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Prologue

World War I defined the history of the twentieth century. Fighting broke out on July 29, 1914, and ended with an armistice on November 11, 1918. The war engulfed Europe and parts of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East and caused the Russian, Ottoman, German, and Austro-Hungarian Empires to collapse. At least 10 million soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen died, and twice that many were wounded, many severely. Front-line nurses and physicians perished, and millions of civilians were killed, injured, or displaced, but their numbers remain unknown. At least 50 million persons died from the influenza pandemic that occurred during and immediately after the war. The victors—primarily Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and the United States—reconfigured a significant portion of the world map. The Great War, as it was called, set the stage for the emergence of the United States as a world power, even though Congress did not declare war against Germany until April 6, 1917. In California, the war redefined the way people related to one another and to the government. Never before had so many Californians taken such a dynamic part in community, state, national, and international affairs. Although we usually think of World War II as the pivotal force in modern California, World War I laid the groundwork. Since no previous book has described the history of California during World War I, *California at War* adds to the record.

I became interested in this topic for two reasons. First, I wanted to understand the origins of the twenty-first-century’s security state. After the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and at Shanksville, Pennsylvania, the nation’s capital became a fortress city. Access to public buildings was forbidden or limited to authorized persons only. My teenage son was prohibited from photographing the statues gracing the interior of Union Station. We were no longer allowed to sit on the Capitol steps and watch the sunset or ride our bikes through the Capitol gardens. In addition to the proliferation of entrance-blocking barricades, surveillance cameras sprang up on street corners. An ever-increasing number of uniformed operatives with authority to arrest appeared on the streets in marked and unmarked
cars. The government established more “security” agencies. Once regarded as secret, the National Security Agency (NSA) surveillance programs became known to the public through a variety of sources by 2010.\(^2\) Gradually, the press and the public began to challenge federal regulations adopted since 2001.\(^3\) On a more local level, by 2009, Los Angeles had become the “most spied-on city in America.”\(^4\)

Distinguishing features of the modern state include the rise of security agencies and the sharing of information among all levels of government. World War I paved the way for the growth of government-sanctioned spying and the creation of a surveillance superstructure. These developments raise fundamental questions about the role of secrecy, privacy, and loyalty in a democracy. War, the most challenging of crises, tested the country’s commitment to due process. US troops died abroad to further the idealism of President Woodrow Wilson, while at home the government turned its back on sacred constitutional principles. Wilson created a propaganda agency, the Committee on Public Information, whose chief goals were to persuade men to enlist and fight, convince citizens to finance the war, and silence critics.\(^5\) By punishing nonconformity and coercing loyalty, the government engineered patriotism. Courts and legislatures gave way to the executive branch on questions of national security during the war, and in its aftermath, legislative and judicial decisions threatened civil liberties.

While living in California, the nation’s most populous and pathbreaking state, I found fertile, untapped ground. I was drawn to stories of World War I and the parallel rise of hyperpatriotic citizens’ associations alongside loyalty-conscious community, state, and national government agencies. Most Californians embraced wartime restrictions with patriotic zeal and did not foresee the retreat into suspicion, unwarranted surveillance, and incarceration of innocent civilians, all of which laid the foundation for the modern national security state.

Because President Wilson turned his words about safeguarding democracy into actual weapons of war in the hands of soldiers, I was simultaneously drawn to the stories of the brave men and women who served overseas. Those stories are the second reason I became interested in this topic. I was interested not only in the battlefield and nursing experiences of ordinary Californians but also in the way daily life changed for everyone on the home front—factory and farm workers, housewives and children, pacifists and politicians. I wanted to know how the war affected them. I wanted to know how an entire state—now the most
influential in the nation and with immediate global recognition—dealt with the demands of war. Hence, this book also investigates how Californians on the home front expanded their economy, promoted scientific research, funded the nation’s war machine, conserved food, enforced rationing, and supported war-related international charities. Even before the United States entered the war, California’s wartime economy flourished because its industrialized agriculture helped feed the Allied Powers. The war provided a tremendous boost to the faltering Hollywood film industry and increased the military presence in the state. Although far removed from European battlefields and Washington bureaucrats, California’s World War I experiences serve as a microcosm for the nation, albeit with characteristics peculiar to the Golden State.

*California at War* is divided into several parts. The introduction describes prewar California. Part I (chapters 1 and 2) illuminates the overseas wartime experiences of individual men and women. As their letters appeared in newspapers and were passed from neighbor to neighbor, they energized public sentiment and gave an intense sense of purpose to home-front endeavors. Part II (chapters 3–6) covers war work at home: military expansion, economic dynamics, volunteer efforts to support the war, and attempts to stem the influenza pandemic. Part III (chapters 7 and 8) focuses on the actions of private citizens’ associations and government agencies to regulate domestic behavior, even when such actions challenged constitutionally protected civil liberties. The epilogue analyzes the legacy of World War I for Californians and for all Americans.

