Trade Union Politics and the Socialist Party of America: The Investigations of Robert Franklin Hoxie, 1908-1913*

by

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Abstract

At the turn of the twentieth century, various Socialist parties vied for a place in the American political system, making alliances where possible and convenient with elements of organized labor. Robert Franklin Hoxie, an economist at the University of Chicago whose principle contributions lay in his writings on the labor movement, wrote a series of essays in which he scrutinized the activities of the Socialist Party of America as it appeared to be at the time poised to become a viable force in American politics. This essay examines Hoxie's writings on the conventions of the Socialist Party within the context of the political dynamic of the period and reveals his interpretations of events based on contemporary accounts and first-hand observations.

Introduction

Robert Franklin Hoxie of the University of Chicago is best known for his studies of the American labor movement, his analysis of the practical applications of the principles of scientific management, and his participation in the activities of the United States Commission on Industrial Relations, and is considered to have been instrumental in the establishment of Institutional economics, a term he is said to have used to describe his own approach to the subject.[1] He was in his time considered a bright and rising star within the Department of Political Economy, having published articles in economic theory, methodology, labor issues, and economic history. His tragic suicide in 1916 deprived the social sciences in general and economics in particular of one of the brightest minds of the era.[2]

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[1] As Walton Hamilton (1916) so declares.

[2] A lengthy presentation of Hoxie's life and work is McCann and Kapuria-Foreman, 2016.

Interest in Socialism as an academic subject

In addition to his work on labor problems, which comprises a large portion of his intellectual output,[3] Hoxie was one of the few academic economists to take seriously the emergence in the United States of the Socialist political parties and to analyze and report on their activities and motivations. Hoxie's interest in the subjects of Socialism and Marxism can be seen to have been piqued as early as 1904. At Cornell University, Hoxie, as an Instructor in Political Economy, taught courses in Modern Socialism and Contemporary Socialism in the Department of History and Political Science from 1904-1906. The *Announcement of Courses of Instruction* for the academic year 1905-1906 identifies the course in Modern Socialism: The Modern Socialist Movement as providing an account of the historical development of Socialism since the French Revolution. The stated aim of the course was to identify the underlying causes behind the emergence of the modern Socialist movement and to examine the Socialist critiques of capitalism, the theoretical bases and practical agenda of the movement, and the nature of Socialism as a political and social force in Europe and America (Cornell University 1905, p.45).

A companion course, Contemporary Socialism, also taught by Hoxie, offered a "critical study" of the modern-day Socialist movements, "with reference to their strength, organization, ideals, theories and methods." The course as well centered on "the ideas of some of the most able critics of enlarged state activity and socialism," with the aim of determining "the relation of contemporary socialism to various essential aspects of modern life" (Cornell University 1905, p.45).

At the University of Chicago, Hoxie continued to lecture on the subject of Socialism, teaching a course in the Department of Political Economy. (From 1893 to 1904, the course had been taught by Thorstein Veblen,[4] who early on was influential in the development of Hoxie's thought.) The University of Chicago *Annual Register* for 1907-1908 identifies the course as "[a] positive and critical study of the activities, the philosophy, and the constructive programme of contemporary socialism." Here the focus was to be on a review of the works of Karl Marx and "other prominent theoretical writers," as well as a critical examination of "the constructive

[3] Hoxie published only one book in his lifetime, *Scientific Management and Labor* (1915), based on his work with the Commission on Industrial Relations. A second book, *Trade Unionism in the United States* (1917), published posthumously, is essentially a collection of previously published essays and new material.

[4] Donald Stabile notes that "Veblen retained an avid interest in the prospects for socialism in the United States; his writing carried intentional messages for U.S. socialist intellectuals concerning their own appreciation of those prospects" (Stabile 1982, p.1).

proposals of the socialistic parties" with an eye to "determining the probable outcome of the movement" (University of Chicago *Annual Register* 1908, p.229).

Hoxie's earliest writings on the subject of Socialism were primarily in the form of book reviews. Two such are reviews of John Spargo's *Socialism: A Summary and Interpretation of Socialist Principles* (1906)[5], William Guthrie's *Socialism before the French Revolution: A History* (1907), and William H. Mallock's *A Critical Examination of Socialism* (1907), all published in the *Journal of Political Economy*. We will briefly report here on the reviews of Spargo and Mallock so as to provide a taste of Hoxie's approach to the topic.

That Hoxie chose to review John Spargo's book is perhaps easily understandable. Spargo (1876-1966) was a leading Marxist intellectual, having written numerous books and articles on the subject, including a biography of Karl Marx. Having established a reputation as a labor activist and Marxist "agitator" in his native England, he immigrated to the United States in 1901, to lecture on the topic of Socialism. A founding member of the Socialist Party of America, serving as a delegate to both the 1908 and 1912 Party conventions, he opposed the more radical, anarchistic faction of the Party.

Hoxie begins his review of Spargo's book thus: "Mr. Spargo is a veteran propagandist. This book therefore presents the view of the convinced socialist." The presentation, "written pretty definitely from the Marxian standpoint," exhibit "a strong tendency to make the essentially difficult and economically false doctrines of the master 'beautifully simple'" (Hoxie 1907a, p.122). While Spargo succeeds is presenting the Marxian doctrine "with such skilfulness and dispatch that no unsophisticated reader can doubt the simplicity, clearness, and correctness of the original," he as well dispenses with received economic theory "with a deftness and appearance of familiarity admirable in its way." Given such effort, Hoxie is left to wonder whether Socialists and Marxists should bother with economic theory at all. "Their cause would undoubtedly be strengthened by admitting the validity of modernized economics and by more frankly basing their case on humanism so far as it concerns economic justice" (p.123). Finally, Spargo's framework for an ideal Socialist State Hoxie regards as somewhat detached from the argument made throughout, as it seems to run counter to the understanding of Socialism as a class-conscious political theory. Rather, it appears to have more in common with the ideals of the "'square-deal' reformers. In sum, while finding fault with the "style, exposition, and reasoning"

[5] The title appears in the review as *Socialism: A Summary and Interpretation of Social Principles*.

of the work, and the flawed presentation of the economics, Hoxie concludes that, overall, the book "adds nothing to the specialist's knowledge of socialist history or theory" (p.123).

William Mallock (1849-1923), an English novelist who wrote on economics and in opposition to Socialism, was not spared Hoxie's critical pen. Mallock dismisses Socialism as having been founded on a false premise, to wit, "that common manual labor alone produces wealth," thus denying any place for "ability." This implies that labor must be directed to its task. Capitalism, on the other hand, recognizes the place of ability in production, and so, "while providing for the efficient co-operation of directive ability, actually gives to labor more than it produces and is not to be condemned because it does not secure a personal equality impossible in a world of unequal men and inconsistent with general well-being." To Hoxie, Mallock's interpretation of Socialism lacks both "fairness and comprehension." It is little more than "the advocates plea, full of subtlety and misrepresentation," his treatment of Marxian theory "based upon a merely vulgar misunderstanding" of Marx's concept of labor as "that productive power which is the common essence of all human effort directed toward the creation of commodities." Mallock's argument, concludes Hoxie, gives one pause whether he had actually read Marx's *Capital* "and, if so, for what purpose" (Hoxie 1908b, pp.541-542).

As is evident from his choice of lecture subject – Modern Socialism and Contemporary Socialism – and the tenor of his reviews of volumes the stated purpose of which was an analysis of Socialism as an object of study, Hoxie evinced an interest in the subject both as philosophy and as dogma, and devoted time and effort to understanding the nature of the doctrine. At the same time, the political and economic situations in the United States and Europe brought into focus the need for a more critical analysis of Socialism as it was being understood and applied by those professing allegiance to its strictures. Thus, his interest in the philosophy of Socialism notwithstanding, Hoxie's decision to focus his efforts on the decision-making process of the Socialist Party of America as the largest of the Socialist parties of the time perhaps derived from his empirical approach to matters of economics and politics.

Previous Studies of Socialism

By 1908 there had been many studies of Socialism as a political and economic doctrine – Sidney Webb's pamphlet *Socialism: True and False* and Richard T. Ely's *Socialism: An Examination of Its Nature, Its Strength, and Its Weakness, With Suggestions for Social Reform*

were both published in 1894. British philosopher Robert Flint's *Socialism* (1895; reviewed by Thorstein Veblen in the *Journal of Political Economy*), German economist and sociologist Werner Sombart's *Sozialismus und soziale Bewegung* (1896; translated as *Socialism and Social Movements in the 19th Century*, 1898), and British Labour Party MP and later Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald's *Socialism and Society* (1905) are but a few of the works published on the subject in that period, the majority written by true believers. Socialism as perceived by the intellectuals of the period emerged as an outgrowth of as opposed to a counter to the successes of the Capitalist mode of production, and, as a result, should not be viewed as *revolutionary* but rather as *evolutionary*. Ely, in particular (but by no means uniquely), viewing the developments through the lens of an American economist (albeit one trained in Germany), identifies "modern" Socialism as the concomitant of industrial society, "the natural outcome of modern industrial conditions," and so one "must seek its beginnings in the beginnings of modern industry." In essence,

> modern socialism is the product of the industrial revolution. It has grown with this revolution, becoming international as the revolution has spread over the nations of the world. The peculiarities of socialism are part and parcel of the industrial revolution itself. (Ely 1894, p.50)

Ironically, notes Ely, it was the very success of Capitalism in organizing production and in altering social and economic relations that led to the acceptance by the working classes of Socialism as a viable alternative to the existing institutional structure. Production had become, in Ely's view, so inherently socialized, with the division of labor and the separation of the owners of capital from the actual producers, that the conditions had been set for the emergence of Socialism as a practicable political and economic movement:

> What could more readily suggest itself than the socialization of the instruments of production, to correspond with the socialization of production on the one hand, and political democracy on the other? It was something so obvious that the workers could not help demanding sooner or later that they should have control of industry, as they were acquiring control of politics; and that they should have the advantages resulting from the

> ownership of the instruments of production which they used, but which advantages they saw now accruing to a distinct class; namely, the capitalist class. (Ely 1894, p.53)

That labor should during this period find Socialism appealing may indeed be, as Ely suggests, "something so obvious." However, at least in the American case, the correspondence appears less than evident, as the historical development of Socialism and the organized labor movement demonstrates.

Selig Perlman's contribution to John R. Commons et al. *History of Labour in the United States* acknowledges early affinities between the interests of elements of organized labor and the Socialist movement. Perlman identifies the American Socialist movement as having emerged after the Civil War; acknowledging that there had been experiments with Socialism, primarily of the Utopian variety, in the 1840s and 1850s, and noting that the Workingmen's Alliance, an organization "based upon the principle of class struggle" and favoring "the necessity of trade unionism and of political action," had been founded in New York in 1853 by a friend of Karl Marx, Joseph Weydemeyer, it was not until after the War that a viable movement could be said to have emerged with the coming to America of the International Workingmen's Association, founded by Marx in London in 1864 "for the propaganda of international Socialism." The years 1873-1879 "cleared the field for a revolutionary movement" as European refugees, well-versed in the Socialist traditions, entered the American workforce (Perlman 1918, pp.204-205).

Yet Perlman argues that the Socialists were themselves "divided into two factions," one directed to the advancement of trade unionism as a means to their own success, the other directed to political action independent of the trade-union movement (Perlman 1918, p.449). That the union leadership, particularly the leadership of the American Federation of Labor, felt the need to distance itself from political entanglements further demonstrates the divergence in perspective and ultimate ends (pp.516-517).

Perlman's history is, by any measure, authoritative in its coverage of the labor movement and the connections with Socialism, yet the primary coverage ends in 1896, with an addendum covering, superficially, important events to 1916. Further, the recitation of events, as with most of the historical analyses of the period, is primarily through documentary sources and not direct observation.

