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MARXIST INFLUENCES IN THE UNITED STATES

PRIOR TO 1900

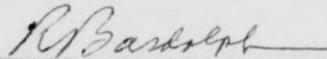
by

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Marxian socialism was introduced to America in the 1850's by German political refugees, among whom were Joseph Weydemeyer, Wilhelm Weitling, Friedrich Sorge, and Victor Berger. Early socialist organizations in America were ineffective and beset with inner struggles.

During the depression of 1873-75 which brought many Americans into poverty, communist propaganda began to find a response. Indifference on the part of wealthy classes to the plight of the unemployed and homeless masses, and government patronage of big business, combined to make the situation seem hopeless. The seriousness became evident during the riots of 1877 when hordes of unemployed pillaged and terrorized in many cities for days. Socialist agitation was commonly blamed for the riots.

Controversies over the means of achieving the desired revolution so weakened the socialist organizations that a faction withdrew, forming the International Working People's Association. The less militant Socialist Labor Party, despite many defections, stood against the use of force and, in particular, dynamite. When a bomb was thrown at Haymarket, presumably by an anarchist, the Party heartily denied any connection with anarchism. Henry George's campaign for Mayor of New York gave the socialists an opportunity to work with labor and reform organizations, which while failing to get George

elected, served to further Americanize the Party.

Lawrence Gronlund in his book The Cooperative Commonwealth, offered Americans a version of socialism minus the class struggle concept which had been offensive to many. Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward popularized socialistic ideas.

Daniel DeLeon, with his emphasis on purity of Marxist doctrine, unwittingly sent out many apostles of socialism as he expelled them from the Party during his time of leadership. DeLeon's plans to infiltrate labor unions failed. Eventually socialists within the party revolted from under DeLeon's iron rule, to unite with other socialists in 1901, forming the Socialist Party of America.

Meanwhile the intellectual climate in the United States was beginning to change, as Lester Ward devoted himself to tearing down the philosophy of laissez-faire, and writers such as William Dean Howells probed into social conditions. While other writers, including Thorstein Veblen and Henry D. Lloyd, sought to awaken the American conscience, Washington Gladden and others championed a social gospel which would redeem social conditions as well as men's souls. Many like-minded intellectuals, despairing of a revolution, adopted Fabian socialism, looking toward a gradual socializing trend. These voices reached a much larger audience than had the socialist organizations, and found wider acceptance, but were not truly Marxist.

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## INTRODUCTION

Marxian communism, generally associated in American thinking with the Russian Revolution of 1917, was introduced to the United States over a century ago. Its exponents, beginning with Karl Marx himself, who incidentally wrote a number of articles for the New York Tribune in the 1850's and 60's, worked tirelessly, agitated and organized, toward the revolution they believed must come.

From the standpoint of social and economic conditions, the United States was much more susceptible to Communist philosophy in the last half of the 19th century, than it is today. This paper will attempt to point out the outstanding Marxist influences in the United States prior to 1900, what they accomplished, what response they achieved from the American public, and most important, why they failed to accomplish their revolution. Karl Marx, in his Manifesto, listed certain goals for his social revolution, many of which have in fact been accomplished in the United States, without violence or uprising. Another goal of this study will be to suggest to what extent, if any, communism influenced the reform movements, and in what way.

Although this paper will concentrate on the years 1875 to 1900, a brief summary of Marxist activities in America from 1848 will be given to lay a groundwork for the later

period. In referring to Marxist activities, an effort will be made to restrict the term to those movements and organizations actually influenced by Marxian Communists, who wanted a radical change in the social structure of America.<sup>1</sup>

Another necessary antecedent to understanding the American response, is a background of the social and economic conditions of the period. Special attention will be paid to the distribution of wealth, the condition of labor, urban housing, public health, the contrast between rich and poor, and the attitude of the upper classes toward the less fortunate.

The riots of 1877, though not a result of Communist planning, will be considered because of the attention they drew to socialist participants and agitators.

The remarkably ineffective socialist organizations will be dealt with, especially the Socialist Labor Party and the more militant International Working Peoples' Association. Behind the façade of constantly changing organizations and continuing struggles for power within them an effort to make an impact on the American social consciousness is evident.

The Haymarket riot in Chicago deserves a close look, for the anarchist movement, which had caused division in socialist circles, was struck a death blow there, and many

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<sup>1</sup>Editor Louis Filler defines radicals as "those who took a doctrinaire position looking to a change in the American social structure," in his book Late Nineteenth-Century American Liberalism (New York: Bobbs Merrill Co., 1962), p. xvii.

socialists changed their methods as a result. Socialist influence in labor unions will be considered briefly.

The most important single influence for Marxism was that of Daniel DeLeon, whose contribution will be discussed and evaluated. While DeLeon's chief skill was that of organization, he was also a theorist of first rank. The conversion to socialism and subsequent role of labor leader Eugene Debs will be dealt with, as well as certain American converts to Communism who wrote influential books.

This leads to a peculiar product of the 1890's: the intellectual radical. As Louis Filler puts it, "It was possible for a radical in thought to be no more than moderately radical in fact: a 'parlor pink.'"<sup>2</sup>

These were respectable, philosophical, well-educated men who would never have dreamed of bombing the stock exchange, but who found intolerable wrongs in the American social order. The words they spoke, and the books they wrote, influenced many thoughtful Americans to rethink their value system, but also influenced less thoughtful citizens to anarchism. Others, despairing of a socialist revolution in America, plotted a peaceful gradual change, on the order of British Fabians. By popularizing the socialist ideas, these intellectual socialists accomplished what the Marxist parties had been unable to do.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

## MARXIST INFLUENCES BEFORE 1875

Richard Ely, writing in 1886, found the origins of the socialism of his day in the European revolutions of 1848, which ended with the flight of many German refugees to America.<sup>1</sup> One of these was Joseph Weydemeyer, a friend of Karl Marx, who with the assistance of H. Meyer, a German merchant, founded the German Workingmen's Alliance.<sup>2</sup> After serving in the Civil War, Weydemeyer was chosen auditor of St. Louis, and edited a Marxist publication there until his death in 1866.<sup>3</sup>

Another of the better known German radicals coming to the United States in the 1840's was Wilhelm Weitling, a utopian Marxist, who advocated a labor exchange bank, and when he could not make any progress with the idea, he turned to communitarianism.<sup>4</sup> This infidelity was displeasing to Marx, as was that of another German refugee, Herman Kriege, who was expelled from the Socialist organization by Marx for

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<sup>1</sup>Richard T. Ely, The Labor Movement in America (New York: Thomas Crowell & Co., 1886), p. 219.

<sup>2</sup>Howard H. Quint, The Forging of American Socialism (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1953), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>John E. Hoover, A Study of Communism (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Wilson, 1962), p. 53.

<sup>4</sup>Quint, 7.

switching to advocacy of free land.<sup>5</sup> An immigrant that did not defect was Friedrich Sorge, an intellectual Marxist, who with Conrad Carl and Seigfried Meyer, started the Communist Club in New York City in 1857. Eleven years later the club, together with a Lassallean<sup>6</sup>-influenced union, sponsored Sorge as a candidate in an election. Sorge corresponded with Marx and Frederick Engels, his co-worker, and in 1869 the Communist Club was the first in America to become affiliated with Marx's International Workingmen's Association.<sup>7</sup>

This association was originally the conception of English and French trade unionists who planned in 1863 to form a permanent international society of trade unions. The first meeting was held in London on September 25, 1864, at which Karl Marx was present as a representative of German workingmen. He drew up a mildly radical declaration which the group passed almost unanimously, and by 1867 Marx was in control of the organization, after a bitter struggle with both liberals and Proudhonists.<sup>8</sup> The International seemed dangerous to the press but it was actually a peaceful-socialistic movement. When Michael Bakunin, a Russian anarchist, tried to

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<sup>5</sup>Stow Persons and Donald D. Egbert, eds. Socialism and American Life, Vol. I (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), pp. 230-1.

<sup>6</sup>Ferdinand Lassalle was a German socialist disliked by Marx, whose influence will be discussed later in the paper.

<sup>7</sup>Quint, 9.

<sup>8</sup>Pierre J. Proudhon, a French philosophical anarchist, became famous for his saying, "Property is robbery."

get control of the Association, a real battle ensued, for Bakunin wanted to use the organization as a secret society to work toward the overthrow of all governments. After Marx finally expelled the Bakuninists, the organization was ruined, and Marx sent it to America to die.<sup>9</sup> He moved the headquarters from London, where he had been living in exile, to New York in 1876, putting it under the care of the faithful Sorge, who had led the American branch since 1869. Under Sorge's leadership, the American branch had absorbed many trade unions in different parts of the United States, representing some 35,000 workmen. They had even sent a delegate to the International Congress meeting in Switzerland, in 1869, and three years later had sponsored a demonstration, jointly with other organizations, in which 20,000 workers demanded an eight-hour work day.<sup>10</sup> The International held its last congress in 1876 in Philadelphia.<sup>11</sup>

Another of the German immigrants who deserves mention is Victor Berger, an Austrian-German who settled in Milwaukee to become editor of the Milwaukee Leader, a leading American socialist paper. Although he helped to win Eugene Debs over to socialism, and then helped him to organize the Socialist

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<sup>9</sup>Lillian Symes and Travers Clement, Rebel America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), pp. 109-113.

<sup>10</sup>Ely, 225-228.

<sup>11</sup>Hoover, 27.

Party, yet Berger is one of the renegades who broke with revolutionary Marxism.<sup>12</sup>

An important part of Marxist doctrine is contained in the Manifesto, which declares, among other things:

The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution!<sup>13</sup>

Credit for the first English publication of this manifesto must go to Woodhull's and Claflin's Weekly, a feminist magazine, sponsored by an anarchist, Stephen Paul Andrews. The two editors, however, were women of doubtful reputation whose endorsement did not help the socialist cause.<sup>14</sup>

It was with the German immigrant population in mind that the New York Herald Tribune invited Marx to write his articles. Marx was most interested in America, and followed the course of the Civil War avidly, corresponding at length with Engels on the progress of the war. Much of this correspondence is still available and in print.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Harvey Wish, Society and Thought in Modern America (New York: David McKay Co., 1952), pp. 220-21.