During World War I, many questions arose: Why is the United States at war? Is the war just and necessary? Who will profit from the war, and will those profits generate greater inequality? Who is an enemy of the state? How do we protect vital constitutional rights in wartime? Those questions are just as important today as they were then.
Introduction

California on the Eve of War

Warning Signs: San Francisco, 1916

More than 50,000 people gathered in San Francisco on July 22, 1916, to participate in a Preparedness Day parade, part of a nationwide movement to support strengthening the US military. The Hearst-Pathé News Service filmed the event. The film shows US Army troops marching in formation, followed by politicians, judges, and representatives of the streetcar, telegraph, telephone, and newspaper unions. With an American flag in hand, philanthropist Phoebe Apperson Hearst, the widow of Senator George Hearst and mother of newspaper baron William Randolph Hearst, leads thirty-seven companies of women representing various civic and social groups. Standing beside her, socialite Claire Rodiester portrays the goddess of Liberty, complete with a long white gown, a multicolored train, and a brilliant crown adorning her head. Raising a torch, she begins to shepherd young children down the parade route. Mayor James “Sunny Jim” Rolph waves benevolently as marchers pass the reviewing stand. Suddenly, a bomb explodes.¹

The film captures some of the carnage and confusion. Police clumsily place a dead body and a wounded man into a van. Another man carries an injured, dazed child. Two mangled bodies are visible in the wreckage while detectives search the site. By the time the rubble was cleared, ten people had died and forty were wounded. Responding to the public outcry that blamed labor for the bombing, city officials quickly arrested two labor leaders, Thomas Mooney and Warren K. Billings.² The sham trial that falsely convicted them exposed political and judicial corruption. Two days after the bombing, the University of California at Berkeley barred antiwar and birth control advocate Emma Goldman from speaking on campus.³

Later, an unknown filmmaker added several minutes of antilabor propaganda and warnings to the Hearst-Pathé footage of the parade. Retitled San Francisco’s Future, the film starts with the sun rising over
the city and filling the sky with light. A warning appears: “WAKE UP SAN FRANCISCO! SHALL WE HAVE THIS. . . .” Then the scene changes to an animated image of “PROSPERITY,” a lovely woman who protects the city and drops bags of gold over it. The following frame reads: “OR SHALL IT BE THIS.” Dark clouds engulf the city. Words stretch across the screen: “ANARCHY SEDITION LAWLESSNESS.”

The next clip depicts the closed-door headquarters of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Nine fierce-looking men gather around a table; a bomb serves as the centerpiece. One man pounds his fist on the table. Then a bomb explodes at the Hall of Justice, destroying the building. The word “CHOOSE!” appears on the screen, with an image of Lady Justice on one side and an anarchist on the other. Printed words announce: “The warning signals sounded at [the] Preparedness Day Parade, July 22, 1916.” The film continues with scenes of the parade and the aftermath of the bombing. It concludes with another warning: “Citizens of San Francisco save our fair city from further disgrace.”

The parade, the bombing, and the amended film illuminate how the preparedness movement in California generated both civic unity and intense dissent. When Californians gathered to either promote or protest war preparations, the conflict overseas had been raging for nearly two years.

The Outbreak of War in Europe, 1914

Nationalist fervor in the Balkans, imperial ambitions and rivalries, entangling alliances, an arms race, and diplomatic and military blunders all led to World War I. After the June 28, 1914, assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, events escalated rapidly. On July 28 Austria-Hungary—assured of Germany’s cooperation—formally declared war against Serbia and bombarded its capital, Belgrade, the next day. On July 30 Russia—rife with internal discord and blaming Germany for the attack on Serbia—ordered full mobilization of its armed forces. Threatened by its neighbor’s mobilization, Germany declared war on Russia on August 1. By 1915, the Central Powers, consisting of Germany and its colonies, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire, were fighting the Entente (or Allied) Powers, consisting of Russia (until early 1918), France, Belgium, Great Britain, Italy, and their colonies. Japan entered the conflict on the side of the Allies, hoping to gain German-occupied
territory in China and thus advance its own imperial aims. A land, sea, and air war spread around the globe, engulfing regions in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia and even in the seas off South America.⁷

Along 500 miles of the western front from the North Sea to the French border with Switzerland, trench warfare left troops bogged down in the stench and muck of mud, rotting bodies, lice, rats, and human excrement. Technological advances in weaponry, including rapid-fire machine guns, longer-ranged bullets, heavy artillery, grenades, flamethrowers, tanks, airplanes, submarines, and poison gas, killed and injured a staggering number of combatants and innocent civilians. The atrocities inflicted on civilians were horrific. Women were raped; infants, children, and the elderly were massacred. The Ottomans committed genocide against the Armenians, although Turkey still disputes this. An unknown number of Jews in eastern Europe were killed, and others were forced to relocate. Factories, bridges, railroads, towns, villages, homes, farms, forests, fields, crops, and livestock were destroyed. In the German-occupied areas of France and Belgium, German troops confiscated bank deposits, entire factories, household goods, food, and livestock and shipped them back to Germany, along with able-bodied young men and women who were forced to work in labor camps.⁸ Although the death toll mounted, no single combat defeat signaled the end. Riven by old rivalries, nations hurled precious blood and treasure into the theaters of war.