One could add more to the list of studies of organized labor and the emergence of Socialism as a political movement, but withal, these tended to be of an impersonal nature, histories derived from the official accounts. While authors could propose rationales for the emergence of Socialism as a viable political, social, and economic doctrine in the sense of its appeal to the working class, there remained a need for a thorough study of the movement itself, one from the perspective of economist as participant-observer, seeking to understand the processes by which the organization made policy decisions. This is the task Hoxie set for himself.

The argument to follow

In the next section, we will briefly comment on the emergence of labor as a political force in the United States, and in so doing establish a basis for Hoxie's investigations. This will be followed by a digression on the history of the Socialist Party of America to 1908, introducing the more prominent figures in the movement as well as identifying conflicts among the disparate factions. In the next three sections, the focus shifts to Hoxie's observations and analysis of the 1908 convention of the Socialist Party of America and the Presidential election of 1908, and the place of the Socialist party in the elections of 1910 and 1911. An Epilogue sums up the argument.

The Emergence of Labor as a Political Force

The political landscape of the United States from the last decades of the nineteenth century to the middle of the second decade of the twentieth was, to put it mildly, factious. In the political arena, single-issue parties were gaining support, with issues such as monetary stability, banking reform, tariffs, immigration, municipal government corruption, regulation of the trusts, extension of the suffrage, labor protection, prohibition, and a host of other concerns being thrust into the national conversation. Economic recessions – "Panics," as they came to be known – in 1873, 1884, 1893, 1896, 1901, and 1907 brought into focus the fragility of the American capitalist economic and financial systems; muckraking journalists highlighted the excesses of the trusts; court decisions were seen as favoring the interests of capital over the demands of labor. In addition, anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movements were sweeping across Europe and gaining influence in the United States, and were viewed as threats to the institutions of society.

With respect to the protection of workers' rights, it was during this period that many of the country's labor unions were founded[6] – the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen (1873), Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers (1876), Cigar Makers' International Union (1877), International Labor Union (1878), Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (1881), Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners (1881), International Working Peoples Association (1883), American Federation of Labor (1886), International Association of Machinists (1888), United Mine Workers of America (1890), International Longshoremen's Association (1892), International Seamen's Union (1892), American Railway Union (1893), Western Federation of Miners (1893), American Labor Union (1898), Brotherhood of Teamsters (1899), International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (1900), United Textile Workers (1901), Women's Trade Union League (1903), United Packinghouse Workers of America (1904), and the Industrial Workers of the World (1905). Unable to achieve their demands through legislative or judicial means, the unions often resorted to other measures. Strike actions were a constant occurrence, many of them ending in violence and death, two of the most notable being the Homestead (Pennsylvania) strike of 30 June to 20 November 1892[7] against the Carnegie Steel Company and the Pullman Railroad car strike from 11 May to 10 July 1894. In addition, anarchists, some associated with more radical elements within and outside the unions, took advantage of the chaotic state of affairs to launch bombing campaigns, such as precipitated the Haymarket Riot (Chicago, Illinois, 4 May 1886) and the bombing of the *Los Angeles Times* building (1 October 1910).

This period also saw the formation of a number of new political parties, taking advantage of the turmoil in the country. The situation proved advantageous especially to those advocating radical political change. Populist and Socialist movements proliferated, garnering support particularly within urban enclaves, rural communities, labor groups, and among immigrant populations. In addition, single-issue parties flourished, many of them focused on issues directly impacting the interests of labor. Among them were the Workingmen's Party (1876), Greenback Party (1876), Socialist Labor Party of America (1878; formed from the remnants of the

[6] See, e.g., Ronald Filippelli (1990) for information on the founding of American labor unions. John R. Commons et al. (1918) offers an excellent presentation, covering the period from the early Republic to the opening of the twentieth century.

[7] The strike, also known as the Homestead Massacre, effectively ended on 15 July after the Pennsylvania state militia was sent to the plant, but was not called off by the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers union until November.

Workingmen's Party), Greenback Labor Party (1878), Revolutionary Socialist Labor Party (1881; organized by anarchists previously associated with the Socialist Labor Party), Social Democracy Party of America (1897), Social Democratic Party of America (1898; formed from the Social Democracy Party), and Socialist Party of America (1901).

Radical reformist agendas loomed especially large toward the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, as the proliferation of Socialist parties would indicate. It is through a desire to understand the motivations and popular appeal of one such group, the Socialist Party of America, that Robert Hoxie undertook his studies of their conventions and political programs. Before reviewing Hoxie's work, however, it may be useful to present a historical overview of the emergence of the Socialist Party of America.

A (Very) Brief History of the Socialist Party of America[8]

The history of Socialist political parties in the United States is a study in conflict with periods of resolution. Founded in 1876 as the Workingmen's Party of the United States, an amalgamation of the Illinois Labor Party (derived from the Lassallean Universal German Workmen's Association), the Marxist Social Democratic Workmen's Party of North America, and remnants of the First International,[9] the Party almost immediately fractured into two camps, those advocating political action and those favoring trade-union advocacy (Perlman 1918, pp.273-274). As a result, a convention was called, with the political faction gaining the advantage. In December 1877 the name had been changed to the Socialist Labor Party. For many years, until the turn of the century, the Socialist Labor Party was the dominant Socialist party in the United States (Cole 1954, pp.365-366). In 1890, Daniel De Leon, who had previously supported the efforts of Henry George, Edward Bellamy, and the Knights of Labor, joined the Party, eventually taking the leadership role. De Leon's ambition was to reorganize the Party and arrange an alliance between the trade unions and the Socialists, and to that end in 1895 established the Trade and Labor Alliance, "a federation of Trade Unions and Socialist bodies

[8] The following is primarily from Frederic Heath, ed. (1900), Morris Hillquit (1903, esp. pp.330-339), Selig Perlman (1918), G. D. H. Cole (1954), Ira Kipnis (1952), August Bolino (1963), and Howard Quint (1964).

[9] Perlman identifies the organizations present at the Conference as the International, the Labor Party of Illinois, the Social Democratic Party, and the Social-Political Workingmen's Society of Cincinnati (German). Perlman 1918, p.270n.1.

with an advanced Socialist programme, based on a militant conception of Industrial Unionism." As a student of Marx, holding to "an uncompromising version of left-wing Marxism," De Leon "favoured political action solely as a convenient means of agitation and not as a method of securing useful reforms within the capitalist system." This put the Socialist Labor Party in direct conflict with the American Federation of Labor, headed by Samuel Gompers, which proposed advancing the cause of labor within the existing capitalist environment. De Leon's challenge to the AFL was his advocacy of the policy of "dual unionism," through which the more revolutionary elements in the trade union movement would attempt to gain control of the "reformist" unions from within, while at the same time continuing to establish a separate, militant trade union association. By 1899 the Socialist Labor Party had become irremediably split – De Leon was left in control of the more radical faction, while a faction headed by Morris Hillquit seceded to form what would eventually become the Socialist Party of America (375-377).

Disillusioned by the direction the Party was taking, many of its members sought to reinvigorate the Socialist movement through other outlets. A viable alternative to the Socialist Labor Party was organized by Eugene Victor Debs, then president of the American Railway Union, one of the first true "industrial" unions. As ARU President, Debs had led in 1894 a boycott of the Chicago Pullman Palace Car Company, in solidarity with striking Pullman workers. Debs and the ARU had been successful in organizing a strike against the Great Northern Railway in August 1893, so when on 11 May 1894 the Pullman workers organized a strike action, Debs effected an intercession, proposing that the two parties engage in arbitration. As the strike continued, the ARU, coincidentally holding its convention in Chicago, voted to boycott Pullman by having its members refuse to service trains carrying Pullman cars. On 26 June, the boycott was launched. The strike and subsequent boycott effectively paralyzed the country, forcing the federal government to become involved under the pretense that the strikers had interfered with the delivery of the United States mail; such interference constituted a violation of the Sherman Anti-trust Act, barring actions in restraint of commerce. Debs and other officers of the ARU were arrested and convicted on a charge of conspiracy for their roles in the boycott and, following months of legal action, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the injunction Debs had been accused of violating was constitutionally valid; he was

sentenced to six months in the McHenry County jail in Woodstock, Illinois. Upon his release on 22 November 1895, Debs had all but officially become a convert to Socialism.[10]

In the 1896 election, William McKinley received the nomination of the Republican Party, with William Jennings Bryan securing the nomination of the Democratic Party, the People's (Populist) Party, and the Silver Party. Debs threw his support behind Bryan instead of the Socialist Labor Party candidate, Charles Horatio Matchett, who had been the Party's candidate for vice-president in 1892. The 1896 alliance between the People's (Populist) Party and the Democratic Party had been one of convenience more than one of principle, and Bryan's loss forced Debs to consider an alternative means to the achievement of the emancipation of the working class. To this end, Debs, having in January of 1897 – New Year's Day – officially declared himself a Socialist in an editorial published in the *Railway Times,*[11] reorganized the ARU as a political organization and, at a convention in Chicago on 18 June 1897, joined forces with the utopian-Socialist Brotherhood of the Co-operative Commonwealth (an organization of which he had in January become the national organizer)[12] – a coalition of leaders of Edward Bellamy's Nationalist Movement, contributors to *The Coming Nation* (a newspaper published by

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[10] "Before Debs entered Woodstock he was not a socialist, and, popular legend to the contrary, it may be seriously doubted whether he was one when he left. Woodstock gave him no sudden revelations; it was rather a conditioning experience. During his incarceration, it was true, Debs talked in airy generalities to reporters. He called the co-operative commonwealth 'the hope of the world' and spoke glibly of the need of emancipating labor from the 'grinding, degrading, pauperizing conspiracy' against it. But he also urged workers to 'eschew all ISMS' in their common struggle against the plutocracy. Not once did Debs do more than acknowledge a sympathy for the ultimate goals of socialism" (Quint 1964, p.281).

As Debs himself describes it, "The Chicago jail sentences were followed by six months at Woodstock and it was here that Socialism gradually laid hold of me in its own irresistible fashion. Books and pamphlets and letters from socialists came by every mail and I began to read and think and dissect the anatomy of the system in which workingmen, however organized, could be shattered and battered and splintered at a single stroke. The writings of Bellamy and Blatchford early appealed to me. The 'Cooperative Commonwealth' of Gronlund also impressed me, but the writings of Kautsky were so clear and conclusive that I readily grasped, not merely his argument, but also caught the spirit of his socialist utterance – and I thank him and all who helped me out of darkness into light" (Debs 1908, p.83).

[11] "In making what was probably the most momentous decision of his life, Debs acknowledged the enormity of his error in having backed Bryan and the Populists in the hope that their victory 'would blunt the fangs of the money power.' But socialism, happily, provided a means of correcting that mistake. The socialists had shown the 'toiling masses' the way out of the existing political and economic labyrinth. He, for one, was going to take it, not only as an escape route from the degradation and oppression of the present but also as a highway to happiness for the future. No person who loved humanity and opposed the 'degeneracy of the race' could be other than a socialist" (Quint 1964, pp.281-282).

[12] "Next to the Kaweah Colony in California, the Ruskin Co-operative Association, and the Social Gospel radicals who established the Christian Commonwealth Colony in Georgia, the Brotherhood of the Co-operative Commonwealth was the most widely known of the various communitarian groups, fellowship leagues, and co-operative societies that flickered in and out of existence during the 1890's" (Quint 1964, p.283).

the Ruskin Commonwealth Association, a colony of utopian Socialists in Tennessee), and disaffected Socialists – to create the Social Democracy of America Party. A Declaration of Principles adopted at the meeting was published in *The Social Democrat* of July 1, 1897. In one very long sentence, the Party made clear the direction in which it would seek to proceed:

> We therefore call upon all honest citizens to unite under the banner of the Social Democracy of America, so that we may be ready to conquer capitalism by making use of our political liberty and by taking possession of the public power, so that we may put an end to the present barbarous struggle, by the abolition of capitalism, the restoration of the land, and of all the means of production, transportation, and distribution, to the people as a collective body, and the substitution of the cooperative commonwealth for the present share of planless production, industrial war, and social disorder – a commonwealth which, although it will not make every man equal physically or mentally, will give to every worker the free exercise and the full benefit of his faculties, multiplied by all the modern factors of civilization and ultimately inaugurate the universal brotherhood of man. The Social Democracy of America will make democracy, "the rule of the people," a truth by ending the economic subjugation of the overwhelmingly great majority of the people. (*Declaration of Principles of The Social Democracy of America* 1897, pp.1, 4.)