<sup>13</sup>Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Communist Manifesto (New York: Labor News Co., 1933), p. 48. The Manifesto first appeared in 1847.

<sup>14</sup>Merle E. Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943), p. 625.

<sup>15</sup>Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Civil War in the United States (3rd ed., New York: Citadel Press, 1961).

Larger waves of German immigrants, coming to America in the seventies and eighties, were influenced more by Lasalle, who was still in Germany, than by Marx, who had been in exile. Lasalle's followers had no use for trade unionism, but instead sought for government help through political action to achieve needed changes. The Marxists, on the contrary, did not seek political activity, but preferred trade unionism, seeing political implications in all the economic struggles of the day. The clash between Lasalle's and Marx's followers went on in Europe and in America. It caused a split in the American International in 1872, which was not mended until 1876, when the Workingmen's Party came under joint Lasallean-Marxist control. The Lasalleans achieved control of the Party in 1877, changing the name to Socialist Labor Party.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout this period, the Marxists remained an isolated, ineffective group in this country. Socialism, taken so seriously in Europe, was hardly considered in America. Morris Hillquit, a socialist leader, gave this explanation for the lack of progress before 1870: (1) United States workers still had economic advantages over European workers; (2) American workers were not class conscious; (3) United States workers had political advantages; (4) there were reform groups to join.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Theodore Draper, Roots of American Communism (New York: Viking Press, 1957), pp. 11-12.

<sup>17</sup>Morris Hillquit, History of Socialism in the United States (New York: Funk & Wagnall, 1903), pp. 153-154.

## CHRONOLOGY

### IMPORTANT DATES IN AMERICAN SOCIALISM

- 1877 . . . Riots, Formation of the Socialist Labor Party
- 1879 . . . Publication of Progress and Poverty
- 1883 . . . Founding of American wing of the Black International
- 1884 }  
1885 } . . . Industrial depression  
1886 } . . . Haymarket affair, Henry George campaign
- 1887 . . . Publication of Looking Backward
- 1890 . . . DeLeon joined the Socialist Labor Party
- 1893 . . . Altgeld freed anarchists
- 1894 . . . Pullman strike, Debs jailed, Publication of Wealth Against Commonwealth
- 1895 . . . Formation of Trades and Labor Alliance
- 1901 . . . Formation of Socialist Party of America



## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Richard Ely once wisely observed that no philosophic system can be understood apart from its setting in the times.<sup>1</sup> This is especially true of communism, hewn out of the sheer cliffs of despair in a stratified society. The industrial age brought hardship to many people of Europe, but while they were suffering, Americans were blessed with free land, to which they thought they could retreat when hard pressed. In 1873, however, a financial crisis brought poverty to many Americans. In the midst of their distress, the fabulous wealth possessed by a fortunate few made some of them ready to listen to socialists, anarchists, or anyone who seemed to offer a promise of something better. The dangers of such an appeal began to worry some observers. An issue of Harper's Weekly in 1874, for example, contains a political cartoon showing death, dressed as a communist, trying to enlist an American laboring man.<sup>2</sup>

The period 1868-1872 had been a time of high speculation and over-expansion of industry. Then, in 1873, two prominent banking houses failed, the Northern Pacific collapsed, and the nation's worst panic was on, to last for six

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<sup>1</sup>Ely, 216.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Nast, Harper's Weekly (February 7, 1874), p. 121, reproduced by Denis T. Lynch in The Wild Seventies (New York: Appleton-Century Co., 1941), pp. 261-266.

years. Hundreds of thousands of industrial workers were unemployed, while others had their wages cut. Textile wages were cut almost in half, while out of forty million inhabitants, three million wage earners were unemployed. Thousands were homeless, dependent on the free soup kitchens which were set up.<sup>3</sup> Many of the homeless in New York City were given lodging by the police. In January, for example, 30,774 lodgings were provided in the police station to homeless men and women, of whom two-thirds lodged there regularly. Homeless children preferred empty boxes, barns, or hallways. Cellars and old buildings, which had been condemned and emptied in 1873 were reoccupied in 1874. Out of a population of a million in 1871, there were over twenty-five thousand beggar children, pitiful evidence that even before the crisis of '73 there were serious shortcomings in the national economy.<sup>4</sup>

Slum areas were filthy and overcrowded, yet owners collected high rents, and attempts to pass laws regulating slum conditions were opposed by the owners and their lobbyists.<sup>5</sup> Jacob Riis, after a first-hand study of conditions, wrote in 1890 of a house which burned in New York, fully insured for \$800, which brought in \$600 a year rent. He told of a twelve-by-twelve foot room where twenty people from five families

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<sup>3</sup>Symes and Clement, 134-35.

<sup>4</sup>Lynch, 261-266.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 275-300.

lived. Old houses were subdivided into small rooms, many of which had no windows. This was not an isolated problem, for at that time three-fourths of New York City's population were living in tenement houses. Eighty percent of the crimes were committed by homeless or inadequately housed people. In one of these unhealthy tenements, where thirty-nine people were living, nine of whom were young children, death claimed five of the little ones that year. Across the street in a model tenement, 161 people of the same class lived, yet only one baby died that year. Any attempt at reform met with resistance from the wealthy owners.<sup>6</sup>

Hundreds of people were dangerously undernourished, and many babies were abandoned by poor mothers, only to end up at Randall's Island hospital where 65% of them died within a year.<sup>7</sup>

Even employed laborers had grave problems. A sales-girl whose wages were two dollars a week was fined 60¢ for a trivial mistake. A typical case was a woman earning three dollars a week, who paid \$1.50 for a room, and could only afford one meal a day. During a shirtmakers' strike, a Jewish worker testified before the state board of arbitration that she worked from four a. m. to eleven p. m., never earned

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<sup>6</sup>Jacob Riis, How the Other Half Lives (New York: Hill and Wang, 1890), pp. 8-15.

<sup>7</sup>Riis, 127, 142.

over six dollars a week, and had to provide her own thread and to pay for her machine.<sup>8</sup>

Men, of course, received higher wages, but hard times cut theirs back also. Ellis P. Oberholtzer, whose history is almost invariably anti-labor, admits that carpenters who received four dollars a day in 1872 had their wages cut to \$2.75, masons from six dollars to \$2.50, and mechanics and laborers<sup>were</sup> down 37 $\frac{1}{2}$ % to 60%.<sup>9</sup>

Children were forced to work in unsafe conditions, and there were many children in the unorganized industries. Boys in the stockyards stood ankle deep in refuse-laden water while they cut up animals in a sickening stench. At a metal works two boys were killed in two years, and others mutilated. A candy factory employing as many as two hundred young girls in a six story building without a fire escape, kept them working eighty-two hours a week. Federal inspectors in Illinois found children working in factories for as little as forty cents a week.<sup>10</sup>

Organized labor, where it was strong, had won some gains, but the force of the law was on the side of the employer. The laborer who joined a union might be discharged for no other

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<sup>8</sup>Riis, 178-80.

<sup>9</sup>Ellis P. Oberholtzer, A History of the United States (New York: McMillan Co., 1931), IV, 13.

<sup>10</sup>Ray Ginger, Atgeld's America (New York: Funk and Wagnall's Co., 1958), pp. 31-33.

reason, while the striker was likely to see his job given to someone else.

Charity could not have solved all these problems, for the people needed work and a living wage. The dangerous class, Jacob Riis declared, was not the poor but the greedy rich who kept them poor by usury.<sup>11</sup>

And yet this was an era of great fortunes, of imposing, palatial mansions, when seven-eighths of the country's families held only one-eighth of the wealth, while 1% of the people owned as much as the other 99%.<sup>12</sup> This was a time when Marshall Field spent \$75,000 on a birthday party for his son.<sup>13</sup> At Commodore Vanderbilt's death in 1877, he left a fortune of one hundred million dollars. His son William when he died in 1895 had already accumulated two hundred million. There were no more than four hundred millionaires in 1850, but in 1892 the New York Tribune Monthly named 4,047 millionaires.<sup>14</sup>

What was the attitude of the upper class toward the sufferings of so many Americans? A few, of course, engaged in charity and actively sought to relieve distress. But the majority were simply indifferent. Jacob Riis, their contemporary, avowed that "The half that was on top cared little for

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<sup>11</sup>Riis, 184-202.

<sup>12</sup>Harold U. Faulkner, The Quest for Social Justice (New York: McMillan Co., 1931), p. 21.

<sup>13</sup>Ginger, Atgeld's America, 8.

<sup>14</sup>Ray Ginger, Age of Excess (New York: McMillan, 1965), p. 93.

the struggles, and less for the fate of those who were underneath, so long as it was able to hold them there and to keep its own seat."<sup>15</sup>

Karl Marx, studying the financial crises which began in 1873, concluded that in America where capitalism had developed so far and so fast, communism should come sooner than in other countries.<sup>16</sup> The editor of the Chicago Tribune sensed the times were ripe for communism to take hold, writing in 1874 that Americans were drifting towards a communistic point of view. He attributed this tendency to (1) declining belief in the ideals on which old creeds are based, (2) communist activity in Europe, (3) agitation by foreigners, (4) "the growing gulf between rich and poor." He advised giving workingmen mental and physical comfort, with a larger share of the product of his labor.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, Communists sensed their opportunity. The German Socialists of New York and Chicago, together with unions and humanitarians, demanded help for the suffering masses of the 1873-78 depression. In Chicago, sections of the International arranged a mass meeting in December, 1873. Over 20,000 orderly unemployed workers marched through the streets with relief demands for the City Council, and the council

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<sup>15</sup>Riis, 1.

<sup>16</sup>Hoover, 27.

