Writers Against American Capitalism in the Early Twentieth Century [3]
Chapter 2. The Alternative American Dream in John Dos Passos’s *U.S.A.*

What is the American Dream? They say it is to abide by the law, do right and live for the Lord, and everything will work out. There is, however, the alternative American Dream, that is, the revolution for the working class.

The hoboes John Dos Passos describes is intensely political. Economic considerations or the desires to go around the country enter this work, *U.S.A.*, but more often it is some political motivation that is the cause, the need get somewhere to participate in a strike or demonstration or revolution. And the heroes in this work are wobblies, the members of the Industrial Workers of the World.

Dos Passos’ sympathy for them is apparent, but he cannot help being discouraged by their failures. When he touches their instability, their tendency to float, to fight small scale sporadic battles and to lack an effective plan or overview of the situation. Thus *U.S.A.* is the story that hoboes have chased the alternative American Dream and fail.