On 30-31 August of 1897, in St. Louis, was held a Labor and Reform Conference, organized by the Executive Board of the United Mine Workers of America with the endorsement of the American Federation of Labor and the Knights of Labor. Debs saw the convention as an opportunity "not to pass idle resolutions, but to take prompt, vigorous, and united action," and to this end, issued an "appeal to the Social Democracy and to all lovers of Liberty and Humanity to meet in St. Louis on the day named to lend a hand to the stricken, suffering miners of the country" (Debs 1897a, p.1). This appeal represented a coalescing of the interests of the labor unions and the Socialists.

In his Labor Day address, Debs waxed eloquently of the mission of this new party in securing for labor an ideal future:

> The Social Democracy deals with the possible, with the practical, with axiomatic propositions in the everyday affairs of life. It lays hold upon fundamental principles with unrelaxing grasp and challenges criticism. It makes humanity the focal, converging, and animating idea and proposes to lift it above chicanery into the clear, serene, and unbefogged realm of common sense. It beholds Labor a mendicant, half-fed and half-clothed, inhabiting hovels, forever doomed to play its part in the tragedy of toil, to die at last unknelled and uncoffined, destined to a hold in the Potters' field, and proposes to lift it up and out of its degrading environments, not by pathways decked with the flowers of fancy, but along the lines of practical endeavor, where mind, muscle, skill, humanity, and home, in holy alliance, in well-adjusted, cooperative effort liberates the enslaved, gives a new birth to hope, aspiration, and ambition, and makes the desert blossom and the waste places glad – a condition in which, when a man earns a dollar he is not compelled to divide it with a capitalist, who, as now, scourges him to his task as if he were a galley slave, but takes to himself all the fruits of his labor, and thus emancipated by industrial and economic laws which elevate, bless, and adorn humanity, the devotee of Social Democracy advances by degrees until the fangs and pangs of poverty disappear, until in his own home fears of eviction no longer breed despair, until wife and children, the recipients of the benedictions of cooperative prosperity, enjoy the fruitions of peace and prosperity, and under their own vine and fig tree live as free from carking care as the songbirds of the woodlands. (Debs 1897b, p.2).

Initially The Social Democracy, under the control of Debs, promoted a scheme of "colonization," through which the Party would select a state and proceed through the electoral process to take control of the legislature and executive, in effect, to "colonize" the state and by so doing institute a Socialist or Social Democratic regime. The Declaration of Principles, in fact, explicitly affirmed the intention to select a state "for the concentration of our supporters and the introduction of cooperative industry," with the gradual extension of the enterprise "until the National Cooperative Commonwealth shall be established" (*Declaration of Principles of The Social Democracy of America* 1897, p.4). Cyrus Field Willard, one of the members of the Colonization Commission, commented that the task of the Commission was "based upon the

Marxian idea that the control of economic conditions means the control of the political machinery." Once the Commission secured land and organized industries, political control would follow naturally (Willard 1897, p.337). However, as disaffected members of the Socialist Labor Party joined the ranks, they, along with a dissident group led by Victor Berger, proposed as an alternative a reliance on political action, thus creating a schism within the Party membership.

The Party convention in Chicago on 7 June 1898 pitted the two factions against one another and marked a turning point in the history of Socialism in America.[13] While the majority report of the platform committee had recommended the Party focus its efforts on political action, a minority report, submitted by the Chicago anarchist John F. Lloyd, promoted political action accompanied by colonization. The delegates voted overwhelmingly, 53-37,[14] in favor of the minority report, specifically for its advocacy of colonization. Following the vote in the early morning hours of June 11and after the adjournment, the opposition delegates, moved by a motion from Isaac Hourwich, an economist and lawyer who had emigrated from Russia in 1890, removed to Revere House to plan their next move. (Debs[15] could not attend due to illness, but sent a message of support.) Here the delegates, including Berger and Frederic Heath, the latter named chairman of the "convention," founded the Social Democratic Party of America.

In a way, as the historian Howard Quint suggests, "[w]ith the passing of the hybrid Social Democracy went the last real vestige of utopianism in the American socialist political movement. … After 1898, American socialism began to achieve maturity, though by no means liberation from doctrinal controversy" (Quint 1964, p.318).[16] On the 6th of March 1900, the new Party held its convention in Indianapolis. By this time, a breakaway group of the Socialist Labor Party, the so-called "Rochester" faction, led by Morris Hillquit, sought to negotiate a merger.

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[13] Quint refers to the period from June 1898 to July 1901 as "a 'Sturm und Drang' period in the history of American socialism." The split he regards as "ideologically salutary" – "Like a strong wind, it cleared the air of utopianism and cut adrift from the socialist standard many who at best possessed a vague and romantic notion of what modern socialism, even in its most conservative form, involved" (Quint 1964, p.319).

[14] The figure is from Heath, ed. (1900, p.65). Quint gives a figure of 52-37 (1964, p.314).

[15] Debs "had openly espoused socialist politics, yet sentimentally he was not unfavorably inclined toward colonization. It had been his first socialist love, and he could not rudely brush it aside without considering himself something of an ideological cad" (Quint 1964, p.310).

[16] "The collapse of the Social Democracy left the way open for the organization of a Social Democratic Party modeled to a great extent after that of the same name in Germany and the Independent Labour Party in Great Britain" (Quint 1964, p.318).

Among the issues of contention was the name of the new organization. A committee was organized to affect a plan for uniting of the two groups. The resulting recommendations were overwhelmingly rejected by the rank-and-file. Subsequently, a "unity committee" comprised of representatives of the Social Democratic Party and the Rochester faction of the Socialist Labor Party was appointed to establish the terms of merger. They selected Debs and Job Harriman (of the Rochester group) as their presidential candidates in the upcoming election. As might be expected, the unity was short-lived – the Executive Board of the Social Democratic Party rejected the agreement, leading to a split in the Party, with the pro-merger group forming a separate Social Democratic Party, known as the Springfield (Massachusetts) faction. Thus the peculiar situation that, in the election of 1900, the candidates representing the Social Democratic Party were actually associated with two competing groups – Debs representing the Chicago faction, and Harriman the Springfield faction. To complicate matters, the Socialist Labor Party had selected its own candidate, Joseph Francis Maloney, a machinist from Massachusetts.

Despite the factionalism within the Party, Debs was enthusiastic about the prospects of the Social Democrats and the Socialist movement in general. In his September 1900 essay in the *International Socialist Review*, "Outlook for Socialism in the United States," Debs marveled at the successes of the past year, "marked with a propaganda of unprecedented activity," the attitude of the people having "undergone a most remarkable change." After all, one would be hard pressed "to imagine a more ignorant, bitter and unreasoning prejudice than that of the American people against Socialism during the early years of its introduction by the propagandists from the other side." These early Socialists – "despised and persecuted 'foreign invaders,'" – succeeded "in laying the foundations deep and strong, under the most trying conditions, of the American movement." Notwithstanding the intolerance and revulsion directed against them and their movement, they persevered and succeeded in creating a national political force (Debs 1900, p.130). The elections of 1896 and 1898 proved that Socialism had become much more than an irritant; the political elites could "no longer reckon it as a negative quantity in making their forecasts and calculating their pluralities and majorities."[17] The continued

[17] In 1896 the Socialist Labor Party candidate for President, Charles Matchett, received 36,359 votes, or 0.26 percent of the total votes cast (nearly half of those from his home state of New York). In the mid-term elections of 1898, the Social Democratic Party achieved a victory in the mayoral contest in Haverhill, Massachusetts, with the election of John Chase. The Socialist Labor Party candidate for Governor, George Peare, received 10,063 votes, or 3.17 percent of the total cast, while the Social Democratic Party candidate Winfield Porter received only 3,749 votes, or 1.18 percent of the total. The Socialist Labor Party candidate for Lt. Governor, Michael Berry, received 12,170, or

denunciations "by the capitalist press and by all the brood of subsidized contributors to magazine literature" served only to confirm "that the advance of socialism is very properly recognized by the capitalist class as the one cloud upon the horizon which portends an end to the system in which they have waxed fat, insolent and despotic through the exploitation of their countless wage-working slaves" (p.131). Still, Debs, having secured the nomination of the Social Democratic Party, was not sanguine about the prospects for 1900 – it was, after all, a presidential election year, and the two dominant parties "will, as usual, strain every nerve to whip the 'voting kings' into line," employing whatever methods necessary "to steer the 'patriots' to the capitalist chute that empties into the ballot-box" (p.132). A glimmer of hope, however, may be seen in the prospect that the trade-union movement would accept the Social Democratic Party as an ally in the struggle against the capitalists. This, noted Debs, may yet be for the Socialists a "source of strength" (p.135). Before any such accommodation could be had, however, the Party itself must face issues within its own ranks.

In an effort to end the discord, in July 1901, a Unity Convention was organized, resulting in a formal union between the two factions of the Social Democratic Party. As reported by Walter Thomas Mills in *Appeal to Reason*, the work of the Convention "was done with the most intense earnestness, but not an ugly personality marred the proceedings from start to finish" (Mills 1901, p.1). The new party would be named the Socialist Party of America. An appeal to the trade unionists would become a large part of its mission. In its Resolution of 31 July, the Party proclaimed "that the trade union movement and independent political action are the emancipating factors of the wage-working class." As the trade union movement "is the natural result of capitalist production and represents the economic side of the working class movement," the Socialist Party acknowledged its obligation "to join the unions of their respective trades and assist in building up and unifying the trades and labor organizations." Further, the Party fully recognized the "historical necessity" of the unions to be "organized on neutral grounds as far as political affiliation is concerned," and conceded that "the class struggle so nobly waged" by the unions, "while it may result in lessening the exploitation of labor, can never abolish that exploitation." This will be achieved "only when society takes possession of all the means of production for the benefit of all the people." Thus, in order truly to achieve the ends to which

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3.88 percent, while the Social Democratic Party candidate, Isaac Skinner, received only 5,899 votes, or 1.88 percent. Vote tallies are from Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections, http://uselectionatlas.org/ , accessed 10 July 2016.

the trade union movement aspires, it is incumbent upon the membership, indeed it is their duty, "to realize the necessity of independent political action on class-conscious lines, to join the Socialist Party and to assist in building up a strong political movement of the wage-working class, whose ultimate aim and object must be the abolition of wage slavery and the establishment of a co-operative state of society based on the collective ownership of the means of production and distribution" ("Socialism and Trade Unionism" 1903, p.280).

