the law and attended the street corner free speech demonstrations. A speaker's box was placed on the corner and as soon as the police would arrest one speaker another would take their place. The inability of the authorities to continue arresting speakers; the public support for free speech, determined and militant opposition and the general public resistance to the denial of civil liberties, eventually led the authorities to repeal the law.

In Vancouver the centre of the protest was Oppenheimer Park. The park had been the traditional territory for free speech especially on Sunday. The 1912 ban on public gatherings in the park immediately united the IWW and the socialist to oppose the law. A crowd of thousands gathered to protest the law. The Deputy Chief of Police was there to declare the gathering illegal. Immediately after publicly reading the law and ordering the crowd to disperse, a labour speaker stood on the box to defy the law. The speaker was immediately arrested and the crowd attacked by the police with whips and clubs. The Province newspaper reported that the crowd was, "Attacked by the police on horse and foot.... men tried to mount the box... but were dragged down ... the grounds looked something like a battlefield." The next week over 10,000 people showed up to protest the ban of public meetings in the park. This time the civic authorities, recognizing the determined resistance, called off the ban on free speech.

Adapted from Plunderbund and Proletariat (History of the IWW) by Jack Scott

Working People: A History of Labour in BC

Preacher and the Slave to be photocopied on the back side of Reading 5 the Victoria and Vancouver Free Speech fights

"The Preacher and the Slave" (Pie in the Sky) is a song written by Joe Hill in 1911. It was written as a parody of the hymn. When the workers returned to the cities from mining and logging camps, the Wobblies competed with the Salvation Army (which they satirized as the "Starvation Army"). Joe Hill coined the phrase "pie in the sky".

Adapted from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Preacher_and_the_Slave

PIE IN THE SKY OR LONGHAIRED PREACHERS

Long-haired preachers come out every night
Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right
But when asked about something to eat
They will answer in voices so sweet:

Chorus: (Audience repeats back words in brackets)

You will eat, (You will eat) bye and bye, (bye and bye)

In that glorious land in the sky; (in the sky)

Work and pray, (Work and pray) live on hay, (live on hay)

You'll get pie in the sky when you die. (That's a lie!)

Holy Rollers and jumpers come out,
And they roll and they jump and they shout.
"Give your money to Jesus," they say,
"And you'll eat on that glorious day!"

Chorus

And the starvation army they play,
And they sing and they clap and they pray.

Till they get all your coin on the drum,
Then they'll tell you when you're on the bum:

Chorus:

Working folks of all countries, unite,
Side by side we for freedom shall fight:
When this world and its wealth we have gained
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain:

Chorus

You will eat, (You will eat) bye and bye, (bye and bye)

When you've learned how to cook and to fry
(and to fry)

Chop some wood, (Chop some wood) do you good, (do you good)

And you'll eat in the sweet bye and bye. (That's no lie!)

[Utah Phillips Sings "Pie in the Sky"](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJ236CwhlPw)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJ236CwhlPw>

Reading 6. The 1912 Canadian Northern Strike

In 1912 thousands of railroad workers walked off the job along the Fraser River Canyon, from Hope to Kamloops. The main grievance was the unsanitary conditions in the camps. One worker described them as, "Shacks without floors or windows, no ventilationtier after tier of bunks, forty to fifty men confined to one bunk house 25x18, ...because of the overcrowding lack of ventilation, it was not uncommon for men to arise in the morning too sick to work."

The workers announced their five demands: \$3.00 a day, a nine hour day, board for \$5.25 a week, a bathhouse at the camps, and pay would start from the time they left the camp, and not from the time they actually started to work. The workers were mostly foreigners: had no vote, could be deported as trouble makers, and thus had no political influence. From the point of view of the political and economic elites these labourers were exploitable and expendable. The revolutionary, philosophy of Industrial Workers of World (IWW): a fair, equitable and just world for all, regardless of race and nationality, spoke directly to the workers' desperate situation.

The IWW strike committee quickly took control of the Fraser Canyon. They established their own police and court systems to maintain discipline and solidarity in the strike zone. A newspaper correspondent at Yale described the strike committees 'discipline' in the town of Yale. "Two drinks only to each manno firearms or ammunition to be brought into town...Yale at present is a seat of a miniature republic run on socialist lines....special IWW constables with their red and green badges parade in the streets.....fines are based on the state of his finances... unruly members are subject to lockup and could be sentenced to hard labour.... every man is given two meals a day and charged 25 cents and if he has nothing the meals are free".

The provincial police were left with little to do as the IWW strike committee took over policing the Fraser Canyon. The official police records even praised the strike committee for, "Maintaining good order and discipline in their ranks." Nevertheless, management was not interested in negotiating with the workers. The owners of the railroad contacted their friends in the provincial government and the press and launched an offense against the strike. Special constables were armed and sent up to the strike zone. The right to picket was denied; strikers camps were burned down; leaders of the strike were arrested; forcible deportations followed.

A government reign of terror swept through the canyon. Inflammatory editorials promoted a 'lynch law' atmosphere. The Vancouver Sun labelled the strikers as, "Armed anarchists...the most despicable scum of humanity....rankest kind of aliens, caring nothing for our country." The IWW continued to attempt to negotiate, but the strike drew to a conclusion mostly in the interest of the employers. The 1912 strike in the Fraser Canyon was the most dramatic of the IWW led strikes in British Columbia but, it was not to be the last.

Adapted from Plunderbund and Proletariat (History of the IWW) Jack Scott

Working People: A History of Labour in BC

Where the Fraser River Flows to be photocopied on the back side of Reading 6 the 1912 Canadian Northern Strike

In 1912 Joe Hill, a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, wrote “**Where the Fraser River Flows.**” The song was written in solidarity with striking railroad workers in British Columbia’s Fraser Canyon. Joe Hill is the most famous labour folk singer from the 1900–1914 period. His songs still inspire workers today. He is known as the man who never died, because he lives on in memory and song.

WHERE THE FRASER RIVER FLOWS

Chorus:

Where the Fraser River flows, each fellow
worker knows,

They have bullied and oppressed us, but still
our union grows.

And we're going to find a way, boys, for shorter
hours and higher pay, boys

And we're going to win the day, boys, where the
Fraser River flows

Verse 1

Fellow workers pay attention to what I'm going
to mention,

For it is the clear intention of the Workers of
the World.

And we should all be ready, true-hearted, brave
and steady,

To rally 'round the standard when the red flag
is unfurled.

Chorus:

Verse 2

For these gunny-sack contractors have all been
dirty actors,

And they're not our benefactors, each fellow
worker knows.

So we've got to stick together in fine or dirty
weather,

And we will show no white feather, where the
Fraser River flows.

Chorus:

Verse 3

Now the boss the law is stretching, bulls and
pimps he's fetching,

And they are a fine collection, as Jesus only
knows.

But why their mothers reared them, and why
the devil spared them,

Are questions we can't answer, where the
Fraser River flows.

Chorus:

[Utah Phillips sings Where the Fraser River Flows](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Rww4Fx5NeY)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Rww4Fx5NeY

Appendix 2: Where the Fraser River Flows

DATA RETRIEVAL SHEET IWW

Students will read their assigned article recording their opinion on the five most important or interesting facts/information, with special focus on what values they share, or do not share, with the person or event.

READING # _____.

Individual Opinion

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Group Consensus

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.