<sup>17</sup>A Century of Tribune Editorials, (Chicago: Tribune, 1947), pp. 42-43.

quickly promised to meet the demands. Nothing, however, was done about it. In New York on January 13, 1874, a great outdoor meeting was planned for Tompkins Square. City authorities became alarmed and cancelled the permit immediately prior to the meeting, but it was too late to stop it. A group of policemen came upon the peaceable meeting and began clubbing the crowd. One week later the New York World began a series of articles showing the extreme poverty of many New York citizens.<sup>18</sup>

Samuel Gompers, an onlooker at Tompkins Square, saved his skull by jumping down a cellarway. This experience made a deep impression on him. Gompers, who as a young man had been influenced by Marxism, lost interest as he fought with Socialists over the need for immediate improvements for the workers.<sup>19</sup>

Not all Americans saw a problem; some at least pretended to believe there was none. Edward Atkinson, political economist, and others wrote articles intended to show that all was well, giving figures to prove it.<sup>20</sup> William H. Vanderbilt insisted that a skilled workman earned enough each day to buy a barrel of flour. (Terrence Powderly, labor

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<sup>18</sup>Symes and Clement, 135-138.

<sup>19</sup>Samuel Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor, vol. I (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1925), p. 96. Also Persons and Egbert, 249-250.

<sup>20</sup>See Atkinson's "The Problem of Poverty," Forum, VII (August, 1889), 609-622.

leader, wondered how the \$2.50 average wage could buy flour costing six to eight dollars.)<sup>21</sup> Andrew Carnegie wrote a book called Triumphant Democracy, in which he stated,

Thus from all sides . . . comes positive proof of the fact that labor in the Republic is receiving more and more of the combined earnings of capital and labor . . . Throughout the length and breadth of the Republic it is fully employed. There is no man, who cannot find work at wages which would seem to the wage earner of other lands to assure a small fortune for old age.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Powderly, "Army of the Discontented," North American Review, CXL (April, 1885), 370.

<sup>22</sup>New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886, p. 139.

## THE RIOTS OF 1877

The year 1877 was the low point of the depression. While railroads had been slashing wages steadily, scandals in the financing of the industry had tended to make the public lose confidence in them. Railroads, while giving unwarranted dividends to stockholders, were cutting back their employees' pay.<sup>1</sup>

Grumbling and scattered violence did not alarm the railway owners or the public. Then in 1877 the Pennsylvania, the Baltimore and Ohio, and the New York Central announced further wage cuts. A gang of firemen and brakemen on the B & O began stopping freight trains outside Baltimore. Police restored the service, and the public still paid little attention.<sup>2</sup>

News of this strike spread to other trainmen, with the result that further strikes broke out. When strikers stopped all trains in Martinsburg, West Virginia, Governor Matthews, in response to requests for help, called up the local militia, who naturally refused to shoot at their friends and neighbors. The countryside was strongly sympathetic to the strikers at this time.<sup>3</sup> When the trouble reached Wheeling, President

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Yellen, American Labor Struggles (New York: S. A. Russell, 1936), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Symes and Clement, 145-146.

<sup>3</sup>Yellen, 10.

Hayes was appealed to, and the whole B & O came to a standstill. Crowds in Washington hooted at four hundred marines on their way to Martinsburg. The marines took the railway yards at Martinsburg and killed ten strikers in Cumberland, Maryland. For three days war raged between the marines, and the strikers and their friends.<sup>4</sup>

The Pennsylvania railroad was likewise affected. The president of that railroad is quoted as asking the militia to give the strikers "a rifle diet for a few days and see how they like that kind of bread." Wherever the militia were used, more violence was encountered from the masses; buildings were burned, and men were killed. Five million dollars worth of damage was done to railway property in Philadelphia, where the besieged militia fled the city.<sup>5</sup>

This violence was a spontaneous eruption from native American workers, rather than a product of communist agitators. The foreign revolutionaries, who had been trying to stir up organized protest, had made little headway because they did not speak the language of the American people. Another hindrance to effective work was the constant squabbling between different factions of the socialists. In 1876 a truce was arranged, and delegates from both factions met to form the Workingmen's Party, but they were too late to make full use

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<sup>4</sup>Symes and Clement, 147.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

of the storm of discontent which was breaking over America.<sup>6</sup> They were unprepared for their great opportunity, yet they received the blame for much that was done. When the strikes reached Chicago, the New York Times said in a sub-headline: THE CITY IN POSSESSION OF COMMUNISTS. The next day police attacked strikers with clubs and guns.<sup>7</sup>

Albert R. Parsons, a young socialist from Alabama, had been urging the unemployed of Chicago to revolt. On July 23rd, the dreaded Chicago strikes began as the Michigan Central switchmen walked out, and other workers followed suit. The Workingmen's Party tried to get control of the strike movement, issuing circulars saying all workers should unite with the strikers. Albert Parsons and other Party leaders urged strikers to peaceable but firm resistance. Mayor Monroe Heith told Parsons to cease talking to the strikers,<sup>8</sup> and when all the railroads were tied up the police arrested Parsons and his assistant, Philip Van Patten. To Mayor Heith's disappointment, the strikes went on just as well without Parsons. When the police tried to break up an outdoor meeting, a battle broke out. Thousands of rioters chased the militia, roaming the streets in packs. It took the son of Ulysses Grant, Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick Dent

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<sup>6</sup>Symes and Clement, 144.

<sup>7</sup>Yellen, 28.

<sup>8</sup>Yellen, 30.

Grant, with two companies of United States regulars, to end the strike and rioting.<sup>9</sup>

Even as far away as San Francisco riots took place, where laborers blamed the Chinese for their economic problems. It began when the Workingmen's Party, encouraged by events in the East, called for a meeting in front of the city hall. As eight thousand people were listening peaceably to the socialists, another mob burst in demanding anti-Chinese action. The socialist leaders emphatically refused, but just then a Chinese walked by, and the mob took off after him. One hundred thousand dollars worth of property in Chinatown was destroyed before the militia could stop the mobs.<sup>10</sup> "German agitators" were blamed for the California riot, meaning of course, the Socialist Labor Party, which was primarily German-American in membership.<sup>11</sup>

In St. Louis the strikers took over the city. The Workingmen's Party called a huge meeting, organized a new city government, ended the disorder, and actually ruled the city for a week, according to Symes and Clement and the New York Times. An indignant resident of St. Louis wrote to the Nation that the disorder lasted only three days, not a week.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Symes and Clement, 148.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>11</sup>"German Socialism in America," North American Review, CXXVIII (April-May, 1879), 386.

<sup>12</sup>Nation, XXV (August 16, 1877), 104.

At any rate the strikers were successful in persuading many workers to walk out, and in winning concessions from employers. Mayor Overstolz closed all businesses, calling for a volunteer militia. Merchants of St. Louis raised fifteen thousand dollars and armed one thousand volunteers. Governor Phelps was sent a letter from the Party's Executive Committee, in which he was asked to convene the legislature to vote on an eight-hour day, non-employment of children under fourteen, and living wages for railroad men.<sup>13</sup> A counter-revolution ended the short rule of the socialists, who were arrested by the militia as part of a group of seventy-five people found in the socialist headquarters, most of whom turned out to be loungers.

Conditions were so alarming that the President and his cabinet made plans to protect the government and the treasury from unfriendly crowds roaming Washington. Riots were put down in one city only to break out in another. When a forced order was finally restored, a new era had begun.<sup>14</sup>

The riots had several results, not the least of which was to awaken the American upper classes from their lethargy. The employers began an indiscriminate attack on all labor organizations, even those which had not struck. Their confidence in the docility of labor forever shattered, they sponsored the building of huge armories, in various cities. The militia was reorganized to be rid of labor sympathizers, while manuals

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<sup>13</sup>Yellen, 31-32.

<sup>14</sup>Symes and Clement, 149.

were prepared to instruct the militia on how to deal with riots. Their attitude was clearly expressed by the North American Review.

The powerful and growing organization which now honeycombs the country must be laid low before we have forgotten the smouldering fires of Pittsburgh and the insurrection which extended through fourteen states of the union--an insurrection which destroyed millions of property and hundreds of lives, in many cases successfully defied the local authorities, and for the first time in American history revealed its power to an organized mob.<sup>15</sup>

Another result of the riots was to render American workmen dissatisfied with their place in American society. Police brutality and a one-sided press made even non-strikers disillusioned and sullen, ready to listen to socialist and anarchist ideas. The Nation expressed this tendency in different terms.

The time has never been more propitious for a rising of the worst elements; for the hardships which the long-continued business depression has brought upon all classes have inclined workmen everywhere to give ear to current demagogical platitudes regarding the oppressions of the poor and the injustice of the rich.<sup>16</sup>

The radicals also learned from the riots that the American workers were capable of uprising, and that socialist leadership needed to be much stronger. At the next meeting of the Workingmen's Party, the name was changed to Socialist Labor Party, to appeal to native Americans. European communists took notice of the riots, some to the extent of planning

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<sup>15</sup>"German Socialism in America," p. 492.

<sup>16</sup>Nation, XXV (July 26, 1877), 49.

a visit to America.<sup>17</sup> Karl Marx was delighted with news of the American uprisings. In a letter to Engels, he spoke of the strikers as being at the center of a dedicated worker's party.<sup>18</sup>

The upper class was wrong when they blamed the riots on "the awful presence of Socialism, which has more than once made Europe tremble."<sup>19</sup> There is reason to believe that Marx was likewise mistaken in thinking that the rioters were workers, for only three days after his letter was written, a Chicago newspaper affirmed that the working class was not part of the rioting mob, which was made of "communists, thieves, thugs, and riffraff."<sup>20</sup> Far from being lawless rioters, the railroad strikers, in one locality, had provided food for troops whose supplies were held up. The mobs of angry rioters were mostly unemployed, hungry, desperate Americans. There were some thoughtful men who realized this.

Alfred B. Mason, writing about the outbreak, said that the discontent was rooted in suffering, and the cure would be found in diminishing the causes rather than in increasing the police force. The villain of the episode, as Mason saw it, was control of legislation by capital, a deadly evil which made the state the enemy of the laboring man instead of his

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<sup>17</sup>Symes and Clement, 152.

<sup>18</sup>Lynch, 442.

<sup>19</sup>Adamic, 35.