In the election of 1900, the candidates of the two prominent Socialist parties – the Social Democratic Party and the Socialist Labor Party – received a combined popular vote total of 127,941, a mere 0.92% of the total votes cast! By 1904, the situation had changed dramatically. The Socialist Party of America, again with Debs as its nominee, drew 402,810 votes (2.98%), while the Socialist Labor Party, represented by Charles Hunter Corregan, a printer from New York, garnered a disappointing 33,454 (0.25%).[18] Clearly there had been a change in the national mood, and the Socialists seemed to have been the recipients of the change. The Socialist Party itself appeared more resolute in conviction and in purpose. The 1904 platform celebrated the Party "as the defender and preserver of the idea of liberty and self-government, in which the nation was born; as the only political movement standing for the program and principles by which the liberty of the individual may become a fact; as the only political organization that is democratic, and that has for its purpose the democratizing of the whole of society." Capitalism is identified as "the enemy and destroyer of essential private property," having engaged in "the legalized confiscation of all that the labor of the working class produces, above its subsistence wage." Socialism, by contrast, proposes the reorganization of industry, economy, and society, such "that every individual shall be secure in that private property in the means of life upon which his liberty of being, thought and action depends." Capitalism and the institutional and social arrangements developed around it, in promulgating class divisions has sown "the seeds of its own destruction"; the only means to the establishment of a moral and just order is "the conscious and complete triumph of the working class as the only class that has the right or power to be." To achieve its stated goals, the Socialist Party pledged itself, "as the party of the working class," to engage in political action directed ultimately to the formation of a "co-

[18] Vote tallies are from Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections, http://uselectionatlas.org/ , accessed 10 July 2016.

operative commonwealth" dedicated to the "complete emancipation" of the workers of America (*National Convention of the Socialist Party* 1904, p.306-307).

The Industrial Workers of the World and the Socialist Movement

On 27 June 1905 in Chicago, a group comprised of Socialists and radical trade unionists met in convention to establish the Industrial Workers of the World, the IWW. Among those in attendance were Algie M. Simons, William D. "Big Bill" Haywood of the Western Federation of Miners and Chairman of the convention, labor organizer Mary Harris "Mother" Jones, Eugene Debs, and Daniel De Leon[19] of the American Labor Union. The Manifesto declared that trade-unionism as then organized had been ineffective in achieving the legitimate demands of the working class, thus necessitating the establishment of an all-compassing union dedicated to the class struggle:

> Universal economic evils afflicting the working class can be eradicated only by a universal working class movement. Such a movement of the working class is impossible while separate craft and wage agreements are made favoring the employer against other crafts in the same industry, and while energies are wasted in fruitless jurisdiction struggles which serve only to further the personal aggrandizement of union officials.
>
> A movement to fulfill these conditions must consist of one great industrial union embracing all industries – providing for craft autonomy locally, industrial autonomy internationally, and working class unity generally.
>
> It must be founded on the class struggle, and its general administration must be conducted in harmony with the recognition of the irrepressible conflict between the capitalist class and the working class.
>
> It should be established as the economic organization of the working class, without affiliation with any political party.
>
> (*Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World* 1905, pp.5-6.)

[19] Selig Perlman refers to De Leon as "[a] convinced if not fanatical Marxian," whose "philosophy taught him that the American labor movement, like all national labor movements, had, in the nature of things, to be socialist" (S. Perlman 1922, p.210).

The impetus behind the creation of the new organization was expressed in a paper read at the convention by Clarence Smith of the American Labor Union, dated 29 November 1904, detailing the origins of the manifesto agreed upon at an "informal" preliminary conference held in Chicago.[20] There it was established that

> the first duty of conscientious union men, regardless of affiliation, prejudice or personal interest, to lay the foundation upon which all the working people, many of whom are now organized, might unite upon a common ground, to build a labor organization that would correspond to modern industrial conditions, and through which they might finally secure complete emancipation from wage slavery for all wage workers. (*Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World* 1905, p.82; Brissenden 1913, p.4.)

Following the informal conference, letters of invitation were sent to "about thirty persons then prominent in the radical labor and Socialist movements" to attend a "secret" conference in Chicago on 2 January 1905 for the purpose of discussing "ways and means of uniting the working people of America on correct revolutionary principles, regardless of any general labor organization of past or present…." Among the signatories was Eugene Debs (*Proceedings of the First Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World* 1905, p.83; Brissenden 1913, pp.4-5). Although invited, Victor Berger and Max Hayes declined the invitation (Brissenden 1913, p.5).

To Samuel Gompers and the AFL, this was yet another in a series of attempts "to smash the American trade union movement."[21] In an editorial published in the *American Federationist*, Gompers labels "the socialist trade union smashers and rammers from without, and the borers from within" the labor movement as "the 'Pirates' and "the 'Kangaroos' hugging each other in

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[20] Economist Paul Brissenden states that the attendees at the"informal conference," identified as "six men of prominence in the socialist and labor movement," were William Trautmann, editor of *Brauer Zeitung*, a newspaper associated with the United Brewery Workmen; George Estes and W. L. Hall, President and General Secretary-Treasurer, respectively, of the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees; Isaac Cowen, representative of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers of Great Britain; Clarence Smith, General Secretary-Treasurer of the American Labor Union; and Thomas Hagerty, editor of the American Labor Union's *Voice of Labor*. Debs, while not present at the meeting, nonetheless was "at that time actively interested in the matter and co-operated in carrying out these prenatal plans" (Brissenden 1913, p.3).

[21] Previous attempts included challenges by the American Labor Union in 1894, the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance in 1895, and the Western Federation of Labor. (Gompers 1905, p.139).

glee over their prospective prey." Debs, while having not been a signatory to the 1904 manifesto but merely cooperative in the process – Gompers noting that the explanation given for his not signing the document was "that 'comrade' Debs was unable to sign the document owing to nervous prostration" – nonetheless drew the ire of Gompers, who declared this but another of Debs' "movements." As for the Socialists, their position stood in stark contrast with previous statements of support for the trade union movement, as expressed in various Socialist congresses. Yet such declarations Gompers views as merely self-serving, as they were made at a time when the Socialists needed the support of the unions in the elections (Gompers 1905, pp.140-141).

While the founders of the IWW were in agreement as to the revolutionary nature of the class struggle, the necessity of direct action as opposed to political means of reform, and the need for industrial unionism[22] as opposed to the craft form of the AFL, any unity that may have existed at the founding was to be short-lived. G. D. H. Cole identifies four groups the positions of which were incompatible with the expressed policies of the IWW with respect to revolutionary action. The Socialist Labor Party (the De Leon wing) and Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance[23] looked to political means to advance their objectives and focused their efforts not on reforming the capitalist system but rather on its replacement. Political action was of paramount importance; in concert with the industrial trade union movement, the focus would be on elections and the use of "parliamentary institutions" to educate the public in the principles of Marxist revolution and to instill class-consciousness among the workers. The function of the Party would be to instill in its members "a strong discipline" and provide guidance to the workers "towards united revolutionary action when the time was ripe" (Cole 1956, p.793).

The Haywood faction, by contrast, insisted on promoting militant unionism in support of the class war, centering on the use of strikes and boycotts. The focus here was on "the creation of a militant and revolutionary Industrial Unionist movement," with the Socialist Party relegated

[22] Hoxie defines an industrial union as one "organized on the basis of the industry rather than the craft." Its significance is that "it attempts to unite into one homogeneous organic group all the workers, skilled and unskilled, engaged in turning out and putting on the market a given finished product or series of closely related products" (Hoxie 1917, p.40).

[23] The Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance existed from 1894 to 1905, the result of the rejection by the AFL of the program demanded by the Socialist wing; De Leon was among its founders. In Selig Perlman's telling, the Alliance "immediately stamped the socialists as wilful [sic] destroyers of the unity of labor. … All the bitterness which has characterized the fight between socialist and anti-socialist in the Federation verily goes back to this miscalculation by DeLeon of the psychology of the trade union movement." Furthermore, the Alliance "was a failure from the outset. Only a small portion of even the socialist-minded trade unionists were willing to join in the venture" (S. Perlman 1922, p.211).

to "subsidiary" status. Political action would be merely a means to an end – participation in the electoral process was inherently corrupting, but there remained a need to exploit it and so co-opt the mechanisms of governance to the advancement of the demands of the workers. This, notes Cole, is consistent in some respects with the position of the French Syndicalists. Haywood's One Big Union would bring under centralized control "on a class basis every sort of worker over the whole country – and presently over the whole world" (Cole 1956, pp.794-795).

The Anarchists Industrial Unionists represented a third faction, and was composed primarily of European immigrants. Finally, the Anarcho-Syndicalists were opposed to any political action or any effort to create a centralized union; their aim was "to destroy all coercive government in favour of 'free' and spontaneous self-organisation of the workers on a local, communal basis" (Cole 1956, p.796).

The major point of contention was the passage in the Constitution of the IWW allowing for the use of political action, in concert with industrial action, to secure the demands of the group, placed there initially so as to placate the De Leon wing. This provoked the Anarcho-Syndicalists and the Western Industrial Unionists, both of whom had eschewed political action. Eventually the Syndicalist wing gained control and succeeded in removing any mention in the Constitution of support for political action. Instead the focus now officially turned to the use of direct industrial action in support of their demands, thus ensuring the exit of the Socialistic element – the move caused De Leon and the Socialist Labor Party in 1908 to form a separate IWW, the Detroit faction, in opposition to the Haywood-led Chicago faction. (Cole 1956, pp.801-802). In the end, the Haywood faction would carry the banner of the movement, while the De Leon group would be rebranded as the Workers' International Industrial Union

In September 1913 the IWW held its convention in Chicago; among the attendees was Robert Hoxie,[24] who presented his impressions of the meeting in an essay published in the *Journal of Political Economy*, "The Truth About the I.W.W."[25] First, the organization, despite its express mission of representing the whole of the working class to the end of the destruction of the capitalist system, "is pathetically weak in effective membership and has failed utterly in its

[24] "I tried to make an honest, first-hand investigation of the I. W. W. I attended its convention, ate, drank, and talked with its members, soaked myself in its factional discussion, haunted its headquarters, fraternized with its officers and leaders, delved in its literature and history" (Hoxie 1914a, p.140).

[25] The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported on Hoxie's essay in the November 18, 1913 edition, on the front page of section two, the entire story consisting of quotes from the *JPE* piece.

efforts to attach to itself permanently a considerable body of men representative of any section of American workers." The true number of paid members is unknown, numbering perhaps around 14,000,[26] nowhere near the exaggerated numbers given "by the impressionist school of reporters and magazine writers" (Hoxie 1913, p.785). Whatever the true figure, the convention demonstrated to Hoxie that, on the basis alone of the lack of any substantial number of permanent, dues-paying members, the IWW "is and seems destined to be utterly inadequate to the tasks which it has set itself to accomplish." Not only could it not begin to compete with the American Federation of Labor or even the Socialist Party in attracting the support of the working class, its numbers could not match the numbers of "employees of many a single capitalist enterprise" (p.787).

More importantly, the convention brought into stark relief the internal conflict that had infected the IWW almost since its inception. Hoxie found an organization "in a state of organic chaos," which, given its history, appears "chronic and inevitable." Here the conflict centered on the question of centralization versus decentralization, with the West faction demanding that each local be granted autonomy while the East faction supported the notion of centralized control, the principle of One Big Union. That the IWW had already taken measures directed at decentralization – abolishing the office of general president, subjecting the executive board to a vote by referendum even as its funding was reduced, and granting autonomy to the locals – was insufficient to allay the concerns of the western faction. The "ideal" they sought, according to Hoxie, was "a loosely federated body of completely autonomous units, each free to act in time and in manner as its fancy dictates, subject to no central or constitutional guidance or restraint – in short, a body of local units with purely voluntary relationships governed in time, character, and extent of co-operation by sentiment only." While the centralization faction carried the day, staving off calls to abolish the convention, abolish altogether the governing board, and grant absolute autonomy to the local chapters, the decentralization faction nonetheless demonstrated its effectiveness in ignoring the wishes of the organizing body and even engaging in sabotage against the very group of which they were ostensibly a part. Hoxie reports that "in fact, it is freely admitted and apparently is looked upon with satisfaction by the decentralizing faction, that there are at present fifty-seven varieties of Industrial Workers of the World." Thus the spectacle

[26] Hoxie reports that, according the records of the organization, the paid membership for the year was 14,310. (Hoxie 1913, p.786n.1.)

of the IWW as an organization "utterly incapable of strong, efficient, united action and the attainment of results of a permanent character, a body capable of local and spasmodic effort only" (Hoxie 1913, pp.788-789).

