Labor's Reconstruction: Social Democracy and Progressivism in American Trade Unions, 1917-1925

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B.A. in History, May 2012, State University of New York at Geneseo

A Dissertation submitted to

The Faculty of
The Columbian College of Arts and Sciences
of The George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 21, 2023

Dissertation directed by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. Especially my grandmother, Brigitte Hartmann, and my grandfather, Siegfried Meyris, who helped open my eyes to the world and always encouraged my curiosity.

Acknowledgments

As a first-generation college student, I owe my success to the many people who took time to help me. First, I would like to thank the George Washington University Columbian College of Arts and Sciences and the History Department for their many years of financial support. Similarly, I extend my gratitude to the Walter P. Reuther Library and the Labor and Working-Class History Association for underwriting several of my research trips.

I would like to offer my endless thanks to my dissertation committee. Tim Shenk, Robyn Muncy, Joe McCartin, and Matt Dallek all gave me invaluable advice on how to revise and improve. Their thoughtful comments and suggestions will doubtlessly help me sharpen and improve this work. Eric Arnesen, my advisor, deserves special mention for the tireless attention he gave to my manuscript and for his years of mentorship. This work clearly reflects our many conversations and the lessons I took out of them.

My thanks also goes out to the faculty members, staff, and fellow graduate students who encouraged me since arriving in Washington, D.C. The courses I took with Richard Stott, Erin Chapman, Tyler Anbinder, Kip Kosek, Michael Kazin, and Angela Zimmerman all helped prepare me for historical work. Conversations with professors Sara Matthiesen, Trevor Jackson, Katrin Schultheiss, Denver Brunsman, and Steve Brady were often equally influential. Chris Brick and Christy Regenhardt at the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers—my place of employment for many years—similarly sparked many an idea. A special mention must also go to Leo Ribuffo, whom I took several classes with and who served on my committee before his untimely passing.

I would like to briefly acknowledge the hard work of the History department's administrators: Evelyn Burns, Johnny Vail, Sam Nohra, and Michael Weeks. Despite

navigating avalanches of emails, course schedules, and reimbursement requests, they were always there to help.

I am fortunate enough to have had a wonderful community of fellow graduate students during my time Washington. To my cohort and all those I spent many days with under the humming florescent lights of the History graduate student office: I couldn't have finished without the laughs and commiseration you provided. A special word of thanks goes out to all those who helped me edit my work. Seth LaShier, Chelsea Davis, Rohail Salman, and Zayad Bangash all spent many hours suggesting revisions. My colleagues and former roommates Kate Steir and Cory Young likewise gave their time generously and were always there to give advice and friendship.

I would be remiss not to briefly mention the many teachers and mentors I had throughout high school and college who not only prepared me academically but took time to know me as a person. To Greece Arcadia teachers Kate Ross, Susan Daly, Cynthia Langford, and Mary Myers: thank you for your many years of encouragement. SUNY Geneseo professors Kathleen Mapes, Justin Behrend, David Tamarin, and Bill Cook gave me my first look into history as an academic discipline and gave me that final push to attend graduate school. My gratitude goes to all.

To my family: my parents, Ingrid and Lars Meyris, always believed I was capable of this work and have never at any point stopped being proud of me. Thank you to my grandmother, Uta Meyris, whose (necessary) weekly calls asking if I was close to defending prodded me across the finish line. Thank you to my partner in all things, Chelsea Tegels, who not only read this work, but provided endless support and patiently

raised my head out of the books to make sure I saw the bigger picture. Thank you for not letting life slip me by.

Abstract of Dissertation

Labor's Reconstruction: Social Democracy and Progressivism in American Trade Unions, 1917-1925

This dissertation details the political maturation of organized labor in the United States. After World War I, the federal government ended its supports for collective bargaining and returned the industries it had nationalized to private ownership. In response, many employers cut wages, lengthened the working day, and laid off workers by the thousands. American unions often initiated work stoppages and protested, but striking had only limited success in reversing job cuts. In this moment, left-leaning trade unionists recognized that workplace justice required both political action and industrial action. They often described their movement as seeking a "reconstruction" of American political and economic life.

European social democrats, particularly those in the British Labour Party, influenced this ideological turn toward worker-led reconstruction. The global economic calamity of the immediate post-war era convinced those on Europe's broad left that only strong government intervention in the economy could ensure a reasonable standard of living. Social democratic parties won several important elections on the eastern end of the Atlantic during the 1920s and inspired American labor leaders to try and recreate that success. They attempted to do so largely by founding a new political institution, the Conference for Progressive Political Action (CPPA).

This dissertation centers on the CPPA. It begins by showing how radical trade unionists, socialists, and liberals disaffected by Woodrow Wilson's handling of the post-war era formed the Conference to gain influence in government. The CPPA would elect

politicians dedicated to enshrining worker protections into law, advance public ownership of economic sectors vital to everyday life, and push for a general redistribution of wealth from the top to the bottom. Organized labor's interest in social democratic politics led several unions to unite a broad group of radical intellectuals and politicians behind a complex and competent electoral machine. The dissertation explains how the resultant CPPA succeeded in holding together a broad left, with at times conflicting beliefs in liberalism, progressivism, and socialism. Importantly, many in the Conference (though crucially not all) hoped to organize all workers across gendered and racial divisions. Many working women and African American reformers had a deep interest in social democracy and greater economic equality. This dissertation shows how some of the roots of the "classic" civil rights era emerge from the labor reconstruction period of the early 1920s.

A central figure in this dissertation is Wisconsin Senator Robert M. La Follette, whom the Conference for Progressive Political Action ultimately nominated to run for president in 1924. La Follette actively sought trade union support and positioned himself as the CPPA's de facto leader in Congress. Though he did not win his presidential election, the movement the senator helped construct survived. This dissertation concludes by showing how several CPPA veterans and their ideas shaped the New Deal and provided American liberalism its more social-democratic undertones.

Table of Contents

Dedication……..iv

Acknowledgements…….....v

Abstract of Dissertation…….viii

Table of Contents……...x

Part I: Reconstruction

Introduction……..1

Chapter 1: A Second Reconstruction…….20

Part II: The 1920 Election

Chapter 2: "The Devil and the Deep, Deep Sea:" The Farmer-Labor Party in the Election of 1920…….103

Chapter 3: We Utter "Jericho": Labor and Politics After the Armistice.....……171

Chapter 4: "The New Sun of Freedom:" Labor's Divisions and the Election of 1920…….234

Part III: The Conference for Progressive Political Action: American Labor in the Atlantic World, 1921-1923

Vignette/Introduction……...293

Chapter 5: "Our Servants in Washington:" Creating a Labor Press……312

Chapter 6: “Is There For Honest Poverty:” Founding the Conference for Progressive Political Action…….336

Chapter 7: The Election of 1922…….....349

Chapter 8: “Flaming Eyes and Fast Beating Hearts”…….....389

Chapter 9: Living in a “House of Make-Believe:” The “United Front,” Left Anticommunism, and the CPPA…….....450

Chapter 10: Between the Millstones: The CPPA and Labor’s Atlantic: Robert La Follette’s Trip To Europe……...495

Part IV: The Election of 1924

Chapter 11: Robert La Follette, the Conference for Progressive Political Action, and the 1924 Election……..535

Conclusion: “We Parted As Friends”…….....627

Bibliography……653

Introduction

On Independence Day, 1924, William Johnston promised American workers a "New Deal." The fifty-year-old president of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) was one of the most powerful trade union leaders in the country. Johnston had led his union through the First World War, walking a tight rope between the promise of labor peace he gave to Woodrow Wilson and his obligation to deliver higher wages and shorter hours for his members. After the armistice brought a post-war economic slump, he fought tooth and nail to keep his members on the job and win raises to match the soaring cost of living. Despite a series of setbacks, including a disastrous loss during the 1922 Shopmen's Strike, the IAM remained several hundred thousand members strong.[1]

When Johnston spoke in Cleveland on July 4, however, he did not address the few thousand attendees solely as the president of a labor union, but as chairman of the Conference for Progressive Political Action (CPPA). The Conference was a first in American politics. Never before had trade unionists made up the bulk of a political action committee set to nominate its own candidate for president of the United States. The Machinists, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, and most of the nation's railroad unions took the most active role, but the CPPA also received generous support from the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. The Railroad Brotherhoods were some of the most socially conservative unions in the country; they excluded, by charter, any members who were not "sober white men."

[1] Stenographic Report of the Convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action Held in Cleveland, Ohio, Which Nominated Senator Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin as a Candidate for President of the United States. Held July 4 and 5. Volume 1, 1-16. The Records of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Library of Congress. Box 1; Joseph A. McCartin, *Labor's Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations, 1912-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 59-60; Colin J. Davis, *Power at Odds: The 1922 National Railroad Shopmen's Strike* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

The needle trade unions, conversely, were some of the nation's most radical. Predominantly made up of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, the Amalgamated and the ILGWU had strong ties to the Socialist Party of America (SPA).[2]

The Socialist Party had developed its own ties with the Conference, choosing to abandon its own ballot line and supporting whomever the CPPA nominated. Prominent SPA member Morris Hillquit sat alongside Johnston on the Conference's national committee. The CPPA drew in radicals of all shades. Former "Bull Moose" progressives like Amos Pinchot and J.A.H. Hopkins joined with staunch radicals of the left like pacifist minister Norman Thomas and Women's Trade Union League leader Rose Schneiderman. Montana senator Burton K. Wheeler and New York Congressman Fiorello LaGuardia were active participants, as was National Association for the Advancement of Colored People field secretary William Pickens. The delegates who met in Cleveland came from many different backgrounds and walks of life.

What united members of the CPPA was, in Johnston's words, a desire for a "great progressive movement" that would "force a realignment of political forces in the United States along fundamental lines." At its July convention, the CPPA unveiled a platform that demanded iron clad collective bargaining rights (complete with the right to strike), the nationalization of mines, power plants, and railroads, a congressional override of the Supreme Court's power of judicial review, an end to the US occupation of Haiti, and a public referendum on declarations of war and peace treaties. At the end of the

[2] Daniel Katz, *All Together Different* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Steve Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York: Free Press, 1991); Robert D. Parmet, *the Master of Seventh Avenue: David Dubinsky and the American Labor Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Paul Michel Taillon, *Good, Reliable White Men: Railroad Brotherhoods, 1877-1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

convention's first day, the delegates unanimously decided to nominate Wisconsin senator Robert La Follette to run for president as an independent. La Follette would win nearly five million votes, nearly a fifth of those cast, making him one of the most successful third party candidates in American history. Certainly, he had the most successful campaign of any independent running on the left.[3]

This dissertation traces the broader history of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. It argues that American trade unionists, socialists, and many liberals and progressives, encouraged by plans for post-war "reconstruction," built vibrant coalitions and shaped a broad left response to the Republican Party's pro-business "normalcy." Americans first learned of reconstruction plans in 1918, when European social democratic parties—the British Labour Party, in particular—drafted bold new plans envisioning a "new social order" free from war, poverty, and the other ill effects of destructive corporate greed. Between the war's end and 1925, American "reconstructionists" formed several institutions to bring about a nation built around social democratic principles and justice for working people. The Conference for Political Action was the most prominent of these reconstruction organizations. In 1924, the CPPA ran La

[3] Eugene Debs hit the peak of the Socialist Party's national election performance in 1912, when he won six percent of the vote. Teddy Roosevelt performed better on the Progressive Party that year, but was not necessarily running on the "left." Indeed, several of Roosevelt's most prominent supporters were Wall Street investors. La Follette easily surpassed Henry A. Wallace's 1948 run by both raw numbers and percent of vote cast (Wallace won just over a million votes and earned just over two percent of the electorate). Bruce J. Schulman, "Farewell to the 'Smoke-Filled Room': Parties, Interests, Public Relations, and the Election of 1924," in *America at the Ballot Box: Elections and Political History*, eds. Gareth Davies and Julian E. Zelizer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 139-152; Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 263-264; Gabriel Kolko, *Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1916* (New York: The Free Press, 1963), 194-204; Nell Irvin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon* (2nd ed.) (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 268-270; Thomas W. Devine, *Henry Wallace's 1948 Presidential Campaign and the Future of Postwar Liberalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

Follette for president and created an intellectual and political legacy that extended well into the New Deal era.

The "Jazz Age" was a conservative period in American history. Nearly a decade of uninterrupted Republican control of the federal government had reversed many of Wilson's wartime economic reforms. The GOP steeply cut the federal budget, ended federal ownership of the nation's railroads and telegraph lines, briefly tried to privatize the merchant marine, and infamously sold off federal naval oil reserves to private companies. Treasury secretary Andrew W. Mellon, himself a millionaire industrialist, worked with congress to slash income rates for top earners. Crucially, the Harding administration formally ended all of Wilson's wartime supports for collective bargaining rights. The War Labor Board, which had provided trade unions with neutral federal arbitration for the first time, would not continue on. The Railroad Labor Board survived, but only as a toothless ghost of its former self. Business owners used the end of federal arbitration to hold down wages and increase hours across many industries. On paper, the twenties were boom years for American capitalism. Consumer goods were plentiful, housing construction soared, and automobile and steel production hit record levels. Of course, in the margins, industries like textiles hit deep and lasting recessions. The gulf between rich and poor grew wider.[4]

Historical works on the 1920s tend to highlight the decade's "tribalism." Indeed, Americans after the war found themselves increasingly divided over race, gender,

[4] For overviews on the complexities of the 1920s economy, see Gene Smiley, "New Estimates of Income Shares During the 1920s," in *Calvin Coolidge and the Coolidge Era: Essays on the History of the 1920s* (John Earl Haynes, ed.) (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997), 215-232; Michael A. Bernstein, "The American Economy of the Interwar Era," in *Calvin Coolidge and the Coolidge Era: Essays on the History of the 1920s* (John Earl Haynes, ed.) (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997), 191-214.

ethnicity, and religion. The Jazz Age was one defined by divisions between traditionalist and modern, rural and urban, wet and dry, Darwinian and Christian. While there were vocal advocates of cultural pluralism (Horace Kallen and LaGuardia, for instance), the mood of the twenties was one of ethnic retrenchment. The federal government effectively shut the door on new European immigration in 1924. Over the first half of the decade, the Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist organization founded after the Civil War, saw a massive revival. Millions of Americans, North and South, East and West, joined the hooded order and pledged to defend Protestant America from all manner of "Un-American" minorities. The immediate post-war years were exceptionally bloody for African Americans. Black people in the United States saw the First World War as an opportunity to demand racial justice. Many served in the armed forces, hundreds of thousands more traveled out of the South to take jobs in Northern cities with fewer Jim Crow laws on the books. Beginning in 1918, the NAACP lobbied for anti-lynching legislation. White Americans largely responded with waves of violence and intimidation.[5]

Given these seismic social changes, a trade-union backed political movement for a social democratic America seems out of place. Yet in the midst of this age of capitalist expansion and societal conflict, millions of Americans still prioritized economic justice and "industrial democracy"—many believed that plutocracy and corporate greed sat at the heart of the nation's woes. There is hardly a historiographical silence on reconstruction and the CPPA. Mid-century progressive and consensus historians like

[5] John Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955) (2011 edition); Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: the Scopes Trial and the America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 2006); Felix Harcourt, *Ku Klux Kulture: America and the Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the Ku Klux Klan: the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York: Liveright, 2017).

William E. Leuchtenburg and Richard Hofstadter both wrote on the movement around La Follette. Hofstadter, however, described the Conference as a last gasp of progressivism and populism prior to the "drastic new departure" of the New Deal. Leuchtenburg mostly agrees, deciding that the "1920s marked a time of transition within progressivism from the old-style evangelical reformism, under leaders like La Follette and Bryan, to a new style urban progressivism, which would call itself liberalism."[6] Other historians between the 1940s and 1970s, like Stanley Shapiro and Kenneth Campbell MacKay, focused on the CPPA as either the end of Progressive Era reform or an abortive preview of the New Deal.[7]

More recently, scholars of labor and American have researched the 1920s in more detail. Historians including Eileen Boris, Annelise Orleck, Dorothy Sue Cobble, and Robyn Muncy have shown in their studies and biographies how working and reforming women saw the post-war era as one of unique opportunity. Motivated by suffrage rights, the increased number of women in the workforce, the possibilities of international cooperation in the League of Nations and International Labor Organization, and the conservative assault on child labor and maternal health provisions, individuals like Rose Schneiderman, Fannia Cohn, and Josephine Roche worked to advance work and welfare policy that would play an important role in the New Deal.[8] Similarly, historians of the

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[6] William Leuchtenburg, *Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 137; Richard Hofstadter, *the Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 5, 218-220, 282-285.

[7] Kenneth Campbell MacKay, *The Progressive Movement of 1924* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972) (Second Edition, 1966); Stanley Shapiro, "The Twilight of Reform: Advanced Progressives After the Armistice," *The Historian* 33 no. 3 (May 1971), 349-364; Stanley Shapiro, "'Hand and Brain': The Farmer-Labor Party of 1920," *Labor History* 26 no. 3 (1985), 405-422.

[8] Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) (second edition); Suellen Hoy, "Sidelined: The Chicago Women's Trade Union League in the Interwar Years," *Labor* 15 no 4 (December 2018), 13-36; Dorothy Sue Cobble, "A Higher 'Standard of Life' for the World," *Journal of American*

Democratic Party have written recently on the development of urban liberalism after the First World War. Following Warren G. Harding's election, and the onset of ten years out of power in the executive and legislative branches, Democrats in Northern cities made more meaningful gestures to trade unions, liberal women, and African Americans.[9] The party, in effect, worked over time to build the New Deal coalition. Brad Snyder tells a related development, noting how a concern for civil liberties in the post-war era—especially during the Sacco and Vanzetti Trial—motivated young attorney Felix Frankfurter to adopt the more militant liberalism he would take with him to the Supreme Court.[10] Scholars of the left have also begun focusing on the 1920s as a crucial decade for the development of both urban worker identity and farmer-labor protest.[11]

This dissertation attempts to bring all these related studies of reform movements together to tell the story of post-war reconstruction and the Conference for Progressive

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History (March 2014), 1052-1085; Dorothy Sue Cobble, *For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021); Eileen Boris, *Making the Woman Worker* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1-86; Amy Aronson, *Crystal Eastman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Robyn Muncy, *Relentless Reformer: Josephine Roche and Progressivism in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Kristi Andersen, *After Suffrage: Women in Partisan Electoral Politics before the New Deal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 9, 16-17.

[9] Douglas B. Craig, "'Don't You Hear all the Railroad Men Speak?': William G. McAdoo, the United States Railroad Administration, and the Democratic Presidential Nomination of 1924," *Journal of American Studies* 48 no. 3 (2014), 777-795; Douglas B. Craig, *After Wilson: The Struggle for the Democratic Party* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); David Burner, *Politics of Provincialism: The Democratic Party in Transition, 1918-1932* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970); Michael E. McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865-1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Robert Chiles, *The Revolution of '28: Al Smith, American Progressivism, and the Coming of the New Deal* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

[10] Brad Snyder, *House of Truth: A Washington Political Salon and the Foundations of American Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[11] Eric Thomas Chester, *True Mission: Socialists and the Labor Party Question in the U.S.* (London: Pluto Press, 2004); Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Red Thread: The Passaic Textile Strike* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2021); Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism, 1919-1929* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Bryan D. Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 103-142; David A. Horowitz, *Beyond Left and Right: Insurgency and the Establishment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Sharon McConnell-Sidorick, *Silk Stockings and Socialism: Philadelphia's Radical Hosiery Workers from the Jazz Age to the New Deal (*Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

Political Action. It also seeks to show that organized labor was the primary actor in uniting liberals, progressives, and left-leaning activists behind the CPPA. Labor historians have correctly noted that trade unions during the 1920s suffered mightily. Without federal wartime supports, union density shrunk and the locals that did survive found themselves bargaining for less. Bosses sought to stymie organizing attempts with a series of on and off the job benefits under a system now commonly known as "welfare capitalism." Other workers in the building trades resorted to violence and occasionally organized crime to retain their positions of power.[12] But between 1919 and 1925, many of the nation's largest trade unions built an impressive political machine, one running pro-labor candidates in competitive primaries and electing dozens of representatives and senators to Congress. The labor-friendly legislation that appeared in the latter half of the decade, namely the 1926 Railway Labor Act and the Norris-LaGuardia Act prohibiting court-ordered injunctions against strikes, pickets, and boycotts, owed a great deal to the CPPA.

Scholars have long studied the role that labor and the left played in constructing mid-century American liberalism. This dissertation relies heavily on the work of Daniel T. Rodgers. In *Atlantic Crossings*, Rodgers paints a vivid portrait of transnational progressive reform. American social scientists, reformers, and politicians were involved in a geographically diverse exchange of ideas with their European counterparts. "Americans in the Progressive Era between the 1890s and the First World War did not

[12] Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (2nd Edition), 162-211; Joshua Freeman, *Behemoth: A History of the Factory and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: W.W. Norton and co., 2018), 174-179; Andrew Wender Cohen, *The Racketeer's Progress: Chicago and the Struggle for the Modern American Economy, 1900-1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

swim in problems," Rodgers writes. "It would be more accurate to say that they swam in a sudden abundance of solutions, a vast number of them brought over through the Atlantic connection."[13] Following Rodgers's conclusions, I take a similar transatlantic view of 1920s reform. Indeed, several historical actors in *Atlantic Crossings*, specifically Arthur Gleason and Frederic C. Howe, appear in this work as well. But while Rodgers looks at the twentieth century Atlantic world from the view of progressive intellectuals, this dissertation focuses primarily on labor leaders and politicians. Individuals like Morris Hillquit, Rose Schneiderman, ILGWU president Benjamin Schlesinger, National War Labor Board co-chair Frank Walsh, and Robert La Follette all went abroad during the 1920s. They traveled to study social democracy— often visiting officials in the British Labour Party and German SPD—and monitor the rise of revolutionary communism on the left and fascism on the right. Leaders in the CPPA near universally believed that social democracy, or the amelioration of capitalist abuses through worker-led organization and direct government intervention in the economy, would be the only way to stall the rise of authoritarianism and prevent another war.

My work also relies on studies by historians interested in organized labor's role in statecraft and politics.[14] The dissertation is, in many ways, a continuation of work that

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[13] Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings, Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 6-7.

[14] The scholarship on organized labor and American liberalism is vast, to name a few: Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Michael Kazin, *Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building Trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1983); Leon Fink, *Progressive Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Democratic Commitment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Cohen, *Making a New Deal*; William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2013); Steve Fraser, *Labor Will Rule;* Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945-1968* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Kevin Boyle, *Organized Labor and*

Julie Greene and Joseph McCartin pioneered. Greene's *Pure and Simple Politics* details the political growth of the American Federation of Labor. Far from eschewing political participation, the AFL, largely under the leadership of Samuel Gompers, encouraged its members to vote and lobbied successfully for legislation to protect collective bargaining rights. Early scholars of American labor, Greene writes, claimed that "the Federation stayed out of politics." Clearly illustrating that was not the case, Greene argues that the AFL developed its own brand of politics—one that believed strenuously in avoiding party loyalty. Gompers-era politics were, however, fairly conservative. Greene describes AFL policy as "antistatist." Though the Federation of the early twentieth century fought for an end to the use of injunctions and workplace protections for women and children, it also rejected comprehensive social insurance, public works in times of depression, or any type of nationalization.[15]

McCartin's *Labor's Great War* provides a "synthesis of labor and political history" during the Wilson administration. He illuminates exactly how the cross currents of rapid industrialization and the rise of the centralized nation state during World War I created a unique moment in American history. Between 1914 and 1920, workers increasingly demanded a voice on the shopfloor. As Amalgamated Clothing Workers

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American Politics, 1894-1994: The Labor-Liberal Alliance (Albany: SUNY University Press, 1998); Lane Windham, *Knocking on Labor's Door: Union Organizing in the 1970s and the Roots of a New Economic Divide* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Keona K. Ervin, *Gateway to Equality: Black Women and the Struggle for Economic Justice in St. Louis* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2017); Christopher L. Tomlins, *The State and the Unions: Labor Relations, Law, and the Organized Labor Movement in America, 1880-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Melvyn Dubofsky, *The State and Labor in Modern America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

[15] Julie Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics: The American Federation of Labor and Political Activism, 1881-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-4; Greene, "Not so Simple," *Labor* 10 no. 4 (2013), 105-110.

president Sidney Hillman declared during the war years, "What labor is demanding all over the world today is not a few material things like more dollars and fewer hours of work, but a right to a voice in the conduct of industry."[16] McCartin describes the phenomenon as "industrial democracy," or the desire of workers, reformers, and managerial experts for "a more powerful state, a more democratic workplace." For a brief time, Wilson asked radicals like Frank Walsh to facilitate collective bargaining. During the war, union rates climbed steadily to their highest point and with federal protection, unions won strong contracts.[17]

This experiment in federal and working class partnership was short lived. Both Greene and McCartin conclude their studies at the end of the war, when Wilsonian liberalism collapsed and the structures that had allowed labor to grow during the early twentieth century fell with it. This is where my study begins. Industrial democracy left a lasting mark on American trade unions. Dissatisfaction with the closing Wilson years, the lamentable state of the economy, and a no-holds-barred assault from capital led many workers to seek new roads to progress. This moment led trade unionists like Johnston, Fannia Cohn, Hillman, and Locomotive Engineers' president Warren Stone into contact with intellectuals like Frederic Howe and Arthur Gleason. Together, they studied the reconstruction plans of European labor parties and dedicated the next seven years of their lives to advancing social democracy in the United States. They would establish the Conference for Progressive Political Action in early 1922. The CPPA serves as a bridge connecting industrial democracy of the 1910s to the New Deal of the 1930s and 1940s.