<sup>20</sup>Lynch, 445.

representative. To prevent a worse outbreak, Mason warned, consideration must be given "without going too far in the dangerous path of socialism . . . Legislation and public opinion, acting together, can and should materially better the condition of the laboring classes."<sup>21</sup>

Alarmed by the sheer indifference on the part of the upper class, Mason sought to awaken them to their dangerous position. Two years later he wrote:

The increase of socialistic sentiment among the masses is not a matter of light consideration. If the proletariat once becomes convinced that property is robbery, what can prevent the temporary extinction of both property and society? Socialism is a sign of discontent. It grows rank in times of depression. It withers away as comfort increases. The book that contains the most forceable argument against Proudhon's maxim is a bank book.<sup>22</sup>

Yet this counsel of moderation was but a voice crying in the American wilderness of overgrown, rank materialism. Even the church, which should have urged the need for compassion, only echoed the current philosophy of laissez-faire. Henry Ward Beecher proclaimed from his pulpit on July 29, 1877:

We look upon the importation of the communistic and like European notions as abomination. Their notions and theories that the Government should be paternal and take care of the welfare of its subjects and provide them with labor, is un-American . . .

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<sup>21</sup>"The Laboring Man and the Capitalist," Nation, XXV (August 23, 1877), 119-120.

<sup>22</sup>"The Abolition of Poverty," Atlantic Monthly, XLIII (May, 1879), 609.

God has intended the great to be great, and the little to be little.<sup>23</sup>

Thus the Marxists, though relatively few in number and ineffective, were held responsible for the riots. Americans, who had thought of communism as applicable only to the old countries, were profoundly shaken. The Nation commented that the riots had taken Americans by surprise because they had thought riots were "the products of a monarchy and aristocracy, and impossible in the absence of down-trodden masses."<sup>24</sup>

The rioters represented new elements of the population with un-American traditions, whose very vote was a menace to our civilization, the Nation continued. They should not be encouraged in any way to think they could force our society to change, and writers should be careful not to discuss social problems as if there were two sides to them, lest these people be encouraged in their ideas, concluded the Nation editorial.<sup>25</sup> Thus fear of communism was driving some Americans to mistrust the traditional ideals of government by the people and freedom of speech and press.

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<sup>23</sup>Yellen, 37.

<sup>24</sup>Nation, XXV (August 2, 1877), 68.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIALIST ORGANIZATIONS

1875-1885

Richard Ely, writing in 1886, sought to assess the socialists' power. He found twenty-six journals, many of which were extremist; one of them, the New Yorker Volkzeitung, had a circulation of over thirty thousand. The trade union magazines often promoted or discussed socialism, while the Knights of Labor endorsed a declaration with socialistic implications. Ely estimated there were half a million moderate socialists, and two or three hundred thousand Internationalists and sympathizers, who threatened the violent overthrow of the enterprise-profit system, especially where industry had brought a concentration of population in the cities.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the agitation of these socialists was missing its mark, the suffering proletariat. The German immigrants who were committed to Marxist socialism prior to 1875 were self-consciously doctrinaire. They read Marx, used his terminology, and this tended to keep them separate from the American proletariat. Response to their circulars and rallies came mostly from the foreign-born, yet the press paid attention to them in an academic way. It became an agreeable intellectual exercise to discuss socialism, working class reforms, and such matters. While refugees from other countries were involved,

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<sup>1</sup>Ely, Labor Movement, 275.

Germans predominated. Their plans and agitations were made more in the light of the European situation behind them than in the New World. The few American-born agitators such as Stephen Pearl Andrews and Albert R. Parsons, provided a link with the American public, but not necessarily a helpful one. Even in 1885 the national secretary of the Socialist Labor Party referred to the organization as a German colony.<sup>2</sup>

Three small socialist organizations met together in Philadelphia in July, 1876, to form the Workingmen's Party of the United States. An alarmed observer of their affairs quoted Sorge and Gabriel as saying "these seditious words":

Rise, then, ye sons and daughters of labor!  
Rally round its flag, and carry it to the heights  
of humanity! Alter and amend what we did wrong or  
may be impracticable, but join hands with us for the  
establishment of that fraternal union of the disin-  
herited and down-trodden wages-laborer which will re-  
lieve us from the evils of capitalistic society.<sup>3</sup>

The Party planned to concentrate on the labor unions, accord-  
ing to Marxist ideas, rather than on political activities, but  
when several socialist candidates in '76 and '77 were success-  
ful, the Party changed its policy. Socialists in the mid-west  
were doing very well, being elected to the legislature in  
Illinois, as town officials in Ohio, and even as Mayor and  
corporation in Youngstown.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Symes and Clement, pp. 117-127.

<sup>3</sup>"German Socialism in America," p. 379.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 386.

This was the time when the Party changed its name to Socialistic Labor Party, and its headquarters from Chicago to Cincinnati, as they planned at their convention in Newark. When returning prosperity dimmed the hopes of socialistic candidates for political offices, the Marxist labor union advocates were ready to take over Party leadership again. Then a new group of refugees came over from Germany, because of Bismark's anti-Socialist Decree of 1878, who advocated physical force for achieving the revolution. (These were not Bakunists, but Marxists.)<sup>5</sup>

After the riots of '77 some of the socialists in Chicago and Cincinnati organized rifle clubs and began drilling secretly with a red flag. At the next convention the executive committee ordered its members not to participate in armed violence, but the violent faction ignored the order. Quarreling over this issue as well as over the Marxist-Lasallian controversy weakened the Party. When some members of the party with reformist tendencies became involved with the Greenback Party, other socialists were disgusted. The more revolutionary elements split away in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, and Chicago, forming the Revolutionary Socialist Labor Party. The Chicago leaders of this new party were Albert Parsons and August Spies, who were later to be hung for the Haymarket tragedy. When Johann Most, an exiled anarchist,

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<sup>5</sup>Quint, 13-16.

arrived in America in 1882, he was greeted by the Revolutionary Party, which he easily won over to Bakunin anarchism.<sup>6</sup>

The Revolutionary Party met with other radical and anarchist groups in 1883 in Pittsburgh to form the International Working People's Association, often called the Black International.<sup>7</sup> This Association had its roots in Europe, where it was formed in July, 1881, in London. The Association in Pittsburgh adopted a Manifesto calling for destruction of class rule by revolutionary means, establishment of free society, exchange of products without profit, reorganization of education, equal rights, and regulation of public affairs by free contracts. Ely described this as laissez-faire carried to its logical outcome: liberty without restraint, which is anarchy.<sup>8</sup> The anarchism of the convention drove some more moderate men back into the Socialist Labor Party. The emphasis on violence offended American workmen, frightened businessmen, and caused those who had scoffed at foreign radicals to see them as a menace in the 1880's.<sup>9</sup> Theodore Woolsey warned that Marxism would "fetter individuality, corrupt the morality of the family, destroy religion, and negate basic economic laws

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<sup>6</sup>Symes and Clement, 153-154.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>8</sup>Ely, 231-232.

<sup>9</sup>Quint, pp. 19-22.

as well."<sup>10</sup> (One might wonder, incidentally, how a "basic economic law" could possibly be negated.)

During the depression of 1884, the country was overrun with homeless, jobless workers. The New York Herald advised that "the best meal that can be given to a regular tramp is a leaden one," and the Chicago Tribune actually advised people to put poison in the food given the tramps. The anarchist's answer to this, not surprisingly, was to advise the tramps to learn to use explosives. They likewise, through their pamphlets, made specific suggestions on how to do away with Jay Gould and William Vanderbilt. Albert Parsons began his publication of Alarm, the leading English-language anarchist publication. In San Francisco a secret society led by Burnette G. Haskell published a weekly called Truth, advising the use of dynamite to put down the rich. Joseph R. Buchanan in Denver took up the cause for the Rocky Mountain area. These anarchists would not have frightened the American public except for other accompanying causes of alarm, mainly the acts of organized labor, of which the anarchists were taking advantage. The property-owning public came to associate organized labor with communism and anarchism.<sup>11</sup>

"The American communistic spirit has attempted crude organizations in trade unions and grangerism," complained

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<sup>10</sup>Curti, p. 639.

<sup>11</sup>Symes and Clement, pp. 161-162.

a writer in the North American Review. He denounced the "lunatic counsel" of the German-influenced Internationals, and reminded his reader that it was the good citizens who were having to pay for the riots.<sup>12</sup>

The Reverend Jesse H. Jones, a Congregational minister in Massachusetts, became so concerned with the problems of labor that in 1872 he founded the Christian Labor Union. He tried to interest other church people to help the working people, but met with indifference and even opposition. His monthly journal, Equity, began by recommending cooperatives, and ended as thoroughly Marxist.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile the Socialist Labor Party, weakened by defections, stood firmly against the use of dynamite, insisting on the need for a revolution in the minds of men. At their meeting in Baltimore in 1883, they adopted a manifesto, declaring that a fair distribution of the fruits of labor was impossible under the present social system. They declared themselves against competition, profit, and monopolies. They advocated that land, and the means of production, transportation, and exchange become the property of the whole people. While expecting that a revolution would eventually come, they did not advocate deeds of violence to bring it on. They were willing to advocate immediate reforms, mentioning specifically

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<sup>12</sup>Alexander Winchell, "Communism in the United States," CXXXVI (May, 1883), 459.

<sup>13</sup>Ralph H. Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought, (New York: Ronald Press, 1940), p. 308.

the prohibition of child labor, and the inspection of factories, food, and dwellings. Ely praised them as being men of better minds than their more violent contemporaries who were meeting in Pittsburgh.<sup>14</sup>

The Socialist Party was at a low ebb in 1883 when its secretary, Philip Von Patten, became discouraged and dropped out. At their next convention the Socialists made a more radical platform, but still warned against anarchism. The depression of 1883 strengthened the membership, as they concentrated on infiltrating labor unions. The labor organizations generally did not welcome the socialists, but borrowed their ideas frequently without acknowledgement. By being alert to American complaints, the Socialists conceived the idea of an anti-monopoly plank in their platform in 1885 in Cincinnati.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ely, pp. 269-270.

<sup>15</sup>Quint, pp. 23-27.

