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**Review of *Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Laborers in the American West, 1905-1930* By
Greg Hall**

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Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Laborers in the American West, 1905-1930. By Greg Hall. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2002. x + 278 pp. Illustrations, photographs, epilogue, notes, index. \$34.95.

America's most vibrant symbol of militant unionism in the twentieth century remains the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the radical labor organization whose renown was literally larger than life. The union's strikes, work slow-downs, and suspected sabotage frightened employers, worried conservative labor groups, and eventually convinced the federal government to crush the loosely structured organization shortly after the United States entered the European war in 1917. Greg Hall centers his argument on the union's remarkable, if short-lived, resurgence following the end of the First World War. The Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (AWIU), the IWW's strongest affiliate, enjoyed an extraordinary revival in the early 1920s, especially among the migratory work-

ers who followed the grain harvests from Kansas north to the Dakotas and to eastern Washington's wheat-producing districts. The author correctly points out that labor historians have paid little attention to the union's postwar rebound among harvest hands in the West: "Contrary to what many historians have argued, particularly labor historians, the IWW was not in a state of wholesale decline during the 1920s."

Harvest Wobblies tells the remarkable story of migratory laborers, first in the Agricultural Workers Organization and later the AWIU, who traveled the rails from the Great Plains to California and the Pacific Northwest following the summer and fall vegetable, fruit, and wheat harvests. In seven uneven chapters Hall argues that agricultural workers comprised the greatest number of IWW members, especially in the Plains states where their appeal was greatest among younger itinerant laborers who felt the sting of exploitation at the hands of farmers, law enforcement authorities, and local business interests. It was among this class of mobile, sometimes homeless hoboes that a shared work-life culture developed based on common class experiences that "provided an identity and cohesion for its members."

Aside from some problematic copy-editing, this book's major weakness is the author's propensity to spin out endlessly the demise of the union after its brief revival in the early 1920s. Readers are repeatedly treated to "The Beginning of the End," "the Collapse of the AWIU," and an overly long final chapter, "The Road to Oblivion." The author would have been prudent to follow the advice given to the White Rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland*: "Begin at the beginning and go until you come to the end: then stop."

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