

Among the several volunteer organizations that appropriated to themselves the role of guardians of the nation's security, undoubtedly the most insidious was the American Protective League. It was designated as a citizens' auxiliary of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with 250,000 members nationally by the end of the war. It was, in the words of one historian, a "quasi-vigilante" organization, "a rambunctious, unruly posse comitatus on an unprecedented national scale," whose members spied on everybody, and "bugged, burglarized, slandered, and illegally arrested other Americans." The existence of "a very lively bunch" of 10 members of the League in Washburn was revealed in January 1919 by an article in the Times. "During the war," the Times reported approvingly, "many persons were kept under surveillance and their every move was noted and some who were purchasers of Liberty Bonds, savings stamps, etc. were known to be wrong at heart although they had deceived others. Some 'pros' were even watched by those they confided in without knowing that they were in the presence of a League man. . . . They worked silently and achieved much"

The super-patriots left no stone unturned in their crusade to root out

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what they considered to be evidence of disloyalty. In August 1917 they were able to have German language instruction in the Washburn public schools discontinued. In July 1918 at a "rousing patriotic meeting," people in a small settlement in the Town of Eileen, known as the German settlement, changed its name to Woodland. The Times remarked that "This is the spirit which we like to see. Here's hats off to Woodland settlement." Not to be outdone, in October 1918 the Council of Defense demanded that the German Lutheran Church cease instructing children in the German language and conducting services in German. After an appeal by the pastor to the governor, the church was allowed to continue to use German in its services.

As the size of the American Expeditionary Force in France increased and the casualty count rose, the selective service system was called upon to provide more men. The lower age limit went from 21 to 18, while the upper limit was expanded from

31 to 34 and men who married after the selective service law was approved lost their exemption. Large-scale dragnets were carried out in October 1917 and July 1918 to catch those suspected of not registering or of failing to report for induction as ordered. The Times reported in July 1918, that "Like a bolt of lightning from a clear sky and with rapidity that was a surprise to the 'natives' a dragnet was spread over the city and the plant of the DuPont Powder company . . . for 'slackers' and draft evaders, the equal of which had perhaps not been witnessed in any part of the country." The city was in effect occupied with volunteers, some of them armed, patrolling the streets, the Times reporting that "it was impossible for anyone to leave the city without going through an underground passage. . . . There was not a house, picture show, boarding house, hotel, restaurant, pool hall, store, or any other place that was not canvassed." At the DuPont plant the guards, assisted by other employees, searched the plant and the adjacent barracks for "slackers." In all, several hundred men were rounded up; however, the majority had registered, but did not have their registration cards with them or were not eligible for the draft because of their ages. Despite the meager

results, the Times characterized the drive as "a good thing" because "It brought into the net a number who are suspected of draft dodging while it taught others that it was necessary to carry their classification cards." To complement such "dragnets," the government offered an award of \$50 "for the delivery at the nearest army camp or post of a deserter," providing a new opportunity for the super-patriots as bounty hunters.

Contingents of Bayfield County men departed for training camps with increasing frequency during the spring and summer of 1918. Departing ceremonies were confined to patriotic rallies at the courthouse, with a parade escorting the selectees from there to the depot, where much informal speechifying and many tearful goodbyes took place. Reporting the departure of a contingent in early May 1918, the Times described them "as a fine lot of boys as have left to join the colors, and all were willingly offering their services to their government." "The scene at the depot," the Times continued, "was a very touching one. The stronger men were there to offer cheers for the boys while mothers and sweethearts and relatives, who are always touched more deeply by scenes of this kind, silently wept as they said goodbye."