## THE HAYMARKET EPISODE

Chicago was the center of the revolutionary movement from 1883 to 1886. Large meetings were sponsored by the International, such as a protest demonstration when the Chicago Board of Trade building was dedicated. These served to make people aware of the revolutionary plans of the socialists.<sup>1</sup> Yet for all the zealous work of the Workmen's leaders, crowds of less than fifty attended the meetings on the lake front, and their newspapers were not widely circulated. Lloyd Lewis in his history of Chicago takes the view that the talk of dynamite and bombs was just to get publicity, that few of them had ever even seen a bomb.<sup>2</sup>

In Chicago as well as in other cities some revolutionary groups had been meeting to drill in public with arms. The Supreme Court held that citizens in Illinois could not do so, as state law prohibited it.<sup>3</sup> The men involved continued to drill after this decision, but not openly. Some groups of metal workers responded to the suggestion to arm themselves. After a clash with Pinkerton men and strike breakers, in April of 1885 at McCormick Harvester, the Metal Worker's Federation

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<sup>1</sup>Henry David, The History of the Haymarket Affair, (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1936), pp. 110-111.

<sup>2</sup>Chicago: The History of Its Reputation, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1929), pp. 155-156.

<sup>3</sup>Presser v. State of Illinois, Jan. 4, 1886.

Union of Chicago determined to arm its members. As a result, businessmen formed military companies to defend their property, and the national guard was increased, drilling often in public places. Tension over labor problems and anarchist threats mounted steadily.<sup>4</sup>

The Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, an organization newer and smaller than the Knights of Labor, passed a resolution for an eight-hour day, to become effective by May 1, 1886. Counting on the Knights to support the venture, the Federation made little preparation. Workers enthusiastically supported the proposition, joining the unions to take part in the project. The leaders of the Knights became increasingly uneasy as the deadline approached, until Grand Master Powderly secretly denounced the movement. On May 1, nearly two hundred thousand workers walked off their jobs, and nearly that many achieved satisfaction without striking.<sup>5</sup>

George A. Schilling, a socialist, had formally begun the movement in Chicago. At first the anarchists ignored the idea, but when they saw its popularity, they supported it enthusiastically. Well before May 1 they were busy organizing and planning strikes. Business generally was opposed to the eight-hour day, and even more especially to the strike as a means of obtaining it. As tension grew, the press,

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<sup>4</sup>David, pp. 150-152.

<sup>5</sup>Yellen, pp. 41-44.

which had been somewhat favorable, withdrew its support. The Chicago Times went so far as to advise that hand grenades be used against agitators for an eight-hour day. The anarchists, not to be intimidated, had a parade of hungry people carrying red and black flags past fine homes, where they stopped to jeer.<sup>6</sup>

At the McCormick Harvester factory, some employees were dismissed for belonging to a union, despite the management's promise a month before that they would not be dismissed for this. While the matter was being discussed, McCormick closed the plant, locking out all 1,400 employees. When he reopened on March 2, he had hired all new workers, calling on Pinkerton guards and many policemen for protection.

The discharged employees were naturally prone to create disturbances around the plant. On May 3, a gathering of the Lumber Shovers' Union, on strike for a shorter work day, was held near McCormick. August Spies addressed them at the request of the Central Labor Union. At first they were antagonistic to him because he was a socialist, but a union spokesman assured them he was authorized to speak. Spies spoke moderately to the 6000 men, urging them to hold out against their employer. Before he had finished speaking, about five hundred men from his audience dashed off after the new McCormick employees, who were leaving the plant. Unable to

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<sup>6</sup>Symes and Clement, p. 171.

stop them, Spies finished his talk. The departing men were McCormick strikers, who attacked the "scabs" and drove them back into the factory. The police when they arrived attacked the strikers, and were pursuing them when Spies came upon the scene. Spies was horrified to see some of the laborers fall wounded or dead as he watched. Unable to get the Lumber-Shovers to assist the workmen, Spies hurried to his office (the Arbeiter-Zeitung) to write a circular denouncing the police action.<sup>7</sup> Yellen gives a slightly different version of the McCormick affair, in which the police are definitely the aggressors.<sup>8</sup> The newspapers blamed the riot on anarchists, liquor, or on August Spies.

When Spies was asked by the International to address a gathering planned by the labor unions to protest police brutality, he quickly agreed. Handbills, announcing the meeting, were being printed as Spies noticed a line which read, "WORKMEN ARM YOURSELVES AND APPEAR IN FULL FORCE!" The line was struck out of all but three hundred of the 20,000 printed, at Spies's request. He left late for the meeting at Haymarket Square, because German speakers always appeared last on the program, and he left his revolver with a friend before the meeting, as usual. When he arrived at the square, only a few people were there, and there was no sign of Parsons. So Spies

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<sup>7</sup>David, pp. 189-190.

<sup>8</sup>Yellen, p. 52.

climbed on a wagon to begin his speech. Parsons arrived to begin his speech about nine o'clock.<sup>9</sup>

About two thousand people, at most, including women and children, were there at any time during the meeting. By then Spies's first anger had worn off, so the speeches were calm, as Mayor Carter Harrison later told the police. The Mayor went home, and so did the Chief of Police, leaving Inspector John Bonfield in charge of the nearby Desplaines Street station. Bonfield had a reputation for rash actions and brutality. It began to rain, and portions of the crowd drifted away. Samuel Fielden, the last and most vehement speaker, had an audience of no more than three hundred people. An alarmed listener ran to tell Bonfield that the speaker had said the law must be throttled, killed, and stabbed. This was enough for the excitable inspector, who marched one hundred seventy-six policemen to Haymarket.<sup>10</sup>

Just as Fielden uttered the words, "In conclusion," the inspector interrupted with the order to disperse immediately and peacefully. Fielden answered that they were peaceable; but just as he was speaking, a bomb was thrown from nearby, killing one officer and fatally wounding others. The police fired into the crowd, some of whom were armed and fired back. There were many casualties.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>David, pp. 194-203.

<sup>10</sup>Lewis, p. 160.

<sup>11</sup>Symes and Clement, p. 173.

The Chicago press became highly emotional and vengeful, blaming the anarchists immediately, and demanding their blood. The bomb-thrower was never identified, but indictments were brought against eight alleged anarchists, even though some of them could prove that they were not in the vicinity when the bomb was detonated. After a trial later called unjust, five of the men were executed for having incited unnamed persons to murder. Indignation was aroused throughout the nation not against the anarchists alone, but against socialists and labor organizations as well. In 1893 John P. Atgeld, then a governor, pardoned the three men who were still living, at the price of his own popularity.<sup>12</sup>

Actually most anarchists were not men of violence; even Johann Most, whose speeches and writings were considered incendiary, was described as a prudent man by one who knew him. Samuel Gompers tells how he was seen to creep cautiously from behind the curtains of the stage after the police had broken up one of his meetings.<sup>13</sup> Yet the message of the anarchists may have stirred up less prudent men to acts of violence.

The labor movement suffered severely from the Haymarket disaster. Labor leaders were obliged to renounce the bomb-throwing and declare their disassociation with anarchy. Because many of them felt that the seven men who were sentenced

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>13</sup>Samuel Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor, (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1925), II, 177.

to death were unfairly accused, the Knights of Labor adopted the following resolve:

That this General Assembly appeals for mercy for the seven men at Chicago to be executed.

That, while we ask for mercy for the condemned men, we are not in sympathy with the acts of the anarchists, nor any attempts of individuals or associated bodies that teach or practice violent infractions of the law, believing that peaceful methods are the surest and best means to secure the necessary reform.<sup>14</sup>

Another result of the Haymarket affair was to slow down or postpone the reform movement by causing men who had been sympathetic to reform, to become antagonistic instead. An example of this tendency might be seen in Francis A. Walker, professor of political economy, who claimed to have been the first in his profession to declare that the sympathy of the community may be an economic force in raising wages. He had written a tolerant explanation of socialism for Scribner's, in which he showed an understanding of the problems of labor, and a willingness to see the government intervene on its behalf. "It is the glorious privilege of governments of the people, by the people, for the people, that they derive only strength and added stability from every act honestly and prudently conceived to promote the public welfare."<sup>15</sup> After ten months of widespread and intensely bitter feeling against the revolutionaries, Walker shared the revulsion, and referred to

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<sup>14</sup>Carol D. Wright, "An Historical Sketch of the Knights of Labor," Quarterly Journal of Economics, I (January, 1887), 167-168.

<sup>15</sup>"Socialism," Scribner's Magazine, I (January, 1887), 119.

them as "brutal, dastardly hordes of law-defying, bomb-throwing anarchists and socialists." He spoke disapprovingly of the use of boycotts and also of the Knights of Labor. To correct the problems he suggested education of laborers to the end that they would not expect unreasonable gains, and not be destructive.<sup>16</sup>

Walker, like many other Americans, especially blamed the immigrant population for the situation in Chicago. Although admitting that not all foreigners were agitators, he insisted that every act of violence among labor had been instigated by foreigners. Thus to the immigrant's problems was added the blame for the Haymarket affair.

There was much talk of prohibiting the anarchists and their associations from declaring their wild ideas, and the Chicago police systematically broke up all kinds of meetings. One writer advised against muzzling the anarchists, lest it make their ideas seem more appealing to the masses. Nevertheless when the agitators instigated a crime, he explained, punishment should be swift and certain, to the defending lawyers as well as the agitator!<sup>17</sup>

The Socialistic Labor Party had already severely condemned the use of dynamite in London in 1885. At a meeting

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<sup>16</sup>"What Shall We Tell the Working Class?" Scribner's Magazine, II (November, 1887), 625-627.

<sup>17</sup>H. C. Adams, "Shall We Muzzle the Anarchists?", Forum, I (July, 1886), 450, 453-454.

in New York called by the moderates to protest this violent tactic, the Internationalists, who approved of violence, and the Socialists actually fought over the issue. Any hope of a reconciliation between the two groups vanished at Haymarket. The Socialistic Labor Party issued a pamphlet purporting to show that socialism and anarchism were opposites and enemies.<sup>18</sup>

At least a few Americans realized the distinction between anarchism and socialism. Richard J. Hinton, who wrote concerning "Organizations of the Discontented," pointed out that a genuine socialist could not be in accord with the Red International, as Socialists did not advocate revolution, but preparation and education. This insight led him to the observation that Americans should welcome the security of labor if the threat of the discontented was to fade.<sup>19</sup>

A voice for moderation which the bomb did not silence was that of Richard Ely. Noting that socialist ideas were spreading widely, Ely reassured his readers that there was no threat from non-violent socialism, but rather from the incendiaries at both extremes, the "poor and ignorant who would destroy wealth, or those of the rich and cultured who would shoot down workingmen like dogs." He warned against trying to suppress ideas by political force.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ely, Labor Movement, pp. 229, 288.