[16] Melvyn Dubofsky, *The State and Labor in Modern America*, 76-81.
[17] Joseph A. McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, 8-9.

Organization:

The dissertation has four distinct parts. The first covers the immediate post-war era. Chapter One provides an intellectual overview of reconstruction. At first reconstruction was only a phrase used by social scientists and government bureaucrats interested in keeping the economy running after hostilities ceased. This changed after the British Labour Party published its plan, *Labour and the New Social Order*, in 1918. The plan, which demanded government action to dismantle capitalism's worst abuses, earned praise from numerous American reformers. Trade unionists shortly thereafter formulated their own plans. Conservative Republicans and Democrats also followed suit, developing their reconstruction platforms designed to thwart labor's ascendancy. It was during this tumultuous era of reconstruction that rifts began to form between "progressive" labor unions that believed in the Labour Party model and cultivated close relationships with radical intellectuals, and the labor "conservatives" of Gompers's AFL. The Federation would stand alongside the CPPA in nominating Robert La Follette in 1924, but its Executive Committee never embraced its policies for government ownership and economic redistribution.

Chapter One also introduces a recurring theme throughout this project: the desire of trade union women and Black workers to share equally in industrial democracy. Women in the WTUL were staunch advocates of reconstruction. Between 1919 and 1924, the Women's Trade Union League sent delegates to the International Federation of Working Women. At these conventions, Rose Schneiderman, Maud Swartz, Fannia Cohn, and several other women workers met with European social democrats and came away inspired by the way these parties advanced legislation protecting vulnerable

workers, advocating for child welfare, and funding educational systems in which any citizen, regardless of status, race, or gender, could advance themselves.

Members of the NAACP-- W.E.B. Du Bois, William Pickens, James Weldon Johnson, Robert Bagnall, and Walter White, in particular-- saw great promise in reconstruction and industrial democracy. They hoped the increasing demands of trade unionists for a better quality of life might also lead to a more accepting attitude toward Black workers. Many of the largest unions in the United States, especially the ones representing railroad workers, deliberately excluded Black members. Years of hostility between African Americans and trade unions led to a mutual distrust. But the great migration of Black people out of the South and into Northern cities meant that an increasing number of African Americans worked in industrial jobs. Unions could materially help many of these urban newcomers, the reformist members of the NAACP leadership determined. The NAACP would have a rocky relationship with the CPPA. The Association's leaders often found themselves frustrated at labor's lack of willingness to fight for antilynching legislation and against legal segregation. When Weldon Johnson, Pickens, or Du Bois did support a labor candidate, it was typically a political aspirant with either Socialist Party or Farmer-Labor Party connections. As argued in several of the following chapters, the NAACP leadership found throughout the twenties that the organized left could at times provide valuable financial, political, and organizational support for civil rights. Wartime Black radicalism lingered during the 1920s and fostered connections between the NAACP and the CPPA's left. Contact between these two factions fed the Association's "proletarian turn" of the mid-1930s.[18]

[18] As historian Steven A. Reich argues, Black workers streamed into Southern NAACP branches during World War I—forming what he described as a "popular working-class based 'movement against race

prejudice.'" They often sought legal help in organizing and advancing their rights in the workplace. Post-war racial violence, however, forced many branches to suspend activities. "Political violence, legal intimidation, and economic terrorism destroyed what chance the NAACP had of becoming a popular movement rooted in the South," Reich writes.

Historians of the 1920s NAACP focus primarily on the Association's fight for the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, which passed the House of Representatives in 1922, but stalled after a filibuster in the Senate. Association leaders spent the remainder of the decade lobbying for another bill. In recent years, historians have uncovered some of the NAACP's other efforts to provide Black people with legal representation, its advocacy for educational equality, and some of its attempts to make in-roads into the labor movement. Scholar Mark Schneider provides a brief overview of the NAACP's relationship with the CPPA.

During the 1930s, Beth Thompkins Bates and Thomas Sugrue maintain, the NAACP saw an influx of young radicals with an interest in the labor movement and the Communist Party's Popular Front. In the late 1930s, Bates claims, the NAACP leadership became more attuned to "local protest networks" that "gave shape to mass-protest strategies employed during the early civil rights era." Sugrue agrees, describing the pre-New Deal NAACP as a middle-class legal advocacy group that was focused far more on winning court battles than fighting for economic improvements for working class African Americans. It was through encounters with members of the Communist Party and the Popular Front group the National Negro Congress that the NAACP adopted a more class-focused approach.

Sugrue's argument on the Popular Front relates to the Long Civil Rights Movement field of scholarship. Coined by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall in 2005, the Long Civil Rights Movement narrative typically supposes that Communist Party members and their allies propelled the Black freedom struggle in the 1930s and 1940s by articulating a vision of equality that placed legal rights and economic rights on the same playing field. After the Red Scare of the late 1940s, Hall argues, moderate liberal groups like the NAACP directed the movement toward a narrow rights-centric direction.

This dissertation highlights the growing connections between progressive and socialist labor organizations during the 1920s. During this middle era, the Association's more militant members had already begun to envision a social democratic version of civil rights—one that accepted economic equality as a component of racial justice.

See Steven A. Reich, "The Great War, Black Workers, and the Rise and Fall of the NAACP in the South," in *The Black Worker: Race, Labor, and Civil Rights since Emancipation*, Eric Arnesen ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 147-170; Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The New Press), 101-144; Mark R. Schneider, *We Return Fighting: The Civil Rights Movement in the Jazz Age* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 1-160; Tom Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), 32-58; Beth Tompkins Bates, "A New Crowd Challenges the Agenda of the Old Guard in the NAACP, 1933-1941," *American Historical Review* 102 no. 2 (April 1997), 341, 343; Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2004); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91 no. 4 (March 2005), 1233-1263; Eric Arnesen, "Reconsidering the 'Long Civil Rights Movement,'" *Historically Speaking* 10 no. 2 (April 2009), 31-34; Arnesen, "'No Graver Danger,': Black Anti-Communism, the Communist Party, and the Race Question," *Labor* 3 no. 4 (2006), 13-52; Robert R. Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008); Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

Part II of this dissertation describes the competing labor reconstruction movements of the 1920 election. Chapter Two provides an overview of the Farmer-Labor Party (FLP), the most direct attempt by trade unionists to directly emulate the British Labour Party and mimic European reconstruction. Without much a chance for success, the FLP still managed to attract high-profile members and maintain reconstruction as a topic of debate. The FLP suffered attacks not only from conservatives fearful of the left, but also from fellow progressives who thought the party too radical and trade unionists convinced that a new party worked against labor's interests.

Chapter Three follows the nation's railroad unions. After the war, the Brotherhoods developed plans for permanent government ownership of the rails. Foiled in their attempts to get the Wilson administration on board, these unions mobilized their members and the American Federation of Labor for a massive political campaign. These labor leaders, however, avoided a new party, preferring instead to run candidates against incumbents in the primaries.

Chapter 4 discusses divisions over the degree of nationalization labor could support, the role women and Black trade unionists should have in advancing labor reconstruction, and the mixed results these unions had in their first election. The Brotherhoods won precious few elections but earned the loyalty of La Follette and his small band of congressional progressives. In Wisconsin, the La Follette progressives and members of organized labor developed a campaign platform demanding government ownership of the rails and opposition to the League of Nations—which many American workers felt did too little to prevent future war. Effective in driving out the vote, the CPPA would use similar campaign talking points for the next several years.

Part III details the founding of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. After an opening vignette explaining the connections between American reconstructionists and their counterparts in the British Labour Party, Chapter Five uncovers the CPPA's roots in organizations like the People's Legislative Service and the League for Industrial Democracy. Chapter Six discusses the Conference for Progressive Political Action's first conference. There the delegates of the railroad unions, the garment trade unions, Farmer-Labor Party, and Socialist Party, agreed to pool their efforts and elect friendly politicians. There were, of course, disagreements between the ideologically misaligned forces—especially between factions of the third party left and the avowedly non-partisan Brotherhoods. Chapters Seven and Eight explore these disagreements further.

Chapter Seven investigates the 1922 election. That year, the newly minted CPPA was wildly successful in electing politicians at all levels of government. The socialists and Farmer-Laborites, however, lost almost every race. The third party left stood clearly in the shadow of the non-partisan progressives. Chapter Eight explains why socialists and non-Marxist trade unionists continued to cooperate in the CPPA despite maintaining serious disagreements over the movement's end goal (an end to capitalism, as the SPA wanted, or a fairer capitalism, which the Brotherhoods sought). The answer was, in short, the British Labour Party and European social democracy, which had convinced SPA leaders, members of the International Garment Workers, and standard trade unionists of AFL and Brotherhood unions that working for immediate gains inside of a broad labor coalition was more effective than working at cross purposes.

Chapter Nine gives another reason why the CPPA was able to survive despite ideological differences: anticommunism. Mirroring developments in Europe, the socialists, Farmer-Laborites, progressive reformers, and standard trade unionists all agreed that the nascent American Communist (Workers') Party was not a trustworthy ally. The 1920s was the era of the United Front. Abandoning calls for immediate global revolution, communists hoped to prepare for a future overthrow of capitalism by "boring from within" established unions and political parties. Communists also hoped that they could use any political power they did secure to promote diplomatic recognition and trade for the cash-starved Soviet Union. Pointing out communists' barely concealed promise to pick up revolutionary politics once it again became convenient, as well as the Soviet Union's continued human rights abuses. The CPPA developed a distinct left-leaning anticommunism. The CPPA, its defenders claimed, hoped for cooperative commonwealth and economic justice, but rejected violent revolution, censorship, and dictatorship.[19]

Chapter 10 concludes Part III with a description of Robert La Follette's 1923 trip through Europe.[20] On this journey, the Wisconsin senator and his retinue observed

[19] For more on left anticommunism, see Jennifer Luff, *Common Sense Anti-Communism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Jennifer Luff, "Labor Anticommunism in the United States and the United Kingdom, 1920-1949," *Journal of Contemporary History* 53 vol. 1 (2018), 109-133; Daniel Soyer, "Executed Bundists, Soviet Delegates and the Wartime Jewish Popular Front in New York," *American Communist History* 15 no. 3 (2016), 296-297. For a selection of overviews, see Eric Arnesen, "Civil Rights and the Cold War at Home: Postwar Activism, Anticommunism, and the Decline of the Left," *American Communist History* 11 No. 1 (2012), 5-44; Arnesen, "'No Graver Danger,': Black Anti-Communism, the Communist Party, and the Race Question," 13-52; Jennifer Delton, "Rethinking Post-World War II Anticommunism." *Journal of the Historical Society* 10 No. 1 (March 2010), 1-41; Jennifer Delton, *Rethinking the 1950s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," 1233-1263; Alex Lichtenstein, "Consensus? What Consensus?," *American Communist History* 11 No. 1 (2012), 49-53; Markuu Ruotsila, "Neoconservatism Prefigured: The Social Democratic League of America and the Anticommunists of the Anglo-American Right, 1917-21, *Journal of American Studies* 40 no. 2 (August 2006); Ruotsila, *John Spargo and American Socialism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006); Judy Kutulas, *The Long War: The Intellectual People's Front and Anti-Stalinism, 1930-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

[20] For a recent overview, see Daniel Scroop, "In Search of a Populist Atlantic: The Transatlantic Travels of William Jennings Bryan and Robert M. La Follette Jr.," in *Transatlantic Social Politics 1800-Present,* eds. Daniel Scroop and Andrew Heath (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 105-128.

European social democracy firsthand. His time abroad also coincided with the French invasion of the Ruhr, which threatened to plunge Europe once again into war. La Follette returned to the United States convinced to run for president. European labor parties, in his estimation, were the only factions capable of stopping autocracy on the left and the right and preserving democracy in government and in work.

This dissertation ends with a summary of the CPPA's 1924 campaign to elect La Follette president. The campaign was the culmination of post-war reconstruction. His platform called for vast changes to American capitalism and representative democracy. Trade unions, socialists, and labor radicals of all stripes enthusiastically backed La Follette. This chapter pays special attention to women in the CPPA and their role in helping the Conference appeal to working women. Most of the women in the CPPA leadership had roles in Workers' Education, a movement also born in reconstruction. Chapter 11 also details the NAACP's activities in the 1924 election. Association secretary James Weldon Johnson hoped to formally endorse the Wisconsin senator's campaign. In the early twenties representatives for the NAACP had visited the British Labour Party and left impressed with what they saw. Further, Weldon Johnson's growing relationship with the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, the American Fund for Public Service (an endowment dedicated to funding leftwing interests), and Brookwood Labor College brought him into contact with the CPPA's leftwing. Ultimately, the NAACP convinced La Follette to condemn the Ku Klux Klan, but the Conference prevented their candidate from taking a stronger stand on legal equality. The Association's leadership broke over which candidate to support—some stuck with La Follette, others voted Democrat or Republican.

The conclusion attempts to tie reconstruction and the CPPA to later developments in American political history. I argue that the reconstruction *movement* died alongside the CPPA in 1925, but that its legacy continued into the New Deal. Several former CPPA members, like Sidney Hillman, David Dubinsky, and John Brophy became foundational figures in the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Hillman and Brophy helped establish the CIO-Political Action Committee, the first permanent body dedicated to electing labor-friendly candidates. Other veterans like Frederic Howe and Frank P. Walsh helped swing progressives to FDR in the 1932 election. Rose Schneiderman and Maud Swartz would join the Democratic Party directly, helping craft labor and welfare legislation throughout the New Deal. Fannia Cohn and other labor educators continued to impart social democracy to incoming trade unionists.[21]

Post-war reconstruction, led many American trade unionists to social democracy. The economic slump after the armistice proved to the leaders of the nation's largest unions how fleeting collective bargaining could be without government support. Only by having a hand on the levers of state power could organized labor be sure of its future. This realization brought trade unionists like Johnston and Stone into contact with radical reformers and socialists who shared their admiration of the British Labour Party, which had grown from a token parliamentary power in 1918 to the governing faction in 1924. The Conference for Progressive Political Action might have failed to elect La Follette, but it generated important conversations on the role of state power and the role of working-class organizations in promoting broader social justice and civil rights. These conversations would last much longer than the CPPA.

[21] Victoria W. Wolcott, *Living in the Future: Utopianism and the Long Civil Rights Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022); Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire*, 117-252.

Part I: Reconstruction

Chapter 1: A Second Reconstruction

In January 1919, Allan L. Benson and Charles Edward Russell published the inaugural issue of their journal *Reconstruction: A Herald of the New Time.* The magazine represented both the optimism and fears of American liberals after the armistice. Benson and Russell were both members of the Social Democratic League-- a splinter faction of the Socialist Party of America that supported Wilson's earlier declaration of war against Germany.[22] After the war, they continued to support Wilson's "progressive internationalism" and hoped that the administration would keep many of the reforms that brought a greater degree of economic justice to the shop floors, mines, and railroads of America. Benson and Russell were particularly fond of the National War Labor Board (NWLB), a new government agency which had vigorously promoted industrial democracy in 1918 in an effort to keep workers on the job and loyal to the war effort.

From its founding in early 1918 through its effective dissolution in 1920, the NWLB had intervened in labor disputes and offered mediation between striking workers and recalcitrant bosses. While conservatives like former president William Howard Taft

[22] The Social Democratic League was small, but influential. Several of its members, including Russell, Benson, and William English Walling became prominent authors, lecturers, and columnists. They advocated a middle road between socialism and Wilsonian liberalism at home and promoted American participation in the war abroad. Several members even supported military efforts to overthrow the Bolsheviks in Russia. Markuu Ruotsila, "Neoconservatism Prefigured: The Social Democratic League of America and the Anticommunists of the Anglo-American Right, 1917-21, *Journal of American Studies* 40 no. 2 (August 2006); Ruotsila, *John Spargo and American Socialism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006); Richard Schneirov, "The Odyssey of William English Walling: Revisionism, Social Democracy, and Evolutionary Pragmatism," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 2 No. 4 (October 2003), 414; Kenneth E. Hendrickson, Jr., "The Pro-War Socialists, the Social Democratic League and the Ill-Fated Drive for Industrial Democracy in America," *Labor History* 11 No. 3 (June 1970), 310-312; "Socialists Have Plan For Reconstruction," *New York Tribune* (Nov 17, 1918), 5; "New York Radicals Urge Voters to Uphold Wilson at Polls," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (November 2, 1918), 4; "Gompers Says Treaty Must Protect Labor," *New York Tribune* (December 2, 1918), 14.

sat on the Board, these individuals had to work alongside labor radicals like attorney Frank P. Walsh and publicist Basil Manly. Largely due to the tireless efforts of these reformers, the NWLB helped bring union density to its highest level ever, raised wages, instituted employee protections, and stoked a broad desire for a voice at work often referred to as "industrial democracy." Despite being a neutral federal regulatory agency that could only offer voluntary arbitration, the Board often used the threat of nationalization and the loss of wartime contracts to convince unwilling employers to accept pro-worker settlements. It was the first time the federal government ever gave such broad legitimacy to trade unions.[23]

But as the war came to an end, the NWLB's future became increasingly uncertain. Equally tenuous was the fate of the broad federal intervention in the economy that had helped keep wages high, goods available, and services reliable during the war.[24] Benson and Russell hoped that *Reconstruction* would draw in like-minded thinkers and lead a national conversation on the fate of reform in the post-war era. The pair were mindful of the political convulsions that had brought the Communist Party to power in Russia and

[23] For additional definitions of industrial democracy and descriptions of the National War Labor Board, see Joseph A. McCartin, *Labor's Great War: the Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 1-6, 64-93, 136-142; Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: the Left Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 90-91; David Montgomery, *Fall of the House of Labor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 374.

[24] The Wilson administration created more than a dozen new federal agencies tasked with securing materials needed for war, transporting them, and ensuring the workers who made them stayed on the job. Agencies like the War Industries Board helped ramp up production and keep goods flowing for both war and, to a degree, consumer markets. The Railway Labor Board likewise kept passenger service running, allowing for continued travel. But prices for foodstuffs and agricultural goods, coal, and housing stock (all difficult to increase in the short term) skyrocketed. Trade unions and federal mediators helped increase wages, but by the end of the war inflation had seriously overtaken these gains. For more on federal intervention, see McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, 64-93; David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: the First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 126-137; Nell Irvin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon* (2nd ed.) (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 296-297, 332-333.

threatened a similar revolution or monarchist reaction in Germany.[25] Without a thorough reconstruction policy to ensure societal peace, the United States could easily slide into "destructive Bolshevism."[26] Though the venture would last less than two years, Benson and Russell did generate meaningful discussion on American liberalism and social democracy.

To promote the new paper, Benson solicited articles from numerous stalwart progressives. Amos Pinchot, an attorney and prominent former Bull Mooser, John Haynes Holmes, a pacifist Unitarian minister and early devotee to Mahatma Gandhi's civil disobedience, suffrage leader and reformer Alice Paul, and progressive Catholic theologian John A. Ryan all wrote features for *Reconstruction*. In the May issue, Upton Sinclair published an exclusive interview with Henry Ford. *Reconstruction* had some political gravitas, as well. Benson gave space to several elected politicians and numerous administrators in the Wilson administration. Iowa Senator William S. Kenyon wrote Russell in advance of the first issue for legislative advice and later agreed to an interview on breaking up the "beef trust." Frank P. Walsh and Basil Manly were frequent contributors.[27]

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[25] Formally a republic at the end of the War, rightwing monarchists formed paramilitaries out of demobilized soldiers and openly plotted a coup. Similarly Bolshevik sympathizers hoped to follow the Russian example and declare a Soviet of their own. Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 30-35.

[26] Alan L. Benson, "Hunger The Mother of Revolution; Why Take a Chance?" *Reconstruction* (March, 1929), 65.

[27] Arthur Capper, "Senator Capper Pillories Profiteers and Urges Government to Imprison Them," *Reconstruction* (June 1919), 164; Amos Pinchot, "League of Nations Covenant Analyzed by One Who Regards It as a Great Peril," *Reconstruction* (June 1919), 172; Basil M. Manly, "What the Great War Has Meant to the Incomes of Some Leading American Corporations," *Reconstruction* (July 1919), 214; William S. Kenyon, "Senator Kenyon Predicts Beef Trust Will Be Curbed by Congress This Summer," *Reconstruction* (August 1919), 246; John A. Ryan, "The Catholic Church and the 'Unlovely Thing We Call Modern Capitalism,'" *Reconstruction* (May, 1919), 143; Upton Sinclair, "Henry Ford Tells," *Reconstruction* (May 1919), 129; William Kenyon to Charles Edward Russell, December 21, 1918. The Papers of Charles Edward Russell. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress (Volume 11).

The journal's topics were wide reaching and its policy suggestions idealistic. Contributors like Glenn E. Plumb, the head attorney for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, demanded the federal government immediately and permanently nationalize the country's transportation system. Others called for steep taxes and criminal prosecutions for war profiteers, land redistribution to put the agricultural economy on a cooperative basis, and a slew of other reforms designed to expand voting rights, promote conservation, and defend African Americans from racialized violence. Worker rights were also a clear priority for the editors. Benson himself proposed shortening the daily workday "until there is an opportunity for everybody to work." This should be done even if "it might hurt somebody's profits," he claimed. Hunger was the "mother of revolution," Benson decided. Half-measures were not worth the risk.[28]

Benson and Russell's magazine was an embodiment of the radical post-war milieu. "Reconstruction," the term they borrowed for their title, was a conspicuous phrase in the United States throughout the late teens and early twenties.[29] The term originated in Great Britain, which founded a "Ministry of Reconstruction" to reintegrate returning veterans and transition the economy from producing war goods back to consumer items. Reconstruction appeared widely in print, was the topic of numerous lecture series, and the subject of many political speeches. It had no one definition. "Reconstruction enthusiasm seemed to burst from the pores of society itself," historian Daniel Rodgers

[28] Allan Benson, "Hunger the Mother of Revolution; Why Take a Chance?" *Reconstruction* (March, 1919), 66; Homer Reed, "Plan to Bring Land Within Reach of Those Would Like to Till the Soil," *Reconstruction* (May 1919), 152; John Haynes Holmes, "Race-Riots Threaten the Nation With Disaster Unless Negro Question is Settled Right," *Reconstruction* (September 1921), 273; Wallace Pennock, "England Has An Anti-Profiteering Law That Gets the Profiteers," *Reconstruction* (December 1919), 327.
[29] For an overview on American reconstruction, particularly as it manifested in the South, see Joseph A. McCartin, "Abortive Reconstruction: Federal War Labor Policies, Union Organization, and the Politics of Race, 1917-1919," *Journal of Policy History* 9, no. 2 (1997): 155-183.

writes. It was a "bedlam of conflicting ambitions and rival utopias."[30] Even participants at the time had trouble explaining the movement. "We hear a great deal at the present time about Reconstruction and many of us are waiting to see what it means," wrote muckraker Henry H. Klein in an early issue of Benson's journal. Economist Elisha M. Friedman, by stripping down its subtleties, perhaps came closest to providing a definition: "The scope of reconstruction varies. Basically it means the reparation of the ruins inflicted by the war."[31] At its core, reconstruction was a social and political response to the maladjustment that the armistice had brought upon global institutions between 1918 and the mid-1920s.

While dozens of differing reconstruction plans circulated in the post-war United States, by 1920 the various schemes fell largely into distinct right and left wings. Conservative reconstructionists believed that liberal experimentation was the root cause of post-war societal and economic calamity. They maintained that returning nationalized industries to private ownership, removing government regulations on business, and fostering stronger networks of international trade and banking would bring broad prosperity and peace.

Leftwing reconstructionists were those that gravitated toward *Reconstruction*. Opposed to re-privatization, radical reconstructionists argued that the government had operated some services more efficiently than private enterprise.[32] The Wilson

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[30] Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 299-300.