Wilsonian Neutrality, August 1914–April 1917

In the United States, President Woodrow Wilson, mourning the death of his wife, sought to assume the mantle of peacemaker. He issued a formal proclamation of neutrality on August 19, 1914.⁹ Neutrality proved complicated, however, and Wilson’s views evolved over the course of the war.¹⁰ When World War I erupted, the United States was experiencing a severe recession. Unemployment rates were rising, and California was worried about its destitute citizens.¹¹ In the initial months of combat, belligerents liquidated their US holdings, causing some banks to close. The New York Stock Exchange shut down for four months. By August 1914, the dollar value of US exports had fallen from $204.1 million in January to $110.4 million. To avoid a financial panic, the federal government stepped in and increased the money supply. Although
Wilson initially objected, by January 15, 1915, the New York firm of J. P. Morgan and Company and the British government had negotiated the first in a series of financial agreements that eventually maneuvered the United States from a debtor to a creditor nation. In fact, the United States replaced Great Britain as the world’s financier. This significant shift in international finance placed the United States in a remarkable new position on the international stage, but it also jeopardized its position on neutrality. By June 1915, the US economy had rebounded, and full employment returned as farms and factories produced food and materiel to ship abroad.\textsuperscript{12} By the end of the year, the value of US exports reached $359.3 million, and the Dow Jones index for stock prices had risen from 54.72 in December 1914 to 99.15 in December 1915.\textsuperscript{13} As economic historian Robert Higgs points out, “Incongruously, the mad slaughter and destruction in Europe led to unprecedented prosperity in the United States during its period of neutrality.”\textsuperscript{14}

Wartime events challenged Wilsonian neutrality. In September 1914 Germany initiated submarine warfare to sink Britain’s fleet and halt merchant ships laden with supplies from reaching the Allies. In November Britain blockaded access to most German ports in an effort to starve the Germans.\textsuperscript{15} Retaliating, Germany declared unrestricted submarine warfare and regarded the waters surrounding Great Britain and Ireland, including the entire English Channel, as a war zone. Neutral ships were forewarned.\textsuperscript{16} For the next two years, Wilson negotiated with the Germans about the sinking of US ships. Tacitly acknowledging the connection between war and economic recovery, Wilson changed his mind and advocated military preparedness in his annual message to Congress at the end of 1915.\textsuperscript{17} At this point, however, little was done to prepare the military for war. As the fighting continued, the United States prospered by selling supplies to the belligerents. Indeed, during the four years of World War I, the United States experienced significant economic growth. In California, these changes were especially pronounced. Appreciating the extent of that transformation requires us to consider California on the eve of war.

\textbf{Diversity in Prewar California}

From 1900 to 1910, as the US population grew to 91.9 million, California’s population soared to 2,377,549, a growth of 60.1 percent. By
President Woodrow Wilson. Portrait by Louis Mark. (George Grantham Bain Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress)
1920, the Golden State had reached 3,462,861 residents, moving it from the twelfth to the eighth most populous state in a nation of 105.7 million inhabitants. California was also becoming an increasingly urban state. Los Angeles experienced a tremendous boom between 1900 and 1920, surpassing the population of San Francisco. In those two decades, the population of Los Angeles expanded by 292 percent to 576,673 persons, the largest growth percentage of any major metropolitan area in the country. Los Angeles County grew to encompass 936,455 persons. By 1920, Los Angeles ranked tenth and San Francisco twelfth in population among the nation’s cities. By that date, San Francisco had 506,676 residents.18

California’s complexion changed in other ways. While native-born whites constituted the majority of the population, California was becoming a global community, and people from many racial and ethnic groups called the state home. Between 1910 and 1920, the total number

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<th>Table I.1. California Population, 1910 and 1920</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oakland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasadena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stockton</td>
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</tbody>
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of African Americans grew from 21,645 to 38,763. Census takers listed 33,694 native Mexicans in 1910; by 1920, the number had increased to 88,771. During the same period, the number of Japanese residents rose from 38,214 to 51,191. When J. Vance Thompson, the work camp investigator (and sometime spy) for the California Commission of Immigration and Housing, toured the Central Valley in the late fall of 1915, he reckoned that the estimate of 60,000 Japanese residing in the state was too conservative. Expressing common fears and not differentiating between native-born and foreign-born residents, Thompson warned the commission’s director that because of their numbers and mobility, Japanese workers could organize and “form a block system” that might threaten “the security of the State.” “Together with the large Mexican population in the southern end,” warned Thompson, the Japanese constituted “a menace” that was “worthy of observance.”