<sup>19</sup>Forum, VII (July, 1889), 548-552.

<sup>20</sup>"Socialism in America," North American Review, CXLII (June, 1886), 524-525.

There were some who saw in the tumultuous events a coming revolution, brought on by the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. One writer, foreseeing an economic revolution, warned that the existing regime could not hinder its coming to "redistribute wealth on a reasonable basis." He censured the materialism of his day, the "callous indifference to every instinct which does not make for wealth." Warning that since a growing number of workers see capitalism, together with the government which upholds it, as their enemy, he urged preparation for a peaceable change.<sup>21</sup>

Lester Ward, economist and social theorist, took a similar viewpoint. The rich were not making good use of their leisure time. A future revolution would be likely to be social, and directed against the power of wealth, which was sustaining a large idle class. He warned that revolutions were often caused by insistence on old ways when public feeling was unfavorable to them. This might be prevented by recognizing the change and meeting the demands.<sup>22</sup> Revolutionary schemes need not alarm Americans if they realize that the government is not to be feared in a democratic country. The working people should understand that the government is precisely what they make it, Ward advised.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>William Barry, "Signs of Impending Revolution," Forum, VII (March, 1889), pp. 165, 168, 170, 174.

<sup>22</sup>Lester F. Ward, "The Use and Abuse of Wealth," Forum, II (February, 1887), 556-557.

<sup>23</sup>Ward, "False Notions of Government," Forum, III, (June, 1887), 372.

Though his wealth was as yet unmolested, Andrew Carnegie felt it expedient to defend the class he represented. He assured the public that the concept of the great rapacious capitalist was almost a myth, since most large companies were owned by stockholders.<sup>24</sup> This was the typical subterfuge of the elite group who sought rewards without responsibility.

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<sup>24</sup>"Results of the Labor Struggle," Forum, I (August, 1886), 538-551.

## SOCIALISM TAKES ROOTS IN AMERICA

After the Haymarket affair had discredited anarchism, more conservative members gained control of the Socialist Labor Party. A visit in 1886 by German socialists Wilhelm Liebknecht, Dr. Edward Aveling, and his wife Eleanor (daughter of Karl Marx), revived the Party. The visitors were pleased at the "unconscious socialism" they found advocated by many Americans, and urged American novelists to write about the proletariat. Liebknecht likewise advised party members to enter more into American life, adapting their methods and propaganda to the tastes of the people.<sup>1</sup>

Another reviving influence on the Party was the Henry George campaign in New York in the same year. In Progress and Poverty, published seven years earlier, Henry George had proposed his "Single-Tax" theory as a solution to the problem of unequal distribution of wealth. The book achieved an instant and enormous popularity, and while the Socialists did not agree with George on the cure he advocated, they were willing to work for George's election as mayor because "they saw in it a movement of labor against capital," as Socialist Morris Hillquit explained. Joining ranks with labor organizations and various reformers they created the United Labor

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<sup>1</sup>Symes and Clement, pp. 180-181.

Party of New York, which enthusiastically nominated Henry George for Mayor. The Socialists were the most active of George's campaigners, helping them to come very near to a victory (which many people supposed was prevented only by a fraudulent count). After the election the single-tax group expelled the Socialists from the United Labor Party, by which means the party was so weakened that the movement was soon abandoned.<sup>2</sup>

The unsuccessful coalition had lasting results, in that the labor organizers and reformers absorbed some of the socialistic philosophy, while the Socialists became more Americanized. Another result of George's campaign was to motivate the old line parties to pass labor legislation, which in turn weakened the Socialists' political appeal.

Another Americanizing influence which helped the socialists was the book The Co-operative Commonwealth, published in 1884 by Lawrence Gronlund, the first to explain Marxism in American terms and adapt it to American conditions. Gronlund, a Danish-born lawyer, teacher, and lecturer, subscribed to conventional Marxist doctrine except that he did not accept the class-struggle concept, preferring to emphasize the evolutionary rather than the revolutionary aspects of communism.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Hillquit, pp. 272-79.

<sup>3</sup>Quint, p. 28.

Another even more influential book was the novel Looking Backward, published by Edward Bellamy four years later. Richard Hinton refers to the book as an American Marxist presentation,<sup>4</sup> but Bellamy was not in fact a Marxist. While he was advocating socialism, his avoidance of party terminology enhanced the spread of his ideas. In the book, the hero awakes in the year 2000 to a utopian world where the state had peacefully taken over the economy. This ethical socialism appealed to Americans who were appalled by Marx's class struggle, and supplied a pattern for socialists to reframe Marxist doctrines to suit popular thinking. It lead ultimately to communism for some people, and was the immediate cause of the formation of Nationalist Clubs all over the country, advocating education toward a gradual state socialism.<sup>5</sup>

Some indication of the spread of ideas sharply critical of the economy might be inferred from a perusal of Grover Cleveland's fourth and last message to Congress in December of 1888. He mentioned "combinations, monopolies, and aggregations of capital" which were rewarded not solely as a result of "sturdy industry and enlightened foresight," but through "the discriminating favor of the government." Corporations which should have been the "carefully restrained creatures of the law" and the servants of the people instead

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<sup>4</sup>Hinton, p. 545.

<sup>5</sup>Symes and Clement, pp. 186-187.

were "fast becoming the people's masters." Republican papers called the speech the "snarl of a beaten candidate," but the New York Evening Post said that the capitalistic class needed a shock.<sup>6</sup>

Another event that helped to Americanize the party was the arrival of Jewish immigrants, eager to learn the ways of their new country. Morris Hillquit was among those who joined the party in 1888.<sup>7</sup>

One of the men who used Bellamy's book as a path to Marxism was Daniel DeLeon, who, while a lecturer on international law at Columbia University, had supported the George campaign, to the disgust of the University officials. His public espousal of Bellamy's socialistic ideas, and his protest of the death-sentence of the anarchists of Haymarket, further alienated him from the school. DeLeon left the University in 1889 to become a member of the Socialist Labor Party, of which he soon became not only a leader but also the editor of its English-language paper, because of his intelligence and determination.<sup>8</sup> While he was praised by Lenin as a theorist,<sup>9</sup> nevertheless, by his insistence on strict Marxism

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<sup>6</sup>Oberholtzer, V, 79-80.

<sup>7</sup>Persons and Egbert, I, 244.

<sup>8</sup>Quint, pp. 144-145.

<sup>9</sup>Curti, p. 626.

and his intolerance of others' opinions, he kept the party small.

DeLeon favored both a political and an economic organization of the working class, who were handicapped, he felt, by their lack of class consciousness, for since they felt united by brotherhood with other Americans, it seemed wrong to them to work against their employers. Trade unions had little chance of success as their strikes and boycotts could not hurt large corporations. DeLeon felt that a trade union movement on an industry-wide basis, involving all kinds of workers in one industry, would be more effective, in conjunction with the Socialist Labor Party.<sup>10</sup>

Labor leaders were not interested in DeLeon's doctrinaire plans, preferring instead the immediate benefits of shorter hours and higher wages for their own members, for they were distrustful of any political action which might threaten their hope of gain. DeLeon condemned these unionists for their shortsighted concentration which obscured future hopes and wider needs.<sup>11</sup>

As part of his scheme to infiltrate labor, DeLeon joined the American Federation of Labor, along with the United Hebrew Trades, which Morris Hillquit had organized in 1888 along socialist lines. When the Knights were electing a

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<sup>10</sup>Quint, pp. 148-152.

<sup>11</sup>Charles A. Madison, Critics and Crusaders (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1959), 2nd ed., pp. 472-473.

president in 1894, DeLeon offered Lucien Sanial, a fellow socialist, his support if he would appoint DeLeon editor of the Journal of the Knights of Labor. Assisted by DeLeon, Sanial achieved the presidency, but for some reason failed to keep his agreement, to DeLeon's disgust. The next year the Knight's executive board expelled the socialists from their union,<sup>12</sup> whereupon DeLeon commented that "the trade union leaders will let you bore from within only enough to throw you out through that hole bored by you."<sup>13</sup>

That same year the expelled socialists met in Cooper Union Hall to organize a militant labor union, concerning which Sanial announced, "We are going to organize the working classes . . . to take the reins of government in their own hands," citing the French socialists for precedents. Enthusiastic applause greeted DeLeon's assertion that "You have the right to snatch excessive property from those who hold it." This organization, the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, was to be the economic revolutionary organ of the laboring man, just as the Socialist Labor Party was to be the political organ. Whenever there was trouble or strife within the A. F. of L., the Socialist T. and L. A. endeavored to benefit from it.<sup>14</sup> Yet this new union never obtained prominence or strength, maintaining a separate existence until its merger

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<sup>12</sup>Quint, pp. 153-160.

<sup>13</sup>Madison, p. 473.

<sup>14</sup>Quint, pp. 161-5.

with other groups in 1905 to form the Industrial Workers of the World.<sup>15</sup>

In formulating the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance DeLeon created a hopeless rift between the radicals and organized labor, based on his own misunderstanding of the American laborer. Many who had belonged to DeLeon's group moved over into organized labor, demonstrating that the average worker is more interested in immediate limited gains than in a proletarian revolution.<sup>16</sup>

Another man who became a socialist through studying socialist tracts and Looking Backward was Julius A. Wayland, a Colorado business man, in about 1890. The Socialist Labor Party of which he was a member cooperated with the Populists in political campaigns, without the stress experienced by such ventures in the East. Wayland was annoyed by DeLeon's condemnation of the Populists. Just before the panic of 1893, which he anticipated, Wayland sold out his business and launched a socialist newspaper, Coming Nation. The magazine quickly became very popular, showing a profit as well, for Wayland judged the interests of his readers shrewdly. He printed basic socialist works such as Gronlund's Co-operative Commonwealth, rather than Marx, which would have been discouragingly difficult for his readers. After an unsuccessful attempt to form a communitarian colony, Wayland

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<sup>15</sup>Madison, p. 473.

