

## Letter from F. D. Becker to Gov. S.V. Stewart, June 27, 1917

*Kalispell, Montana*

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Gov. S.V. Stewart  
Helena, Montana

My Dear Sir:

Your valued communication of the 25th received, and you have relieved my mind entirely, for I was a little disturbed when it was reported to me . . . that the . . . prosecuting attorneys of Flathead and Lincoln Counties . . . were starting an investigation to ascertain who had made unreliable reports to you in regard to conditions in this section. . . . Everything that was reported was the absolute truth. . . . The business men in general here were more or less alarmed over conditions and felt that an emergency existed and were very anxious to do their duty. . . . They seemed to feel that actual crimes had to be committed before any arrests could be made. . . . It seemed that there was only one alternative, this being the troops, and although I have no knowledge whatever of how the troops were ordered to our section, I think I can voice the sentiments of the vast majority when I say the troops have saved the situation. . . .

I believe I told you that possibly thirty I.W.W.'s, a great many of them being agitators, were in Kalispell, and had opened up headquarters. However, day before yesterday our Sheriff and Chief of Police felt that these headquarters should be either curbed or removed and [had] . . . five or six leaders . . . arrested for some offense, the headquarters closed up, and the "element" disbanded, and we are indeed very grateful to Sheriff Metclaf for taking this action. . . .

The I.W.W.'s methods of destruction are various. . . . In one logging camp they had sawed about 1,500,000 feet of logs four inches short of the marks. . . . Some are reported as having mislabeled cans and cases in a cannery, crippling horses in the feed stables, dropping sour milk into fresh in a condensory, dropping acid on goods in clothing stores. A favorite stunt is to hit a steel rail with a heavy ax; another is to break shovel handles as fast as they get them, to lose or hide tools, to saw trees so that they will break, polluting wells by throwing in old boards, etc. I heard that one I.W.W. was caught with a tin box full of cockroaches, after he had let a lot more loose in a cook house and dining room. Another was found to have placed a lousy shirt in each bunk.

On the farm they tell of tricks done during harvest such as disabling threshers, throwing a piece of iron in the engine, slashing the ends of bales of new grain sacks, and even putting matches in bundles of wheat.

The average lumber-jack is a first class man, honest, and square, and ready to do the right thing, [and] if he joins the I.W.W. he does it only because he thinks it will help him to better conditions. . . .

*Yours Truly,*  
*F. D. Becker, Secretary*  
*Montana Lumber*  
*Manufacturer's Assoc.*

Source: *Montana Council of Defense Records, 1916–1921. Record Series 19* [box 2 folder 15]. Montana Historical Society Research Center. Archives. Excerpted in *Not In Precious Metals Alone: A Manuscript History of Montana* (Helena, 1976): 251.