[31] Elisha M. Friedman, "The Problem of Reconstruction in the United States," in *American Problems of Reconstruction: A National Symposium on the Economic and Financial Aspects* (Elisha M. Friedman, ed.) (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1918), 24.

[32] Freighting rates did increase during government operation, but in exchange the Railroad Administration had dramatically improved service on both passenger and freight lines. The government had also made improvements to tracks, depots, and terminals. As will be demonstrated in chapter 3, advocates of nationalization correctly predicted that returning rails to private hands would result in higher rates for

administration had taken over the railroads during the war and increased service dramatically– all while shortening work hours and increasing pay. Permanent nationalization opened the possibility of shipping priced for use, not for profit, these liberals claimed. They similarly praised the War Labor Board– its aid to unions and its resolve to protect industrial workers. The war economy had plotted a potential course for social justice that the nation could abandon only at its own peril.

This chapter focuses on leftwing reconstruction—how it attracted disaffected Wilsonian liberals, progressive and social democratic trade unionists, members of the Socialist Party, working women, and reform-minded African Americans. It begins by discussing how the economic and societal challenges of war and demobilization prompted scholars and reformers to hatch far-reaching plans for recovery. These plans first originated in Western Europe, Great Britain in particular, and made their way across the Atlantic to the United States by the end of 1918. Several economists gravitated toward a report by British Prime Minister Lloyd George's Ministry of Reconstruction, which advanced a system of voluntary industrial councils, a return to private enterprise, and scientific management. Other more conservative politicians took the cost-cutting and privatization aspects of this reconstruction to heart, but kept little else. When he ran for president in 1920, Warren G. Harding claimed that his "return to normalcy" was a type of reconstruction– or "readjustment," as he preferred to call it.[33]

consumers, less service for shippers, and wage cuts for railroad employees. See I. Leo Sharfman, *The American Railroad Problem: A Study in War and Reconstruction* (New York: The Century Co., 1921); David M. Kennedy, *Over Here,* 296-347.

[33] For a recording of the speech, see Warren G. Harding, *Readjustment*. (Bridgeport, Conn.: Made by the Columbia Graphophone Manufacturing Company, 1920) *Library of Congress* https://www.loc.gov/item/2016655168/, accessed 11/29/2022.

Those interested in radical reconstruction found inspiration in the British Labour Party (BLP), which had in 1918 published *Labour and the New Social Order*—a bold new plan to make industrial democracy a permanent feature of the political economy. The BLP's demands for broad nationalization, ironclad collective bargaining rights, and a cradle to grave social safety net inspired radicals on both sides of the Atlantic. Arthur Gleason, an investigative journalist for the liberal publication *Survey*, perhaps did more than any other American to circulate Labour Party ideas in the United States.[34] His books on the BLP, *Inside the British Isles* (1917), *British Labor and the War* (1919), and *What the Workers Want* (1920), drew interest from many like-minded progressives distressed by the post-war turn against industrial democracy

Upper-class former Bull Moose progressives like Amos Pinchot, J.A.H. Hopkins, and George Record began to see the Labour Party platform as a tonic to destructive working-class upheaval. This small group of influential progressives founded the Committee of 48 and planned a new party based on reconstructive principles.[35] Many social gospel Protestants and pro-worker Catholic clergy found useful material in radical reconstruction, as well. Virtually every major Christian denomination published its own plans for political, economic, and spiritual peace.[36]

Labour and the New Social Order of course profoundly affected American trade unionists. For those interested in industrial unionism, like John Fitzpatrick of the Chicago

[34] For an overview of Gleason in Great Britain, see Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings,* 308-313.
[35] For an overview on the 48ers see Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 314-315; Stanley Shapiro, "The Twilight of Reform: Advanced Progressives After the Armistice," *The Historian* 33 no. 3 (May 1971), 349-364; For a brief biography on Amos Pinchot and his view of progressivism, see Otis L. Graham Jr., *An Encore for Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 74-78.
[36] For an overview see Joseph M. McShane, *"Sufficiently Radical:" Catholicism, Progressivism, and the Bishops' Program of 1919* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 136-189.

Federation of Labor, the BLP provided a model for a new party.[37] By 1920, a patchwork of local, state, and national labor parties appeared in the United States. Left-leaning members of the National Women's Trade Union League saw the Labour Party as a model as well. Few labor unions on either side of the Atlantic put much stock into organizing women. But as it sought to grow in power, the British Labour Party appealed to working-class women with promises of education, maternal and child health, and affordable housing. For NWTUL leaders like Agnes Nestor, Maud Swartz, and Rose Schneiderman, a new labor-backed party could fight for the legislative protections they sought while providing proximity to the trade unions they hoped would eventually treat women workers as a priority.[38]

Even conservative leaders in the American Federation of Labor devised their own plan for reconstruction—albeit one less radical than the British example.[39] Reconstruction reflected the assertiveness that labor had gained during the war. Millions of workers had seen the benefits of wartime industrial democracy. Unemployment sank lower, wages rose, and when there was trouble on the shopfloor union stewards and government investigators were there to address them. After 1918, when war contracts dried up and the Wilson administration lost the political will to fight, bosses eagerly

[37] Elizabeth McKillen, *Chicago Labor and the Quest for Democratic Diplomacy, 1914-1924*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 126-192; Stanley Shapiro, "'Hand and Brain': The Farmer-Labor Party of 1920," *Labor History* 26 no. 3 (1985), 405-422.
[38] Suellen Hoy, "Sidelined: The Chicago Women's Trade Union League in the Interwar Years," *Labor* 15 No. 4 (December 2018), 13-33; Dorothy Sue Cobble, "A Higher 'Standard of Life' for the World: U.S. Labor Women's Reform Internationalism and the Legacies of 1919," *Journal of American History* 100 No. 4 (March 2014), 1052-1085; Dorothy Sue Cobble, *For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 77-188.
[39] Julie Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics: The American Federation of Labor and Political Activism, 1881-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 280-283; McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, 204-205; On AFL postwar conservatism, see Jennifer Luff, *Common Sense Anti-Communism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 63-74.

sought to reassert control. Labor-centric reconstruction coming in from abroad matched their experiences and inspired action.

The societal trend toward left reconstruction similarly influenced some Black reformers. William Pickens and W.E.B. Du Bois adapted post-war reconstruction with an eye toward civil rights. Tens of thousands of African Americans fought in World War I. Many more moved north to take better paying jobs in the defense industry. Reformers in the NAACP hoped that these sacrifices and demographic changes would chip away at Jim Crow and perhaps put an end to the horrific lynchings that had become a hallmark of racial terror during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[40] These hopes blended well into the post-war utopianism that transatlantic labor reconstruction offered.

This chapter provides a brief intellectual history of post-war reconstruction as it appeared in the American public sphere between 1918 and early 1920. Virtually every American, regardless of ideological persuasion, saw a need for concerted government economic policy after the war. Questing for a way through the high inflation, climbing unemployment, and labor unrest that marred the United States after the armistice, many social scientists and reformers looked abroad. The producing classes, these reconstructionists held, would stand against plundering plutocrats and revolutionary Bolsheviks and herald a cooperative commonwealth. Labour Party-inspired formulations of reconstructive democracy had real staying power. Individuals that helped give shape to post-war American reconstruction – Arthur Gleason, Frank Walsh, Basil Manly,

[40] Steven A. Reich, "The Great War, Black Workers, and the Rise and Fall of the NAACP in the South," in *The Black Worker: Race, Labor, and Civil Rights since Emancipation*, ed. Eric Arnesen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 147-177; Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The New Press, 2009), 61-100; Mark R. Schneider, *We Return Fighting: The Civil Rights Movement in the Jazz Age* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 1-160.

Women's Trade Union League leader Rose Schneiderman, and NAACP field secretary William Pickens, to name a few– would go on to play important roles in farmer-labor politics and social democratic reform during the twenties and beyond.

Defining Reconstruction: Technocracy, Radicalism, and Normalcy

Not long before the war ended, Elisha M. Friedman compiled an edited volume titled *American Problems of Reconstruction*. An economist and financial advisor, Friedman had spent the prior two years working for the Council of National Defense, the War Finance Corporation, and the War Industries Board. He had researched price fixing and taxation policy in Britain.[41] As it became increasingly apparent that Germany could not keep fighting indefinitely, it horrified Friedman that the United States had no set plan to deal with the economic havoc that an armistice would bring. While the fighting in Europe after 1914 had necessitated a "compulsory preparation" for war, there was seemingly no "corresponding stimulus to peace preparations," Friedman lamented. The government needed a policy of reconstruction to "determine what new conditions resulting from the war" confronted the nation and consider what "suitable adaptations" were available to meet them.[42]

The federal government had indeed done a great deal of planning to transition into a war economy. To fulfill material needs, the Wilson administration had created a complicated bureaucracy and tasked it with finding the necessary raw materials, ramping

[41] "Elisha Friedman, Economist, Author," *New York Times* (March 26, 1951), 23.
[42] Elisha M. Friedman, "The Problem of Reconstruction in the United States," in *American Problems of Reconstruction: A National Symposium on the Economic and Financial Aspects*, ed. Elisha M. Friedman (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1918), 3; Elisha M. Friedman, "Principles of Reconstruction in Europe," *ibid.,* 17.

up manufacturing capacity, and ensuring that goods and personnel arrived where it needed to in a timely manner. By 1918, the Railway Administration assumed control over every mile of track and waterway in the country. William G. McAdoo, Wilson's treasury secretary and son-in-law, tamped down smoldering railroader and dock worker discontent by approving generous pay increases and maintaining shorter hours. To ensure smooth production goals, the federal government agreed to pay top dollar to farmers, mine operators, and industrialists—profits for many of the nation's largest manufacturers ballooned. Looking to prevent strikes and stoppages, the War Labor Board cajoled business owners into recognizing unions, accepting higher wages, and shortening hours. On a few occasions where management refused to cooperate, the Wilson administration threatened to take over plant operation directly. Thanks in large part to this government support, American trade unions organized millions of new members and funded ambitious efforts to represent workers in the steel and meatpacking industries—two sectors that had proven remarkably difficult to break into.[43]

This economic state of affairs, Friedman warned, was on borrowed time. The cost of living was approaching "peak levels," he wrote. Redirecting food, fuel, clothing, and building materials to the war effort had caused shortages in the consumer market causing retailers to raise prices. A flood of workers from rural areas flooding to the urban north for jobs in war industry factories had seriously strained the housing stock and caused rent to similarly soar. If the federal government did not adequately prepare for demobilization, the already tenuous situation could implode. Veterans would return home, putting

[43] McCartin, *Labor's Great War,* 140-141; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (2nd Edition) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 38-52; David M. Kennedy, *Over Here*, 296-347; Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 369-376.

additional pressure on consumer goods and seeking jobs that had been filled in their absence. Employers, no longer receiving generous government contracts, would seek to reassert authority on the shopfloor, slash the "unheard-of wages" they offered during the war, and increase the work day.[44] Trade unions would almost certainly rebel and the resultant strikes would wreak additional havoc on the fragile market.

The United States was running out of time to make these decisions. Reconstruction, he noted, was already "the question of the hour in all of Europe." Indeed, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom had already assembled teams of politicians and social scientists to develop solutions. He praised French economist Maurice Alfassa, who recommended "a Department of National Economy to bring about a closer cooperation than in the past between state and private interests." To "prepare economic campaigns in much the same way as military campaigns are conducted during the war," Friedman summarized.[45] For the same reasons, he supported the British Reconstruction Ministry, which in 1917 had unveiled a series of plans to centralize the economy and address unemployment and inflation by retraining returning soldiers, fine tune inter-Imperial resource allocation, and promote labor and management cooperation. A key component of British reconstruction was the formation of so-called "industrial councils."

The councils were the brainchild of John Henry Whitley, a liberal Member of Parliament and head of the Reconstruction Ministry's subcommittee on labor relations. The government would organize each council by industrial category (e.g. textiles, coal, steel, etc.) and create a space for business owners and sanctioned trade unionists to

[44] Elisha M. Friedman, "Principles of Reconstruction in Europe," in *American Problems of Reconstruction: A National Symposium on the Economic and Financial Aspects*, ed. Elisha M. Friedman (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1918), 23.
[45] Elisha M. Friedman, "Principles of Reconstruction in Europe," 10, 19.

voluntarily negotiate. These councils would, in Whitley's estimation, give a voice to workers, generate consensus over wages and benefits, reduce strikes and stoppages, suggest government legislation to rationalize their sectors, and increase productivity by making studies of the latest trends in scientific management.[46] Like the United States' War Labor Board, the Whitely councils sought to make industrial democracy a formal part of the British political economy.

Friedman approved of this technocratic reconstruction and outlined a similar system for the United States. He suggested Wilson increase funding and staffing for the Federal Reserve, the Trade Commission, Tariff Commission, and Shipping Board. These agencies would adjust interest rates and levies to appropriately cool the economy, protect American manufacturing, and reconfigure trade routes for peacetime. He also recommended a federal program of "vocational education" to reintegrate wounded soldiers back into civilian life. Most important to Friedman, however, was that the government permanently maintain a "general economic staff" of experts to coordinate an "uninterrupted national economic policy." These experts in the federal bureaucracy would prevent special interests and over-zealous politicians from meddling in monetary policy. "As government grows in complexity it transcends the capacity of the average congressman to understand it," Friedman wrote. "Years of oratory have been wasted in fruitless discussion of facts and policies which could be easily determined by a small

[46] As stated in the Interim Report on Joint Standing Industrial Councils (Whitley Report) "improvements of processes, machinery and organization and appropriate questions relating to management and the examination of industrial experiments, with special reference to co-operation in carrying new ideas into effect and full consideration of the workpeople's point of view in relation to them." For a transcript, see Paul Kellogg and Arthur Gleason, *British Labor and the War: Reconstructors for a New World* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), 422; Ministry of Reconstruction," *Report on the Work of the Ministry for the Period Ending 31st December, 1918* (London: Majesty's Stationery Office, 1919); Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 291-297.

board of experts in as many months." His belief that science would "calibrate" democracy led to a near contempt for the democratic process. There was a need for an "educational qualification for suffrage, both in general and on the issues of a campaign," Friedman decided.[47]

Friedman was a moderate on labor rights. While the economy should be guided by experts, he believed there needed to be some type of continued policy to foster "harmonious relations between employer and employed and to safeguard standards of living." He agreed with Louis B. Wehle, from whom Friedman solicited an article on "Capital, Labor, and the State" for his edited volume. Wehle had served as council for the Interstate Commerce Commission and the wartime General Munitions Board. Having resolved several disputes between workers and management during the war, he supposed that the Whitley report's "shop committees" presented the best way to stabilize the economy and maintain industrial democracy. In exchange for what he believed amounted to "profit sharing" and "fair pay for fair work," Wehle argued that labor should monitor productivity and learn new management techniques to keep prices low.[48]

Friedman shared Wehle's assessment on labor, though he warned against too much workplace reform. Reconstruction could easily "lead to reaction if its course is not wisely guided." Just as the "unrestricted power of the mob after the French Revolution led to the dictatorship," the working class could continue to accrue power and either take the reins of government itself or invite a counterrevolution. It would be the duty of

[47] Elisha M. Friedman, "The Problem of Reconstruction in the United States," in *American Problems of Reconstruction,* 3-12; E.W. Kemmerer, "The War and Interest Rates," *ibid*., 391-414.
[48] Louis B. Wehle, "Capital, Labor, and the State," in *American Problems of Reconstruction: A National Symposium on the Economic and Financial Aspects*, ed. Elisha M. Friedman (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1918), 166-172; Elisha M. Friedman, "The Problem of Reconstruction in the United States," 8.

Friedman's technocrats to keep a sharp eye for destructive radicalism. "There will be a superabundance of schemes and a danger of over-reforming a tired and unwilling world, which has been exhausted by the great conflict and dulled in its power of rapid adaptation," he warned. "A runaway civilization is in need of breaks."[49] Friedman's call for a middle-of-the-road approach to reconstruction found only a small audience in the increasingly polarized post-war political order.[50] But between 1919 and 1920, debates over reconstruction transitioned largely into a contest between the Republican Party's pro-business "normalcy" and a leftwing energized by the British Labour Party.

Liberals in the Wilson administration eagerly pushed the president and the Democratic party to advance some kind of reconstruction policy. William G. McAdoo suggested extending government ownership of the rails for another five years. Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson, assailed on all sides for the deteriorating industrial peace– pressed the president for a clearer policy on arbitration after the war. Frank P. Walsh and Basil Manly similarly defended their War Labor Board and asked Wilson to extend its appropriation and expand its reach. The United States sat upon "industrial volcano," Walsh wrote in *Reconstruction*. With demobilization threatening to spike inflation and unemployment, labor and industrialists were likely to be at one another's throats. If the federal government continued to stand behind the Labor Board and compel employers to accept arbitration, industrial peace might have a chance.[51]

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[49] Elisha M. Friedman, "Principles of Reconstruction in Europe," 28-33.

[50] Though in Friedman's analysis were seeds of what would bloom into the scientific management craze that would define industrial relations in the latter half of the coming decade. For overviews on post-war industrial relations theory, "welfare capitalism," and scientific management, see Joseph A. McCartin, *Labor's Great War,* 202-220; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (2nd Edition), 162-211; Joshua Freeman, *Behemoth: A History of the Factory and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: W.W. Norton and co., 2018), 174-179.

[51] Frank P. Walsh, Basil M. Manly, and A.B. Garretson, "Is America in Danger?" *Reconstruction* (April 1919), 97, 99; Franklin K. Lane, "Forward," in *American Problems of Reconstruction: A National*

Both progressive economist Ordway Tead and Felix Frankfurter (then a young attorney working between several wartime regulatory agencies) made similar pleas. By raising wages, encouraging unionization, and shortening hours, American industrial policy had been "surprisingly effective" in both reducing poverty and keeping production high-- especially "in the light of our pre-war muddle in these matters," Tead posited. Frankfurter implored the president not to let labor-management relations go "back to their former state."[52] Both men, like Friedman, pointed to the British Reconstruction Ministry's plan as an example.

Elected politicians showed little appetite for programs of this magnitude. Wilson quickly became embroiled in peace talks and winning a League of Nations. Without firm leadership, the president had allowed the "wilderness" of reconstruction to grow into a "tangled tropical jungle," one journalist criticized. If Wilson had intended to formulate a reconstruction program, the midterm elections rendered the point moot. The Republican Party won huge majorities in Congress by laying the high cost of living at the feet of the wartime regulatory state. Party leaders promised to shrink the government, impose fiscal austerity, and take on the unions and their demands for higher wages. Chastened by the heavy loss, Wilson and the Democrats were understandably wary of keeping the albatross of big government around their neck. The White House did manage to sponsor a Presidential Industrial Conference at which union and industrial leaders were to *voluntarily* draft a new constitution for labor rights (Charles Edward Russell of

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Symposium on the Economic and Financial Aspects, xxv-xxvi; Douglas B. Craig, "'Don't You Hear all the Railroad Men Speak?': William G. McAdoo, the United States Railroad Administration, and the Democratic Presidential Nomination of 1924," *Journal of American Studies* 48 no. 3 (2014), 777-795.

[52] Ordway Tead, "The British Reconstruction Programs," *Political Science Quarterly* 33 n. 1 (March 1918), 72; "New Labor Idea Taught By War," *New York Times* (December 15, 1918), 44.

Reconstruction attended as a delegate), but labor bolted after business leaders like Elbert Gary and John D. Rockefeller Jr. scuttled any clause to protect the right to organize.[53]

Even smaller reconstruction initiatives at the state level stalled. After taking office in 1919, New York Governor Al Smith formed a Reconstruction Commission and tasked them with submitting a report to the Assembly. The Commission suggested new allocations for a state employment placement service, vocational retraining for those chronically out of work, public work projects in depression, unemployment insurance, and low interest loans for new home construction.[54] The Republican dominated legislature refused to consider these suggestions.

The GOP continued to campaign on abruptly ending the wartime interventions into the economy in advance of the 1920 election, but it co-opted the language of reconstruction to do it. Warren G. Harding's famed call for a "return to normalcy" was very much a part of this trend. Indeed, the formal title of the normalcy speech (which he originally gave to the Boston Home Market Club, an interest group dedicated to protective tariffs) was "Readjustment"—a phrase often used in lieu of reconstruction.[55] In various renditions of this speech, Harding promised a "reformation to get rid of reformers" in government and to remove the "blighting hand of government ownership" on private enterprise. "We shackled, regulated, restrained, reproved and revised during the war, and it was accepted as a war necessity," the future president said, "but now we

[53] John W. Owens, "Less Talk, More Work, Country's Chief Need," *Baltimore Sun* (December 15, 1918), 1; McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, 191-193

[54] New York State Reconstruction Commission, *A Permanent Unemployment Program* (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1919).

[55] Readjustment, for instance, was the term Bethlehem Steel magnate Charles M. Schwab used when writing his article on industry in Friedman's volume. Schwab argued that all industries should have some type of employee representation in management decisions, but preferred that these be company unions without federal backing. He decided that "restrictive laws against industry benefit the Nation not at all." Charles M. Schwab, "Steel" in *American Problems of Reconstruction*, 354-144.

are at peace, and it is time to unshackle." Reconstruction, no matter who proposed it, could not save the world; only the industrialists could. To bring down inflation, the Ohio senator demanded that industrial workers increase their efficiency, drop demands for additional pay increases, and stop living like "drunken sailors without a thought of America."[56] The Harding campaign took clear aim at the institutions that maintained industrial democracy.

Labour and the New Social Order and Leftwing Reconstruction

Across the Atlantic, the British Labour Party set the standard for leftwing reconstruction. Convinced that the Ministry of Reconstruction had not gone far enough in diagnosing the societal ills that generated inequality, BLP leaders plotted a bold new path to industrial democracy. On January 1st, 1918, a Party subcommittee published *Labour and the New Social Order*. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, both well-known members of the social democratic Fabian society, drafted the document. While not a formal platform, the Webbs hoped that *Labour and the New Social Order* would outline what the BLP's ideals and its hopes for a more just future. With the Great War still raging, and with millions of British citizens reeling from the effects, the self-proclaimed representative party of the working class (which at this point had a mere forty seats in parliament) charted a course to permanently end social discord in the United Kingdom and beyond.[57]

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[56] "National Ideas and Policies," *The Protectionist* (June, 1920), 73-81; Warren G. Harding, "Problems of Reconstruction," *The Protectionist* (January 1921), 412-414; Philip Kinsley, "Harding Stand on Big Issues," *Los Angeles Times* (June 14, 1920), 12; "Harding Home; Gives Blow to One Man Rule," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (July 6, 1920), 1; "Harding Tells His Friends and Neighbors of Marion Their Tribute is Best of All," *Washington Post* (July 6, 1920), 4.

[57] Gary Dorrien, *Social Democracy in the Making* (New Haven, *Yale University Press*, 2019), 315; Matthew Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate: A History of the British Labour Party Between the Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 12-13; Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

The Webbs' subcommittee proposed four "Pillars of the House" to prevent "the end of a civilisation"-- "The Universal Enforcement of a National Minimum," "The Democratic Control of Industry," "The Revolution in National Finance," and "The Surplus Wealth of the Common Good."[58] Embedded within these demands were calls for full employment; the nationalization of railways, mines, and electricity, tax reform; universal education; and "Home Rule" for each colonized nation, "whatever its colour."[59] With these reforms in place, Britain might have a more just and peaceful future.

For the Webbs, war and economic calamity went hand in hand. The industrialists who made their riches on foodstuffs, munitions, clothing, and natural resources had little incentive to pursue a lasting peace, they believed. If hostilities did cease, profiteers would almost certainly make up for losing government contracts by increasing prices and slashing wages. The resulting hardships could lead to revolution and additional bloodshed.[60] On behalf of the Labour Party, they assured the war-weary British public that profit-driven capitalism would be "buried" alongside "the millions whom it has done to death."[61] The document clearly influenced BLP leaders. Notably, it was in late-February 1918 that the Labour Party adopted Clause IV of its constitution: a plank to "secure for the producers by hand or by brain the fruits of their industry and the most

[58] *Labour and the New Social Order* (London: The Labour Party, 1919), 3.
[59] *Labour and the New Social Order*, 5-20.
[60] It was exceedingly common for those on the European and North American left to blame capitalism for the war. Competition over limited resources had heightened nationalism and expanded imperial boundaries. Manufacturers and investment bankers, they noted, were eager to absorb the demand for cash and war materials. As representatives of the Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conference declared in February 1915, the war was "a monstrous product of the antagonisms which tear asunder capitalist society and the aggressive policy of colonialism and imperialism." Paul Kellogg and Arthur Gleason, *British Labor and the War: Reconstructors for a New World* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), 352; Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 32-54; Michael Kazin, *War Against War: The American Fight for Peace, 1914-1918* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 156-158.
[61] *Labour and the New Social Order*, 4.

equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production."[62] The clause for the first time officially committed the BLP to a socialist future. It would remain unedited until 1994.