<sup>16</sup>Symes and Clement, pp. 191-2.

left the colony and newspaper, but began another paper very soon, The Appeal to Reason, which by 1900 was the most widely read socialist paper in the United States.<sup>17</sup>

Beginning in the late 1880's a change took place in the American attitude toward socialism, as evidenced by the writings of certain prominent citizens. The new position was made possible by two underlying trends: First, a change in American thinking with respect to economic and social problems, and second, a change in the nature of the socialist position.

While the United States was rapidly industrializing, the apologists for laissez-faire had hastily thrown up a barricade of ideas to protect the interests of capital. The resulting philosophy was too contrary to the equalitarian, Christian heritage of thinking Americans to last long.

The first economist to devote himself to breaking down this barricade was Lester Ward, who severely condemned the power of wealth which was "producing an idle class, or caste, sheltered behind the forms of law, but odious to the changing spirit of the age." Ward suggested that the time might come when some of the most successful modes of getting money at that time would be considered crimes. The rich had better make good the title to their wealth by using it wisely, he warned, "to avert the impending crisis by . . . taking hold with will and energy of the active duties of life."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Quint, pp. 179-197.

<sup>18</sup>Ward, "The Use and Abuse of Wealth," pp. 556-7.

The nineties brought an interest in reform which reached the intellectuals, as especially evidenced by the works of William Dean Howells. His The Rise of Silas Lapham suggested an awakening consciousness of social problems, while in 1890 A Hazard of New Fortunes dealt boldly with social problems in New York. A reviewer of his Traveller from Altruria, a Utopian novel, concluded that the idea of laissez-faire was unchristian, and that Howells' book entered a "significant and beautiful protest" against it. The notion of divine right of kings, continued the reviewer, perished not just by revolution, but by men becoming aware that it had no foundation, and so likewise would the theory of divine right of millionaires.<sup>19</sup>

Edmund J. James, late President of the University of Illinois, in his review of a book by economist Henry Carter Adams, gave a clear statement of the new American position toward economic problems:

We have little or nothing to hope from socialism, and quite as little from the extreme form of laissez-faire-ism; for if the former would abolish all existing industrial institutions and put unworkable ones in their place, the latter would resist all healthy change and reform, until the forces of progress, bursting all bounds, might sweep away not only all barriers to change, but even society itself.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Atlantic Monthly, LXXIV (November, 1894), 703.

<sup>20</sup>Edmund J. James, Review of Outline of Lectures Upon Political Economy, by Henry Carter Adams. Political Science Quarterly, II (March, 1887), 186-188.

The exposure of the brutal tactics of capitalists undoubtedly helped to shape the American attitude. Henry D. Lloyd's Wealth Against Commonwealth, published in 1874, and Thorstein Veblen's Theory of the Leisure Class, took a clear and critical look at our socio-economic situation. Lloyd was especially critical of the theories of social Darwinism,<sup>21</sup> feeling that in a laissez-faire economy, only the most vicious would survive. Critical of the church because it had ranged itself on the side of the economic system, rather than calling for the golden rule to be put into practice in every phase of men's lives, Veblen called the labor movement the most religious movement of the age.<sup>22</sup> Lloyd never joined the Socialist Party,<sup>23</sup> and Veblen, though he valued Marx's effort to free mankind, was critical of his system. Yet they influenced other Americans to make a fresh examination of the economic and social order in our country.

A contemporary reaction to Lloyd may be found in the magazine Arena for October, 1894, which affirmed that while Lloyd sought to arouse the conscience, he had no "scheme of state socialism like that of Lasalle or of internationalism

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<sup>21</sup>Social Darwinism here refers to the application of the "survival of the fittest" concept to economics. See Richard Hofstadter's Social Darwinism in American Thought (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

<sup>22</sup>Sidney Fine, Laissez-Faire and the General Welfare State (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1956), p. 342.

<sup>23</sup>Daniel Aaron, ed. America in Crisis (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), p. 164.

like that of Karl Marx." When addressing a group in Chicago who were protesting a police raid on a peaceful worker's meeting, Lloyd told the group that their citizenship conferred power to break evils of society, which they must use, or lose. The same writer criticized those who talked Christianity but did not live it.<sup>24</sup>

The antithesis between the words of the Gospel they were proclaiming and the life they were living became apparent to some churchmen, of whom a few became outspoken advocates of the social gospel.<sup>25</sup> George D. Herron, whose address, "The Message of Jesus to Men of Wealth," attracted much attention, was one of these.<sup>26</sup> Another was Washington Gladden, who championed the help of the state for securing employment for workers, which might be called socialism, he admitted, but was better than pauperism.<sup>27</sup>

Ely, while not a preacher, had reached the same conclusion, saying the teachings of Christ contain just what

<sup>24</sup>Peter Latchford, "A Social Reformer," Arena, LIX, 584.

<sup>25</sup>By "social gospel," as used here, is meant the Christian message which stresses the need for social unity, the ultimate solution in Christian love, and the need to work toward the coming of the kingdom. See Stow Persons's American Minds (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1958), pp. 410-412.

<sup>26</sup>Filler, p. 246.

<sup>27</sup>Fine, pp. 328-9.

is needed to solve the nation's problems, but the church must learn to keep the second great commandment.<sup>28</sup>

The influence of Marxian socialism on the social gospel may be questioned. In Gabriel's opinion, "The Christian socialism of the social gospel owed nothing to the materialistic dialectic of the class struggle of Marx."<sup>29</sup> It would be more reasonable to suggest that the social gospel was a reaction to the needy condition of men and the callous indifference of social Darwinism.

The change in the nature of socialist teachings relates somewhat to socialist experiences with the labor movement. The accomplishments of labor leaders toward shorter hours and better pay became "the chief and successful rival of Marxian socialism in the American labor movement of the last third of the century," declared Gabriel.<sup>30</sup> The new humanism of the 1890's was the "American substitute for Marxism."<sup>31</sup> It was native-born, and taught that man could make a better society without revolution, which is born out by another contemporary writer in Forum, who insisted that "the true answer to Socialism, with its barbarous schemes for the abolition of capital,

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<sup>28</sup>Ely, Labor Movement, p. 331.

<sup>29</sup>Ralph H. Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought (New York: Ronald Press, 1940), p. 330.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 214.

will be given by a vast extension of co-operation which will make every man a capitalist."<sup>32</sup> The Marxist term, rule of the proletariat, meant rule of the immigrant to many of that day, which would have been most unwelcome. On the other hand, growing acceptance of reform ideas impressed the socialists. While Laurence Gronlund had already dismissed the class struggle as incompatible with American thought, other moderate socialists found ways of interpreting socialism which were more acceptable.

An important objection to communistic doctrines was expressed by Henry Van Dyke, who said:

There is a fundamental and absolute difference between the doctrine of the Bible and the doctrine of the communizer. For the Bible tells me that I must deal my bread to the hungry, while the communizer tells the hungry that he may take it for himself.<sup>33</sup>

An answer to this and other objections was put forward by Philip S. Moxom, in a manner which shows a conciliatory adaptation on the part of that socialist, saying one should not be afraid to take a good look at socialism. Present in the forms of the post office, army, and water and sewer works, it is the opposite of unsocialism, as people work together rather than against each other. Moxom quoted Professor J. B. Clark who announced that "Competition without moral restraints

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<sup>32</sup>W. S. Lilly, "The Ethics of Property," Forum, VIII (February, 1890), 595-611.

<sup>33</sup>"Christianity and Communism," Forum, IV (November, 1887), 304.

is a monster." After a systematic attempt at refutation of misconceptions of socialism, Moxom concluded that "Christian Socialism plants itself squarely on the truth that man is the child of God, that God is love, and that therefore men are brothers and are meant to be helpers of each other in the progressive realization of the kingdom of God."<sup>34</sup>

Not all socialists would have been in agreement with this statement, but among those who felt much the same were members of the American Fabian Society, formed in 1895, and patterned on the British movement. Leading American Fabians were Dr. William P. Bliss and Laurence Gronlund. Another related movement was the Social Reform Club, whose members included Charles Sothern, Earnest Crosby, John B. Walker, and W. J. Ghent. Once a member of the Socialist Labor Party, Sothern had been expelled by DeLeon for his lack of Marxist spirit.<sup>35</sup> After the 1896 presidential campaign the Fabians, who had supported Bryan, became discouraged with political activity, turning instead to gradual socialism as suggested by Ely and Frank Parsons. In keeping with this trend, Joseph E. Scott changed the name of his journal from The Socialist to Social Economist. Others, such as Herbert N. Casson, also expelled from the Socialist Labor Party, advised working with other reform groups in a non-partisan way, toward eventual

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<sup>34</sup>"Christian Socialism, New England Magazine, X (March, 1894), 25, 28.

<sup>35</sup>Symes and Clement, pp. 204-5.

transformation of society. Bliss, Casson, and Eltweed Pomeroy were convinced that the British Fabians' methods were best for the United States, rather than insisting on a class struggle, which, they felt, hindered the progress of socialism.<sup>36</sup> In 1897 Edward Bellamy published Equality, which buttressed the literature of American Fabian socialism, as did Gronlund's The New Economy. Equality was intended to show how the United States could evolve from a dictatorship by business into a socialistic order. The New Economy urged socialists to abandon the class struggle, relying instead on education.<sup>37</sup>

British experiments in cooperative ownership or management of business and industry were described by Lloyd in his book Labour Co-Partnership, reviewed by Nation in October of 1898. A new attitude of acceptance toward a modified socialism is evident in the review, which finds the chief significance of the movement in its realization of "all that socialism ever promised to the working classes," doing so "without any social disturbance, without encroaching upon any person's rights, and without asking any special favors from the Government." This is contrasted with the teachings of Karl Marx who would set class against class.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Quint, pp. 250-1.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 273-6.

<sup>38</sup>Nation, LXVII (October 13, 1898), 273.

