

# Mooning the Olympics: The Efforts of Tom Mooney to Boycott the 1932 Summer Olympic Games

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Tom Mooney was unique in his contribution to the 1932 Olympic Games. He was never found on the lists of world record holders, the victor's podium, or even spectating at the closing ceremonies of the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics. What Mooney did recognize was that the Olympic Games were the closest approximation to a truly global event that mankind had yet generated. Further, he realized that within this apparently global event existed a boycott arena of international influence. What made Mooney's situation anomalous was that he came to his conclusion while detained in a San Quentin, California prison.

Tom Mooney was an American Federation of Labor Unionist convicted of murder in connection with the bombing of the First World War Preparedness Day Parade in San Francisco, California on July 22, 1916. Mooney spent fifteen years of his imprisonment unsuccessfully exploiting several propaganda vehicles to proclaim his innocence before he obtained the interests of the Labor Sports Union's National Counter Olympic Committee. The Labor Sports Union, with Tom Mooney as their honorary chairman, dramatized Mooney's case through a series of Tom Mooney Street runs in several large American cities. Also, the Labor Sports Union proposed an International Workers Athletic Meet, which they dubbed the Tom Mooney Olympics, to be held in Chicago as a direct counter statement to the Los Angeles Games. The effort of the Labor Sports Union to make Mooney's plea for a pardon heard was culminated in a politically leftists protest during the Olympic Games closing ceremonies, August 13th 1932.

It was the intent of this paper to examine the efficacy of Olympic boycotts as political statements. Further, this study sought to demonstrate boycott's historically decisive influence as a politically left challenge to the established Olympic ideal through a case study of Tom Mooney.