EDITORIAL NOTE: Walter Merriam Pratt, who contributes this article on the strike situation in Lawrence is a First Lieutenant of the Eighth Regiment and Battalion Adjutant on Colonel Sweetser's staff. He went to Lawrence the day the trouble broke out and remained on duty until relieved at the end of twenty-six days. Mr. Pratt's new book, "Tin Soldiers?" which deals with the militia, from various standpoints, is in the hands of the printer at the present time and will be out the last of March.

LAWRENCE in Massachusetts has been the scene of a small sized Civil War the past two months. Insignificant as it is, this is really what the great textile strike amounts to. And many students of social and civic conditions fear that it is the beginning of a wage war, which will spread throughout the country. The conditions which exist in this New England city today are largely the result of our emigration laws. For years the off-scourings of Southern Europe have been pouring into the city, and working for wages which Americans could not compete with. They will not be assimilated, have no sympathy with our institutions, skimp, scrape, starve themselves to save a little pile of money and then hurry back from whence they came. Their presence here is often due to the avarice of their employers, who are bound to sooner or later reap what they sow. And it was generally taken for granted that the mill operatives were a much trodden, badly treated and under paid lot of people. This is not a fact. Instead of receiving five dollars a week a has been stated, the average wage, not including the higher officials, is between nine and ten dollars and it is largely a man's own fault if he receives only the average wage. Any intelligent person may become a skilled weaver and receive twenty to twenty-five dollars. The conditions under which the operators work are pleasant and everything possible is done to protect their health and bodies. Most of the mills are new and of modern construction and no expense has been spared to make the ventilation, light and sanitary condition the best. Some of the mills have escalators to the top floor and restaurants where an ample dinner may be purchased for ten cents, while most of the mills have shower baths. The American Woollen Company has built some two hundred houses, each seven rooms and bath, which rent for eighteen dollars per month. The un-Americanized foreign element, however, are not educated up to things of this kind and if their pay was many times what it is they unquestionably would prefer to live as they do. Half a dozen families in one small tenement, eight or ten people in a room wallowed in dirt.

The mills were enveloped in a blinding snow storm when the trouble started in the darkness of Monday morning. The starting time was 6.40 o'clock but it found only a small percentage of the help present. Outside thousands shouted, hissed and booed. The Prospect mill on the South Lawrence side was the first to have its windows smashed. A crowd of perhaps a thousand gathered in front of it and contented itself with throwing ice and rock at it. One shot was fired and Corporation Detective Flynn promptly nabbed the man who fired it and who when searched, was found to have a pistol, twenty-two cartridges and two stilettos on him. While this was taking place about a thousand strikers entered the Wood Mill
and rushed into the workrooms waving red handkerchiefs as flags, cut the belts of the machinery, shut off the power, dragged the women operators from their benches, and beat them with clubs, and after smashing everything in sight drove all hands from the mill with pistols and knives. Meanwhile several thousand men and women rushed the Pacific Mills or the North Lawrence side, lines of hose were turned on them and forced them back. The pressure was so great that those in front were knocked down and went rolling over and over across the bridge. Those who succeeded in getting through the gates found themselves prisoners.

By 8.30 there had been cases of rioting in all parts of the city and yelling mobs openly paraded the streets with clubs and revolvers, smashing windows at will. Mayor Scanlon appeared at the Armory about this time and signed the precepts calling out the militia and in a very few minutes the local companies were clearing the mill district, and the Adjutant General in Boston had been notified. By noon Colonel Sweetser and his staff of the Eighth Massachusetts Infantry and eight infantry companies, 502 men and officers were on the scene or had started for it, together with 20,000 rounds of ammunition. The worst mix-up took place in front of the Atlantic Mills, where a mob of five or six thousands were yelling, throwing ice or shooting revolvers at the mill. Into this crowd, amid a shower of missiles the soldiers went, and the mob gave way before the butt ends and the bayonets. Another riot occurred in the afternoon near the city hall, and again the soldiers had to resort to their bayonets, but as night began to fall conditions became normal. During the day between forty and fifty arrests were made. Revolvers, knives or clubs were found on most of those arrested and one to two years was the sentence imposed by judge Mahoney of the Municipal Court on most of them in an all night session. This prompt and fearless action of the judge, not only brought forth favorable comment throughout the country, but was a great assistance to the police and militia in keeping down further demonstrations. During this first day there were many broken heads and a number were badly injured by the bayonets. Several of the soldiers were bruised by being hit with flying missiles, and one militiaman was twice stabbed in the arm.

In addition to the militia, Boston, Lynn, Haverhill, Salem, Lowell and Everett sent police officers who remained in Lawrence forty-eight hours. At the request of the mayor, Colonel Sweetser assumed the responsibility of the mill district, leaving the augmented police force to do patrol duty throughout the rest of the city.