Dangerous or not, leaders relied on the state’s ethnic labor force. California’s economic development in the extractive industries and transportation depended on a ready source of cheap, exploitable labor. The state’s complex labor system had evolved and adapted to changing demographic and economic conditions since the Gold Rush (1848–1860), when white newcomers started to exploit the state’s resources and to discriminate against non-Anglo landowners and workers. They nearly exterminated the California Indians, who had lived on the land in diverse families and clans for more than 10,000 years. They also deprived Californios (Spanish-Mexican land grantees, their families, and

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Table 1.2. Foreign-Born Population of California, 1900–1920

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total foreign-born</td>
<td>367,240</td>
<td>586,432</td>
<td>757,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Europe*</td>
<td>268,865</td>
<td>424,303</td>
<td>505,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Asia</td>
<td>51,024</td>
<td>72,413</td>
<td>81,707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>10,264</td>
<td>38,214</td>
<td>51,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>40,262</td>
<td>27,764</td>
<td>10,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From North and South America</td>
<td>39,987</td>
<td>81,482</td>
<td>154,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>29,818</td>
<td>44,677</td>
<td>59,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>8,086</td>
<td>33,694</td>
<td>88,771</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Northwestern, central, eastern, and southern Europe.
other Mexican residents) of their lands and rights. Although California had been admitted to the Union as a free state in 1850, two years later its legislature passed a fugitive slave law that allowed slave owners who had arrived in California with their slaves prior to statehood to transport them back to the South. The law remained in effect until 1855, depriving previously free blacks of their rights.

By the 1870s, Sinophobia (and the accompanying violence) had become an institutionalized feature of California politics, not only in San Francisco and Los Angeles but also in small towns such as Chico in the northern Sacramento Valley. Labor unions fought to protect the jobs of the white working class. In 1877 a short-lived anti-Chinese Working-men’s Party of California was formed, and Californians pressed Congress to pass four exclusion acts between 1882 and 1904 to prohibit Chinese workers for the next four decades.

Prejudice in California took a number of forms in the years leading up to World War I. By the turn of the twentieth century, Japanese workers had replaced the Chinese, and white hostility toward their modest numbers intensified. This did not prevent Irving Murray Scott, owner of the prosperous San Francisco Union Iron Works shipyard, from signing a contract to build a 4,760-ton warship for Japan’s navy in 1896.

Some Californians even worried about an invasion from Japan in the first decade of the new century, and San Francisco’s city engineer Marsden Manson wrote about threats to Western civilization from what was then referred to as the “yellow peril.”

In 1905 President Theodore Roosevelt helped resolve a conflict over a decision by the San Francisco School Board. The board had voted to remove ninety-three Japanese children from public schools and place them in the separate “Oriental School” attended by Chinese students. When this decision was announced, the Japanese government objected. In 1907 Roosevelt worked out a “Gentlemen’s Agreement” whereby Japanese children could attend white schools, but further immigration would be restricted to nonlaborers and wives of first-generation Japanese immigrants, the Issei. Roosevelt also issued an executive order prohibiting Japanese laborers from entering the United States from Mexico, Canada, or Hawaii. In 1913 the California legislature passed the Alien Land Act, prohibiting both Chinese and Japanese from acquiring land. Some Japanese farmers nonetheless managed to survive, as evidenced by the Walnut Grove Japanese community near Sacramento, until the 1920s.
Exclusionary immigration policies were also promoted by Californian Anthony Caminetti, who served as US commissioner of immigration from 1913 to 1921. On February 5, 1917, Congress echoed California’s anti-Chinese sentiment and passed a pathbreaking immigration law, the Asiatic Barred Zone Act, which restricted entry from any country not owned by the United States adjacent to the continent of Asia along certain longitudes and latitudes. Congress exempted the Japanese and relaxed restrictions imposed by Roosevelt’s “Gentlemen’s Agreement” for two reasons: California needed Japanese agricultural workers, and during the war, Japan was a military ally. As a result of the war, however, the new law more clearly defined and prohibited “anarchists, or persons who believe in or advocate the overthrow by force or violence of the Government of the United States.” A significant change from earlier law was the establishment of the principle of guilt by association. The new law excluded from entry “persons who are members of or affiliated with any organization entertaining or teaching disbelief in or opposition to organized government,” and it stipulated that any alien who entered the country and advocated anarchist views could be deported within five years of entry. Simultaneously, the California legislature struggled with the notion of “guilt by association” as it worked to draft a criminal syndicalism bill during the war years.