Labour and the New Social order embodied the BLP's new post-war assertiveness. Prior to 1914, the Labour Party had been a small group of socialists and radical trade unionists with only a token representation in parliament. While nominally independent, Labour operated mostly as a pro-worker pressure group within the Liberal Party. Ten years later, the Party had enough power to form its first government. The BLP had done much to grow its reputation during the war. The Party had initially opposed the conflict and many of its most notable members, including future prime minister Ramsay MacDonald, would keep a pacifist attitude. The majority of the BLP, led by former iron molder Arthur Henderson, came to support the war effort out of patriotic duty and a desire to thwart German militarism. Over the four years of fighting, Party leaders became crucial intermediaries between trade unions (which like their American counterparts had grown in size and militancy) and the Liberal-controlled government. Elected labourites gained several cabinet positions and used their time in the public eye to support higher wages, stringent price controls on housing and foodstuffs, and excess profit taxes on war industries.[63] Henderson was one of the few MPs to consider a negotiated peace at the end of 1917—by then the seemingly endless war was growing evermore unpopular.

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[62] Paul Kellogg and Arthur Gleason, *British Labor and the War: Reconstructors for a New World* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), 367.

[63] Marcus Morris, "Peace, but not at any price: British Socialists' Calls for Peace on the Eve of the First World War;" Chris Wrigley, "At the Crossroads: the Labour Party, the Trade Unions and the Choices of Direction for the Democratic Left," in *Labour, British Radicalism and the First World War*, eds. Lucy Bland and Richard Carr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 17-31; For an overview, see Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate,* 1-74.

Labour was well prepared for the snap election a month after the armistice. Much of the public blamed Prime Minister Herbert H. Asquith for dragging the nation into an unpopular war. Consumer prices continued to soar and, as in the United States, industrial leaders responded to demobilization with attempts to cut wages and increase hours. The government was badly divided over reconstruction. While many veterans of the Asquith government hoped for limited price controls and public-private partnerships to address unemployment, Lloyd George and the "Coalition Liberals" that joined hands with the Tories were more than willing to abandon nationalization schemes and comprehensive social insurance in the name of austerity.[64]

The Labour Party, conversely, produced an unambiguous reconstruction platform with far-reaching goals. A distilled and truncated version of the Webbs's lengthy and academic treatise, the BLP's 1918 platform advocated democratic control over the mines, rails, and waterways, soak-the-rich taxes, a "super power" system to deliver cheap electricity, subsidies for new homes, an "effective Ministry of Health," and free education through university "without distinction of class or wealth." In the last election before the war, the BLP captured six percent of the electorate. More than a fifth of voters pulled the lever for Labour in 1918.

The BLP's success story sent shockwaves across the Atlantic. With official government plans for reconstruction in the United States remaining largely stalled, a noticeable shifted towards the Republican Party's conservative readjustment, and an ineffective National War Labor Board that provided no hope for permanent industrial

[64] See Trevor Wilson, *Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914-1935* (London, Collins Press, 1966), 105-106, 168-169, 193-197; Chris Cook, *A Short History of the Liberal Party, 1900-1997* (London: MacMillan Press, 1998) (Fifth Edition), 63-93.

councils along the lines of the Whitley Report, American radicals were an eager audience for new plans.[65] *Labour and the New Social Order* had real imagination and novel solutions.

Virtually every American felt the effects of the post-war economy. Social scientists like Elisha Friedman wrote extensively on the need for coordinated governmental intervention to address the sky-rocketing cost of living and to adequately reintegrate returning veterans. The Republican sweep in 1918 and duties of negotiating peace largely kept the Wilson administration and liberal state governors from adopting such a policy. In the vacuum, reconstruction broke on ideological lines. Conservatives like Harding advanced a program to pull back government supports and dismantle or defang the boards that had resolved labor disputes. On the left were those who gravitated toward *Labor and the New Social Order*. This more radical grouping, which drew in trade unionists, disenchanted progressives, social gospelers, and eventually *some* Black reformers would congeal in the early twenties into a popular political movement that would eventually nominate Robert La Follette for president.

The *New Social Order* and Arthur Gleason

Arthur Gleason was foremost amongst the Labour Party's boosters in the United States. Gleason had been a war correspondent for the *Survey*—a magazine that social worker Paul U. Kellogg took over in 1912. *Survey* quickly became a leading publication for reform during the Progressive Era. Kellogg filled its pages with in-depth reporting on

[65] Joseph A. McCartin, *Labor's Great War,* 175-193; Melvyn Dubofsky, *The State and Labor in Modern America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 76-81; Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 38-60.

poverty, immigration, education, healthcare, and racism. Kellogg, who had vigorously opposed American involvement in the war, had hired Gleason to investigate its effects abroad.[66] It was while in London that Gleason began sending glowing reports of the BLP and one of its most prominent leaders: President of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB), Robert Smillie. The Scottish miner had risen to the top of his union just a few years before Britain declared war on Germany. He helped form the so-called "Triple Alliance" between his union, the Transport Workers' Federation, and the National Union of Railwaymen. Unlike most British trade union leaders, Smillie refused to sign a no-strike pledge after 1914 and frequently used the threat of stoppages to win major concessions for coal miners. Hours went down, wages nearly doubled, and the Federation expanded its membership to nearly one million.[67] Knowing that labor's "full emancipation" required legislative victories, he pointed his members toward Labour Party candidates. For these efforts, Gleason told his American readers that he "learned what Lincoln must have been like from knowing Robert Smillie."[68] It would not be the last time he used a Lincoln analogy.

Smillie and the MFGB appealed to Gleason because of their expansive vision. Not content fighting only for their own wages, the miners pushed Labour Party candidates to instigate broad economic change. A few months after the war, Smillie and

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[66] Clarke A. Chambers, *Paul U. Kellogg and the Survey* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 46-76.
[67] Paul Kellogg and Arthur Gleason, *British Labor and the War,* 168-177; Clarke A. Chambers, *Paul U. Kellogg and the Survey* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 66-67; On the Triple Alliance, see "The British Miners and the War," *Survey* (March 23, 1918), 679-682; Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 7, 11; Derek Matthews, "1889 And All That: New Views on the New Unionism," *International Review of Social History* 36 no. 1 (June 1991), 24-58; G.R. Carter, "The Triple Alliance of Labour: Its National and Trade-Union Significance," *Economic Journal* 26 no. 103 (September 1916), 380-395; "The 'Triple Alliance,'" *Independent and the Weekly Review* vol. 108 (March 4, 1922), 219.
[68] Arthur Gleason, "Robert Smillie," *Nation* (March 27, 1920), 394-395.

the Labour MPs convinced Lloyd George's coalition government to form a new "Coal Commission" and seriously discuss permanent nationalization of the mines, production for use, and healthcare, housing, and sanitation reform for mining towns. Meeting in the House of Lords, Smillie, Miners' Federation vice president Frank Hodges, Sidney Webb, and R.H. Tawney, head of the Workers' Educational Association, fiercely debated mine owners and members of Parliament. John Sankey, the government-appointed barrister tasked with overseeing the commission, voted in favor of nationalization—Lloyd George ignored him.[69]

Regardless of the outcome, Gleason believed the meeting was epoch making. Irritated after Kellogg asked him to write features on Lloyd George's home building and educational plans instead of Smillie's meeting, Gleason sent off a curt reply. Emphasizing the Coalition government's tepid reconstruction plan over labor's efforts "would be like omitting the Emancipation Proclamation as of social significance and concentrating on welfare devices, operated by benevolent slave owners, for the benefit of tired negroes," he wrote. "We are witnessing the most stupendous change in social conditions of the last hundred years," the reporter insisted. "At this moment, the fight is on for the transformation of industry into public service." The Labour Party's reconstruction was the one worth paying attention to.[70]

By 1919, Kellogg also grew to admire the British Labour Party. He and Gleason co-authored *British Labor and the War: Reconstructors for a New World* that year. They

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[69] Coal Industry Commission, *Reports and Minutes of Evidence on the First Stage of the Inquiry* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1919); Arthur Gleason, *What the Workers Want: A Study of British Labor* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 33-55.

[70] Arthur Gleason to Paul Kellogg, April 29, 1919. Arthur Gleason Papers. Library of Congress. Reel 2. Folder 1919 [microfilm no. 318]. As Daniel Rodgers describes Gleason's transformation: "In the face of the war state's swelling appetite for power, labor's project of devolved yet socialized control sounded a powerful clarifying note for Gleason." Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 309.

hoped their book would "best serve American readers by telling of certain of its eager manifestations —international, political, industrial— that will play an organic part in the period of reconstruction."[71] The British movement was a usable example. In addition to a several hundred-page description of labor-led reconstruction in Britain, Gleason included transcriptions of the Whitley Reports, the Labour Party's constitution and 1918 election platform, and *Labour and the New Social Order*. Their book was likely the first study many Americans read on the movement.

British Labor and the War sold well. Gleason continued to write articles on the Smillie and the Labour Party not only in Survey, but in publications like the *Nation* as well. Demand was apparently high enough for Gleason to publish a follow up—*What the Workers Want: A Study of British Labor*—the following year. A staff writer for the *New York Call*, the Socialists Party's English-language daily paper, called Gleason "an authority" on the BLP and described *British Labor and the War* as "acknowledged to be the best book on the British labor movement, not only in this country, but in England, where the workers themselves" acclaimed it. Frank Hodges and BLP-aligned economist and London School of Economics professor Harold Laski both wrote to congratulate Gleason on the "great deal of interest" his book had generated. Smillie thanked him for the publicity as well, though he confessed to being puzzled that American readers would read his comments on reconstruction and not do more to end the Espionage Act and the persecution of anti-war radicals: "It is a strange thing that your papers will publish statements made by men like me, in this country, and if the same things were said by a

[71] Paul Kellogg and Arthur Gleason, *British Labor and the War: Reconstructors for a New World*, vii-viii.

Socialist, in America, he would likely find himself in prison."[72] At the time Smillie wrote, Eugene Debs and Emma Goldman had been imprisoned for making anti-war statements and the infamous "Palmer Raids" (named for Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer) had swept up thousands of radicals and deported several hundred to the Soviet Union.[73]

Smillie's paradox spoke to the state of American progressivism at the end of World War I. Woodrow Wilson had entered the White House eight years earlier as a liberal reformer. He won a constitutional amendment for the income tax, lowered tariffs, and created the Federal Reserve. The Clayton Antitrust Act went after monopolies while establishing a carveout for trade unions, the Seaman's Act eliminated many of the worst abuses for ship workers, and the Adamson Act gave railroad workers the eight-hour day. In 1916 even some socialists campaigned for Wilson under the guise of keeping the United States out of the war. But the president had torched much of his good will by 1919. Wilson had worked hard to sell American participation in the war as a necessary defense of democracy.[74] At least at first, his administration's defense of worker rights

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[72] "British Labor Will Control in Decade, Declares Gleason," *New York Call* (January 2, 1919), 1, 3; "100 Injured in Unemployment Riot in Front of British Gov't Offices," *New York Call* (October 19, 1920), 1; "Labor Education News and Notes," *New York Call* (January 22, 1921), 6; Robert Smillie to Arthur Gleason, June 17, 1920; Laski to Gleason, October 20, 1921. Arthur Gleason Papers. Library of Congress. Reel 2. Folder: 1921, 1922.

[73] Paul and Karen Avrich, *Sasha and Emma: The Anarchist Odyssey of Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 267-290; Ernest Freeburg, *Democracy's Prisoner: Eugene V. Debs, The Great War, and the Right to Dissent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955); Jennifer Luff, *Common Sense Anti-Communism*, 63-74.

[74] Ann Hagedorn, *Savage Peace: Hope and Fear in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster), 1-36, 53-50; Michael Kazin, *War Against War: The American Fight for Peace, 1914-1918* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 241-292; William E. Forbath, *Law and the Shaping of the American Labor Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 16, 156-158, Nell Painter, *Standing at Armageddon* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008),, 269-277; Paul Michel Taillon, *Good, Reliable White Men: Railroad Brotherhoods, 1877-1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 198-204; Gabriel Kolko, *Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1916* (New York: The Free Press, 1963), 217-278.

seemed to indicate that there would be *some* progress on the home front. But as the conflict dragged on and Wilson backtracked on his labor record, approved the persecution of radicals, and advanced a peace treaty that no longer resembled his original Fourteen Points, many liberals, like Gleason, jumped ship.

Gleason saw the British Labour Party as the perfect antidote to half-hearted liberalism. While the government held conferences and made bold claims, Smillie and the Miners' Federation nearly doubled the wages of a million workers and fed their members into a political movement seeking a broad societal reconstruction. Lloyd George's reconstruction had been nothing but a "paper scheme" conjured by the "old gang inside the framework of the old order in a time of huge debt, falling production, and spiritual disillusion," Gleason wrote in February 1920. "David, the war-maker, cannot build the temple."[75]

The journalist never explicitly compared British and American reconstruction. He did, however, encourage his readers to closely study the situation abroad and worked to dispel rumors that the British labor party was revolutionary or dangerously radical. The movement towards "Workers' control," a trend on both sides of the Atlantic, was the "greatest functional advance for democracy since the state extended its operations beyond police power." Similarly, Smillie's advocacy for the Labour Party undergirded his belief in responsible change. "His desire here was to keep the privileged classes from precipitating a conflict which would end in violent revolution," Gleason wrote. "He wished the workers to have ready a weapon for forcing revolution back into the evolution

[75] Arthur Gleason, *What the Workers Want: A Study of British Labor* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 26; Arthur Gleason, "Robert Smillie," *Nation* (March 27, 1920), 394-395; Arthur Gleason and Paul U. Kellogg, "The England They've Been Fighting For," *Survey* (November 30, 1918), 243; Arthur Gleason, "One Year of Reconstruction," *Survey* (February, 7, 1920), 527.

of constitutional change."[76] No one on Britain's left save a small core of communist revolutionaries wanted "the spectacle of people whipped into feverish excitement and mowed down by machine guns." And he predicted no "seismic tremor" would follow a Labour Party victory at the polls: "Nothing rash, they seem to say; we have a living wage; hours are no longer killing—let us build our tabernacle in this place."[77] What labor wanted was sensible reconstruction. They had to lead it because the state and current government failed to do so.

Returning to the United States in 1920, Gleason worked for the remainder of his life to advance British-styled reconstruction in his own country. As will be elaborated in later chapters, Gleason became a leading researcher for unions interested in nationalization and workers' control. His experience with the Workers' Educational Association and other labor universities in Britain also led Gleason to throw himself headlong into creating a similar movement at home. American wage earners needed "training in the science of reconstruction" and labor education was a "means to the liberation of the working class, individually and collectively." He worked diligently behind the scenes to secure funding, design courses, and connect labor educators across borders. He never took a public role, worrying that he could accidentally invite the "meddling and muddling of middle class dilettantes." Spencer Miller Jr., who would run the AFL's Workers' Education Bureau from the twenties into the 1940s, credited Gleason with "crystallizing immediately all of the unrelated discussion" about the British Labour

[76] Arthur Gleason, "The New Constitutionalism in British Industry," *Survey* (February 1, 1919), 594; "Labor Situation in England," March 15, 1919, 853; Arthur Gleason, "Robert Smillie," *Nation* (March 27, 1920), 394-395.
[77] Arthur Gleason, "The Parliament of Labor," *Survey* (October 4, 1919), 9-10; Arthur Gleason, "One Year of Reconstruction," *Survey* (February, 7, 1920), 527.

Party and radical education "during the years of reconstruction after the World War." When Gleason died unexpectedly in 1924, trade unionists, socialists, and reformers of all stripes came to mourn him.[78]

American Progressives and British Reconstruction

Several prominent writers and social workers soon accepted Gleason's views on the British Labour Party. Attending the National Conference of Social Work held in the Summer of 1918, sociologist Winthrop D. Lane noted that "speaker after speaker throughout the conference," including Jane Addams, "referred to the far-reaching program of the sub-committee of the British Labour Party, it became evident that many social workers here… are responding with enthusiasm to this vision of radical changes in the economic and industrial order." He was not the only one to mark the trend[79]

Literary critic Harold Stearns, writing in the New York-based arts and politics magazine, *The Dial*, worried that only those representing the business elite were poised to take the lead on American reconstruction. Industrialists could "contribute their technical and scientific knowledge, but they cannot be allowed to dictate policy," Stearns posited. But trade unions offered the best counterweight to protect wider community interests. "Labor is more alive and intelligent than ever before," he declared. "That can be plainly seen in the program of the British Labor Party."[80] In the *Public*, a magazine that Assistant Labor Secretary Louis Post founded in 1913, one writer told Americans to look at the

[78] "Memorial Service to Arthur Gleason, 1878-1923," John Brophy Papers. Mullen Archives: Catholic University. Box 1. Folder 33; Harold Laski to Arthur Gleason, October 20, 1921. Arthur Gleason Papers. Library of Congress. Reel 2. Folder: 1921; "Arthur Gleason is Paid a Tender Tribute at Memorial;" Harry W. Laidler, "Arthur Gleason," *New Leader* (February 9, 1924), 1, 9.
[79] Winthrop D. Lane, "The National Conference of Social Work," *Survey* (June 1, 1918), 252.
[80] Harold Stearns, "Why Reconstruction?" *The Dial* (October 5, 1918), 251.

"British Labor Party's program as the Ten Commandments." "The thing of which we can now be assured is that henceforth we are to have in this country political group of major size and importance," another author predicted. "This group will rely very frankly on those who are primarily producers,-- on organized wage earners and organized farmers."[81]

Herbert Croly, editor of *The New Republic*, featured *Labour and the New Social Order* in its entirety. "Tentative as the document is in its existing form," the journal's editors wrote in their introduction, "it is probably the most mature and carefully formulated programme ever put forth by a responsible political party." They supposed that their fellow liberals who might be "accustomed to the timidities and tepidity of American progressivism" would "shrink from the drastic character of much of the proposed social and financial legislation," but the editors encouraged readers to follow the British in their "thorough-going radicalism."[82] The *Nation*, too, featured numerous articles on the international labor-led reconstruction and went so far as to demand a new political party.[83]

The *Nation* had since the Civil War been among the leading opinion magazines for liberal and iconoclastic men and women of letters. Over the course of its history, the magazine's editors had pushed for radical reconstruction during the 1870s, advocated for civil service reform, and opposed American annexation in Latin America and Asia. Oswald Garrison Villard, grandson of famed abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, edited

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[81] "The Promise of Tomorrow," *The Public* (May 4, 1918), 556-557; S. Zimand, "Ministry of Reconstruction," *Public* (November 16, 1918), 1405.
[82] "Forward," *New Republic* (February 16, 1918), 1.
[83] For some examples, see Frederic C. Howe, "Land Settlements and the Soldier," *Nation* (Marc 22, 1919), 426; Foreign Correspondence," *Nation* (March 15, 1919), 395; J.A. Stevenson, "The Great Winnipeg Strike," *Nation* (June 14, 1919), 935; Basil Manly, "American Industrial Unrest," *Nation* (June 14, 1919), 933.

the magazine during the first few decades of the twentieth century. Garrison initially opposed entry into World War I but begrudgingly came to accept fighting a war to ensure future peace and global democracy. The Espionage Act and the post office's censoring of "radical" materials, however, caused Villard, a staunch civil libertarian, to rage.[84] He further criticized Wilson for giving ground on his Fourteen Points and pledge for a representative League of Nations.

Writing to Robert La Follette in 1919, Villard called the Treaty of Versailles "the most iniquitous peace document ever drawn." The treaty's demands that Germany shoulder responsibility for the war and make reparations reeked of "bad faith, revengefulness and inhumanity." The League of Nations, which not only lacked universal national representation but left colonialism untouched and deliberately excluded German participation, also drew Villard's ire. The League retained "the old and vicious order of the world," advantaged the Allied European governments who drafted the treaty and gave further control to the "international bankers" who had financed the war. "To my mind it seals the ruin of the modern capitalistic system and constitutes a veritable Pandora's Box out of which will come evils of which we have not as yet any conception," he wrote. Villard, who had just returned from Europe, told the Wisconsin senator that he had gone fully convinced the "Germans were exaggerating their needs and sufferings for the purpose of influencing the peace negotiations," but left "convinced that there had been no understatement." Taking stock of soup kitchens in Munich and Dresden, Villard claimed to see a "picture of suffering and misery and degradation" that "haunted" him. The

[84] Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 20, 32, 156, 353; Kazin, *War Against* War, 124-125, 148, 241.

journalist and reformer was "utterly unprepared" for what he saw and predicted a "Communist dictatorship" if the economic despair did not quickly improve.[85]

Villard's letter does much to explain why some American liberals and progressives shifted toward left-leaning reconstruction after the war. The Justice Department continued to trample over civil liberties at home. Convulsions in the global economy left no nation untouched. And while fighting had *mostly* stopped in Europe (the Russian civil war continued apace for several more years), the Treaty of Versailles left much to be desired.[86]

In March 1919, Villard dedicated a full page in the *Nation* to a group of progressives called the Committee of 48. Led largely by J.A.H. Hopkins, the former treasurer of Teddy Roosevelt's 1912 Bull Moose campaign, the Committee used the space to issue a call for action: *Revolution or Reconstruction*. Attorneys and former Progressive Party members Amos Pinchot and George L. Record helped draft the piece. ACLU founder Arthur Garfield Hays, Ellen Hayes, a onetime socialist, suffragist, and math professor, pluralist philosopher Horace Kallen, Frederic C. Howe, a noted land reformer and Wilson-appointed head of immigration for the Port of New York, and author Charlotte Perkins Gilman would all also either sign the document or soon after join the organization.[87] Historian Kenneth E. Miller writes that the Committee came up

[85] Oswald Garrison Villard to Robert La Follette, August 5, 1919. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B84. Folder: Villard, Oswald Garrison.
[86] For a longer discussion of progressive "irreconcilables" see pp. 281-287. For scholarly overviews, see Elizabeth McKillen, *Making the World Safe for Workers: Labor, the Left*, and *Wilsonian Internationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 208-240; Kazin, *War Against War*, 277-288; Ann Hagedorn, *Savage Peace*, 118-122, 356-359; Kennedy, *Over Here: the First World War and American Society*, 359-360.
[87] Committee of Forty-Eight, "For a Conference of Americans Who are Equally Opposed to Reaction and Violent Revolution," (New York: Committee of Forty-Eight), 6-8. (Available https://archive.org/details/TheCommitteeOfForty-eightForAConferenceOfAmericans)

with the name to suggest that they had support from all forty-eight American states– despite many commentators erroneously suggesting the group had only forty-eight members.[88]

Much like Gleason and Villard, the Committee of 48 grew increasingly alarmed at the Wilson administration's lack of action on reconstruction. In *Revolution or Reconstruction*, Hopkins, Pinchot, and the other signatories pointed toward an "autocratic and reactionary minority" that had taken root at various levels of American government and committed to harassing dissenters and censoring free speech. Reaction had also settled in the boardrooms of corporate America, where captains of industry, engaging in "orgies of profiteering," elected to break unions and drive down wages. If dissatisfaction grew a revolt was not out of the question. They pointed directly at the fledgling democracies of central and eastern Europe to make their point. "Europe too has had its reactionary ruling minorities, its industrial autocrats, its financial oligarchies… its bursting budgets, its toilers broken in body and bitter of soul," the 48ers concluded in their report. "And Europe has revolution."[89]

Pinchot and Hopkins approached reconstruction from a solidly progressive worldview. Progressivism, though difficult to singularly define, came out of the vast income inequality and industrial unrest of the Gilded Age. It was a largely white-collar movement. Progressives like those who eventually gravitated toward the 48ers hoped that by breaking trusts, conserving natural resources, monitoring industrial safety, and providing public education they could expand the middle class and eschew any radical

[88] Kenneth E. Miller, *From Progressive to New Dealer: Frederic C. Howe and American Liberalism* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2010), 319n30.
[89] Committee of Forty-Eight, "Revolution or Reconstruction? A Call to Americans." Amos Pinchot Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Box 87. Folder "Committee of 48" 4 of 6.

upheaval. Progressives had a historically complicated relationship with trade unions. They acknowledged the need for workers to have a voice on the job site, but disapproved of labor stoppages that could impact the larger economy. Unions that grew strong enough to paralyze American industry to win demands could be as threatening as the worst plutocrats.[90]

The 48ers saw the post-war era as a potentially cataclysmic one. Labor was stronger than ever before and while the threat of communist revolution in the United States was low, the specter of Bolshevik unrest loomed from the peripheries. Industrial democracy could keep working-class militancy from boiling over. The Committee's labor plank supported an end to injunctions and the guaranteed right to organize and bargain collectively, though the draft statements Amos Pinchot wrote went into far more detail. For Pinchot, and likely the rest of the Committee board, "Democracy in Industry" also demanded the "right to strike and picket" and a minimum wage "dependent upon the cost of living and maximum hours." Pinchot's draft also favored expanding the "industrial councils" envisioned by the War Labor Board to include not only workers and managers, but producers and consumers as well.[91] The platform also prohibited property ownership and patent holding for the purpose of speculation and "equal economic, political, and

[90] As will be argued, "class interest" reviled many Progressive Era reformers. These men and women hoped that "democratic renewal," appeals to broad American values, and scientific management would ameliorate labor conflict. Though many supported employee representation and collective bargaining, they would remain distrustful of powerful unions that could strike and wreak havoc on the consumer economy. For an overview on progressives and class, see Shelton Stromquist, *Reinventing the People: The Progressive Movement, the Class Problem, and the Origins of Modern Liberalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Leon Fink, *Progressive Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Democratic Commitment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[91] "Democracy in Industry," Amos Pinchot Papers. Library of Congress. Box 87, Folder "Committee of 48" 4 of 6.

legal rights irrespective of sex or color."[92] Restoring economic and civil liberties could prevent disaster.