... Troops were quartered in different mills, each in touch with headquarters by telephone. Search lights, telephones, and sharpshooters were placed in the mill towers. Warm worsted caps, mittens, overshoes and cots were issued to the men, and a thousand and one little details had to be attended to the first night so that Colonel Sweetser and his staff did not get much sleep. The mayor and several city officials remained at the Armory. The tired sentries had to face a bitingly cold wind as they walked their post. They were sent out in pairs for safety and on three hour shifts this first night. The anticipated trouble at the opening of the mills did not occur. No gathering of any magnitude was permitted, the crowds were kept
ceaselessly on the move. The mill district, surrounded by a cordon of soldiers, presented a greatly changed aspect from the day before. The stormy scenes which were the cause of the militia being called out were succeeded by a military system of order. The strikers and their sympathizers were plainly cowed by the show of arms. The glistening bayonets which had inflicted many wounds the day before seemed to particularly impress the crowds. Things were so unusually quiet that there was a general feeling of suspicion and every one seemed to feel that it was the lull before the storm and that trouble was due at any moment. It came the next day, and Wednesday proved a lively, exciting fighting day. Ten thousand men and women marched through the streets, singing the "Marseillaise" and booing at the soldiers. Attempts were made to enter the mill districts and the strikers were stopped by the soldiers and many were badly hurt. One mob of several thousands attempted to march down Canal Street and were stopped by Battery C, armed with pistols and wagon wheel spokes. The strikers tried to force their way through and a hand to hand conflict ensued and many fell from blows on the head. Those in the rear threw missiles while those in front used their fists. The soldiers drew their pistols and leveled them at the front rank of the strikers, but did not fire. It was a dangerous situation. A few minutes more and the soldiers must fire or fall back. Just in the nick of time a reserve company arrived on the double quick with bayonets fixed, and the strikers turned up a side street.

A number of times during this day, as was also true during the first two trying weeks, bloodshed was narrowly averted by the good judgment and patience of the militia officers.

The first two weeks parades and occasional clashes with the soldiers were daily events.

Colonel Sweetser proved himself the right man for the place. Instead of going at the affair in a slam-bang way, he felt his way along carefully and refused to be aggravated into any course until he saw his way clear. A judge, a successful lawyer and a soldier of experience, he was well fitted for the task set for him. The tools with which he had to work, were such that the slightest error in handling them might result in the most fateful consequences. But by his diplomacy, vigilance and military ability he soon won the confidence, respect and thanks of not only the people of Lawrence but all New England. The militia itself proved an agreeable surprise to thousands of citizens who knew it in name only until now when dependent upon it for protection. There was no drinking and no disorder, the men did their duty under the most trying conditions. Long hours, hard work and terrible weather, did not dismay them. And the tin soldier idea many people had of them soon vanished when they saw them facing bricks and bullets in zero weather.

Colonel Sweetser listened to Ettor's side of the story and notified him that he would be held strictly responsible for any violence that occurred. He also issued a public warning through the newspapers to all women and children and those not mixed up in the affair to keep off the streets and away from the parades.
Ettor, Haywood and the other agitators daily made revolutionary speeches to crowds estimated at from fifteen to twenty thousands, from the band stand on the Common. In the confusion of tongues these gatherings made a veritable Babel. Speeches were made in Syrian, Italian, Greek, Lithuanian, Armenian, French, Russian and other languages. And the excited masses would frequently burst forth in noisy approval of the violent threats of the speakers.

The militia gave the strikers a great many privileges and allowed them much leniency the first two weeks, and apparently the strikers thought it indicated weaknesses. They forgot that the soldiers were present to shoot if necessary. The condition, therefore, reached an acute stage of development on Monday, the twenty-ninth. Between five and seven the city was the scene of the wildest disorder, car windows were smashed, wires cut, women knocked down and kicked and many people hurt by flying missels. The demonstration was participated in by several thousands of the strikers and was apparently well organized and seemingly had leaders. Most of the trouble occurred away from the mill district and the soldiers. Frequently, however, the mob made a demonstration against them, but the latter kept cool. The ice was pretty thin at times, however, and more than once a squad or company threw a cartridge from the magazine into the barrel of their rifles upon the command of the officer in charge. The click of the bolt as the cartridge was thrown into the chamber sounded so ominously significant to the mob that they each time backed away. Rioting continued throughout the day by the inflamed multitude of frenzied aliens, with blind fury. The soldiers, police and detectives had a hard time of it but by night had restored order. One woman had been shot and killed, a policeman stabbed and many injured, twenty-four electric cars demolished and many windows smashed and other property destroyed. It was a new experience for Massachusetts and public sentiment which up to now seemed to be with the strikers, changed abruptly and demanded that the enemies of the state be stamped out.

More troops were rushed to the city during the night, making twenty-two companies of infantry and two troops of cavalry, also fifty Metropolitan Police. Colonel Sweetser now took over the entire city and established the nearest thing to Martial Law that is possible in Massachusetts without special legislation. He divided it into six military districts and announced that there would be no more parading or gatherings held in any part of the city. Three or more persons on the street would be considered a crowd and everyone was advised to keep off the streets unless on business. When the good and bad people of Lawrence awoke Tuesday morning they found a sentry on every corner and patrols on every street. The striker resented this and trouble ensued. One crowd of several hundred gathered about five A. M. on White Street in the Syrian quarter. A squad of soldiers ordered them to disperse but instead of doing so they commenced throwing ice and rocks. Windows on both sides of the street were opened and a fusilade of coal, sticks, tin cans and even iron window weights reigned down upon the soldiers. Something had to be done, and done quick. The order to charge bayonets was given and into the crowd the little squad went. They drove back the crowd but in doing so one man was killed. The law was maintained and order was
restored throughout the city. So well has the militia performed its duty that no outbreaks have since occurred. This is because the strikers have not had a chance to get together to start anything. Hundreds of operators began to return to work when they found it was safe to do so, and at the end of two weeks about one-half of the help were back in the mills.

The cost to the Commonwealth has been great, the militia has cost in the vicinity of $4,000 a day, but the fact that they succeeded in keeping down violence after they took over the entire city, thus saving millions of dollars' worth of property, indicates that the outlay is attaining its result. It is hoped that a settlement may be reached before this article appears. Meanwhile the military force is gradually being reduced. At this writing, however, it is quite certain that if it were entirely withdrawn trouble would at once break out again.