It seems no wonder, then, that the membership of the IWW should consist of "the least capable, least developed, lowest trained, and poorest paid of American workmen," as well as "irresponsible atomists who are so constituted that to them all authority is an ever-present challenge." It draws into its orbit "the desperate elements of the working class, the men who have not developed and cannot develop, under the existing system, organic discipline and constructive ability," while those workers "of constructive mind" prefer to better their lot working within the system, eschewing radical politics and industrial action (Hoxie 1913, p.792). Hoxie sums up his argument in no uncertain terms:

> Viewing the situation in any reasonable light, therefore, we find it difficult to escape the conclusion that the Industrial Workers of the World as a positive social factor is more an object of pathetic interest than of fear. It has succeeded in impressing itself upon the popular imagination as a mysterious, incalculable force likely to appear and work destruction at any time and place. It has terrified the public because its small body of irresponsible and footloose agitators scent trouble from afar and flock to the point where social rupture seems to be for the moment imminent. They are like Morgan's raiders. By rapidity of movement and sheer audacity they have created the impression of a great organized force. But in reality they are incapable of anything but spasmodic and disconnected action. (Hoxie 1913, p.797.)

The Platform of the Socialist Party of America, 1908

Hoxie's Interpretation of the Convention

The Socialist Party held its 1908 convention in Chicago from 11-17 May, and Hoxie reported on the gathering in an essay that same year in the July issue of the *Journal of Political Economy*. Should anyone care to understand "what socialism really is in this country and what it

is likely to become in the near future," this congregation provided quite the indication (Hoxie 1908a, p.442).[27]

To begin, the convention delegates were not, as one might suppose, "a homogeneous body of working men in the usual meaning of that term," but on the contrary, the number of delegates identified as wage-laborers was quite small. Such is understandable to Hoxie, as the wage-laborers among the membership of the Party would face great difficulty in leaving their places of employment "for propagandistic purposes." So, while there were among the attendees several trade-union leaders and officials,[28] the rank-and-file were conspicuous by their absence. The convention was instead dominated by a congeries of "farmers, lawyers, editors, small enterprisers, politicians, professional organizers, professional agitators, and ministers and ex-ministers of the gospel."[29] This disconnect between the perception of the Socialist movement as a movement dedicated to promoting the interests of the working class and the composition of the Party alleging to be the vanguard of those interests suggests "that while socialism has a solid basis in working-class membership, it is, like most new movements resting to any considerable degree on sentiment, a loadstone for the most diverse elements in society; that is has drawn to itself, along with intelligent and constructive middle-class leaders, a generous quota of cranks, mystics, and mere agitators." This would be significant in determining the future course of the Party (Hoxie 1908a, p.442).

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[27] Throughout, Hoxie seems to have been favorably disposed to the more conservative Socialists. David Burns suggests that Hoxie "was the type of intellectual that socialists touting reform were attempting to bring into the party" (Burns 2013, p.75).

[28] Robert Hunter, himself a member of the Party, lists, "[a]mong the most noteworthy delegates" with ties to organized labor, Max Hayes, editor and "debater" at AFL congresses; Robert Bandlow and Barney Berlyn, "active workers in the trade-union movement"; James Carey, unionist and Socialist legislator from Massachusetts; William Haywood, formerly of the Western Federation of Miners; and "[n]early all of the delegates from Wisconsin" (Hunter 1908, p.293). One of the founders, Algie Martin Simons, had been a student of Richard Ely at the University of Wisconsin and was acknowledged by Ely as assisting in his 1894 book, *Socialism: An Examination of Its Nature, Its Strength, and Its Weakness, with Suggestions for Social Reform*.

[29] Charlotte Teller, essayist, novelist, and Socialist who attended the convention, observes of the attendees, "I remarked at once that there was much more tan and wholesome color than anæmic pallor or symptoms of sweatshop and factory. These were men and women of more than usual vitality. Here were American farmers, sturdy, thoughtful, eager; here were lawyers with something of that keen and disciplined look of the early American statesman; there were ex-college professors, writers, preachers, coal-miners, cigar-makers and other industrial workers, doctors, dentists and small business men. And I was told by the national secretary, Mahlon Barnes, that the small towns and the farming communities had a greater increase in the number of delegates and therefore in membership than the large industrial communities, the cities! That Socialism was spreading fastest where people had time to read and think" (Teller 1908, pp.31-32).

As to the political positions of those in attendance, Hoxie's impression, "reduced to lowest terms," is of a battle for control of the Party itself. Within the Party were two identified competing factions – the first, "a comparatively small group of very intelligent, skilful, moderate, and constructive leaders," predominately of the middle class, and the second, "an unorganized, impulsive, comparatively unintelligent, sentimental, for the most part negative, and in part revolutionary mass, drawn from all classes and actually representing none."[30] These two groups were acknowledged by the Party as Constructivists and Impossibilists, respectively (Hoxie 1908a, pp.442-443; Teller 1908, p.28).[31] The two factions clashed with respect to the type of unionist the Party should seek to support. The Constructivist faction was primarily non-political, supporting craft trade unionism and seeking solutions to the issues of primary concern to workers, while the revolutionary, Impossibilist[32] faction demanded support for direct political action, in the guise of industrial unionism. In the end, the two factions settled temporarily their

[30] Julie Greene notes that, since 1906 the Party had become more divided between factions of the left and right. "The left wing emphasized industrial action, especially through the Industrial Workers of the World, and saw political work as useful primarily for educational reasons," while the right wing, in coalition with the center, "focused on broad social and political reforms, seeking to achieve socialism gradually through 'constructive' reforms." The right wing faction was thus far more likely to embrace the position of the AFL. (Greene 1998, p.220).

[31] In *Trade Unionism in the United States*, Hoxie identifies two varieties of revolutionary unionism, in general both "distinctly class-conscious rather than trade-conscious." Revolutionary unionism "asserts the complete harmony of interests of all wageworkers as against the representatives of the employing class, and seeks to unite the former, skilled and unskilled together, into one homogeneous fighting organization. It repudiates, or tends to repudiate, the existing institutional order and especially individual ownership of productive means, and the wage system. It looks upon the prevailing modes of right and rights, moral and legal, as, in general, fabrications of the employing class, designed to secure the subjection and to further the exploitation of the workers. In government it aspires to be democratic, striving to make literal application of the phrase *vox populi, vox Dei*. In method, it looks askance at collective bargaining and mutual insurance as making for conservatism and hampering the free and united action of the workers." The Socialist variant "finds its ultimate ideal in the socialistic state and its ultimate means in invoking class political action," but does not, at least at the outset, "entirely repudiate collective bargaining or the binding force of contract, but it regards these as temporary expedients." For the Socialist, unionism and socialism would be "entirely harmonious in action," as "two wings of the working class movement." The quasi-anarchistic variant, by contrast, "repudiates altogether socialism, political action, collective bargaining, and contract." To the quasi-anarchist, Socialism is "but another form of oppression, political action a practical delusion, collective bargaining and contract schemes of the oppressor for preventing the united and immediate action of the workers. … Direct action and sabotage are its accredited weapons, and violence its habitual resort" (Hoxie 1917, pp.48-49).

[32] Teller identifies the Impossibilist as "the man who uses the 'holy words' of any movement; … and he always opposes practical measures. He represents an important phase of the Socialist movement, the historical, almost fanatic insistence upon the 'philosophical basis.' In 1854 he would have belonged – by reason of his temperament -- to that group of Abolitionists who gave no definite plan of procedure to the country when they presented the vital issue of slavery. He exists in every movement, is sincere, usually right in theory and always in evidence. He both retards and hastens – retards the practice of principles while calling attention in his intensity to the principles themselves" (Teller 1908, pp.28-30).

differences by agreeing in the Party platform to the term "organized labor," thus preventing a schism within the Party.

In its statement of principles, the Party declared its mission to be the uniting of "the workers of the nation and their allies and sympathizers of all other classes" to the end of the abolition of the capitalist class system, freeing the worker and "all other classes of modern society" from the debilitating effects of class rule. In "freeing" the worker from the exploitative capitalist, all other classes of society shall be likewise freed from the oppression and exploitation that are the consequence of class distinctions –

> The small farmer, who is today exploited by large capital more indirectly but not less effectively than is the wage laborer; the small manufacturer and trader, who is engaged in a desperate and losing struggle for economic independence in the face of the all-conquering power of concentrated capital; and even the capitalist himself, who is the slave of his wealth rather than its master. The struggle of the working class against the capitalist class, while it is a class struggle, is thus at the same time a struggle for the abolition of all classes and class privileges. (National Convention of the Socialist Party 1908, p.321).

The final platform included a lengthy list of industrial demands – shorter workday, at least one day a week for rest, inspection of factories, prohibition of child labor, and abolition of official charity in favor of government social insurance – as well as political demands – inheritance and graduated income taxes, extension of the suffrage, proportional representation and abolition of the US Senate, limitations on the power of the Supreme Court to pass on the constitutionality of laws, national education and health legislation, establishment of a Department of Labor, and election of judges (National Convention of the Socialist Party 1908, p.323). Tellingly, the Party platform did not contain references to questions of immigration or race, although such were discussed during the convention. With respect to immigration, the Party committee assigned the task of addressing the question unanimously agreed to appoint a special committee "to carefully study and investigate the whole subject" and report their findings at the next convention. At issue was a dispute over the question of Asian exclusion. The resolution adopted, while maintaining that "the fundamental principle of Socialism is the

struggle between the exploiting and exploited classes," and that the "controlling principle" of the movement "is the economic interest of the workers," nonetheless framed the argument in nationalistic and blatantly protectionist terms. The Party "affirms that the working class must protect itself against whatever imperils its economic interests. The mass importation by the capitalist class of foreign workers with lower standard of living than those generally prevailing may in some instances become as serious to the working class of the nation as an armed invasion would be to the nation itself." To do otherwise than restrict foreign labor "is to set a bourgeois Utopian ideal above the class struggle." Thus, the committee decided "to resolutely oppose all immigration which is subsidized or stimulated by the capitalist class, and all contract labor immigration, as well as to support all attempts of the workers to raise their standards of living" (p.105).

The question of race as a consideration in the exclusion of Asian immigrants was set aside for another day. The Party itself remained uncommitted on the subject of exclusion.[33] The rationale – the convention "does not feel itself competent to decide upon [the question] at this time in the absence of a scientific investigation of the matter." Instead of confronting the issue, the decision was made to establish a "special committee" the purpose of which was "to carefully study and investigate the whole subject of immigration, in all its aspects, racial no less than economic, to publish from time to time such data as they may gather, and to report to the next convention of the party" (National Convention of the Socialist Party 1908, p.105).

Quite another issue related to the subject of religion. The platform states simply, "The Socialist Party is primarily an economic and political movement. It is not concerned with matters of religious belief" (National Convention of the Socialist Party 1908, p.321). As Hoxie notes, the Socialist Party had for some time wrestled with the contentious issue of religion, the Christian socialists on one side, whose membership had been encouraged by the Party, and the atheists, primarily Marxian Socialists, on the other. To the greatest extent possible, any conflict with respect to the matter, any issue "in which the champions of the materialistic philosophy

[33] The delegates at the 1901 Unity Conference discussed the "Negro question" in response to a resolution introduced by the three "colored delegates" in attendance – William E. Costley, John W. Adams, and Edward D. McKay. A resolution was adopted on 1 August 1901, sympathizing with the "subjection to lawlessness and oppression" of the negro, and declaring his "interests and struggles" to be identical to those "of the workers of all lands, without regard to race, or color, or sectional lines" and inviting him to "membership and fellowship … in the world movement for economic emancipation by which equal liberty and opportunity shall be secured to every man and fraternity become the order of the world" ("Negro Resolution Adopted by Indianapolis Convention" 1901, p.1). See also Ross 2015, pp.61-62.

would be sure to disturb the mystical serenity of those who had found it possible to look upon socialism as a mere striving for that co-operative commonwealth dimly shadowed forth in the altruism of religious teaching," was to be avoided (Hoxie 1908a, p.445). Yet such was not to be, as the two factions proved unable to exist harmoniously, the reason being, in Hoxie's estimation, that Marxian Socialism lends itself, indeed "breeds," atheism. "[A]theism is a definite enough tenet of working-class philosophy," and so "on this account the so-called Christian socialist faction may be surely counted upon to vex the socialist movement in the future with an element impossible of real assimilation" (p.445).