Like Gleason, Pinchot and Hopkins saw the British Labour Party as likeminded. Among the committee's first pamphlets was a reprinted speech by Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, a suffrage activist, conscientious objector, and future Labour MP. Pethick-Lawrence, also worried about unrest, maintained that freedom of speech was society's most "splendid safety-valve." To simply allow self-expression in political life was not enough, however. Citizens needed freedom from the "artificial, unnecessary inequalities imposed on… people from their birth" and the "intolerable tyranny" some industrialists held over "the lives and whole condition of labor." Violent revolution occurred only when the people had "no faith in political action, no faith in the power of people by reasonable evolutionary means."[93] The Labour Party sought to restore this faith.

As the following chapter will illustrate, members of the Committee of 48 held divergent opinions on the extent of industrial democracy they were willing to accept. Indeed, many former progressives would avoid joining the Committee because it was pro-labor. Journalist William Hard called these individuals the "goody-goody-be-nice-to-the-workingman-and-kid-him-along crowd" that had made up the conservative wing of the Bull Moose party nearly a decade prior. But even generally pro-worker 48ers had hard limits on worker control of industry and government ownership. Pinchot, in particular, frequently minimized class difference and highlighted the common goals of all Americans. "Labor, the farmer and the great middle class," he wrote prior to the

[92] "Committee of 48 Explains Platform," *New York Times* (December 22, 1919), 5.
[93] Hand and Brain: A Speech Delivered by Pethick Lawrence. Committee of Forty-Eight Pamphlets No. 2. Amos Pinchot Papers. Library of Congress. Box 88. Folder: Committee of 48.

Committee's first conference in December 1919, "are if they would only realize it, in a sense, members of one class in that they are equally the victims of the monopolist group."[94] Organized labor, in short, was welcome in the Committee's ranks, but only as part of a larger coalition. Class politics, either driven from the top or from below, degraded American democracy. As historian Otis Graham writes, Pinchot "wanted what most progressives wanted– restoration of competitive conditions in the American economy."[95] Balancing out monopolist control required empowered trade unions. But trade unions strong enough to hold the public hostage could be equally dangerous.

Reconstruction lit a fire in the bellies of many American progressives and liberals. Woodrow Wilson had lost whatever good will he had garnered with this group during the war years by continuing to persecute radicals, backing away from the agencies tasked with maintaining industrial peace, and failing to win an equitable treaty in Paris. The British Labour Party offered imagination at a time when many political parties seemed to lack it. Arthur Gleason helped bring the BLP's message home to the United States and into the pages of the nation's leading progressive journals of opinion. Progressives and radicals like Oswald Garrison Villard and those who filtered into the Committee of 48 embraced the task of advancing European-styled reconstruction.

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[94] In another speech, Pinchot was clearer regarding the Committee's ideas: "It is not a class platform. Here it differs essentially from the platform year after year by the Republican and Democratic conventions, for they are distinctly class platforms, designed to place and keep in the hands of the privileged classes the country's material resources and transportation systems." William Hard to Robert La Follette, July 9, 1920. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B85. Folder: Hard, William; Untitled Speech [n.d.] Amos Pinchot Papers. Library of Congress. Box: 87 Folder: Committee of 48: 4 of 6. This document is likely Pinchot's speech at the Committee's founding conference in St. Louis. It begins with "Ladies and Gentleman" and has significant marginalia in Pinchot's hand; Amos Pinchot, "Here's a Fighting Issue Says Amos Pinchot," *Facts: National Conference Number Issued By Committee of 48* (St. Louis: December 11, 1919), 1. Found in Amos Pinchot Papers Box 87 Folder 3 of 6.

[95] Graham, *An Encore for Reform*, 74.

"Hopeful Signs:" The Social Gospel and Reconstruction

The Committee of 48 found like-minded reconstructionists amongst social gospel Christian denominations. Several religious leaders signed on to the Committee's pamphlet "Revolution or Reconstruction?" including John Haynes Holmes, a Unitarian Minister and pacifist who would soon become famous for his sermons on Gandhi, and Charles D. Williams, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan.[96] Williams studied the British Labour Party closely, especially during his travels to the Western Front in 1918. He praised the BLP as "made up not only of workers, but the keenest thinking men in the literary world as well." "We have no such organization here," Williams warned an audience in Chicago, "but it must come in time, or we shall see a social revolution in this country."[97] By the spring of 1919, Williams began occasionally referring to American financial and industrial elites as "our reactionaries and Tories," and alluded to "real democracy" that was "spreading around the world." Doubling down on his warning, he wrote in *Reconstruction*, "If Bolshevism ever sweeps over America, it will be due, not to the I.W.W. and the ignorant proletariat who fly the red flag, but to the blind conservatives who resist the cosmic tide of the new democracy."[98] His fears reflected the growing sentiments of religious orders over the course of 1919. Almost every denomination-- concerned with the welfare of its parishioners-- issued a reconstruction plan for economic, political, and spiritual salvation.

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[96] Joseph Kip Kosek, *Acts of Conscience: Christian Nonviolence and Modern American Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 82.
[97] "Bishop Warns America," *The Appeal* (St. Paul Mn.) (November 30, 1918), 2.
[98] Charles D. Williams, "Great Episcopal Bishop Flays Organized Greed and American Militarists," *Reconstruction* (March 1919), 72.

As far reaching as Christian social reconstruction was, its proponents claimed to be committed anti-revolutionists. William Faunce, a Baptist clergyman and President of Brown University, echoed the Christian mission of social reconstruction and industrial peace in an address to the 1919 Northern Baptist Convention. Faunce likened a nation built on "industrial antagonism" to a "pyramid standing on its apex already toppling into ruin."[99] "If the church be truly democratic," Faunce continued, "it will not indorse the social domination of any class, whether it be a class of radicals and revolutionists or a class of Bourbons and reactionaries."[100] Reconstruction, for many, grew not only out of the gospel, but out of fear of societal disorder.

The Methodist Board of Bishops, too, demanded a more democratic America. In May 1919, it called its congregants to "give most earnest heed to the application of Christian principles to social reconstruction… If Christianity is a driving force, making for democracy, we cannot put a limit upon the extension of democracy, we must recognize the inevitability of the application of democracy to industry." Perhaps the most militant statement, the Board of Bishops called for a just wage to, "have the right of way over rent, interest, and profits."[101] The Methodist reconstruction plan was remarkably similar to the Methodist Church of Canada's plan, which also called declared it "un-Christian to accept profits when laborers do not receive a living wage," but did not go as far as calling for an end to speculation and the nationalization of natural resources.[102] These calls could be seen as an expansion of the social gospel of the Progressive years as

[99] William H.P. Faunce, "The Church and Social Reconstruction," *The Biblical World* 53 no. 4, (July 1919), 358.
[100] *ibid*.
[101] "Methodist Bishops Would Put Wages Ahead of Profits," *New York Tribune* (May 23, 1919), 8; "The Church and Social Reconstruction," *Outlook* (June 4, 1919), 182.
[102] Samuel Zane Batten, "The Churches and Social Reconstruction," *The Biblical World* 53 no. 6 (November 1919), 594.

advocated by individuals like Charles Monroe Shelton, Jane Addams, Washington Gladden, and Walter Rauschenbusch-- an expansion forged in the fires of war, by the reconstruction plans of labor (both in Britain and America), and the needs of parishioners and congregants.[103] Certainly, many churches took a more urgent and calamitous tone.

Samuel Zane Batten, a Baptist minister serving in New Jersey and the greater New York Area, was one such social gospeler who saw the chance for American Christians to shape reconstruction as "one of the most hopeful signs of the times."[104] "There has never been such a challenge to the church," Batten wrote, "[and] never such an opportunity before it."[105] He also, alongside Bishop Charles D. Williams, acknowledged the role of the British Labour Party in instigating the reconstruction boom-- crediting these leaders with compiling "one of the wisest and most statesmanlike documents thus far produced."[106] Batten was, however, far more interested in the program issued by the Church of England and the British Quaker Employers-- which called for curtailment of capitalism but forked from the Labour Party's more militant class rhetoric.[107] As Batten decried the present state of American social order, he called

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[103] As historian William R. Hutchinson claims, social gospelers like Walter Rauschenbusch believed that if the churches did not adapt to the social needs of their congregants, "the churches would be ignored, increasingly and deservedly." William R. Hutchinson, *Religious Pluralism in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 86.

Historian Gary Dorrien also suggests, Christian Socialism was a major contributor to the British Labour Party. He points specifically to Frederick Denison Maurice, an Anglican priest, who Dorrien claims, "said that Christianity and socialism belong together because they espouse the same defining principles of cooperation and fellowship." Later labour leaders like Ramsay MacDonald and mining union leader, Kier Hardie, followed this early Christian condemnation of capitalism, Dorrien claims. Dorrien, *Social Democracy in the Making: Political and Religious Roots of European Socialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 5-10.

[104]Samuel Zane Batten, "The Churches and Social Reconstruction," 594.

[105] Samuel Zane Batten, *The New World Order* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society), 19-20.

[106] *Ibid*, 18.

[107] Batten also proclaimed inspiration from the archbishop of York, who visited the United States during the War and spoke on "social reconstruction." (Samuel Zane Batten, "The Churches and Social Reconstruction," *The Biblical World* (November 1919, 594; Batten, *New World Order*, 7.)

for a "comprehensive program of social redemption." In America, Batten preached, there were but a "few people drawing large incomes, holding valuable privileges, living in fine houses" while millions struggled with "meager incomes, with little opportunity, living in narrow, rented tenements." The sad state of affairs pointed to "defects and maladjustments in society." The whole "social system" needed repair, he determined.[108] Reconstruction offered an opportunity to elevate the social gospel from individual acts of righteousness to a dual effort to reform both the soul and the government.

Batten's views found a home amongst the ranks of the Federal Council of Churches-- a central body of clergy loosely uniting several Baptist, Presbyterian, and other smaller protestant denominations. Like Batten, the Federated Council demanded global "redemption" and an application of the "ethical principles of the Gospels." The Council further maintained the necessity of "a combination of ownership and control in co-operative production" in industry, a government plan government-mandated living wage, and a system of full employment. Outside of economic suggestions, the Council insisted on women's suffrage and for African Americans, "equal wages for equal work, adequate and efficient schools, courteous and equal facilities and courtesy when travelling, adequate housing, lighting, and sanitation, police protection, and equality before the law."[109] The report carefully tread the color line and included no specific mandate for social equality or voting rights.

[108] Samuel Zane Batten, *The New World Order* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society), 40-41.
[109] Samuel Zane Batten, "The Churches and Social Reconstruction," *The Biblical World* (November 1919, 594.

The first national religious body to publicly commit to social reconstruction was the Catholic Church—specifically the National Catholic War Council (NCWC).[110] American bishops assembled the NCWC in 1917 to "promote the moral and spiritual welfare of the United States Troops."[111] Each archdiocese nominated a representative to sit on the council, and John J. Burke, a Paulist priest and newspaper editor, headed the board. Over the course of the conflict, the organization successfully won a draft exemption for Catholic priests and seminarians, and vigorously policed the ratio of Catholic chaplains to Protestant ones in the American Expeditionary Force. Naturally, the NCWC kept a close eye on legislation, and hoped to continue its lobbying after the war--not only to join with other denominations against "legislation that would be godless and anarchistic," but to preserve the Church's laity from the Protestant majority.[112]

The Council marked the start of its reconstruction program in 1918 with the pastoral letter of Francis Bourne, the Archbishop of Westminster. Cardinal Bourne claimed the Church could no longer ignore the criticisms of the industrial system made by "people in every class of life, especially the workers." The NCWC credited British Labour with influencing Bourne's letter, and, by extension, acknowledged the BLP's influence on its own report. "Unquestionably," the Council's report noted, *Labour and the New Social Order* was "the most comprehensive and coherent program that has yet

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[110] For a thorough study on this organization, see Joseph M. McShane, *"Sufficiently Radical:" Catholicism, Progressivism, and the Bishops' Program of 1919* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1986).

[111] "Catholics Organize National War Council," *New York Tribune* (August 13, 1917), 5.

[112] As Bishop William T. Russell of Charleston explained, "We must watch the storm in its growing. The Prohibition movement shows what we may expect, if we disregard the distant murmurings of a storm that is brewing against our schools, hospitals, and asylums." Letter from Bishop William Russell, Bishop of Charleston, South Carolina to all Archbishops. Catholic University. National Catholic War Council Records. Available *American Catholic History Classroom*, accessed April 6, 2019, https://cuomeka.wrlc.org/items/show/165

appeared on the industrial phase of reconstruction."[113] The Council's final program, titled *Social Reconstruction: A General Review of the Problems and Survey of Remedies*, backed by the Bishops of Rockford, Toledo, Tagaste, and Charleston, put forward a "practical and moderate program." Like many other reports, the Bishops and priests called for a vague system of full-employment, safe and available housing, and a permanent War Labor Board coupled with the right to organize. The authors also maintained that women workers deserved equal pay for equal work, though "should disappear" from jobs "which conditions of life and their physique render them unfit." In perhaps the bishop's most militant remark: "we should give our hearty support to all legitimate efforts made by labor to resist general wage reductions."[114]

The Catholic Program expanded upon *Rerum Novarum*, demanding not revolution but societal cooperation.[115] The primary defects of American capitalism according to the NCWC were inefficiency, waste, and "insufficient incomes for the great majority of wage earners, and unnecessarily large incomes for a small majority of privileged capitalists." Cooperation in industry and production was the solution. Business owners, the bishops concluded, needed to understand that they had responsibilities beyond generating profits. A true capitalist, the bishops instructed, "has no right to interest on his investment until his employees have obtained at least living wages."[116] Primarily, the Council supposed a Catholic solution to socialism, which the reporters concluded meant "bureaucracy, political tyranny, the helplessness of the individual…,

[113] "Social Reconstruction: A General Review of the Problems and Survey of Remedies," 5-6. found in Amos Pinchot Papers. Library of Congress. Box 94. Folder: Labor 1914-1921, 1 of 7.
[114] *Ibid*, 12-14.
[115] It is worth noting, briefly, that the *Rerum Novarum* was also popular amongst Guild Socialists in England like Sidney and Beatrice Webb and G.D.H. Cole, who believed that modern capitalism destroyed a more humane artisan-centered economy. Dorrien, *Social Democracy in the Making*, 12.
[116] "Social Reconstruction: A General Review of the Problems and Survey of Remedies," 23-24.

and in general social inefficiency and decadence." As famed Catholic reformer Rev. John A. Ryan explained, the report resurrected the tradition of "Christian collectivism." Further grounding the Bishop's report, Ryan boldly suggested "that the Church is in no [way] responsible for the development of the unlovely thing that we call modern capitalism."[117] Like the other religious reports, *Social Reconstruction* was as much a spiritual and moralistic document as an economic and political one.

Certainly, NCWC's clear opposition to socialism did not prevent it from evoking the ire of the business elite. Ralph M. Easley, Executive Chairman of the council of the National Civic Federation, excoriated the Catholic plan for reconstruction. Easley also served as editor of the *National Civic Federation Review* and had, since the winter of 1918, closely observed reconstruction programs. While Easley and the rest of the NCF expressed sympathy with the organized labor-- AFL president Samuel Gompers was after all the organization's sitting Vice President-- they viewed *Labour and the New Social Order* as blatantly Bolshevistic. Even the more moderate precursor to *The New Social Order*, the "Whitley Report," contained "elements of I.W.W.' ism," the NCF's board claimed.

Falling into the conservative wing of post-war reconstruction, Easley and the Civic Federation advocated for a restrained federal government that monitored tariffs, transportation routes, and interest rates but withdrew from any direct economic intervention. Any form of public ownership was completely anathema to the NCF's values. The "responsible" and "patriotic" craft unionists who led the AFL had a role to play in determining wages and otherwise rationalizing the workplace, but the industrial

[117] John A. Ryan, "the Catholic Church and the 'Unlovely Thing We Call Modern Capitalism,'" *Reconstruction* (May 1919), 145.

unions that threatened to shut down the mine, rail, steel, and textile industries were "hyphenate" Americans, "shadow huns," and Russian agitators. The intellectuals who studied the Labour Party and drafted similar plans for a cooperative commonwealth were equally disloyal.[118]

It was, therefore, no compliment to describe the Catholic plan for *Social Reconstruction* as "affected" by the "prodigious amount of propaganda that has been put out in this country and in England in the interest of the British Labour Party's program"[119] Easley flatly rejected the NCWC's call for a living wage, full employment, and comprehensive social insurance as socialistically inspired. *Social Reconstruction* was "only the expression of the opinion of the gentleman signing the document." The report, he claimed, had "no official sanction" from Church hierarchy. Concluding with a thinly veiled threat, Easley warned that the "churches of our country… all are controlled by boards of trustees, made up largely of business men." These "millions" of churchgoers who believed in "the rights of private property and the orderly development of society" would not tolerate the whims of a "radical element" in the Catholic hierarchy whose suggested program "would overthrow our current present institutions."[120]

Reverend John O'Grady, Secretary of the NCWC Committee on Reconstruction, responded to Easley with a few sharply worded retorts. Angry that Easley accused

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[118] "Europe's War Labor Experience," *National Civic Federation Review* (March 25, 1919), 1-2; T. Everett Harre, "Shadow Bolsheviki and Others," *ibid*., 5; "British Capital and Labor Unite," *National Civic Federation Review* (April 10, 1919), 1; "'Who's Who' in the 'The New School,'" *ibid.,* 4-5; Nicholas Murray Butler, "Is America Worth Saving?" *National Civic Federation Review* (May 15, 1919), 5-6; F.G.R. Gordon, "The Failure of Public Ownership," *ibid.,* 18; Chester M. Wright, "Labor Voices Its Patriotism," *Civic Federation Review* (June 30, 1919), 1.

[119] Ralph M. Easley, "Radicals Mislead Churches About Labor," *The National Civic Federation Review* (March 25, 1919), 3.

[120] Ralph M. Easley, "Radicals Mislead Churches About Labor," *The National Civic Federation Review* (March 25, 1919), 3.

Catholic bishops with being taken in by socialists, he insisted that his fellow council members had "sufficient intelligence and sufficient knowledge of social thought and conditions to protect themselves against being 'misled by radicals.'" To close, O'Grady reminded Easley the Church was not in the hands of businessmen, but in the "hands of the Pope and the bishops."[121]

Industrialists and business boosters like Ralph Easley saw British Labour Party-styled reconstruction as a real and growing threat to the established order. Even the Catholic church could not be counted on as a bulwark against radicalism. The widespread desire of religious leaders to seriously reform capitalism speaks to the militancy of the era. It escaped hardly anyone's notice that wage earners were bearing the brunt of post-war economic contraction. Both Protestant and Catholic social gospelers believed that working-class Americans should not be forced to make sacrifices for the sake of corporate profits. High wages and reasonably steady work had been one of the very few positive outcomes of American participation in a costly and largely senseless war. There was little reason, they thought, to turn back the clock, increase human suffering, and possibly foment violent revolution.

"Bubbling Over With Life:" Organized Labor and Reconstruction

In December 1918, the New York Central Federated Trade Union held a joint conference on reconstruction. First founded at the turn of the century, the CFU operated as a central body for Manhattan trade unions. Given Manhattan's high union density, it was among the most powerful local federations in the country. In 1915, CFU members

[121] "Letter from Rev. John O'Grady to Mr. Ralph Easley, April 9, 1919," *American Catholic History Classroom*, accessed April 8, 2019, https://cuomeka.wrlc.org/items/show/172.

elected a slate of radical leaders like Edward I. Hannah, general secretary of the International Union of Pavers, Thomas J. Curtis, leader of the Tunnel and Subway Constructors, Edward C. Rybicki, head of Typographical Union Local 6, William Kohn of the Upholsterers' Union, and Ernest Bohm, a thirty-year veteran of the Bookkeepers, Stenographers and Accountants' Union. Abraham Lefkowitz, a ranking member of the newly emergent American Federation of Teachers and Stationary Firemen president Timothy Healy were prominent in the CFU as well. A growing fear that the United States would intervene in the Great War had influenced New York trade unionists to elect Hannah and the other leaders, all of whom initially opposed American involvement. Wartime inflation had also likely hit New York City harder and earlier than most of the nation. A hub for transportation and light industry, job seekers heading into the area put pressure on an already expensive city with limited housing stock.[122]

With this sea change in leadership, the CFU developed a reputation for labor militancy. After long hours, low pay, and a series of workplace accidents prodded New York City streetcar operators to walk off their jobs in the summer of 1916, the CFU secured the votes for a city-wide general strike in support. The threat of nearly 800,000 workers on picket lines in the nation's largest city bedeviled industry leaders nationwide. Business owners and local politicians worked feverishly to break the CFU's resolve and ultimately succeeding in getting many of New York's building trade unions to withdraw

[122] "American Metropolis Deluged With Incoming Yellow Metal," *Atlanta Constitution* (October 24, 1915), 8; "Economic Aspects of the Great European War," *Wall Street Journal* (March 15, 1915), 7; J. Charles Laue, "Scotched by Old Guard Among American Federation of Labor Leaders, Central Federated Union Falls, Victim in Its Battle on Behalf of Progress," *New York Call* (September 6, 1920), 16; "Edward Hannah, Active in Labor Movement, 73," *New York Herald Tribune* (December 30, 1944), 8; Melvyn Dubofsky, "Organized Labor in New York City and the First World War, 1914-1918" *New York History* 42 No. 4 (October 1961), 380-400.

their support. Though the general strike failed to materialize, the CFU had captured the imaginations of thousands of workers during the war years.[123]

Despite having been elected largely because of their opposition to American intervention in World War I, the sinking of the Lusitania and German calls for unrestricted submarine warfare convinced CFU leaders to back preparedness and ultimately support Wilson's declaration of war. At no point in the roughly year-and-a-half of American involvement, however, did the CFU accept Wilson's plea for labor peace or Samuel Gompers's request for a no-strike pledge. When New York unions wished to strike, the CFU arranged for boycotts and sympathy walk-outs in support. When union Internationals demanded their locals accept arbitration for less than they asked for, the CFU encouraged them to hold the course. The Central Federated Union led numerous demonstrations against "unfair" subway fares and "profiteering" grocery stores. Shortly after the war, it instructed its members "not to pay rent they considered exorbitant" and lobbied politicians for price controls.[124]

The CFU's 1918 conference for reconstruction drew in representatives of the Brooklyn Central Labor Union and the Women's Trade Union League. The three like-minded organizations agreed upon a bold new venture: building their own political party. The Wilson administration, with its continued arrests of accused subversives without due

[123] "Seeks $1,000,000 to Aid Strikers," *New York Tribune* (June 11, 1916), 16; "Gompers' Rule Shaken," *Baltimore Sun* (September 30, 1916), 2; "To Strike in Sympathy," *Baltimore Sun* (September 11, 1916), 1; "New York Federation Indorses Trade Strike," *New York Tribune* (September 16, 1916), 1; "Scotched by Old Guard Among American Federation of Labor Leaders, Central Federated Union Falls, Victim in Its Battle on Behalf of Progress," *New York Call* (September 6, 1920), 16.