Progressive Politics

By the turn of the twentieth century, some of California’s reform-minded urbanites, eager to curb corruption in local politics and to enact social reforms, organized the Lincoln-Roosevelt League. By 1908, these maverick Republicans had elected Progressive politicians who passed a direct primary law and paved the way in 1910 for the election of Hiram W. Johnson as governor. Johnson was a major force for the Progressive Party, which sought to realign the existing political power structure in its favor by reforming the electoral system. The Progressives’ agenda also included the initiative process, the referendum, and the recall of public officials. California women, who had built a strong movement of their own, played a significant role in Johnson’s success, and he, in turn, supported the women’s legislative agenda. Women served on appointed commissions at the state and federal levels and, in 1911, won the right to vote in state and national elections.
Johnson—a robust, round-faced man with a downturned mouth, glasses, and hair parted in the middle—possessed a fighter’s instinct and a venomous vocabulary that he was not afraid to use. Remarkably adept, this Sacramento native initiated pragmatic, centralized political, economic, and social programs that Progressives believed would cement their power base and correct the problems generated by a burgeoning industrial society. The governor’s response to successive waves of worker discontent originated not only from his Progressive goals but also from his concerns about the disruptive activities of the Industrial Workers of the World and worries about the potential expansion of immigration when the Panama Canal opened in 1914. To assimilate immigrants into mainstream American society and improve working conditions for the state’s laborers, Johnson created a permanent Commission of
Immigration and Housing in 1913 and named Simon J. Lubin to head it. Lubin, a Harvard graduate, Sacramento businessman, civic leader, and earnest reformer who blended idealism with practicality, used his own money to underwrite efforts at social engineering and pay spies to infiltrate union meetings. His measures aimed to improve housing and sanitation conditions in cities, towns, farms, and labor camps. Working with statewide leaders, Lubin studied workers’ needs, encouraged corrective legislation, and initiated immigrant education and Americanization programs.

Labor and Its Opponents

The Progressives and the moderate California labor movement (both marked by dissension) had a tenuous relationship, partly because of Johnson’s remedial, bureaucratic approach to politics and worker issues. By cleverly appointing union men to various boards and sponsoring legislation designed to enhance worker safety and well-being, Johnson partially co-opted labor’s bid for power. The California Federation of Labor and the State Building Trades Council nonetheless called attention to their agendas and urged the passage of legislation that was even more favorable to labor. In San Francisco, despite the opposition of businessmen, the labor movement sustained a number of relatively successful trade and transportation unions that continued to exploit anti-Asian sentiment to generate membership.

When the bomb exploded during the San Francisco Preparedness Day parade, labor became the designated scapegoat. The incident, the trial, and the protracted court appeals heightened the animosity between labor and business leaders. The president of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, making spirited references to the city’s Gold Rush-era Vigilance Committees, marshaled businessmen to rid the city of radical elements and pressed for an open-shop policy, thereby curtailing even peaceful protest. Voters enacted an antipicketing ordinance. Some historians credit the antiunion campaign with the gradual decline of San Francisco’s most powerful unions after World War I.

In Los Angeles, the aggressive Merchants and Manufacturers Association eagerly promoted industrialization. It defied unions by waging open-shop and strikebreaking campaigns. According to historian Robert M. Fogelson, trade unions not only “faced the determined opposition”
of manufacturers, realtors, and merchants but also “suffered from the influx of rural Americans who created a surplus of skilled labor and in many cases considered organized labor subversive.”\textsuperscript{39} In 1910 that city also enacted an antipicketing ordinance. A divisive strike supported by the American Federation of Labor, the Labor Council, and socialists culminated in the bombing of the offices of the conservative \textit{Los Angeles Times}. The blast, set by two union men, killed twenty newspaper employees. In 1911 the city’s progressive lawmakers supported a measure that would have created a review board empowered to delay strikes and lockouts, but the state legislature defeated it. The legislature likewise voted down a union-supported anti-injunction bill that would have improved unions’ ability to conduct collective bargaining and, simultaneously, would have invalidated the Los Angeles antipicketing ordinance. The California Federation of Labor tried unsuccessfully from 1911 to 1919 to get an anti-injunction bill passed to curb the power of California courts, which had ruled that even peaceful picketing could be enjoined.\textsuperscript{40}

Adding another layer of confusion to the troubled labor situation was the fiery class-conscious and anticapitalist rhetoric and syndicalist philosophy of the IWW, which was seen as a threat not only by business representatives but also by other union leaders. Patrick Henry McCarthy, the autocratic president of the Building Trades Council who sported a flamboyant handlebar mustache and colorful bow ties, argued that the IWW “should be driven out of America, for there is no place here for them.” Although the IWW scored some recruitment success among migrant workers, its modest California membership provoked reactions far out of proportion to its numbers or deeds.\textsuperscript{41}

In the end, the active labor councils and labor-backed politicians in both San Francisco and Los Angeles lost influence as the Progressive agenda moved forward and as Californians and the national government reacted to labor-related violence and radicalism after the country entered the war.\textsuperscript{42}

\textbf{Divided Opinions about the War}

In 1915 a sensational spy case riveted Californians and brought the war closer to home. The federal government arrested the German consul general at San Francisco, Franz von Bopp; his military attaché,
Lieutenant Wilhelm von Brincken; vice-consul Eckhard von Schack; and several other consular employees. The men were accused of planning to blow up ships, bridges, trains, and munitions plants in the United States and Canada. One of the plants on their list was the Hercules Powder Company in Pinole in Contra Costa County, across the bay from San Francisco. Bopp had also recruited Lieutenant Lothar Witzke, the only German spy who was condemned to death in the United States during the war. The charges against the Germans included fomenting revolution among anti-British communities in California that were eager to oust the British from Ireland and India. The spies were tried, convicted of conspiring to violate the nation’s neutrality law, fined, and sentenced to prison. Despite these serious offenses, both the *Los Angeles Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* published editorials deprecating war and urging the United States to stay out of the conflict.