In all, Hoxie considers the Constructivists to have won the day, achieving the goal of promoting the interests of the trade-unionists, the support of whom was essential to the political survival of the Party. Yet the victory rang hollow, as the Impossibilists had succeeded in establishing within the Socialist Party a distinct and compelling anti-trade union faction, thus giving the appearance that the interests of the trade-unionists were of secondary importance to the aim of the destruction of capitalism and class rule, and creating the impression that the Party simply did not take seriously the legitimate concerns of the trade-union movement (Hoxie 1908a, p.444). The platform itself, in fact, leans heavily on the political, its proposals "calculated to strengthen the working class …, and to increase its power of resistance against capitalist oppression" (National Convention of the Socialist party 1908, p.322). The political aspect was evident throughout, especially so in the platform adopted:

> The private ownership of the land and means of production used for exploitation, is the rock upon which class rule is built; political government is its indispensable instrument. The wage-workers cannot be freed from exploitation without conquering the political power and substituting collective for private ownership of the land and means of production used for exploitation.
>
> …
>
> To unite the workers of the nation and their allies and sympathizers of all other classes to this end, is the mission of the Socialist party. In this battle for freedom the Socialist party does not strive to substitute working class rule for capitalist class rule, but by working class victory, to free all humanity from class rule and to realize the

> international brotherhood of man. (National Convention of the Socialist Party 1908, p.321.)

This political aspect of the Socialist Party Hoxie identifies with the Socialist movement as a whole. Socialism in the United States is "not a mere movement *of* workers," but rather "is a movement definitely based on the conception of class struggle and is essentially a conscious, organized struggle *for* the social domination of the working class." It represents "an attempt to reconstruct the political and legal fabric in the interests of this class." In its present form, Socialism "is a strange mixture of elements – utopian, Christian, scientific – men coming to it by all modes of thought and sentiment – the one common bond being struggle for working-class political supremacy" (Hoxie 1908a, p.448).

Yet the Socialist Party and the Socialist movement cannot become a "potent political force" unless and until its members come to the realization that significant changes must be made. The two most important for Hoxie are "the elimination of certain elements which breed only dissension within and distrust without," and the granting of "effective executive control" to the party organs. This especially means dissociation with "a certain ignorant, doctrinaire, ultra-revolutionary, semi-anarchistic element" within the Party, associated most closely with William Haywood and the Girard, Kansas-based newspaper *Appeal to Reason*, published by Julius Augustus Wayland. These "semi-anarchistic" elements Hoxie deems incapable of establishing an independent political organization, so they "and their like fasten themselves like leeches upon the most revolutionary party existing and, by the power which extravagant appeal to class consciousness has upon the minds of the rank and file, they make themselves popular heroes, force the real party leaders unwillingly to support their outrageous and destructive actions, and damn the party in the minds of reasonably conservative men by assuming to act as its mouthpieces and spokesmen." To some extent, at the 1908 convention the Party did in fact begin the process of purging the more destructive elements by forcing the withdrawal of Haywood from a leadership role.[34] Yet in so doing, the Constructivist faction could not sustain

[34] "The feat was accomplished by the exercise of both strategy and force. The strategy was shown in allowing Haywood as an assumed candidate for nomination to bellow about the country weeks and even months before the convention. In this way, it was hoped that he would politically hang himself. And he did so weaken his hold upon the minds and hearts of the sane socialist constituency that before the day for nomination came, a caucus of conservative delegates was able to force his 'voluntary' withdrawal and thus to save the leaders from the choice between disruption of the party and suicidal acquiescence" (Hoxie 1908a, p.447).

its momentum and so failed to elect "a real working-class leader of suitable caliber." As a concession, Eugene V. Debs and Benjamin Hanford were selected to lead the Party, despite the understanding "that Debs has no longer mind nor character for leadership and that neither of the candidates really represents the dominant trend in the party policy" (Hoxie 1908a, pp.446-447).[35]

In Hoxie's estimation, the singular problem with which the Socialist Party would have to deal was that of "too much democracy and untrammeled individualism in the party organization." The choice they must confront, one they in fact recognized, was that "between democratic ideals coupled with inefficiency and efficiency through centralized authority." They opted for the latter. This, notes Hoxie, represented "a noteworthy step … in the direction of eliminating generally the cumbrous tyranny of the rank and file which has heretofore put a brake upon the party machinery." As the proposal had to be approved by the rank-and-file membership, its passage was somewhat in doubt (Hoxie 1908a, p.448).

Significantly, the leadership of the Party for the time being had fallen to the more conservative and moderate elements, those of the Constructivist wing. Victor Berger, John Spargo, Robert Hunter, Morris Hillquit, Algie Simons, Seymour Stedman, Ida Crouch Hazlett, to name but a few, people "of distinctly middle-class extraction or present middle-class occupation and status." Their aim, in Hoxie's view, is radical reform, not revolutionary action; to the Constructivists, "Marx is indeed an authority but not a god." Rather, their principal desire is "practical reform, immediate results, party efficiency." Should they be successful "in making strong and permanent their present precarious hold on the party authority and machinery, it is at least doubtful whether the organization will ever go the full route to social revolution" (Hoxie 1908a, p.449).

In all, Hoxie perceives the Socialist Party of 1908 as "a force destined to play an important part in the development of American polity." Yet Hoxie recognizes that such is by no means a certainty. While the majority of new members will likely come "from the ranks of organized labor," they will first have to be convinced that the political actions of the American Federation of Labor are not sufficient to their cause (Hoxie 1908a, p.450).

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[35] In his report on the Socialist convention, Robert Hunter assesses Debs far more favorably. He is "the greatest Socialist agitator," who, as a public speaker, has no peer in the Socialist movement. "He is not a great politician. He long since gave over politics in the ordinary sense. He is really an evangelist, – a kind of Luther, leading men to faith and sacrifice. Not even his most bitter opponent would deny that he is a man of intellect and ability, but those who follow him speak of his devotion, of his sacrifice, and of his love" (Hunter 1908, p.298).

The Aftermath: The Election of 1908

The Presidential election of 1908 resulted in the continuation of Republican control, with William Howard Taft handily defeating his Democratic challenger, William Jennings Bryan, 51.6% to 43%, garnering 66.5% of the electoral votes. The Socialist Party, represented by Eugene Debs and Benjamin Hanford, received 420,856 votes, more than they had managed in the 1904 election but still a mere 2.83% of the total,[36] while the Socialist Labor Party polled a paltry 0.09% (14,031 votes). Tellingly, and of importance to understanding Hoxie's interest in labor and the Socialist movement, Samuel Gompers had thrown his support behind Bryan and the Democrats, abandoning the long-held non-political position of the American Federation of Labor. As Henry White, who had from 1895 to 1904 served as General Secretary of the United Garment Workers' Union, an affiliate of the AFL, observed, the policy against the endorsement of political candidates or a political party "was dictated, not altogether as a protection against the design of politicians, but also as a means of keeping the movement out of Socialistic hands." There had been efforts for many years to commit the Federation to support Socialist causes, but these had been rebuked, as "safeguards adopted against 'Capitalistic' politics applied equally to the Socialists" (White 1908, p.375). Nonetheless, Gompers, "without recanting his former views" respecting the non-political nature of the AFL, "justifies his present course on the same grounds as those on which a people might seek to justify a revolution – as a means of averting a graver evil." While Gompers was in agreement with the position of the Socialists "as to the need of the organized workers asserting themselves as voters," that "the union must either strike a blow at its enemies at the ballot-box or submit to the thraldom [sic] of the courts," it was equally clear "that the effective way of delivering this blow is through one of the dominant or 'Capitalistic' parties" (p.376).

Hoxie addressed the issue of the Federation's political activity in the 1908 election in his *Journal of Political Economy* essay, "President Gompers and the Labor Vote" (1908). Gompers, according to Hoxie, admittedly repeating a "rumor," had been "at one time an ardent socialist" whose "hidden aim has always been to draw the workers as rapidly as practicable in the direction

[36] Debs chartered a train for a nation-wide, coast-to-coast campaign tour, the first "whistle-stop" campaign in American history. Dubbed the "Red Special" by Algie Martin Simons, one of the founders of the Socialist Party, the tour drew such large crowds and press attention that it was predicted that the Socialists may receive as many as 1.5 million votes! See J. Robert Constantine (1990, esp. pp.lxx-lxxi) and Charles Lapworth (1908).

of class-conscious political action."[37] While Gompers' desire was ultimately the establishment of an independent labor party, his support of the Democratic candidates was a calculated one, "forced upon the leaders of the federation by the imperative demand for a positive policy promising immediate results of a visible nature" (Hoxie 1908c, p.693). The Federation itself and the labor movement in general had suffered major setbacks. Employers had become more intransigent in their dealings with labor, the economic situation had led to greater unemployment and a lowering of wages, and the courts had sided with the employers in a series of decisions regarding labor-management disputes. It had become clear that the "business unionism" model of Gompers and the AFL had failed to deliver the promised advances and even threatened to roll back those which had been achieved (p.694).

Gompers and the Federation were thus left with three alternatives. Support the Socialist Party, establish an independent labor party, or cooperate with one of the established political parties. The first alternative, seek to support the candidates of the Socialist Party, was quickly rejected, due in no small part to the actions of those within the Party itself. Many of the Party leaders had been quite critical of the position of the AFL leadership with respect to their stance on cooperating with business as a means to secure their objectives, maintaining that only direct action would serve to compel them to accede to the demands of the workers. Every failure of the Federation to achieve its goals was highlighted, the Socialist solution offered as a more viable alternative. This, in Hoxie's view, represented a "reflection of the antithetical natures and methods of business unionism and socialism. The socialist dream of future felicity will not mate with the unionist demand for immediate results" (Hoxie 1908c, p.695).[38] The second alternative,

[37] Gompers, for his part, explicitly rejected Socialism and the approach of the Socialists in the trade union movement in a speech before the AFL delegates in 1903: "I want to tell you, Socialists, that I have studied your philosophy; read your works upon economics, and not the meanest of them; studied your standard works, both in English and German – have not only read, but studied them. I have heard your orators and watched the work of your movement the world over. I have kept close watch upon your doctrines for thirty years; have been closely associated with many of you, and know how you think and what you propose. I know, too, what you have up your sleeve. And I want to say that I am entirely at variance with your philosophy. I declare it to you, I am not only at variance with your doctrines, but with your philosophy. Economically, you are unsound; socially, you are wrong; industrially, you are an impossibility" (Gompers 1903, p.198).

[38] In an essay published in the *Journal of Political Economy* in October 1907, John Curtis Kennedy, a junior colleague of Hoxie's in the Department of Political Economy at the University of Chicago, demonstrates that "trade-unionists and socialists hold to practically the same views and are seeking the same ends," and argues further "that it is only a question of time before trade-unionists in America will recognize this fact and lend their support to the Socialist Party" (Kennedy 1907, p.470). Specifically, the common features Kennedy identifies as characteristic of both Socialism and trade-unionism are expressions of class-consciousness, the use of political action to secure

a separate labor party, was rejected as well, as the political reality assured it would be little more than a footnote in the election. Thus Gompers' decision to ally the Federation with the Democrats.