[124] Melvyn Dubofsky, "Organized Labor in New York City and the First World War, 1914-1918" *New York History* 42 No. 4 (October 1961), 380-400; "Wants No Higher Fares," *New York Times* (August 10, 1918), 14; "Demand Higher City Wages," *New York Times* (February 2, 1917), 17; "C.F.U. Against Gary Plan," *New York Times* (October 27, 1917), 24; "Seek Political Aid to Cut Food Prices," *New York Times* (December 22, 1917), 7; "All City's Unions Threaten Strike on Rent Gougers," *New York Times* (March 7, 1920), 1.

process, its reluctance to defend trade unions after the war, and its overall lack of attention to reconstruction, could no longer represent their interests. The Republicans offered no reasonable alternative. "Labor is the best and most competent judge of the wants and needs of the workers," the joint committee concluded. "Labor will represent itself in the legislative halls of the nation." Thomas J. Curtis of the Subway Constructors concurred: "never before has it been so necessary as today for labor to band together in political life. Those in power are determined to crush labor at every opportunity."[125] While the delegates saved drafting a full reconstruction plan until the proposed party's founding convention after the new year, they promised to defend the interests of those who worked with "hand and brain." The quote was a clear and deliberate nod to the British Labour Party.

Reverend Richard Roberts, a Welsh born Presbyterian minister, founder of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and pastor of the Brooklyn based Church of the Pilgrims, saw the BLP's specter hovering plainly over the CFU's meeting in early January 1919.[126] For Richards, there was "no question" that the Central Federation Union had "frankly borrowed" from the Labour Party's reconstruction materials. Labour and the New Social Order had a "wide American circulation," the reverend noted, and had been rightfully "hailed as a constructive statesmanlike presentation not only of the demands of labor but of the necessary development of the democratic ideal." The founding members of the New York Labor Party, as it came to be known, did enshrine a reconstruction platform

[125] "Shall Labor Have a Party?" *New York Tribune* (January 14, 1919), 10; "Labor to Enter Politics," *New York Times* (December 21, 1918), 7; "Hand and Brain Party Formed for N.Y. City," *New York Tribune* (December 21, 1918), 16; "City Unionists Plan Parleys on Labor Party," *New York Call* (December 21, 1918), 8.
[126] "Shall Labor Have a Party?" *New York Tribune* (January 14, 1919), 10; "Dr. Richard Roberts," *New York Times* (April 12, 1945), 23.

similar to its British counterpart. They called for universal employment (managed through public works in times of recession), a minimum wage adequate enough to meet the cost of living, "democratic control of industry and commerce," an eight-hour day and a 44-hour week, free education through college, comprehensive social insurance, government ownership of utilities and transport, and perhaps most daring a "100 per cent tax on all incomes above $100,000." Internationally, the CFU demanded the US extend diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union and Republic of Ireland, a League of Nations open to all, and a general reaffirmation of "peace without victory." Of course, some demands met American problems specifically– freedom for leftwing political prisoners, a strong child labor amendment, and an end to prohibition (ratified as of January 16, 1919).[127]

The CFU's conference drew its fair share of admirers. Reverend Roberts described it as "the liveliest thing" he had seen in America. "It was seething and bubbling over with life; it was panting and heaving with eagerness," he wrote. "I confess that I have never seen anything quite like it for sheer intensity of purpose." He left particularly impressed with New York Women's' Trade Union League president Rose Schneiderman, whom he described as speaking with a "very clear, constructive mind with a good deal of genuine fire."[128] As detailed later, the WTUL became a leader in post-war reconstruction thought.

[127] "Greater New York Labor Party Formed," *New Majority* (January 18, 1919), 11; "Labor Here Adopts Wilson Peace Aims," *New York Times* (January 13, 1919), 6; Eva Wechsler, "Jobs for Everybody," *Life and Labor* (February 1919), 33; Richard Roberts, "New Labor Party, America's Way Out from Bolshevism Says Dr. Richard Roberts," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (January 19, 1919), 2.
[128] Richard Roberts, "New Labor Party, America's Way Out from Bolshevism Says Dr. Richard Roberts," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (January 19, 1919), 2

Representatives of the United Hebrew Trades (UHT)– a federation loosely combining the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and the Furriers' Union– also commended the meeting and reconstruction platform. Unlike the CFU, the UHT never openly supported the American war effort. More conservative and non-Jewish members of the Central Federated Union more than once accused Hebrew Trades of disloyalty and, in the words of one UHT leader, planned the "annihilation" of their organization. Overcoming this distrust, however, needle trade representatives not only attended the New York Labor Party conference but reported favorably on it. "The realities of life have removed all doubt and questions" the CFU might have had over a radical path forward, A. Rosebury, a contributor to the Garment Workers' weekly magazine *Justice* wrote.[129] Rosebury praised the "whole spirit of the convention, the radical platform and program adopted unanimously… the revolutionary tone prevailing from beginning to end, and the satisfaction in the ranks with the result of the two days' labor." No new party based on the BLP could succeed in America unless it embraced "within its fold all existing labor and similar organizations" and united them in a shared battle against "the forces of reaction," Rosebury concluded. The CFU made a good start. Over the next several years, the needle trades would pull away from their base in the Socialist Party and move toward a less-defined independent political action. From

[129] Given that hundreds of thousands of Eastern European Jews worked in the needle trades, and that nearly all these workers had fled persecution in the Russian Empire (or had relatives who did), the UHT was understandably reluctant to join a war that propped up the Czarist regime. The UHT opposed conscription and threw its support behind Socialist Party candidates that promised an immediate negotiated peace. A. Rosebury, "Impressions of the Labor Party Convention," *Justice* (January 18, 1919), 7; Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 176-177, 216-228; Melvyn Dubofsky, "Organized Labor in New York City and the First World War, 1914-1918," *New York History* 42 No. 4 (October 1961), 380-400.

early 1919 through the 1960s, the garment trades would support a labor party in New York City.[130]

During the 1920s, radical unions that had backed Socialist Party of America candidates began to seriously question their relationship to the avowedly Marxist organization. Between the turn of the century and World War I, the SPA developed a small but vocal electoral presence. It reliably controlled Milwaukee's city hall, counted on a handful of New York State assemblymen, and had pockets of support amongst poor farmers in plains states like Oklahoma. Victor Berger represented northern Milwaukee in Congress and Meyer London the Lower East Side. But the war reversed these fortunes. The government's crackdown on anti-war dissidents hit the party hard. Several newspapers lost mailing privileges. Eugene V. Debs, its most identifiable member, landed in federal prison. Victor Berger lost his seat in Congress. The success of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia energized the revolutionary leftwing to split the already fractured party.[131]

The federal government's wartime protections of trade unions demonstrated concretely the benefits of having labor-friendly politicians in office. And as reconstruction plans outlining comprehensive social democracy filtered across the Atlantic, radical trade unionists realized they would need more than a score of elected socialists split amongst several state legislatures to enact meaningful change. If standing

[130] A. Rosebury, "Impressions of the Labor Party Convention," *Justice* (January 18, 1919), 7; A. Rosebury, "Prospects of an American Labor Party," *ibid*., 7; Daniel Soyer, *Left in the Center: The Liberal Party of New York and the Rise and Fall of American Social Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021), 1-35.

[131] Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 3-246; James Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969); David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1955), 1-150; Soyer, *Left in the Center*, 10-24; Michels, *A Fire in their Hearts*, 172-178.

behind a less doctrinaire labor party could bring in working-class voters skeptical of outright socialism, such a venture was certainly worth the effort.

Socialist Party leaders were slow to respond to reconstruction. Many, like longtime party editor James Oneal, Rand School of Social Science director Algernon Lee, and Municipal Judge Jacob Panken argued (with some merit) that left-leaning reconstruction was nothing more than a watered-down socialism. Those interested in industrial democracy would eventually find that no reform could make capitalism humane. One writer for the socialist *New York Call* resented that liberals seemingly praised those who demanded "a reconstruction" that would "preserve the present economic system with its exploitation, its poverty for the workers and senseless luxury for the idle owning class" as 'patriots'" while denouncing those who sought to build a system "aimed to put the workers in control of the industries upon which they depend for a living" as "Bolshevists." Reconstruction itself was something of a distraction. The term meant one thing for the workers, "to the capitalists another, to the politicians and statesmen another, and so on." Only "voting a workingman's ticket" for the SPA would solve the conundrum. The party had "built up an organization in every Assembly district" in the city, former (and future) state legislator Louis Waldman proclaimed at the New York Labor Party's founding meeting. "We cannot expect those who have been in the Socialist movement to leave the party they have worked with for ten or twelve years." Only a little over a year prior, attorney and SPA leader Morris Hillquit won more than

twenty percent of the vote for Mayor of New York. The party had established infrastructure.[132]

Not all party members stood aloof from reconstruction. The SPA had fought for twenty years to win the hearts of organized labor, but had rarely succeeded in doing so. But between 1917 and 1919, thousands of workers in New York and, as will be shown, cities across America responded favorably toward independent political action, public ownership, and limited forms of wealth distribution. Even if it was not strictly socialist, some party members believed they had a duty to encourage this trend. Eva Wechsler, who covered the CFU's convention for the Women's' Trade Union League, noted that the new Labor Party "left the door open for joint action with the Socialist Party." As a socialist, Wechsler believed that only by upending the economic "system which depends on a reserve of unemployed" could the working people found justice. But she found the CFU's non-doctrinaire radicalism an inspiring step in the right direction. The "mere fact that labor has definitely broken with the Democratic and Republican Parties and that the worker is to become habituated to independent political action seems to indicate the development of class consciousness in the hitherto conservative history of American trade unions," she determined.[133]

Harry W. Laidler, perhaps more than any other socialist, presented an openness to non-Marxist reconstruction. Laider, in his early-thirties at the time, was executive director of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS)-- an organization purposed with

[132] Eva Wechsler, "Vote as You Strike," *Life and Labor* (February 1919), 33; "Reconstruction," *New York Call* (June 28, 1920), editorial; "After-War Plan Considered at Party Meeting," *New York Call (*October 5, 1918), 5.
[133] Eva Wechsler, "Vote as You Strike," *Life and Labor* (February 1919), 33; Eva Wechsler, "Jobs for Everybody," *Life and Labor* (January 1919), 7-9.

connecting college students and professors with the SPA and its methods. Acknowledging that "war collectivism" fell "far short of the Socialist ideal," he nonetheless believed it was the party's duty to stoke the embers of industrial democracy. "Those who have the vision of a complete industrial democracy should study carefully every step toward collectivism and analyze the advantages and disadvantages of such steps from the standpoint of social efficiency." The ISS would help them along this path. The Society held its own conference on reconstruction in September 1918. Some of the speakers included liberal reconstruction economist Ordway Tead, National Consumers' League president Florence Kelley, and Christian Socialist Percy Dearmer.[134] A few years later, Laidler would change the name of his organization to the League for Industrial Democracy.

American trade unions naturally had differing responses to reconstruction. The labor conservatives who headed the American Federation of Labor– men like the AFL's longtime president Samuel Gompers, Daniel Tobin of the Teamsters, John P. Frey of the Molders and Foundry Workers, and Matthew Woll of the Photo Engravers– had a very skeptical view of radical post-war reform. In December 1918, shortly before departing on a trip to represent American labor at the Paris Peace Conference, Gompers gave his own speech on reconstruction. The AFL had voted at its national convention two months prior to form its own reconstruction committee. Gompers gave Frey and Woll, two of his most loyal lieutenants, the authority to draft the Federation's post-war program. As the committee hoped to publish its report just after the New Year, when Gompers would

[134] Harry W. Laidler, "War Time Control of Industry," *Intercollegiate Socialist* (October-November, 1918), 11; "Reconstruction After the War: A Summary of the Autumn Conference, I.S.S." *Intercollegiate Socialist* (October-November, 1918), 17-28; "I.S.S. to Confer Sept. 10 to 16 in Water Gap," *New York Call* (September 1, 1918), 7; Gary Dorrien, *Social Democracy in the Making*, 112.

likely still be abroad, this would be the aging president's only chance to make his feelings known.

Following the scores of reconstruction reports that preceded and followed his speech, Gompers worried over the "downward trend in the conditions of labor and the standards of life." But unlike many other reconstruction plans left of center, Gompers cautioned *against* increased government intervention in the economy. Beyond asking the federal government to control the unemployment rate by slowing demobilization, the AFL leader asked for little at all. The government could preserve fair play by limiting the use of injunction to break strikes and by offering *voluntary* mediation between workers and employers, but it should not keep its hand permanently in the private market. Addressing calls from many trade unionists (including those in the CFU) for some kind of public health initiative, he declared it was "a grave danger to place into the hands of the government the powers which would necessarily result from governmental compulsory health insurance." He felt similarly about unemployment insurance: leaving bureaucrats to "decide as to whether the cause of unemployment is justifiable" was no victory. He remained steadfastly against the nationalization of any existing industry.[135]

His most stern warning was to expressly avoid independent political action– forming a labor party in particular. The AFL under Gompers certainly participated in politics. The Federation had lobbyists on Capitol Hill, before Election Day it typically published a candidate's record on labor reform, and it encouraged its members to vote their conscience and donate to the Federation's non-partisan campaign fund. Gompers

[135] "American Labor Mission Returns," *The National Civic Federation Review* (April 25, 1919), 1-2, 10-11; F.G.R. Gordon, "The Failure of Public Ownership," (May 15, 1919), 18; Chester M. Wright, "Labor Voices Its Patriotism," *Civic Federation Review* (June 30, 1919), 1; Samuel Gompers, "Political Labor Party-- Reconstruction-- Social Insurance," *American Federationist* (January, 1919), 38-41.

himself had a close relationship with the Democratic Party.[136] But labor running its own candidates, primarying incumbents, and establishing permanent political action committees had always been a step too far for the AFL executive council.

In his speech, Gompers listed his reasons for avoiding these activities. With any political vehicle, "Every sail is trimmed to the getting of votes," Gompers argued. "The question of the conditions of Labor, the question of the standards of Labor, the question of the struggles and sacrifices of Labor, to bring light into the lives of the work of the toilers-- all that is subordinated to the one consideration of votes for the party." Even if labor formed its own party, inevitably a political issue would arise that could divide trade unionists from their elected officials. In this scenario, he estimated, a labor party would split "allegiance of the men and women of labor between two bodies."[137] So long as trade unions represented their members on the shop floor, all was well. Tying their fortunes too closely to a political movement could weaken labor's foundations.

Gompers was admittedly a product of the Gilded Age. He had lived to see the Knights of Labor and its broad vision for a cooperative future crushed by federal repression. Politically-motivated anarchists had set the movement for the eight-hour day back decades by throwing bombs in Haymarket Square. When Eugene V. Debs tried to revive the tradition of bold and inclusive unionism by leading the American Railroad Union in Pullman, he invited a sweeping injunction and the bayonets of the National Guard. The federal crackdown on the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World during the war was yet another chapter in his sordid tale. Only the AFL, with its craft unionism,

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[136] For a detailed overview of the AFL's early political activity, see Julie Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Greene, "Not so Simple," *Labor* 10 no. 4 (2013), 105-110.
[137] Samuel Gompers, "Political Labor Party-- Reconstruction-- Social Insurance," *American Federationist* (January 1919), 38.

close relationship to business groups like the National Civic Federation, and its core belief in voluntary membership and contractual arbitration had survived and grown in strength. By not tying itself too closely to any political movement, he noted, the Federation had also won bipartisan support for the labor provisions of the Clayton Anti-trust law, which passed Congress in 1914 and provided some, albeit weak protections from injunctions, and the 1915 Seaman's Act, which equipped sailors with legal and workplace protections.[138]

Careful and constructive reform moved labor forward, radicalism moved it back. "My aspirations know no limit for my fellow men," Gompers insisted in a 1919 speech. "But I am vain enough to believe that I have some common sense and understanding of the operations of the human mind. I am not going to give up voluntarily the labor movement of today to look for the chimerical tomorrow." He pointed to Bolsheviks fighting a civil war in Russia. By seizing government power and the levers of the economy they had "lost not only the meat from the bone but the bone itself, and have not even the shadow," Gompers concluded. "They went out for the maximum for the masses, for land, bread and peace, and they haven't their land, bread or peace."[139] The Civic Federation praised him for the remarks.

The AFL's final program for reconstruction, released in February 1919 predictably followed Gompers's tract on unionism. The committee called on the government to make it a "criminal offense for any employer to interfere with or hamper

[138] For an overview on federal and judicial repression shaping Gompers's outlook, see William E. Forbath, *Law and the Shaping of the American Labor Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 37-127; Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics*, 212-213, 246-248.
[139] "Two Notable Utterances from Two Statesmen," *The National Civic Federation Review* (June 5, 1919), 10.

the exercise" of "legitimate activities of trade unions" and, like the CFU, demanded restored free speech and public education through university. Along these lines, Frey and Woll demanded a "People's Final Voice in Legislation," which translated to a legislative override of the Supreme Court-- a topic that I will cover in greater detail later. The members also supported the growth of public energy companies, particularly hydroelectric facilities. This, however, was the extent of federal economic intervention the committee called for. Frey and Woll took a dim view of social insurance and called public works projects to reduce unemployment an "expedient at best." Instead of calling for full-employment legislation, the committee believed that collective bargaining would naturally raise wages, reduce "underconsumption," and create new jobs out of sheer consumer demand. Notably, the committee stayed silent on democratic management of industry and the nationalization of railroads and mines– policies favored by hundreds of thousands of unionized miners and rail workers.[140]

The committee on reconstruction was certainly not a reactionary body, though it was undeniably one that remained skeptical of government interference in industry's affairs. As the committee unhesitatingly wrote, "Democracy can function best with the least interference by the state compatible with due protection to the rights of all citizens." Though the report did not cover political action, Woll commented a few weeks later supporting his president's comments. The "solidarity of the labor movement must not be endangered by any attempt to identify it with a partisan political movement," Woll

[140] "American Federation of Labor Reconstruction Program," *American Federationist* (February 1919), 130-134.

concluded. "The right of the humblest man to vote however he may please… must be fully safeguarded."[141]

The AFL leadership's position on reconstruction reflected its longstanding faith in craft unionism and its belief that Wilsonian liberalism would continue into the postwar era. As 1919 progressed, however, Gompers, Woll, and Frey quickly learned just how anti-labor general American sentiment had become. During the war years, Gompers fought a difficult battle to both advance trade unionism in a tight labor market that very much benefitted wage earners and keep shopfloor disruption to a minimum. After November 1918, the battle lines changed. Industrialists fought tooth and nail to claw back whatever power they could and hundreds of thousands of workers struck to resist these encroachments. As he had done throughout his near fifty years in the labor movement, Gompers vigorously defended unions and the right to strike. He never, however, changed his position on reconstruction and independent political action. Gompers considered both a threat to the movement until the day he died.

"A Little More Woman:" Reconstruction and the Women's Trade Union League

As hard as Gompers tried to tamper trade union clamor for British-styled reconstruction, pressure continued to bubble up from below. Energized by wartime labor militancy and unwilling to return to the status quo, wage earners across the country called for expansive industrial democracy and perhaps a new political realignment to protect it.

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[141] The proposal on government ownership reads: "Whatever final disposition shall be made of the railways of the country in ownership, management or regulation, we insist upon the right of the works to organize…" This hesitancy pales in comparison to unions like the Railroad Brotherhoods or the Machinists who would adopt the "Plumb Plan" to continue government management of the railroads. ("American Federation of Labor Reconstruction Program," *American Federationist* (February 1919), 130-134; Matthew Woll, "Stand By Your Principles," *American Federationist* (February 1919), 149-151; Paul Michel Taillon, *Good, Reliable White Men*, 204-205.

Working women were amongst the foremost proponents of a thorough-going reconstruction and a new labor party.

The number of women in the workplace steadily increased during the 1910s and crested during the war.[142] With its ranks swelled, the National Women's Trade Union League moved into greater prominence. Established in 1903, the WTUL sought to organize women workers, primarily in industrialized cities like New York and Chicago, and lobby for protective legislation on their behalf. The organization brought suffragists, social workers, and labor organizers together in an effective alliance. The League influenced the passage of numerous state and local laws limiting women's hours, lobbied for voting rights, and enforced safety standards. Its core belief in the combined power of trade unionism and government-led reform primed the WTUL for an interest in reconstruction.[143]

Also helping push the League toward reconstruction was its long and established ties with European labor. League founders had explicitly modeled their organization after the British Women's Trade Union League and had long shared a vision of an equitable workplace.[144] The war years had done much to advance the position of working-class women in Britain. After 1918, when British women over thirty won the right to vote, the British Labour Party changed its constitution to allow women to formally join and run under the party banner. To harness this new energy, the BLP organized several "women's

[142] McCartin *Labor's Great War*, 48, 60; Painter, *Armageddon*, 242-246.
[143] Dorothy Sue Cobble, *For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 15-50; Suellen Hoy, "Sidelined: The Chicago Women's Trade Union League in the Interwar Years," *Labor* 15 No. 4 (December 2018), 13-33; Diane Kirkby, "'The Wage Earning Woman and the State," *Labor History* 28 no. 1 (January 1987), 54-74.
[144] Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 35; Dorothy Sue Cobble, "A Higher 'Standard of Life' For the World: US Labor Women's Reform Internationalism and the Legacies of 1919," *Journal of American History* (March 2014), 1054-1058.

sections," devoted more resources to its publication *Labour Woman*, and in 1918 appointed the Fabian suffragette Marion Phillips as the Party's first dedicated women's organizer.[145] As Phillips herself stated, "Men and women together must find the methods by which our Society can be reconstructed… but there are many problems which men cannot solve alone, because their experience has lain outside them, and the Labour Party has always realised the need of women's help and sought to gain it."[146]

Male-dominated British trade unions of course continued to discriminate against women, but the Labour Party at least promised to protect dignity on the job regardless of sex, to extend the full scope of unemployment insurance to "badly paid" women workers, extend free health care and education to all, and to go after the "profiteers" that had made running a household increasingly expensive. The BLP's "Resolutions on Reconstruction" promised the "complete emancipation of women." It further made the fight for "work or maintenance at fair rates" for women displaced by demobilized soldiers, "urged" trade unions to knock down barriers to access, enshrine equal pay for equal work, and repeal a provision in the tax code preventing married women from filing separately from their husbands.[147] The platform clearly showed the influence of party women.

The WTUL was quick to study British reports regarding the post-war period. As early as January 1918, the League reported that its British counterpart was "looking

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[145] June Hannam, "'The Victory of Ideals Must Be Organized': Labour Party Women Organizers in the Inter-War Years," *Management and Organizational History* 5 No. 3-4 (2010), 331-348.
[146] Marion Phillips (ed.), *Women and the Labour Party* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1918), 11.
[147] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gates*, 40-41; Mari Takayanagi, "'One of the Most Revolutionary Proposals that has Ever Been Put Before the House:' the Passage of the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act of 1918;" Krisztina Robert, "The Unsung Heroines of Radical Wartime Activism: Gender, Militarism and Collective Action in the British Women's Corps;" Deborah Thom, "Living through War, Waging Peace: Comparing Mary Macarthur and Sylvia Pankhurst," in *Labour, British Radicalism and the First World War* eds. Lucy Bland and Richard Carr, 56-68, 108-122, 145-160; "Resolutions on Reconstruction" found in Kellogg and Gleason, *British Labor and the War*, 401-402.

forward with much interest to the reconstruction period," when the real work of societal change could begin. Another contributor to *Life and Labor* congratulated women in Great Britain for "sharing in the great movement toward industrial democracy." She called each statement "a new milestone along the road of progress."[148] The influence ran deep.

When two leading members of the WTUL, Agnes Nestor, vice president of the International Glove Workers, and Melinda Scott, president of the Straw Hat Trimmers' Union, visited England as part of Gompers's labor delegation, they often broke from the group to attend Labour Party meetings. Indeed, the Labour Party actively reached out to the women of the AFL delegation. "Our British brothers called upon the women of our mission to give the first greeting to labor at the reception and tea arranged by the joint committee of the Parliamentary committee and the Labor Party, and later, at the executive committee of the British Labor Party," Nestor recalled. She further noted that women were present at every BLP event-- the Trade Union Congress even placed Margaret Bondfield, an organizing secretary for the National Federation of Women Workers, on a Parliamentary committee, making her the first woman to ever serve in that capacity.[149] Bondfield rose up the ranks of the BLP as secretary of the Shop Assistants' Union and an active campaigner for the Independent Labour Party.[150]

Bondfield, in turn, toured the United States as a guest of the WTUL during the Spring and Summer of 1919. Making the trip alongside her was fellow Labourite Mary MacArthur, who first gained political experience by serving on the wartime Central Committee for Women's Employment. And though she did not win, MacArthur ran for

[148] Margaret A. Hobbs, "England's Women Workers and the War," *Life and Labor* (May, 1918), 88; "British League Looks Forward to Reconstruction Period," *Life and Labor* (January 1918), 19-20.
[149] Agnes Nestor, "Meeting British and French Labor," *Life and Labor* (September 1918), 185-186.
[150] "Margaret Bondfield, Daughter of the People," *Life and Labor* (May 1919), 111-112.

the House of Commons in 1918. Bondfield and MacArthur made similar speeches: both praised the extension of women's suffrage in Britain, though derided that it was restricted to those thirty and older, extolled the necessity of equal pay, and credited these successes to labor having a political arm.[151]

When Bondfield addressed a rally at Chicago's Street Car Men's Hall in early July, she insisted that in order for labor to push a fair reconstruction, it needed to compromise. Bondfield was a self-described socialist who nevertheless advocated for those on the left to abandon dogmatism and doctrinal disputes. Bondfield foresaw difficulty in establishing enough unity for an American labor party-- something she attributed to a "general attitude of individualism." Still she called upon radicals in the United States to follow their British counterparts and "take a back seat" in their still fragile coalitions. She further reminded that factionalism was something "which the capitalists who watch this movement look upon with great glee." She addressed the matter more bluntly in *Life and Labor*: "We will have to sink all pettinesses, to take big views, to be tolerant. We must learn to live better than we have ever lived before, and, above all, learn to work with the people we don't like."[152] Bondfield's warning came out of experiences in the Independent Labour Party.

