

The Sentry

words & music by Jim Smith

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The most notorious event of the IWW Movement was labeled the Centralia Massacre, and occurred in 1919. In Lewis County, the timber barons were particularly strong, and succeeded in whipping up an atmosphere of hatred and suspicion of the Wobblies. A raid on the Wobbly Hall was planned for Armistice Day, November 11. Members of the American Legion paraded in front of the Wobbly Hall, then broke ranks and charged the door. Wobblies inside the hall began firing on the Legionnaires, three of whom were killed. As one Wobbly, Wesley Everest, fled, he turned and shot a pursuing Legionnaire. Everest was captured, savagely beaten, and later lynched by the mob. Despite massive evidence, none of those participating in the lynching were ever brought to trial. However, eight of the Wobblies were given maximum sentences allowed, 25 to 40 years, in a "trial" held in Montesano for the murder of the Legionnaires.

In Centralia, a bronze statue stands in a city park, in memory of the Legionnaires who died. The "Massacre" is never mentioned among older people, and the events of 1919 still cast a shadow over the town.

The following song was written in recent years by a Centralia resident, Jim Smith, in memory of that event.

The musical score is written on four staves in 4/4 time. The melody is in the treble clef, and the lyrics are written below the notes. Chord symbols (Dm and C) are placed above the notes. The lyrics are: "In a lum-ber town in Wash-ing-ton, once called Center-ville, the Le-gion-aires were march-ing, of war they'd had their fill. Then the dead-ly shots rang out, and several men were killed."



The cause of all this turmoil, made news throughout the land.
The Legionnaires had stormed the hall, of the hated Wobbly band.
The rebel group was waiting, loaded guns in hand.
Now a lonely sentry guards their sleeping. (repeat)

Angry local citizens soon ran the Wobblies down.
Their leader Wesley Everest was lynched and then cut down.
His bullet riddled body 'neath Hangman's Bridge was found.
Now a lonely sentry guards their sleeping. (repeat)

The rebel group was put on trial and swiftly put away.
Twenty-five to forty years in prison they would pay.
While those who lynched Wes Everest would never serve a day.
Now a lonely sentry guards their sleeping. (repeat)

Some folks say the Wobblies got justice for their crime.
Others say that they were merely victims of the times.
Opposing local business men had put them out of line.
Now a lonely sentry guards their sleeping. (repeat)

Today the Centralia Massacre is of the distant past.
The fact that twelve young lives were ruined might be forgot at last.
If not for the sentry who continues at his task.
Silently the sentry guards their sleeping.
Still a lonely sentry guards their sleeping.
Now a lonely sentry guards their sleeping.
Now a lonely sentry guards their sleeping.