The difficulty with this decision, notes Hoxie, is that the political attitudes of the rank-and-file of the AFL were not necessarily coincident with that of Gompers and the leadership. While the membership may have been "thoroughly committed to business unionism," they could be at once conscious of their social and economic class. In his class-conscious "mood," the unionist "repudiates utterly the fundamental notion of business unionism, namely, that harmony of interests exists between the employer and the worker and between the middle and the working classes." This attitude is most prevalent "when members of the working class appear to attempt a middle-class pose," leading to resentment of a union member who feigns middle-class pretensions. For Hoxie, such resentment explains to a significant degree the lack of electoral support for the Democrats, but did not necessarily translate into support for the Socialists (Hoxie 1908c, pp.697-698).

Still, some found consolation in the defeat. Charles Kerr, editor of the *International Socialist Review*, found "encouragement" in the results, noting that, in the municipalities in which the "left wing" of the Party, of which Kerr was a staunch advocate, had established a strong organizational presence, substantial gains had been made. Arkansas, Idaho, Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, and Texas, states in which the left wing expended considerable effort in carrying out its educational campaigns, including circulating Marxian literature and explaining the reality of the class struggle, showed the most improvement in terms of voter turnout. In contrast, Massachusetts and the states of the Midwest, especially Wisconsin, had barely held on to their previous totals. To Kerr, the advances demonstrated the need to focus more on issues of class conflict and revolutionary action and less on the pragmatic emphasis on meeting worker demands. "Let us keep to the one issue of the class struggle, and the votes will come" (Kerr 1909, pp.533-534).

The Elections of 1910 and 1911

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desired ends, and (eventually, for the trade-unionists) an acceptance of the necessity of collective ownership of the means of production and distribution.

In the midterm elections of 1910 and 1911, the Socialist Party continued to gain momentum, winning elections primarily at the state and municipal levels; Victor Berger in the November 1910 election won a set in the U.S. House of Representatives for Wisconsin's 5th Congressional District, becoming the first Socialist to win national elective office. In Hoxie's estimation, such an outcome, "coming as it does in a period of comparative industrial and political normality, strongly suggests the speedy rise of the Socialist party and the Socialist creed to a position of permanent consequence in the United States." While Socialism appeared to have become "a great political force" with which the country must contend, there remained the question as to the reason behind the sudden electoral gains, "whether it is something to cause the mighty to tremble and the lowly to rejoice; whether it is a grim but passing danger, a sign of social uplift, or a huge political joke." As a social scientist, Hoxie's motivation was to discover the underlying reasons behind these results, the nature of the gains, the platforms on which the candidates ran, and the support they received (Hoxie 1911, pp.609-610).

To this end Hoxie undertook a scientific inquiry, sending "some six hundred letters … to members of all parties in places where the Socialist successes have occurred." The Socialist victories occurred predominately in the Midwest, with Wisconsin accounting for twenty-two percent of the total number of Socialist office holders. The Midwest region alone elected seventy percent of the total, while the remainder centered in the West, Northwest, and Pacific coast regions – the East (save for Pennsylvania and West Virginia) appeared "very scantily represented," while the Deep South remained "almost wholly untouched." Surprisingly, most of the successes occurred in small towns – on Hoxie's count, of the 160 municipalities in which the Socialists held office, "33 are cities of 10,000 and more, 105 fall below 5,000, and 51 are townships, or cities and villages under 1,000." Milwaukee itself laid claim to "more than one-eighth of all the Socialists in office" (Hoxie 1911, pp.611-613). Although most of the electoral gains made by the Socialists were in small municipalities, these were not mere agricultural enclaves; on the contrary, many were manufacturing, mining, and transportation centers, with the singular exception of Berkeley, California, which was an educational center (pp.613-615).

Despite the gains made, the Socialists exercised little actual control. The offices to which they were elected were of minor significance – in only five cities (Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Berkeley, California; Butte, Montana; Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; and Two Harbors, Minnesota) did the Socialists succeed in capturing the office of mayor and other "major" offices. Given the lack

of any real power base, the best the Socialists could hope to achieve "is to give an honest and efficient administration" (Hoxie 1911, p.616). Still, Hoxie notes that one can draw certain conclusions from the Socialist victories. First, Socialism has emerged as "something more than a mere doctrinaire sect or party of protest." It has shown a potential to national as opposed to simply regional acceptance, and crosses class and sector divisions. Second, Socialism can by no means be construed as a potent political force; to conclude otherwise from the election returns thus far "is to deal altogether in hyperbole" (p.616).

As to the reasons behind the electoral successes of the Socialists, Hoxie is not accepting of the conventional explanations. The "common conclusion" is that the election results do not demonstrate "the existence of any real Socialism or bona fide Socialist election successes in the United States." To Hoxie, a close study of the election results suggests otherwise. The Socialist movement in the United States "is at present a young, vigorous, and very protean movement, for the most part moderate, liberal, honest, and above all essentially democratic." The principle difference between the Socialist philosophy and "the democracy of the crowd" is that the former "rests on an evolutionary philosophy rather than on the classical eighteenth-century, absolutistic, natural-rights doctrine" (Hoxie 1911, p.629).

Among the litany of factors alleged to have been responsible for the sudden emergence of Socialist officeholders are the development of a class consciousness on the part of the working class, a reaction to "the present wave of insurgency and radicalism, helped on by the buncombe of self-seeking politicians and the teachings of misguided uplifters and college professors," and an ill-informed or uninformed electorate (Hoxie 1911, p.617). Alternative explanations include the perception of corruption in municipal government, "bipartisan combinations and ring rule for the control of office and the sale of privilege, corporation control, unequal tax burdens, and general inefficiency and waste," and a host of other causes, including

> the influence of the foreign element in our population; the growing strength and radicalism of trade-unionism; the recrudescence of populism; the disquieting effect of high prices; general political discontent and desire for change; apathy and carelessness in an off political year, and finally, purely local issues and conditions including city indebtedness, local industrial depressions and labor controversies, municipal-ownership

> contests and local-option fights, factionalism and cut-throat politics, the personal popularity or unpopularity of candidates, and so on, ad infinitum. (Hoxie 1911, p.618)

Yet such explanations do not capture fully the essential nature of the political dynamic. In order to provide a degree of clarification to the results, Hoxie offers a typology of Socialism's successes, identifying seven distinct types. The first is the "broad, liberal, opportunistic, moderate type," the Wisconsin or Midwest variety. This variant is strongest in manufacturing areas comprised of large immigrant, predominately German, working class populations. Maintaining for itself the mantle of "real Socialism," in that "it is an integral part organically of the National Socialist party, and has always the Socialist creed in the background," the progressivist platform of the local Party calls "for honest and efficient city administration, the equalization of tax burdens, the curbing of corporations, direct popular control of legislation and officials, the improvement of labor conditions and of the housing, education, and amusements of the working people, and the greatest practicable extension of municipal ownership and control" (Hoxie 1911, pp.623-624).

A second type of success is founded on an appeal to class consciousness, the "base" of success extending from the Midwest to the Rocky Mountain states, areas dominated by the bituminous coal mining industry and miners' unions. The Party leadership consists predominately of immigrants from Great Britain (in contrast with the mining industry situated in the anthracite coal regions, largely identified with immigrants from eastern and southern Europe). As to an explanation for the successes here, Hoxie can only surmise "that there is something in the working environment of these miners which makes them think in different terms from those about them and gives them a different outlook on life and society" (Hoxie 1911, pp.624-625).

Those areas formerly bastions of Populist support provide a rationale for the third type of success. Comprised in large part of farmers and small business owners, this type "is mainly but the outcome of the policy of the Socialist party in maintaining a permanent corps of speakers and organizers," who select a small town and proceed to establish a local party apparatus, focusing on the support of younger voters. As the basis of its popularity is not class-determined or economically-centered, it tends to be short-lived (Hoxie 1911, pp.625-626).

Opportunism defines the fourth type of Socialist success, and so it is not confined to any geographic area or economic class. Local economic downturns, labor-management disputes, any economic or political circumstance may present itself as an opportunity for this form of "revolutionary Socialism" (Hoxie 1911, p.626).

The state of municipal government affords a rationale for the fifth type of Socialist success. "It is in the boss-ruled, corporation-ridden, tax burdened city, with its poorly paved, ill-lighted, dirty streets, its insufficient water-supply and air-filled gas mains, its industrial fire-traps, its graft-protected vice district, its fat politicians, untaxed wealth, crooked contracts, and wasted resources, that Socialism finds its best object-lessons and has won some of its most significant, if not its most numerous, successes." This is reform Socialism, dedicated not to the class struggle but rather to the betterment of the community and the return of honest government (Hoxie 1911, 626-627).

Moderate or idealistic Socialism, representing the sixth type of Socialist success, "stands for honesty, efficiency, cleanness, law enforcement, and a large measure of municipal ownership, because these are the good and righteous things." Primarily found in the states of the Far West, its candidates come from the ranks of the local clergy or professions, and may include temperance advocates as well (Hoxie 1911, pp.627-628).

Lastly, the seventh type of success is "altogether trivial and fortuitous." It is "the result of factional squabbling, personal likes and dislikes, lack of opposition, petty local and personal issues, etc." (Hoxie 1911, p.628).

That Socialism as manifest in the Socialist Party had made electoral progress one cannot doubt; to Hoxie, the results provided evidence that Socialism "is just beginning to gather force in the United States." Whether its successes will continue depends upon the extent to which the Socialists respond to the challenges of governing, and to the responses of the opposition, mainstream parties. Should they fail to achieve their promised objectives, they run the risk of alienating their followers; should they venture to do too much too soon, they run the risk of failure (Hoxie 1911, p.630). In addition, there is the problem of a "lack of consistency," which he finds due in large part "to its varying degrees of youth in different sections of the country and to its practical inexperience." He even goes so far as to adduce "a definite law of the development of Socialism which applies both to the individual and to the group."

> The creedalism and immoderateness of Socialism, other things being equal, vary inversely with its age and responsibility. The average Socialist recruit begins as a theoretical impossibilist and develops gradually into a constructive opportunist. Add a taste of real responsibility and he is hard to distinguish from a liberal reformer. It is the same with the movement. These Socialist successes in general, therefore, are a training school of constructive democracy. This fact should calm the fears and allay the prejudices of all those who have a real faith in the people. (Hoxie 1911, p.631)

Of this characterization the Socialist activist William English Walling disagreed, singling out Hoxie by name. The "theoretical impossibilists" had never amounted to "more than a handful" of the membership, their obstructionist tactics out of all proportion to their numbers, while the revolutionists within the Party, "in spite of the very considerable and steady influx of reformers into the movement," have increased in number and in influence. In fact, according to Walling, the Party had for some time become increasingly more revolutionary, with the "reformist" wing having been "heavily outvoted in every Congress of the present Party – in 1901, 1904, 1908, and 1910." That the revolutionary wing controls the agenda is beyond doubt when one considers that the Party's candidate for the Presidency in the previous three elections was none other than the "revolutionist" Eugene Victor Debs! (Walling 1912, p.175).

An Update on the Elections of 1911

In March 1912 Hoxie published a follow-up study to his 1911 survey, "The Rising Tide of Socialism," including revisions to vote totals resulting from a change in the method of calculation of votes. Here Hoxie notes the tremendous electoral advances made by the Socialist Party in the November elections, where by "November elections" is meant the period November and December 1911 and January and February 1912 (Hoxie 1912a, p.205n.1). The results from this period are significant, for they occurred in districts in which, in the Fall of 1911, no municipal elections had taken place in what Hoxie had termed the "main strongholds of Socialism." Furthermore, it is worth noting that the vast majority of the newly-elected officials, over 85 percent, "were elected in states which had heretofore returned few or no Socialist officials and in municipalities new in the Socialist ranks." The number of members of the Party voted "into public offices of various degrees of importance" by Hoxie's (conservative) estimates

totaled "no fewer than 642," a number exceeding "by more than one hundred the combined Socialist election successes thus far recorded in the years 1908, 1909, 1910, and in the spring of 1911" (Hoxie 1912a, p.205).