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[151] For more on Bondfield's U.S. visit, see Margaret Grace Bondfield, *A Life's Work* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1948), 162.

[152] The Independent Labour Party was an influential socialist minority within the larger Labour Party. While several ILP leaders, including Ramsay MacDonald and Bob Smillie, held top positions in the BLP, they achieved power not by holding socialism as a litmus test, but rather by being dedicated labor leaders and parliamentarians. As historian Matthew Worley writes, "Labour's less defined ideological basis — born more from a pragmatism and desire for worker representation than from any specific theory, socialist or otherwise—adapted itself to the circumstances of the time." "Miss Bondfield to Women of Chicago," *New Majority* (July 19, 1919), 12; Margaret Bondfield, "Pressing on Toward Utopia," *Life and Labor* (August 1919), 187; Worley, *Labour Inside the Gates*, 7.

Mary MacArthur took a slightly different approach. Closer to the moderate wing of the BLP, MacArthur never fully endorsed socialism. This did not mean she was less interested in reconstruction. "The workers have been promised a new world and they will have that new world. More than that, they are determined to share in industrial control," she told her audience from the pulpit of the Church of the Ascension in Greenwich Village.[153] Instead of state socialism, she theorized, workers would control the shop floor, the people would control the House of Commons through the Labour Party, and the two groups would meet "in joint conference to take final action on all national measures." Not taking any cues from prescribed social scientific measures, MacArthur believed the BLP was "founded upon the instinct of mother love."[154] The love a mother has for her children, she argued, was the same motivation that guided the Labour Party to improve the lives of British citizens.

WTUL leaders saw themselves as walking a similar path as their British counterparts. "A lesser revolution is going on inside the trade union movement," Margaret Dreier Robins and Sarah Cory Rippey, editors of the League's publication, *Life and Labor*, wrote. "Although it occasionally interferes with the work [of organizing], the League feels that this impatience with the old order is wholly good and that the new ideas which are being discussed have in them the germ of something much more effective in the way of trade union organization."[155] These "new ideas" closely corresponded with

[153] "Labor Unrest in England," *New York Times* (May 5, 1919), 12.
[154] "Tells of Labor Party," *New York Times* (May 3, 1919), 7; "Woman's New Ideas in the Labor Movement," *New York Times* (May 11, 1919), 26.
[155] This sentiment reflected broadly in the League's publications; the editors, for instance, devoted the majority of their March issue to an article by William Z. Foster, a syndicalist-turned-organizer for the Chicago Federation of Labor, had recently completed a successful campaign to unionize Chicago meatpacking workers. Defaming the AFL leadership in all but name, Foster called upon the "movement" to abandon its "nineteenth century tactics" and "suicidal jurisdictional quarrels" in order to reach more

those circulating around the British Labour Party– an organization that continued to inspire WTUL leaders.

League organizers, having long fought for recognition in the trade union movement and a voice in politics, hoped American reconstruction would similarly better their positions. Melinda Scott's address to the AFL's convention during the summer of 1918 underpinned the WTUL's wartime fighting spirit. Scott made familiar arguments that the WTUL had long employed to justify protective legislation like shorter hours and a minimum wage. "Women are the potential mothers of the future race and we have got to take care of the future generation," she told the crowd. It would also be inappropriate for women to enter "trades that will injure the future generation."[156] But Scott warned the predominantly male organization against seeing women as only temporarily in the workforce, undeserving of high wages, or not worth organizing. "We have got to demand the same pay as men for the same work," Scott told the crowd, "and any man who stands in the way of women joining their trade unions, it seems to me, is taking the nose off his own face."[157] The future, Scott and her allies insisted, was one with women in the workplace and the longer trade union leaders took to realize this, the worse off they would be. The British Labour Party was nowhere near perfect in regard to securing women a place in the movement-- Agnes Nestor recalled a member of the Edinburgh Central Labor Council telling her that "the women were not ready" for leadership roles

workers. William Z. Foster, "How Life Has Been Brought into the Stockyards," *Life and Labor* (April 1918), 72.

[156] Melinda Scott, "Our Fraternal Greetings to the A.F. of L. Convention," *Life and Labor* (July 1918), 132.

[157] *Ibid*.

yet— but it seemed more open to women's participation than the American labor federation.[158]

The League published its own reconstruction report in March of that year. Members of the committee included previously mentioned leaders like Margaret Drier Robins, Agnes Nestor, and Melinda Scott, as well as famed women trade unionists Alice Henry, Fannia Cohn, and Rose Schneiderman. In addition to the usual calls for public ownership of power and natural resources, bargaining rights (inscribed here as "self-government in industry"), and the eight hour day, the WTUL's report included plans for "social insurance against sickness," "equal opportunity" for trade and technical education, and a more vague call for "the protection of motherhood." The Reconstruction Committee also took aim at trade unions and employers who engaged in wholesale replacements of women in favor of demobilized male workers. As soldiers returned home *en masse*, businesses, local politicians, and even trade unions unceremoniously cut loose women hired during the war to create openings. The WTUL often fought in vain to protect the fired workers.[159]

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[158] Agnes Nestor, "Meeting British and French Labor," *Life and Labor* (September 1918), 186.

[159] The League's most public battle on behalf of women war workers took place in Cleveland. The Cleveland Street Railway Company, in December 1918, fired 150 women conductors at the behest of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees. These women, the WTUL argued, "would have been members of the union but for the fact that the men refused to admit them." Ethel M. Smith of the League's national office in D.C. and the renowned labor attorney and former War Labor Board Chief, Frank Walsh, represented the dismissed workers in front of a federal arbitration board. The board sided with the dismissed conductors, but the recalcitrant owners of the company, backed by Cleveland's mayor, refused to accept the order. It is worth noting that the WTUL did not have unanimous support in its campaign for the conductors; Gertrude Barnum, a former member of the League who took a position with the Department of Labor, disputed the WTUL's view of the "conductorettes." Barnum saw the women on the Cleveland line as essentially strike breakers who took work from men whether or not they went to the front. Criticizing the "sentimental women friends of the 'poor working girl,'" Barnum insisted that "women should be encouraged to try and enter [unionized industrial jobs] by the 'front door,' that is, by applying for membership in the union at once and applying for the job through the union." Barnum's attitudes marked in no uncertain terms the challenges faced by women hoping for a strong voice in industrial reconstruction. The League's belief that reconstruction and demobilization should not come at the expense of women in industry likely displeased many labor leaders. Indeed, the conductors were initially dismissed only after the union struck the rail lines to get rid of them.

Finding no avenue to advance their form of reconstruction with either major party, WTUL leaders believed it was "time for labor to enter politics and make its influence felt." "Whether [labor] shall do this by organizing an independent political party which shall at elections nominate candidates, is not a question to be decided without deliberation and careful consideration," *Life and Labor's* editors wrote. "But it must take as active a part in each campaign as if it had its own candidates."[160] If the League had previous doubts regarding an independent labor party, they eroded in 1919. Members like Rose Schneiderman, Maud Swartz, and Melinda Scott became key architects of the 1920 Farmer-Labor Party (FLP).

The Chicago Federation of Labor, which became the beating heart of the FLP, was eager to bring the League and the women in industry it represented into an electoral coalition. The CFL's position was much the same as the League's: jobs for returning soldiers should not come with a loss of household income for families who likely need it. As one member, Ann Forsythe, put it, "Now the war is over, and everyone is talking of a new democracy and a chance for all peoples to be free. And yet the women whose praises were on every tongue yesterday are now called to go home. And home is the thin pay envelope and the pauper's job." Her solution was a living wage "regardless to sex or

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"Program of the Committee on Social and Industrial Reconstruction of the National Women's Trade Union League of America," *Life and Labor* (March 1919), 51-53; "Women's Victory in Vain," *New York Times* (March 19, 1919), 16; "Rules for Conductorettes," *Baltimore Sun* (March 1919), 2; "League Member Protests Action of Reconstruction Committee," *Life and Labor* (March 1919), 66; "Women Street Car Conductors to Be Reinstated," *Life and Labor* (April 1919), 98; Gertrude Barnum, "Cleveland 'Conductorettes' and the Labor Unions," *Reconstruction* (March 1919), 81; "To Drop Women Conductors," *Baltimore Sun* (December 4, 1918), 3. For a detailed analysis on women in the workforce during World War I and an overview of the Cleveland conductor strike, see Maurine Weiner Greenwald, *Women, War, and Work: the Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 139-185.

[160] "Labor in Politics," *Life and Labor* (December 1918), 258.

skill."[161] Margery Currey, who represented both the CFL and WTUL, extended this emancipation to the drudgery of household work as well. As she wrote, a vote for the Labor Party "means that a command is made to do away with the things that make the woman's life a continuous program of activities with the broom, the dustcloth and the washtub."[162] The Labor Party's program offered a chance for greater opportunity in the workplace, a more comfortable standard of living, and time to pursue interests outside the home.

The Chicago Federation of Labor worked diligently to bring women, both in industry and at home, into its protean electoral machine. The Cook County Labor Party formed so-called "Women's Campaigns" in nineteen different wards; invited Jeanette Rankin, the first woman congressional representative. to speak and nominated two women for alderman. Ida M. Fursman, a public school principal, campaigned on school reform and teacher unionization-- calling the $775 a year Chicago teachers earned "a stipend," not a wage.[163] Also campaigning was Clara Masilotti, who had proved instrumental in organizing Italian garment workers the decade prior.[164] The inaugural convention of the Labor Party of Illinois in April 1919 further bolstered the initial hopefulness regarding the role of women in the Party. Gertrude Fitzgerald, a Chicago delegate, dismayed at the complete lack of women seated on organizational committees, gained the floor's attention and exclaimed, "I move that there be not so much *man* about all this, and a little more *woman*."[165] To her surprise, the delegates took her remarks

[161] "Enough to Go Around," *New Majority* (January 11, 1919), 4.
[162] Margaret Currey, "The Labor Party for Women," *Life and Labor* (March 1919), 64.
[163] "Women Candidates Campaign," *New Majority* (March 8, 1919), 10; "Watch Our Women," *New Majority* (March 8, 1919), 4.
[164] Margery Currey, "Clara Masilotti Labor Candidate," *New Majority* (March 8, 1919), 7.
[165] Margery Currey, "Shoulder to Shoulder in the Labor Party," *Life and Labor* (June 1919), 141.

seriously and assigned committee roles to more women. Though only nine women initially had credentials to the convention, the delegates elected four of them on the Executive Committee.

There is little doubt that a shared interest in the British Labour Party helped bring the League and the CFL together. Whether it was Margaret Bondfield's non-doctrinal socialism or MacArthur's maternalist industrial democracy, the reconstruction that came out of the British isles seemingly offered many blueprints. The war had plainly shown the precious position of women workers. In the various wartime positions they took, women were overworked, underpaid, and highly expendable. Trade unions often made inconsistent allies. In both Great Britain and the United States, organized women sought economic justice for both those on the shopfloor and those managing the home and raising children. The impulse toward reconstruction offered perhaps a once in a lifetime opportunity to make major strides in this field. Winning suffrage in both countries similarly opened new avenues to power. In the United States, many League members hoped a labor party, built on the British model, would make equally poignant appeals to working-class women.

To "Win the Reality of Democracy:" African Americans and Reconstruction

If reconstruction was born of the tumultuous war years, it is no wonder that African Americans joined in making their own plans. The War years prompted the largest internal migration in American history. Northern industrialists, faced with a massive labor shortage and no more European immigrants to fill these positions, advertised these positions to mostly Black agricultural workers. around half a million Black Americans

jumped at the opportunity to leave Jim Crow and find better paying jobs in the process.[166] Concurrently, African Americans enlisted in droves for military service. Intellectuals like W.E.B. Du Bois and William Pickens pointed toward the sacrifice of Black soldiers abroad to push for citizenship rights at home.[167] This renewed assertiveness, marked by an expectation of equality after the war for democracy, met entrenched resistance from white America. Violence, both in the form of extra-judicial lynchings and city-wide race riots, were common after the war. Indeed, 1919 became so soaked with the blood of African Americans that commentators dubbed it the "Red Summer." One of the most infamous chapters of the Red Summer took place in Chicago, when the stoning of a Black youth by a mob of white sunbathers sparked a wave of violence that tore through Chicago's poorest neighborhoods. The Chicago rioting stalled any progress organized labor had made in breaking down the color line during the war-- the full implications of this will be discussed in the next chapter.

Some six months prior to the armistice, William Pickens, Dean of the Baltimore-based Morgan College, was already making suggestions for reconstruction. In a speech he titled, "The Kind of Democracy the Negro Race Expects," Pickens called upon "the Negro to state clearly what he means by democracy and what he is fighting for."[168] Pickens's democracy was multifaceted. He demanded not only "Democracy in State," by which he meant equal franchise despite race, class, or gender, and equal access to education, but also "Democracy in Industry." "There must be a more just and fair

[166] Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 160-161.
[167] Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 288-294; Painter, *Standing at Armageddon,* 355-356; Adriane Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 1-11.
[168] William Pickens, *The Kind of Democracy the Negro Race Expects* (Baltimore: Herald Printing, 1918), 3.

distribution of wealth in a democracy," he told the audience. "There should be no 'colored' wage and no 'white wage'; no 'man's' wage no 'woman's' wage." To be sure, Pickens directed this jab not only at politicians and owners of capital, but to exclusionary American labor leaders as well. Overall, the Dean hoped for "One standard of justice, written and unwritten." Pointing once again to the global color line and need for global reckoning of racial inequality, Pickens demanded democracy and justice "as much for South Africa as for South Carolina."[169] Pickens's vision for reconstruction was not far out of line from those interested in the British Labour Party.

It would be another year before Pickens joined the NAACP as its field secretary. Though this is not to say that the Association had no thoughts on reconstruction. It did not issue an official reconstruction plan as thorough as other organizations, but the editorial staff of *the Crisis* did make Association's ideas clear. Du Bois, who managed the *Crisis*, devoted the entire February 1919 issue to reconstruction and had Mary White Ovington, the NAACP's chairman, tackle the topic. Ovington, a suffragist, social worker, and former socialist, had, alongside William English Walling, formed the NAACP roughly a decade prior. The NAACP's leadership was gradually becoming Black-led; still, in 1919, many of its officers were white reformers.[170] "Today," Ovington wrote, "the first thought of those who think at all is Reconstruction." She claimed that "every oppressed group," which included women, newly independent nations, workers, and racial minorities, now realize "while systems are fluid, before the structure of society becomes rigid again, is the opportunity to win the reality of democracy." Ovington articulated the shared desire to make the war count for something. Though Ovington

[169] *Ibid.,* 4-7.
[170] Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice*, 1-60.

acknowledged that of "all the peoples clamoring for liberty and the right to fuller self-expression" that perhaps none had "a more uphill road than the American negro."[171] She attributed this condition to a system serfdom and "antiquated feudalism" that kept Black Americans tied to menial occupations without the right to the ballot and often due process itself.

Ovington did not formulate her own plan for reconstruction, but rather borrowed the "14 Points" developed by John R. Hawkins, a banker, educator, and financial secretary for the African Methodist Episcopal Church, who addressed the District of Columbia's branch of the Association.[172] His suggestions for a Black reconstruction echoed the sustained hope that African American military service was a precondition for equal citizenship.[173] In regard to the latter point, Hawkins supported "the same military training for colored youth as for white," equal access to military promotion, and a recognition of Black participation in "every struggle for the defence of [the] flag." Speaking to the political and economic portion of his 14 Points, Hawkins demanded more money for Black education, cleaner and more accessible housing in cities, an end to the "peonage system," and a living wage irrespective of race.[174] Unsurprisingly, Hawkins's 14 Points differed from any other reconstruction plan in that it included no protection for labor unions. Given the sharp racial antagonisms between the majority of Black workers and the unions that excluded them, members of the Black elite were unlikely to look upon

[171] Mary White Ovington, "Reconstruction and the Negro," *Crisis* (February 1919), 169.
[172] "Howard University Hears Business Enterprise Plea," *Washington Post* (May 3, 1926), 5; "J.R. Hawkins, Clinton School Trustee, Dies," *Washington Post* (Nov 1, 1950), B2.
[173] David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2009), 325-382; Chad Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Adriane Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).
[174] Ovington, "Reconstruction and the Negro," *Crisis* (February 1919), 169.

this type of membership favorably.[175] Still, Ovington determined that many of these proposals were at least tangentially applicable "to all the American working class." She argued that all progressive organizations had an obligation to band together for better schools and wages, fairer housing, and more humane prisons. Making note of the lack of labor plank, however, she insisted Black workers "should accordingly fight for his right to join the union of his craft, or if that be denied him, form a union of his own." Summarizing the socialist stand on the issue, Ovington wrote, "Until the Negro recognized the solidarity of labor neither he nor the white man can permanently be assured of their industrial and manhood rights."[176]

Ovington by no means ignored the formidable obstacles prohibiting Black equality: "Disfranchisement and segregation, unfair trial in the courts or no trial at all, these are relics of slavery… that strives to keep the worker where he has formerly been, stamped with the sign of inferiority." She also repeatedly made reference to lynching--insisting that black Americans could expect no progress as long as they remained excluded from the most basic right to life. It is no wonder that then that representatives of the NAACP, unlike so many other groups, made no grand political requests for a new party or a radical new society. For the association, reconstruction meant what it had in the wake of the Civil War: equal rights and full citizenship. As Ovington explained the

[175] During the Nineteenth and early Twentieth century, some unions, like the United Mine Workers of America, welcomed black workers into locals—mostly out of necessity, and never to break down the "color line." Though many more unions excluded Black workers entirely. The interracial meat-packing and steel unions in and around Chicago proved remarkably fragile in the face of racial antagonism, and railroad unions notoriously engaged in violence and lynching to keep Black employees out of white-only jobs. Daniel Letwin, *The Challenge of interracial Unionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 1-7; Alex Lichtenstein, "Exploring the Local World of Interracialism," *Labor History* 41 No. 1 (2000), 63-66; Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 36-38; Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 28-36.
[176] Ovington, "Reconstruction and the Negro," *Crisis* (February 1919), 169.

Association's idea of progress: "It may be rescuing a woman from being convicted as a vagrant under the 'work or fight' law in Georgia; it may be securing the right to sit in the orchestra of a theatre in a northern city; but each time it is a bit gained in the great movement for the destruction of racial discrimination in a democracy."[177] The leadership of the NAACP felt that its very existence was radical enough to warrant gradualism and a slower path to victory.

The NAACP also developed connections with other liberal reconstruction organizations. Du Bois praised the work of the Social Democratic League, which had founded *Reconstruction*. James Weldon Johnson, the NAACP's future secretary, attended the conference of Organized Social Agencies which dealt with the theme of demobilization and the future of social work. Felix Adler, a philosopher, reformer, educator, and an early member of the Urban League, presided over the event. Finishing on November 30, 1918, the delegates issued a proclamation insisting "That every program for national and community reconstruction shall adequately and consciously include provision for out Negro fellow-citizens and for their cooperation therein."[178] While many organizations did follow this general framework, many others did not.

For Du Bois, reconstruction had an international component as well. Namely, the "redemption" of Africa. When Emmett Jay Scott, Secretary-Treasurer of Howard University, invited Du Bois to attend a "Reconstruction and Re-adjustment Congress" in

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[177] Mary White Ovington, "Reconstruction and the Negro," *Crisis* (February 1919), 172.
[178] "Representation in National Social Work," *Crisis* (January 1919), 121; "Education," *The Crisis* (April, 1918), 295; "Socialists Have Plan For Reconstruction," *New York Tribune* (Nov 17, 1918), 5; "After the War," *the Crisis* (January 1919), 114; Markuu, "Neoconservatism Prefigured," *Journal of American Studies* 40 No. 2 (2006), 328-330; Richard Schneirov, "The Odyssey of William English Walling: Revisionism, Social Democracy, and Evolutionary Pragmatism," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 2 No. 4 (October 2003), 414; Kenneth E. Hendrickson, Jr., "The Pro-War Socialists, the Social Democratic League and the Ill-Fated Drive for Industrial Democracy in America," *Labor History* 11 No. 3 (June 1970), 310-312..

October 1919, he suggested Africa as a topic.[179] A large topic of discussion at the meeting was Du Bois's 1915 "The African Roots of War." The sociologist argued that European competition over potential colonial riches in Africa would continuously spawn military conflict unless dealt with. The best force to untangle colonialism and stop further conflict, Du Bois supposed, was a multi-racial working-class movement. Of course, he insisted, this was easier said than done: "All over the world there leaps to articulate speech and ready action that singular assumption that if white men do not throttle colored men, then China, India, and Africa will do to Europe what Europe has done and seeks to do to them."[180] More specifically, he wrote of the white working class, "By threatening to send English capital to China and Mexico, by threatening to hire Negro laborers in America, as well as by old-age pensions and accident insurance, we gain industrial peace at home at the mightier cost of war abroad."[181] The color line created industrial peace through a tranquil white working class, but industrial peace fed the war machine.

Following the war, Du Bois and the NAACP expressed this sentiment in the language of Pan-Africanism. By no means a new idea, Pan-Africanism received renewed interest after the armistice, when non-white peoples in subjugation the world over sought to turn Wilson's call for "self determination" into a wave of anti-colonialism and racial justice. Though Pan-Africanism is most closely associated during this period with Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association and its "Black Star Line," the

[179] Letter from Howard University to W.E.B. Du Bois, October 25, 1919. *W.E.B. Du Bois Papers*. University of Massachusetts.
[180] Not long after Du Bois published his article, eugenicist think Lothrop Stoddard published *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World Supremacy*. His argument was essentially that colonized people would eventually rise up against white rule and bring about "race extinction." Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribners, 1921).
[181] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The African Roots of the War," *Atlantic Monthly* (May 1915), 711-712.

NAACP spearheaded its own initiative to "redeem" Africa.[182] On January 6, 1919, the Association packed Carnegie Hall to discuss the future of the African continent. Anthropologist Horace Kallen spoke on his work with noted British pacifist Norman Angell to create the League of Free Nations, an alternative to Wilson's model that would have included both Asian and African delegates. Participants Mary Ovington, John R. Shillady, and James Weldon Johnson insisted not only upon an inclusive League of Nations, but the international "care and protection of the peoples of Middle Africa," specifically in the former German colonies and the Belgian Congo, which they argued should be turned over to supranational control.[183] Du Bois personally traveled to Paris for a February 19th meeting of the Pan-African Congress. Sixteen Black Americans attended, alongside twelve African delegates, mostly Liberian, and the rest came from various corners of the French Empire. The ideological divide between delegates was profound; though they passed several resolutions concerning political and social equality, they could not agree on a system of "national self-determination." As historian Tyler

[182] When Garvey moved to Harlem in May 1917 and promised racial uplift via publicly traded Black-owned businesses, membership in the UNIA exploded. By 1919, Garvey's most ambitious project, the steamship company, the Black Star Line, encouraged thousands of Afro-Americans to invest in a shipping company that would finally unite western Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States. Like many other Afro-Americans, Garvey firmly believed that the Paris Peace Conference was a unique opportunity for African decolonization. As Judith Stein argues, Garvey believed that African people in the western hemisphere could lift themselves up by starting Black-run businesses that would simultaneously bring "western civilization" to the African continent. Because of this, Garvey sent Haitian-born Elizier Cadet as his emissary to the Versailles talks. Cadet made little progress and conflict flared between Garvey and Du Bois, who gained far more attention for his meetings with representatives from British and French West Africa. This rivalry lasted years. Garvey drew in thousands of followers with his message of self-respect and financial prosperity, though his rivals claimed him to be a con artist with authoritarian tendencies. Though the UNIA had an astounding membership during the 1920s, it plays only a peripheral role in this dissertation. (Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey* (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana State Press, 1986), 108-109; Colin Grant, *Negro With a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 155, 174-183, 244-247; Clarence G. Contee, "Du Bois, the NAACP, and the Pan-African Congress of 1919," *Journal of Negro History* 57 No. 1 (January, 1972), 18-19; Jeannette Eileen Jones, "'Brightest Africa' in the New Negro Imagination," in *Escape from New York: the New Negro Renaissance Beyond Harlem*, eds. Davarian Baldwin, Minkah Makalani (University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 32-34.