This Fabian socialism was not unacceptable to labor unions which by the middle nineties were both politically minded and strongly socialistic in their platforms. Leaders such as Tom Mann, John Burns, and Ben Tillett were Fabian-type socialists, asserted a columnist in the New England Magazine. In opposition to the Social Democracy of Hyndman and William Morris, who wanted all means of production immediately placed under government control, Fabians wanted gradual assumption by cities of street cars, water and gas, and other necessary services. They did not want to control men, but to provide facilities for men to utilize, in an age which might well be designated the age of divine right of property. Nearly all unions sought government ownership of railroads, telegraphs, and telephones, the columnist asserted.<sup>39</sup>

Ely advised the practical expedient of listening to the complaints of the oppressed, discussing them, and granting their requests if they were just. Before judging the actions of labor, he recommended taking into account the circumstances. Men should work for the improvement of the laboring class through labor organizations, schools, churches, and the government. There should be equality before the law, Ely stressed, and no legal repression of the labor movement, which would only drive it underground. The function of social

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<sup>39</sup>N. O. Nelson, "Organized Labor," New England Magazine, XIII (November, 1895), 341-4.

science, Ely declared, is to teach men to keep the second great commandment.<sup>40</sup>

A practical demonstration of this philosophy was carried on by social reformers, one of whom was Jane Addams. Her work of befriending immigrants at Hull House was most effective. In an article written in 1892, she told about the Working People's Social Science Club, which met at Hull House for discussions. She felt (unlike the Chicago police) that the only danger to America from radicals lay in attempting to suppress theories. "Nothing so disconcerts a social agitator as to find among his auditors men who have been through all that and who are quite as radical as he in another direction." Miss Addams also mentioned economic conferences that were held for laborers and businessmen in 1888-89, which if held sooner might, in the opinion of many, have prevented the Haymarket riot.<sup>41</sup>

Thus socialism, as it discarded its irreconcilable elements of violence and class struggle, and as segments of its environment lost the hostile elements of selfishness and prejudice, took root in America. As Ely expressed it, socialism would take so long to accomplish, perhaps hundreds of years, that there was nothing to fear from it. The new climate can be sensed in Ely's calm proposition: "Now, if our descendants,

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<sup>40</sup>Ely, Labor Movement, p. 287.

<sup>41</sup>"An Effort Toward Social Democracy," Forum, XIV (October, 1892), 239-40.

generations hence, are convinced, as a result of successive experimental steps, that pure socialism is the best industrial form, it certainly need give us no concern, and it were foolish to pass a single sleepless night in lamentations over the prospect." There was danger, he felt, in repressing free and open inquiry, but the really dangerous forces were those of disintegration.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Ely, Labor Movement, p. 287.

## REBELLION

While these changes which made possible the Americanization of socialism were taking place, the leader of the Socialist Labor Party, Daniel DeLeon was deliberately resisting all change. He kept the party small by consistently weeding out any dissenters, until there were many more socialists outside the party than within it.

A new and more flexible socialist leader soon to come to the foreground was Eugene Victor Debs, who had organized the American Railway Union during the depression of 1893, and had won a strike victory over the Great Northern.<sup>1</sup> When trouble broke out at Pullman, in the form of a strike and lock-out, the workers appealed to the Railway Union for help. After Debs came to survey the situation, his sympathy was aroused by what he saw. George M. Pullman, a bitter opponent of unions, provided for every aspect of his employees' lives in Pullman, Illinois, one of the most extreme examples of a "company town" in American industrial history. When the depression brought a reduction in wages and lay-offs, no reductions were made in rents or in company store prices. Rents in Pullman were already 20-25% higher than those in nearby Chicago, according to figures given by Almont Lindsey. The

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<sup>1</sup>Ginger, Age of Excess, p. 166.

Pullman Corporation showed a profit which could have been used to prevent the wage reduction, even during the depression.<sup>2</sup>

Debs tried to arbitrate, but Pullman refused to talk to him. Warning against violence, Debs called on other members of the Railway Union for a boycott of Pullman cars. When eventually some violence occurred, Chicago businessmen, ignoring Governor Altgeld, who was known to be sympathetic to labor, appealed to the president. Despite Altgeld's protest that the troops were not needed, President Cleveland sent 10,000 regular troops, which resulted in an increase of violence. An ironic use of a law intended to restrict business occasioned Debs's arrest under the Sherman Anti-Trust Law, when he refused to call off the strike. The court finally broke the strike by issuing an injunction against Debs ordering him to refrain from prolonging the strike. When Debs refused to comply he was jailed again. The A. F. of L., although asserting its sympathy, would not violate the injunction, and thus gave its support to what was to become an important weapon of big business.<sup>3</sup>

Debs, who had already been influenced by Bellamy's work, studied socialistic literature while serving his term in the Woodstock jail, and was visited by Victor Berger, a

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<sup>2</sup>The Pullman Strike, (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1942), pp. 92, 100.

<sup>3</sup>Symes and Clement, pp. 198-9.

Milwaukee socialist.<sup>4</sup> While Lindsey affirms that Debs became a socialist at this time,<sup>5</sup> Quint takes the view that the failure of the Democratic-Populist combination in 1896 was the turning point of Debs's life, and Coleman's biography substantiates this claim.<sup>6</sup> In 1897, Debs concluded the affairs of the American Railway Union, and three days later launched the Social Democracy of America, affirming socialism was the only hope for the masses. Old railroader friends from the Union, and some members of a utopian organization (at this time Debs was interested in the establishment of a communitarian colony) joined with him, including Richard Hinton, Emma Goldman, and J. A. Wayland. The odd combination of labor leaders and utopianists lasted only a year, after which the politically minded formed a new party, the Social Democratic Party of America, of which Debs was treasurer, while Victor Berger, who influenced Debs against colonization, assisted in the planning.<sup>7</sup> The Social Democrats offered DeLeon the editorship of an English-language socialist paper, but he ignored the offer from what he considered a "reformist movement" unworthy of a Marxist.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Marvin Wachman, History of the Social-Democratic Party of Milwaukee in Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences, XXVIII, No. 1. (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois, 1945), 15.

<sup>5</sup>Lindsey, p. 304.

<sup>6</sup>McAlister Coleman, Eugene V. Debs (New York: Greenberg, 1930), pp. 169, 184-5.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 196-7.

<sup>8</sup>Wachman, p. 21.

The obvious advantages of a union between the two socialist organizations did not impress DeLeon.

Beginning about June, 1898, DeLeon discovered a new foe in the person of socialist J. A. Wayland, who began assailing him every week in his newspaper, Appeal to Reason.<sup>9</sup> Soon after that Morris Hillquit, utilizing the Volkszeitung, commenced his own war on DeLeon, who took refuge in the journal, People, which he edited. This culminated in a conflict followed by a party split, in which the followers of Hillquit left the party. The Social Democrats were not enthusiastic about accepting the Hillquit faction, but managed to work with them in a presidential campaign, in which Debs polled 97,000 votes. The official union of the two socialist groups took place in 1901, when the resulting new party took on the name, Socialist Party of America,<sup>10</sup> representing at least 10,000 members, of whom only 20% were foreign born.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>11</sup>Hillquit, pp. 338-9.

## CONCLUSION

Socialistic organizations made little appreciable impact on the United States, for their agitations were either ignored by the majority or heartily resented. Their propaganda for the most part accomplished very little, while their attempt at infiltration of labor unions failed miserably. The ineffectuality of the organizations may be laid to several factors:

1. The lack of a large, permanently depressed class in America.
2. The incompatibility of their propaganda with the American mind.
3. The narrowness of their appeal.
4. The foreign character of early organizations.
5. The lack of unity among the socialists.

As has already been pointed out, economic conditions, especially during the depressions, were most unfavorable for a majority of Americans, but the depressions were not permanent, and the citizens impoverished by them could both remember and anticipate better conditions. The American mind, rich in the heritage of Puritan ethics, rural independence, Jacksonian equalitarianism, and the long promise of the good life America had held out to the world, was not receptive to the ideas of class warfare, destruction, and violation of

property rights. The Marxist appeal especially directed itself to the propertyless urban industrial worker, but had nothing to offer other segments of the population.

The socialist appeal was most effective among the foreign-born who crowded into urban tenement districts, being for much of this period directed by, and expressly to, German immigrants. This success severely restricted the socialist appeal by characterizing it as "foreign agitation." Instead of analyzing the problems of America and seeking a remedy for them, the Marxists endeavored to apply a ready-made solution prescribed for a foreign situation.

Throughout this period there was a constant difference of opinion among socialists as to just what their objectives and methods should be. Leaders were not content to disagree peaceably, but created schisms within their organizations, dissipating most of their energies in castigating one another rather than their capitalistic foes. What most handicapped them from this standpoint was their inability to work together toward common goals.

It might be concluded that the Marxists to some extent influenced the reform movement which began in about the 1890's. This was not their intention, for they scorned any intimation of reformist tendencies. Fabians did espouse reform, but they were not Marxian socialists. The reform movement, if influenced at all by Marxism, was delayed and handicapped by the Marxists who not only mistrusted reform, but

sought to alienate the upper classes from which the reformers would be drawn. In addition, their encouragement of violence offended the working class, and their atheism alienated the churches which might otherwise be expected to support reform. The main assistance which Marxism might have given to the reform movement was in calling attention to the need for reform.

When anarchism was discredited by the Haymarket riot, the element of violence, which had characterized the radical fringe, was denounced by the socialists. Then with the publication of Gronlund's Cooperative Commonwealth and other similar works, the class struggle was eliminated from their agenda. The Fabians brought socialism a step closer to popular acceptance by their substitution of reform for revolution, that is gradual rather than immediate change. Yet this watered-down socialism, as DeLeon would hasten to insist, was not Marxism. It was, instead, an American adaptation of selected elements of the Marxist theory; a far-reaching plan of reform, which could well have been derived from native American experience. DeLeon, by his insistence on strict interpretation, made the changes in doctrine more evident and hence more acceptable to those who opposed Marxian socialism. The rebellion against DeLeon, while it had no impact on society, did prepare the way for a more moderate and adaptable organization.

The intellectual impact of its native-American literature was by far the most effective aspect of socialism, for

it influenced men's minds against the injustices of the social order and toward possible remedies. Those espousing any form of socialism were, however, still in a small minority by the turn of the century, and most of the goals for reform lay far ahead. It might well be affirmed that America influenced Marxism much more than Marxism influenced America.



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