Hollywood feature films about the war simultaneously entertained and influenced audiences. At the outbreak of the war, the US motion picture censor board asked producers to precede footage of war scenes with a caption requesting audiences to remain quiet and not to demonstrate any partisanship, indirectly suggesting a more active alternative. Subsequently, a riot broke out in a San Francisco theater when moviegoers thought a film they were watching showed actual fighting between the French and Germans. Other films added to the unease. The 1916 film *The Flying Torpedo* played on fears of a Japanese invasion of the West Coast. In that movie, a band of international ruffians tries and fails to find a wireless aerial torpedo, which saves the West Coast from invasion. Another film, *The Secret of the Submarine*, portrays Russian and Japanese spies, cohorts of a “Black Council,” attempting to steal plans for a unique submarine the US government needs to protect its coast. In the end, the spies are thwarted. *Yankee Pluck* tells the story of a Japanese diplomat who steals plans for an antisubmarine mechanism; he is shot by the investor’s girlfriend, who retrieves the plans.

Actor and director William deMille, older brother of director Cecil B. DeMille (the brothers styled their names differently), explained in his autobiography that the State Department asked the film industry to “preserve our neutrality.” According to deMille, “American thought was strongly in sympathy with the Allies, but the State Department was urgently advising the industry to avoid making pictures which might be construed as unfriendly to governments with which we were technically at peace.” When Thomas Ince’s 1916 antiwar film *Civilization*
was released, deMille wrote: “Tom Ince frightened the country almost to death.” The film “showed how a foreign country, very similar to Germany, had perfected her secret organization over here, and at the proper moment, mobilized millions of pseudo-Americans, uniformed and armed, who held the land as a dominion of the Central European Power.” As deMille noted, viewers “went for this film with avidity; went
and shuddered and began casting suspicious glances at life-long friends who were unfortunate enough to have European connections.”

Prominent Californians were divided in their response to the preparedness movement and the notion of US entry into the war. Flamboyant and hardworking San Francisco congressman Julius Kahn proposed national defense legislation and received backing from most of the city’s businessmen. Kahn, a frequent critic of Wilson’s policies, strongly advocated preparedness. In 1913 he had helped establish the National Defense League, an organization dedicated to improving the nation’s military capabilities. As a key member of the House Military Affairs Committee, Kahn successfully lobbied Congress to pass the 1916 National Defense Act and Naval Appropriations Act, which authorized an expansion of the regular army and the National Guard, stricter federal requirements for guardsmen, and the construction of more battleships and destroyers. The preparedness movement instilled in many a new mentality, a readiness to accept the idea that the United States could become a combatant.

In San Francisco, women joined the preparedness movement and created a training program. The first national women’s group to promote preparedness, the Woman’s Section of the Navy League (WSNL), was organized in 1915 as an outgrowth of General Leonard Wood’s military preparedness camps for civilian men in Plattsburgh, New York. In California, Frona Wait (Mrs. Frederick) Colburn, a San Francisco Examiner journalist and author who became associate editor of the Overland Monthly, functioned as president, or “regent,” of the San Francisco chapter of the WSNL, with support from an executive board comprising accomplished Bay Area women. During the summer of 1916, a month-long training camp took place at the San Francisco Presidio, where students received instruction in traditional domestic endeavors such as first aid, food conservation, sewing, and knitting. They were required to comply with military discipline and studied cipher transcription, code work, map reading, and plain and wireless telegraphy. A. B. C. Dorhmann, the owner of a local department store called the Emporium, sent his female clerks to the camp and paid their fees, expenses, and salaries.

Other prominent Californians held opposing views about the war. The president of the University of California, Benjamin Ide Wheeler, a classics scholar who had earned his PhD in Heidelberg, initially opposed US entry into the war, but his loyalty was questioned and his resignation
called for because of his friendship with Germany’s Kaiser Wilhelm II. Stanford University’s former president and chancellor, David Starr Jordan, an internationally recognized leader of the peace movement, became director of the International Peace Foundation in 1910. He also served as an active member of the California branch of the People’s Council of America for Democracy and Peace. While speaking at a peace rally on April 1, 1917, angry crowds taunted him.

Two active California suffragists, Alice (Mrs. Dean) Park of Palo Alto and Rose Morgan French of San Francisco, campaigned for peace. As it became clear that the belligerents were losing a generation of men to war, peace advocates were reminded of the carnage of the American Civil War and the atrocities the US military had committed in the Philippines. Opposition to involvement in the European conflict mounted among California pacifists. French served as a member of the US delegation to the International Conference of Women for a Permanent Peace at The Hague in 1915, and she represented the National Federal Suffrage Association and the California Suffrage Association. While in Europe for the peace congress, French and other delegates visited the Belgian refugee camps in Holland, but little else is known of her.