That the Party had, given that the elections occurred in but a few states, "in apparently 'unsocialized' territory, in a new group of municipalities," nonetheless "more than doubled its political power," was evidence "of the real strength, character, and tendencies of the movement." Yet, in Hoxie's estimation, what appeared to be demonstrative of a resurgence of political power in fact, when viewed more closely, showed the Party to be but a municipal political force. Of the victorious candidates, "but four represented areas larger than the county, three of these being members of state legislatures and one a delegate to a state constitutional convention."[39] Wisconsin remained the single exception.

Of singular interest is the observation that the "center of gravity of the Socialist political system" had shifted from the Midwest to the East, with Pennsylvania and Ohio outperforming Wisconsin (although Milwaukee still represented the largest municipality in which the Party held a political advantage). New York, where, in Schenectady, the Party achieved a "sweeping victory," New Jersey, West Virginia, and Indiana also showed impressive gains. Yet these gains most likely resulted from the local nature of the elections; while the "center of gravity" may have shifted to the East, the "stronghold" of Socialism remained in the Midwest (Hoxie 1912a, pp.207-209). Add to this the fact that the victories in 1910 and 1911 occurred not, as they had in previous elections, merely in small, rural communities, but rather centered in the larger, more industrial municipalities, and appeared to have been more concentrated than previously. Two of the eastern industrial states, Pennsylvania and Ohio,[40] accounted for 72 percent of the newly-elected officials. Finally, the Party increased dramatically its representation in areas in which manufacturing was dominant – 67 percent of the communities were considered industrial, compared with 38.5 percent in previous elections, while agriculture accounted for only 14

[39] By Hoxie's count, "Of the new officials 27 are mayors and village presidents, 211 councilmen, aldermen, and village or township trustees, 4 city commissioners, 5 charter-revision commissioners, while 67 others may be considered to occupy major municipal positions. Of the remainder 47 are assessors, 79 are school officers, and 60 are connected with the work of justice and police" (Hoxie 1912a, p.206).

[40] "[N]ot only has Ohio suddenly taken its place as one of the most important centers of Socialist power, but it appears in a striking way to represent what the Socialists call a 'good movement.' The policy and fortunes of the party in this state should therefore constitute an exceptionally good test of the ideals, effectiveness, and possibilities of Socialism in this country" (Hoxie 1912a, p.212-213).

percent, down considerably from the 45 percent of communities previously. While Hoxie is quick to remind readers that the predominately agricultural states of the Midwest did not participate in the midterm elections, nonetheless "the later results are a very necessary corrective of any conclusions which may have been drawn" from the outcomes of previous contests. In short, the Socialist Party was becoming a more urban and industrial-centered political force (Hoxie 1912a, pp.210-211).

As to specific issues that may have precipitated the elections results, Hoxie observes that "ultra-theoretical Socialism," Socialism as a principled political doctrine, was not a factor, or at best a negligible one. Class-conflict was as well an insignificant consideration. On the contrary, Socialist victories came as a result of focusing on strictly local issues, with which the mainstream parties could readily have agreed –

> Extravagance and inefficiency, good government and economy, corruption and graft, gang and corporation rule, the personal popularity, honesty, and ability of candidates, individual and party records, commission government, charter revision, public improvements, specific problems of municipal ownership, franchise-granting, the tax rate, bond issues, local option, the enforcement of law against liquor-selling and vice, religious affiliations, ethnical jealousies – all these, as non-Socialist factors, and many others, played their part in the election or defeat of Socialist candidates. (Hoxie 1912a, p.214)

In all, the nature of the Socialist victories appears to Hoxie to have been the result of alterations in their methods of campaigning. The Party as a whole focused its efforts on "organization, agitation, and education," with coordination at the national level in providing assistance and support to the local organizations. In addition, the Party rebranded itself, presenting to voters a characteristic Socialism, a national party dedicated to the improvement of the conditions of the working class and the amelioration of the deleterious consequences of unrestrained capitalism, a party of efficient municipal organization and administration, dedicated to political and economic equality, honest government, and civic betterment, a party dedicated to the restraint of corporations and the protection of workers' rights to collective bargaining, in short, a party of social, political, and economic reform. That there remained a core of idealistic fervor cannot be

denied. Yet the Party understood that the factors that motivated the electorate were the conditions directly affecting the people (Hoxie 1912a, pp.216-220).

Hoxie's conclusion drawn from the elections results is that the country had come "at last face to face with a vigorous and effective Socialist movement – a movement which is nation-wide, which is laying the foundation for a permanent structure by building from the bottom of the political system, which is recruiting its main strength in the important civic and industrial centers, and which is growing at a rapidly accelerating rate." While Hoxie feels it premature to consider the Socialist Party as a "potent political power," it is nonetheless conceivable that within a decade the Party would be of such strength as to mount a serious challenge to the dominant Republican and Democratic Parties. The Party already transformed itself "from a speculative sect, preaching a gospel of far-off revolution, to a crusading army," and to continue to make advances must not lose sight of the "distinctive character" that has led to its successes thus far (Hoxie 1912a, p.213). Its previous victories and record of governing provided the necessary evidence of the potential of the Socialist movement. The municipal administrations did not enact wholesale, revolutionary changes to the governments in which they exercised control. "The old laws are administered. Men buy and sell and contracts are enforced. Capital does not withdraw frightened out of the city. The churches continue their services. Men still cleave to their wives and families. Public education flourishes." What did change was the manner of administration, efficient and honest governance, municipal ownership, the closing of tax loopholes that favored the wealthy, curbs on the police power, remediation of living and working conditions. The only puzzle is why the Party did not have even greater success. Hoxie's answer gets to the nature of the Socialist Party itself – "The Party is struggling to reconcile democracy and efficiency in the conduct of its own affairs" (Hoxie 1912a, p.223). The gains it has made have yet to be digested by the decision-makers within the organization. In short, "[t]he incompatibility of extreme 'democracy' and efficiency is the present bane of the Socialist party" (p.213n.).

In Hoxie's estimation, the Socialist Party had transformed itself from its early days as a congeries of disaffected groups nominally associated with the label of Socialist into an effective political organization. It had become far less doctrinaire, far less interested in revolutionary action, and more concerned with the process of governance. The Socialist Party conventions are exercises in democracy, not back-room politics; the convention, "in marked contrast to those of

the old parties, is altogether free from the dominating and manipulating influence of a national committee unresponsive to the immediate will of the party membership." This represents, in Hoxie's view, something new, in both organization and method (Hoxie 1912b, pp.738-739).

The Party itself has evolved to the point where it is no longer necessary to engage in its conventions in recitations of Marxian philosophy. The committees devote themselves to matters of policy; they "are not supposed to confine their work to an exegesis of Marx but to secure the facts and interpret them scientifically." While Marx may indeed be granted "the absolute authority of the soap boxer," a "heroic figure" to the movement, the party is nonetheless not as rigidly wedded to the dogma as it is popularly regarded. To the contrary, the Party in its convention constructed a program fully cognizant of the reality its candidates and membership must face. In this regard, Hoxie finds it "refreshing" to witness "an American political party assembled in convention gravely discussing a social or political problem on its merits in order that the party may occupy a portion that is at once tactically sound and scientifically tenable" (Hoxie 1912b, p.744).

Yet Debs, despite the successes at the ballot box, expressed concerns as to the means and methods employed in capturing the vote. In a brief essay published shortly after the 1910 elections in the *International Socialist Review* entitled "Danger Ahead," Debs cautions against the desire to gain political office at the expense of the commitment to the revolutionary principles of the Party.

> The danger I see ahead is that the Socialist party at this stage, and under existing conditions, is apt to attract elements which it cannot assimilate, and that it may be either weighted down, or torn asunder with internal strife, or that it may become permeated and corrupted with the spirit of bourgeois reform to an extent that will practically destroy its virility and efficiency as a revolutionary organization. (Debs 1911, p.413)

Those seeking office over principle wish to re-brand Socialism to appeal to "bourgeois sensibilities," yet any support that may derive from such an appeal would be fleeting and would represent a subversion of the philosophy underlying the movement (Debs 1911, p.413).

As to the trade-union movement, while Debs wishes actively to court its members, he is only interested in the support "of those who believe in socialism and are ready to vote and work

… for the overthrow of capitalism." The American Federation of Labor, in concert with the Civic Federation, he views as being "deadly hostile" to the Party and to the philosophy of Socialism "and every revolutionary movement of the working class." To encourage a rapprochement would be disastrous to the Party, trading principles for political pragmatism (Debs 1911, p.414).

Epilogue

In the presidential election of 1912 William Howard Taft, the Republican incumbent, faced Democrat Woodrow Wilson. Theodore Roosevelt, who had in 1908 supported Taft as his political heir, mounted a challenge but was outmaneuvered by the conservative bloc of Taft delegates; Roosevelt and delegates from the progressive wing of the Republican Party then formed the Progressive Party, with Roosevelt as its candidate. Once again the Socialists selected Eugene Debs as their candidate, his fourth run for the office. Wilson won the election, with 41.8% of the vote and 439 electoral votes, with Roosevelt coming in second (27.4%, 88 electoral votes) and Taft finishing third (23.2%, 8 electoral votes). Debs and the Socialists garnered 900,742 votes, or 5.99% of the total votes cast, their best showing ever! Such was to be the high point of the Socialist Party, as its fortunes decline precipitously in the years that followed.

As to the unions, what had been an "open" contest between the "business element" and the "socialist or revolutionary element" had, in Hoxie's estimation, gradually become more "subtle." The "good business unionist" had become generally "intolerant of socialism," as the demand shifted to a greater share now, a demand "not to be secured by academic discussions of a mythical coöperative commonwealth in the future." The Socialists, favoring industrial unionism, continually focused their efforts on proselytizing, attempting to convert the craft unionists to their position using any means at their disposal. "They have joined the unions, got themselves elected delegates to central bodies and conventions and have used the discussion of every union problem, every difference between unions, every union failure or disaster, to point out with contempt the weakness of craft organization and to preach industrial unionism and party socialism." Yet this approach failed to have the desired outcome. Far from converting the craft unionists to the Socialist position, the tactic "has made most craft unionists, however revolutionary at heart, violent haters of socialism in its objective party form." As it so happened,

however, the "cooler headed socialists" who had been content with a more gradualist approach had, according to Hoxie, witnessed the AFL "normally tending to industrialism" in the course of events as their numbers increased within the union and their position became more acceptable. The "fiery efforts" of the Socialists and more radical elements had merely delayed the inevitable shift in perspective (Hoxie 1917, pp.186-187).

Finally, historian James Weinstein relates the contents of a letter Hoxie sent to Ralph Easley, founder and chairman of the executive council of the National Civic Federation,[41] in which Hoxie opines, "the chief trouble with the Socialist party is lack of discipline. When a majority decision is reached (especially if the minority is ultra-radical, red, IWW-ish) the minority gets up on its hind legs and yells 'boss rule,' 'steam roller.'" Hoxie concludes "that the Socialist situation indicated 'the impossibility of attempting to combine democracy and efficiency'" (Weinstein 1967, p.330).[42] Weinstein nonetheless observes that the Party as Hoxie knew it, despite its inefficiencies, real and perceived, was far more "open and diverse" than its successors, which became centralized in organization and demanded a more disciplined membership (p.330).

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[41] The National Civic Federation, founded in 1900 as successor to the Chicago Civic Federation, was a collection of business and labor interests that advocated solutions to labor disputes, including collective bargaining and labor legislation. Among its members were Samuel Gompers and Andrew Carnegie.

[42] We attempted to locate the letter in the archives of the National Civic Federation, located in the New York Public Library, but were unsuccessful.

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