More is known about Alice Park, a slender woman with prodigious energy. She served as a delegate to the International Woman’s Suffrage Alliance in Budapest in 1913 and as a delegate to the International Peace Congress at The Hague. In 1915 she joined the Henry Ford Peace Expedition. Appealing for national and world peace, Park sent copies of the “California Peace Memorial” to presidents of state women’s organizations. That same year, she formed a Palo Alto branch of the Woman’s Peace Party; its members included poet and author Ellen Coit (Mrs. Orrin L.) Elliott, the wife of Stanford University’s registrar; Jessie Knight (Mrs. David Starr) Jordan; and Evelyn Wight Allan, the dean of women at Stanford. Once the United States entered the conflict, Park continued to struggle for world peace and to protest the harsh treatment of conscientious objectors and members of the IWW.

Non-Californians also attempted to influence state politics. In March 1917 the East Coast–based Emergency Peace Federation placed advertisements in newspapers in the West urging citizens to oppose US entry into the war, warning: “You in the West do not realize how we are being stampeded into war—a war that will mean a butchery of the flower of our youth.” The message proclaimed: “The Voice of the West can prevent war. You must act at once.” Some Californians acted quickly. They
attacked pacifists in the press and promoted US participation in the war. Well-known citizens William Bowers Bourn II, owner of the Empire Mine, and Charles Mills Gayley, a professor at the University of California, formed the American League of California to provide financial and manpower support to the Allies. Their group’s motto was “Duty to God and Country.” Bourn and Gayley used the American League to send messages to the New York Times, President Wilson, and the California congressional delegation, proclaiming: “REJECT PACIFISM IN CALIFORNIA.” The league offered “to lend unstinted help to the cause of civilization and democracy now in imminent danger.”

Bourn, a prominent Bay Area businessman, Stanford University trustee, and key promoter of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, wrote to a friend on March 16, 1917: “The condition of this county is indeed pitiable. At heart it is so sound, but utterly without leadership. I am counting on your co-operation in a league that is being formed to get behind the President and shove him. I do not think he can be led.” Bourn and San Francisco artist and landscape designer Bruce Porter also founded the Friends of France. Initially set up as a committee to celebrate “France and Belgium Day” during the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, it evolved into a permanent organization that raised a considerable sum of money for the American Ambulance Field Service (later called the American Field Service), a group of college students and graduates who volunteered for ambulance duty with the French army in France and the Balkans. Scores of California benefactors, including J. Henry Meyer, a San Francisco banker who gave $1,600 ($31,000 in 2017 dollars), enabled the Friends of France to purchase and equip four ambulances manned by two units from Stanford University and another two units from the University of California. Californians later donated money for sixty additional ambulances.

The California Council of Defense

By February 1917, US entry into the war seemed imminent. More than 5 million persons had died since the start of the war, and the death toll was mounting. Having previously suspended its unrestricted warfare policy in 1916, on February 1, 1917, Germany announced its resumption in an effort to block Britain’s food supply, and it proceeded to sink Allied and US ships. The United States broke off diplomatic relations
with Germany two days later. Germany’s policy of unrestricted submarine warfare threatened US economic expansion, which relied, in part, on increased trade with the Allies, especially after the British and French naval blockades prevented access to the Central Powers and even neutral powers such as Sweden. As economic historian Benjamin O. Fordham concludes in his analysis of the declining value of US exports during the first three months of Germany’s renewed campaign: “Wilson genuinely wanted to avoid American intervention, but the need to protect American trade prompted him to take risks that led ultimately to that outcome.”

In addition, the British informed Wilson of the existence of the Zimmermann telegram; he released its decoded text to the American press on March 1. Sent by Germany’s foreign minister, Arthur Zimmermann, to the Mexican government, the telegram contained Germany’s offer to help Mexico “re-conquer” the territory it had lost to the United States in 1848 if Mexico would invade its northern neighbor. Mexican officials studied the proposal and rejected it. Germany also encouraged Japan to support its war goals. Many Americans reacted with hostility toward Germany. The Los Angeles Tribune wrote with unrealistic exuberance that “in the presence of the situation we now confront, all differences are extinguished, all racial prejudices obliterated, and the men and women of America unitedly support the President in the pride and strength of their common devotion to their country.” The Milwaukee Journal observed: “In California [there] are very many Americans of German blood. But, against California, the German Government hoped to launch all the force of Japan, a people of another race which the German Kaiser had declared a peril to civilization.”

A Los Angeles Times editorial on March 1 ordered readers to “Get Together and Get Ready!” Claiming that “the people of no American city have shown more patriotic zeal for military preparedness than the citizens of Los Angeles,” the editor called for the formation of a “central Los Angeles war board” to coordinate the movements of patriotic societies and work with the US Army. Warning that “the sky is full of portents,” the editor concluded: “AND THE GREATEST DANGER IS FROM TREASON AND SEDITION WITHIN OUR OWN GATES!”

The president asked Congress to arm American merchant ships. Although the legislation authorizing the action passed the House of Representatives on March 1, several senators, including Californian John Downey Works, held up the bill. Angry at the senators, Wilson bypassed
congressional approval and announced on March 12, 1917, an executive order to place guns and gun crews on merchant ships sailing in the waters around Great Britain, France, Italy, and the eastern Mediterranean—the areas included in Germany’s unrestricted submarine warfare policy. Simultaneously, the advisory committees of the Council of National Defense, supervised by Secretary of War Newton Baker, began mobilizing American resources and industry for defense purposes. Complicating matters in Europe, the first phase of the Russian
Revolution occurred in March 1917. Tsar Nicholas II abdicated, and a provisional government was established. Californians thus started to worry about the threat of Bolshevism.

The threat of war rearranged political fortunes around the state. Hiram Johnson, reelected governor in 1914, decided two years later to campaign for a seat in the US Senate. In 1916, running on both the Progressive and Republican tickets, he won. William D. Stephens, a conservative Los Angeles businessman, former Chamber of Commerce president, and undistinguished three-term US congressman, replaced him as governor. Worried about his Progressive Party legacy, Johnson was reluctant to relinquish control and leave California for Washington. He made it clear he did not trust Stephens, a native of Ohio. But Stephens, a practical politician, needed to consolidate his power base.

The California legislature began preparing for war. As President Wilson’s cabinet urged him to consider a declaration of war against Germany, state leaders enacted a special war emergency bill on March 29, 1917. It authorized the creation of a state Council of Defense “for the immediate preservation of the public peace and safety.” With Governor Stephens acting as chairman, the council was expected to investigate the effects of war on the civil and economic lives of the people of California and recommend to the governor measures to provide for the public security, protect the public health, develop the economic resources of the state, and encourage military training. The legislature also charged the Council of Defense with protecting “routes of communication,” assisting those “upon whom the hardships” of war fell “most heavily,” and eliminating “waste and extravagance” in public spending. In one broad sentence, the legislators granted the governor and the appointed council members the power “to consider measures to be taken to meet the exigencies of all situations occasioned by war.”

Governor Stephens made full use of these new powers. He initially appointed twenty-nine prominent Progressive and Republican men and three women to the Council of Defense; they were reimbursed for expenses but received no salary for their services. A. H. Naftzger, a Los Angeles businessman and acquaintance of the governor, held the paid position of vice-chairman. The council brought together educators from the University of California and Stanford University, major growers, bankers, utility and transportation company executives, labor leaders, publishers, oil producers, attorneys, military officers, and state officials. The three female members were Ethel Moore, an Oakland social
worker and educator; Josefa (Mrs. Shelley) Tolhurst, former president of the influential Los Angeles Friday Morning Club; and Bertha (Mrs. Herbert A.) Cable, chair of the Women’s Committee of the Council of Defense and president of the California Federation of Women’s Clubs. Fifty-eight county Councils of Defense comprising local judges, law enforcement officers, and often the county farm adviser implemented directives from state headquarters. The Council of Defense insinuated itself into all aspects of daily life, giving Governor Stephens a statewide platform and simultaneously augmenting the authority of the state.73

On April 2, 1917, Wilson addressed a joint session of Congress and asked for a declaration of war against Germany. Eager to protect and expand American financial investments and manufacturing interests, the president argued his case by noting that from the “very outset of the present war,” Germany “has filled our unsuspecting communities and even our offices of government with spies and set criminal intrigues everywhere afoot against our national unity of counsel, our peace within and without, our industries and our commerce.” He called Germany’s submarine warfare a “war against mankind” and declared his idealistic belief in the United States’ role of safeguarding and extending democracy worldwide.74 On April 6, 1917, Congress declared “a state of war exists” with Germany, and the California Council of Defense started its work.75

Outside San Francisco and Los Angeles, however, the war seemed far off to most Californians. For instance, according to Edith Daley’s 1919 history of Santa Clara County, citizens in San Jose “were in a state of apathy to the imminence of war.” Some of them rejected the idea of the Council of Defense and thought it was “quite unnecessary.” Then, according to Daley, “the war grew closer.” The army set up a camp at Sixth and Santa Clara Streets, where two companies and an attachment awaited orders. Daley wrote: “It began to disturb mothers and sisters, sweethearts and wives. Women didn’t want war—they protested. They voiced that protest by a long, long petition against war, a petition forwarded to Washington. They were not disloyal—they just didn’t want WAR! It is a way women have to want to keep their loved ones safe at home.”76

In many ways, California served as a microcosm of the nation’s responses to the war, but the state also possessed several features that made the trajectory of its involvement unique. Since the mid-nineteenth century, California’s population had grown phenomenally fast, especially in its cities. The ethnic mix in California was far more diverse than in most other parts of the country and included Native Americans as well
as immigrants (or their descendants) from Latin America, Asia, and western Europe. Labor activism and violence had a tradition of prompting extreme responses. Progressive reforms and the state apparatus put in place by Governor Hiram Johnson provided models for government interventions during the war emergency. Finally, California women had played an active role in humanitarian programs since the Gold Rush; during the Progressive Era, they not only obtained the right to vote but also served on powerful commissions. All these features made California’s participation in the Great War unique.