[183] "Africa and the World Democracy," *The Crisis* (February 1919), 173-175.

Stovall summarizes the Congress, the diversity of the delegates was "political as well as geographical."[184] The American and Liberation delegations were more favorable to varying forms of national independence (with European and American oversight). Several of the French attendees, most from the West Indies, not Africa, fought to improve the day-to-day lives of colonial subjects, but maintain their connection to the metropole.[185] Achieving no major results, the conference would nevertheless set a precedent for several high-profile anti-imperialist meetings in Europe throughout the decade. These meetings, discussed in later chapters, brought members of the NAACP in contact with anti-colonial allies on the left-- including members of the British Labour Party.

The NAACP may have been the most influential group to plot a reconstruction course for Black America, but it was not the only one. Asa Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, editors of the New York-based black socialist newspaper, *The Messenger*, developed a far more comprehensive and radical reconstruction pamphlet. Published in March 1919, *The Negro and the New Social Order*-- noticeably named after the British plan-- offered a root and stem reimaging of race relations in America. Randolph and Owen first attacked systems of "industrial peonage," or other means of holding black people in economic bondage, including sharecropping and by extension "absentee landlordism," and the company and pay in script. Going beyond merely calling for the

[184] Tyler Stovall, "Black Modernism and the Making of the Twentieth Century: Paris, 1919," in *Afro Modernisms: Paris, Harlem, and the Avant-Garde*, eds. Fionnguala Sweeney and Kate Marsh (Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 28-29.
[185] "In Paris in 1919, Black internationalists were not completely opposed to the imperial order but hoped to have a greater voice in defining the principles of colonial reform." Caio Simões de Araújo, "Between Race, Nation, and Empire: Tensions of (Inter)-Nationalism in the Early Interwar Period," *Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and the Formation of New Politics after the Great War*, eds. Marcus M. Payk and Roberta Pergher (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 172.

abolition of these institutions, the authors demanded cooperative farming and publicly-owned grain elevators and farm exchanges, as proposed by the North Dakota Non-Partisan League, and legally-guaranteed equal pay for equal work. As Ovington did, the two called upon unions to accept Black workers-- or, when needed, for Black workers to form their own unions. Like most other plans, they also insisted on public ownership of transportation and power.[186]

Distinct to *Negro and the New Social Order* were the planks involving civil rights and racial equality. Randolph and Owen suggested a vigorous enforcement of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendment, a repeal of any "vagrancy laws," often used to force unpaid labor, and a federal bill to lower congressional representatives for states with Jim Crow prohibitions on voting. In addition to a strong anti-lynching bill, the two editors considered legislation to "remove automatically any sheriff whose prisoner is taken from him," thereby creating a check on police complicit in extralegal violence. Also crucial was the end of miscegenation laws and the right of interracial marriage, as they claimed "race purity is both a myth and without any value. There is no pure race in the world." It is worth noting that Randolph and Owen opposed immigration restriction, and especially the use of criminal records as a bar to entry, for "crime is such a relative term."[187] This platform, almost certainly, developed out of Randolph's close association to the Socialist Party and the Hebrew Trades, who, both largely comprised of Eastern European immigrants, derided efforts to close or curtail America's ports of entry.[188]

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[186] Owen and Randolph published the pamphlet as a supplement to the March 1919 issue of *The Messenger*. Chandler Owen and A. Philip Randolph, *Negro and the New Social Order* (New York: Messenger Publishing Company, 1919), 3-8.
[187] *Ibid.,* 6-10.
[188] Jewish members of the International Ladies Garment Workers and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers were among the few in organized labor to fight against immigration restriction. In part, this was because many Eastern European Jews had family seeking to escape religious persecution in Europe. An early

In total, *Negro and the New Social Order* reflected the radical economic platform of the many labor and socialist groups developing reconstruction plans, but with added sections deliberately addressing the color line in the United States. Randolph and Owen had nowhere near the readership and influence of the NAACP, but it would be a mistake to assume their reconstruction plan garnered no attention. Despite their socialist outlook and pacifism during the war, the insistence that "Democracy cannot exist upon a foundation of caste" resonated. And, given the proliferation of anti-capitalist-- or at the very least anti-profiteering-- rhetoric in the shadow of the war, it is safe to assume their economic agenda carried some weight as well. Randolph became a fixture in left-wing Harlem politics. He also lectured across the United States and gave several addresses in another prominent city for Black thought, Washington D.C. When Randolph delivered a two-hour speech on *Negro and the New Social Order* in early January 1920, he predicted that the left-wing would win influence amongst Black Americans. As a correspondent for the *Washington Bee* reported, Randolph predicted that Americans of color would align with a Labor Party "to become a part of the ruling power in the world." Though Randolph received many comments from conservatives and centrists, apparently Carter Woodson, editor of the *Journal of Negro History,* told the audience: "Mr. Randolph is a prophet." What Woodson meant by his remark was left unclear, as the reporter claimed the crowd's enthusiastic cheers and applause "drowned him out."[189] The incident reflected the mood of 1919.

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example of an industrial union, ILGWU organizers crossed ethnic boundaries to bring Jews, Italians, and African Americans under the same banner. "Labor Votes Down Free Immigration," *New York Times* (June 20, 1922), 18; Daniel Katz, *All Together Different* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 4-5; Tyler Anbinder, *City of Dreams* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 465-469.

[189] "A. Philip Randolph, Twentieth Century Prophet," *The Washington Bee* (January 10, 1920), 6; Barbara Foley, *Spectres of 1919: Class and Nation in the Making of the New Negro* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 18.

Still, a cautious approach to improving race relations, as emphasized by Booker T. Washington from the late-nineteenth century until his death in 1915, was still popular. More popular still was Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association.[190] There were, in some aspects, good reasons for Black leaders to separate themselves from radical opinions. Randolph and Owen, and to a lesser extent, Du Bois and Pickens, provided ammunition for racists and political segregations to uphold and fortify systems of inequality. The editors of *Lumber*, a trade paper issued by the Journal of Commerce Company, included large sections of *Negro and the New Social Order*, concluding that the report posed an existential threat to business in the South. "It is hardly necessary to bring to the attention of Southern employers of negro labor the obvious fact that the spreading of this sort of propaganda," the staff of *Lumber* wrote, "is something which cannot safely be ignored."[191] A few months later, South Carolina representative (as well as a future senator, governor, Supreme Court justice, and Secretary of State) James F. Byrnes addressed Congress and suggested that Randolph and Owen served as stooges of the IWW and the Soviet Union. He further accused Du Bois and William Trotter, editor of the *Boston Guardian*, of doing their "utmost to incite riots and cause bloodshed." Byrnes was explicit in his racism; discussing the possibility of radicalized Black veterans refusing to re-assimilate, he casually suggested a race war: "If by reason of his experience he seeks social and political equality with the white man, but refuses to consider leaving for parts where it will be willing given to him, and cherishes the hope that by violence it can be gained here, he can not too quickly realize that there are in this

[190] Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 46-51; See Stein, *World of Marcus Garvey*; Foley, *Spectres*, 15-16.
[191] "Bolshevik Propaganda Developing Among Southern Negroes," *Lumber* (April 14, 1919), 14.

country 90,000,000 white people determined not to extend political and social equality to the 10,000,000 negroes."[192]

The year after the First World War was also the height of the Red Scare– giving Black Americans more of a reason to give the left a wide berth. Aside from Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's nationwide raids rounding up suspected radicals, the New York legislature formed the so-called Lusk Committee to investigate subversion. In addition to ordering its own raids, the legislature expelled five Socialist Party assemblymen in early 1920 for holding allegedly "un-American" beliefs.[193] The Justice Department linked Black reconstruction uncritically to red plots for violent revolution and paid close attention to "radicalism and sedition among the negroes."[194] In a special report published toward the end of 1919, the Justice Department examined several publications and the "emphasized feeling of race consciousness" that pervaded in them. This consciousness, the report concluded, was often "antagonistic to the white race, and openly, defiantly assertive of its own equality and even superiority." Famously, the report dubbed *The Messenger* the "most able and the most dangerous of all the negro publications."[195] All reconstruction plans met with public scrutiny, but no other plan met with such staunch opposition or threats of violence. Ideas of post-war Black reconstruction truly sat at the confluence of anti-radicalism and violent racism.

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[192] Representative Byrnes, speaking on H.R. 5118. 66th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* 58—House (August 25, 1919), H. 4305.
[193] Louis Waldman, *Albany: the Crisis in Government* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920); Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 224; Jack Ross, *Socialist Party of America: A Complete History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 219-220; Murray, *Red Scare*, 94-102.
[194] For an overview on federal surveillance of Black political organizations, see Theodore Kornweibel Jr., *"Seeing Red:" Federal Campaigns Against Black Militancy, 1919-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).
[195] Report of the Department of Justice, "Radicalism and Sedition Among the Negroes," *New York Times* (Nov 23, 1919), XX1.

Conclusion

In the last issue of the *Nation* published in 1919, Oswald Villard and the other editors of *The Nation* summed up the prior twelve months as a "Year of Revolution." Not sparing details, the staff condemned the Versailles Treaty, mourned the state of the global economy, and warned against "unprecedented outbreaks" of mass unrest. In a particularly dark allusion to the collapse of old world order, the writers stated, "A year ago, Italian peasants were burning candles before the picture of Woodrow Wilson; today, some millions of men and women the world over, starving, freezing, dying, are grimly denouncing the statesmen who sacrificed honesty… on the altar of outworn political ideas." But this loss of faith was not irredeemable, they claimed. The citizens of countries and colonies the world over at least appeared to be "taking over the power which the nerveless hands of the politicians have dropped." Villard saw American social movements as in league with labor politics abroad, specifically comparing British reconstruction politics with the "Plumb Plan League, the Nonpartisan League, the Labor party, and the Committee of 48."[196] The *Nation* presented a note of optimism in an otherwise deeply depressing climate. But for all this planning around reconstruction, for all the independent political organizing within labor and without, virtually the entire broad American left closed 1920 with almost nothing to show for their efforts.

The Wilson administration failed to deliver a coherent reconstruction policy. Hampered by congressional Republicans, preoccupied with arduous peace negotiations in Europe, and reluctant to offend voters worried about political radicalism and labor unrest,

[196] "A Year of Revolution," *The Nation* (December 27, 1919), 817.

the White House largely allowed the post-war economy to go rudderless. Civil liberties in the United States also remained under siege and dissidents languished in prison. The national chaos that reconstruction advocates prophesied largely came to pass. Prices continued to skyrocket, unemployment rose, and the bottom fell out of the market for agricultural commodities. Millions of Americans struggled and workers precipitated massive strikes in the nation's factories, docks, and mines.

Yet intellectual vibrancy that united reconstructionists across the broad left in the late nineteen-teens continued well into the next decade. These labor leaders, religious thinkers, and progressives held on to their core beliefs that the federal government had an obligation to help working people and empower workers. In the years to come, they would theorize ways to bring their ideas to life. Some envisioned a new Farmer-Labor Party, others independent political action within the two parties. All involved agreed that trade unions, farmers' organizations, and consumer cooperatives needed more power. The following chapters detail the plans reconstructionists made.

Part II: The 1920 Election

Chapter 2: "The Devil and the Deep, Deep Sea:" The Farmer-Labor Party in the Election of 1920

Between its founding in 1920 and its demise in 1923, the Farmer-Labor Party (FLP) attempted to corral American reconstructionists behind a single banner. The FLP's supporters believed their new venture would put reconstruction theory into practice, unite wage earners and farmers, and usher in a cooperative commonwealth. Those interested in the British Labour Party and its radical solutions could now firmly reject the two party system and vote their conscience, the Laborites insisted. The height of the party's relative success was the 1920 election– when its leaders succeeded in attracting an array of notable liberals and labor leaders and nominated full slates of candidates in states and cities across the nation. Optimism in FLP circles ran high prior to November, but a dismal performance on Election Day shattered their hopes.

Failing to capture more than one percent of the electorate, the Farmer-Labor Party resides mostly in historical obscurity.[197] Certainly, the Farmer-Labor Party never

[197] Scholars have given far more attention to other left-leaning parties of the twentieth century. The Communist Party of the United States has been, and continues to be, the subject of many monographs. Likewise, the Socialist Party of America has been the subject of rich analysis—most recently in Jack Ross's party biography, *The Socialist Party of America* (2015), Sharon McConnell-Sidorick, *Silk Stockings and Socialism: Philadelphia's Radical Hosiery Workers from the Jazz Age to the New Deal (*Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) and Jake Altman, *Socialism Before Sanders: The 1930s Moment from Romance to Revisionism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). Though not entirely a "leftist" group, Michael Lansing exhaustively covered the Non-Partisan League, a farmer's organization that grew out of the SPA during World War I, in his monograph *Insurgent Democracy* (2015). For work on Trotskyist dissidents, see Bryan Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928* (Urbana: University of Illinoi Press, 2007) and Donna T. Haverty-Stacke *Trotskyists on Trial: Free Speech and Persecution Since the Age of FDR* (New York: New York University Press, 2016). Recently, historians have analyzed anarchists and syndicalists in recent works such as Timothy Messer-Kruse, *The Haymarket Conspiracy: Transatlantic Anarchist Networks* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), Paul and Karen Avrich, *Sasha and Emma: The Anarchist Odyssey of Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State:*

amounted to anything resembling a viable political group. Yet it offers a snapshot of postwar reconstruction, a national mood which captured the attention of countless Americans looking for a radical overhaul of the status quo. It is worth looking into exactly why the new party failed to capture even a *fraction* of this public enthusiasm. Prior studies on have touched on several reasons for the party's collapse-- progressive concerns over what "industrial democracy" actually meant, the Laborites' failure to properly differentiate themselves from their ideological rival, the Socialist Party, the general anti-red hysteria that marked the era, and the open hostility generated by Samuel Gompers and the AFL's Executive Committee.[198] While all valid interpretations, a closer

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Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 2015), and Tom Goyens, *Radical Gotham: Anarchism in New York City from Schwab's Saloon to Occupy Wall Street* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017). On the New Left and post-World War II radical factions, see Howard Brick and Christopher Phelps, *Radicals in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), Bryan Burrough, *Days of Rage: America's Radical Underground, the FBI, and the Forgotten Age of Revolutionary Violence* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2015), and Arthur Eckstein, *Bad Moon Rising: How the Weather Underground Beat the FBI and Lost the Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

[198] Joseph McCartin and Stanley Shapiro focus most on the differences between Laborites and progressives—with McCartin correctly noting debates over industrial democracy. Shapiro also notes arguments over the extent of "democratic management" in industry and Progressive concerns over the "Sovietism" that worker control could result in Shapiro, "Hand and Brain," *Labor History* 26 (Summer 1985), 418). David Shannon and James Weinstein, in *The Socialist Party of America* and *The Decline of Socialism in America* look at the Farmer-Labor Party from the perspective of the Socialist Party. The FLP was unable to differentiate enough from the socialists to overtake them from the left or convince non-socialists that they were indeed a less-radical option (*The Socialist Party of America* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1955), 156-170; *Decline of Socialism in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 272-279).

McKillen examines the Farmer-Labor Party with her eye predominantly on foreign policy. Both her books, *Chicago Labor and the Quest for Democratic Diplomacy* and *Labor, the Left, and Wilsonian Internationalism*, and her recent article "The Irish Sinn Fein Movement and Radical Labor and Feminist Dissent in America, 1916-1921," highlight the anti-imperialism of the labor left, particularly amongst the Irish leaders of the Farmer-Labor Party—John Fitzpatrick, Frank Walsh, and Dudley Field Malone—who advocated harsher sanctions against the British Empire than Woodrow Wilson was willing to consider. McKillen focuses on the "harassment" brought on by Gompers and the AFL leadership. Gompers, McKillen notes, was invested in Wilson's League of Nations and International Labor Organization, and worked to directly undercut the success of the Farmer-Labor Party, which would have sapped labor's support for the Democratic Party and loudly advocated for policies Wilson and Gompers hoped to avoid: a free Ireland, and end to American exploitation of foreign countries in the Western Hemisphere, and the stripping of Europe's colonies. Elizabeth McKillen, *Chicago Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); McKillen, *Making the World Safe for Democracy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); McKillen, "The Irish Sinn Fein Movement and Radical Labor and Feminist Dissent in America, 1916-1921," *Labor* 16 No. 3 (September 2019), 11-33.

analysis presents a rich portrait of reconstruction and American social democracy. The men and women of the FLP created a national stir– drawing the attention of the public, press, and political establishment– but also showed the hard limits of third party activity on the left.

This chapter argues that, through both its successes and failures, the Farmer-Labor Party helped guide the trajectory of reconstruction and reform after World War I. Rich in nuance, the debates between progressive liberals and labor radicals over the fine points of industrial democracy provide a kaleidoscopic view of liberal and left-leaning thought and characterized the conflict between these two factions that would last well into the New Deal.[199] This chapter will also highlight labor's growing opposition to a new party. Opposition to the FLP, most often explained as the consequence of Samuel Gompers and his hostility toward independent labor politics, came from the rank and file below as much as it came from the AFL's leadership—many trade unionists believed the

[199] As Daniel Rodgers notes, the "shock of economic consolidation" was the primary motivator for progressives of all stripes. That said, though Rodgers does focus on wartime collectivism, and touches on post-World War I labor reconstruction, his treatment of Progressivism in *Atlantic Crossings* deals primarily with urban and rural renewal and reorganization and how these intellectual legacies resulted in New Deal-era communalization schemes. Otis L. Graham Jr. exhaustively details the variance of progressive attitude toward New Deal liberalism in *An Encore for Reform* (1967). His second chapter "The Fight Against the New Deal," discusses individuals like Amos Pinchot and George L. Record and their liberal-based ideological aversion to the New Deal—primarily their fears of government overreach and empowering the working masses over the managerial class. Shelton Stromquist also works to differentiate progressive attitudes toward "class politics" and addresses how it differed from later iterations during the 1930s and 1940s. The "class problem" Stromquist notes, was on the mind of many Progressive Era reformers, and even if there was no one solution posited by the diverse network of progressives, there was a tendency to support ameliorating the worst abuses of industrialization through government action. "The project of solving the 'class problem' did not expire with the era of World War I. A remarkable coalition of reformers, trade unionists, Taylor Society adherents, and enlightened employers sought to invest 'harmony of interests' with new meaning during the 1920s and in doing so established a framework for industrial relations that prefigured the CIO and government-regulated collective bargaining as the path to industrial peace," Stromquist writes. Daniel T. Rodgers, "Capitalism and Politics in the Progressive Era and in Ours," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 13 No. 3 (July 2014), 379-386; Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 409-484; Otis L. Graham Jr., *An Encore for Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 24-100; Shelton Stromquist, *Reinventing the People* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 201-202; Leon Fink, *Progressive Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Democratic Commitment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

potential costs of political adventurism were simply too high to justify involvement in a new party.[200] And finally, this chapter posits that the FLP actually succeeded in creating a framework for a diverse political coalition dedicated to the working class-- even if its numbers were inconsequentially small. Representatives of the NAACP and the National Women's Trade Union League both expressed real interest in a working-class party, though the FLP could not maintain the enthusiasm or finances to keep these new members involved.[201] The Farmer-Labor Party demarcated the limits of independent

[200] Julie Greene critiques the notion that the early twentieth century American Federation of Labor was apolitical—insisting that its approach toward state action and elections were neither "pure" nor "simple." She also argues that a "central dynamic" of the AFL's outlook was "the effort by Samuel Gompers and other leaders to consolidate their power, ensure the dominance of their political and economic views, and suppress dissent—particularly from the left." No doubt, as Jennifer Luff shows, during World War I Gompers and the Federation assisted in dismantling the Industrial Workers of the World and helped the federal government identify revolutionary communists. This chapter will not argue against this notion so much as it will provide a matching perspective—that it was also local unionists and local heads that pushed the AFL to defan—abor parties. Julie Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Greene, "Not so Simple," *Labor* 10 no. 4 (2013), 105-110; Jennifer Luff, *Common Sense Anti-Communism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

[201] For scholarship on the class dimension of the Women's Trade Union League and similar currents in groups like the National Woman's Party, see Stromquist, *Reinventing the People*, 107-130; Suellen Hoy, "Sidelined: The Chicago Women's Trade Union League in the Interwar Years," *Labor* 15 no 4 (December 2018), 13-36; Dorothy Sue Cobble, "A Higher 'Standard of Life' for the World," *Journal of American History* (March 2014), 1052-1085; Eileen Boris, *Making the Woman Worker* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); 1-86; Amy Aronson, *Crystal Eastman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 223-242.)

As numerous historians have pointed out, the Progressive Era saw a reaffirming of racial exclusion in American political life. Despite the brief interlude of Populist Party attempts to form coalitions across the color-line during the 1890s, by the turn of the twentieth century, Jim Crow political exclusion was all but standard across the South. Theodore Roosevelt, following the Spanish American War, sought sectional unity and realignment from the previously inflexible North-South Republican-Democratic divide—resulting in "lily-white" chapters of the GOP. Where interracial political cooperation did exist, it mostly occurred in aid societies, often led by wealthy white men and women, dedicated to legal aid, protection from lynching, and public health. A notable exception was the Socialist Party, which by the late nineteen-teens encouraged multi-racial organizing, but the Socialists never succeeded in gaining mass support from black Americans. David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in Twentieth Century*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 14-122; Charles Postel, *Populist Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 173-204; Ed Ayers, *Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 214-338; Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely* (New York Hill and Wang, 2009), 242-313; Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The New Press, 2009); Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); William Jones, "Nothing Special to Offer the Negro," *International Labor and Working Class History* 74 no. 1 (Fall 2008), 212-224; Jeffrey Perry, *Hubert Harrison* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

political possibility. Indeed, these lessons would continue to influence those interested in advancing reconstruction through the creation of the Conference for Progressive Political Action in 1922, the La Follette campaign of 1924, and the growth of Brookwood Labor College and adult education through the latter half of the decade.

"Plain, Average People:" The Farmer-Labor Party's 1920 Convention

Rose Schneiderman returned from the July 1920 convention of the newly-founded Farmer-Labor Party (FLP) in Chicago with mixed emotions. A longtime champion of working people, particularly the immigrant women of New York's many garment factories, she was undoubtedly excited that labor finally had its own party, doubly so after the convention nominated her to run for US Senate in New York.[202] "I have come home with a deep conviction that there is enough common sense, courage and devotion in America to free our country of plutocracy," she told well-wishers who came to greet her.[203] Schneiderman had traveled a great distance, both physically and politically. Born

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While Patricia Sullivan and Kevin Boyle have written recent studies on the NAACP during the 1920s, both have focused on the growth of the Association's legal strategy and courtroom battles. Only Judith Stein and Mark Schneider seem to have recounted the NAACP's interest in the Farmer-Labor Party. Stein mentions only in passing that Reverend Robert Bagnall attended the July conference to find a "popular alternative" to the NAACP's lobbying strategy. Schneider is one of the only scholars to investigate the NAACP's electoral approach during the 1920s, but gives only passing mention to the Farmer-Labor Party and later interest in the La Follette campaign and claims support was, at best, "muted." Scholars like Glenda Gilmore, Tom Sugrue, and Beth Tompkins Bates have argued that the Association only adopted a grassroots, working-class, approach during the 1930s and that this turn was inspired, at least in part, by the Communist Party. Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice;* Boyle, *Arc of Justice* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2004); Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 163; Mark R. Schneider, *We Return Fighting: The Civil Rights Movement in the Jazz Age* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 112-113, 254; Tom Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty* (New York: Random House, 2008), 32-58; Bates, "A New Crowd Challenges the Agenda of the Old Guard in the NAACP, 1933-1941," *The American Historical Review* 102 no. 2 (April, 1997), 340-377.

[202] Schneiderman was first nominated by the American Labor Party at its convention in Schenectady in May, but the ALP formally fused with the Farmer Labor Party and nominated a national ticket and platform in July 1920. "Woman for Senator is Named by Labor," *New York Times* (May 31, 1920), 2.

[203] "Party has Power to Smash Plutocracy, Says Woman Envoy," *New York Call* (July 17, 1920), 1.

in a village in Russian Poland, she spent her early adult life bringing attention to the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire, lobbying for worker protections, and passing women's suffrage in New York. In 1919, she crossed the ocean with credentials from Woodrow Wilson to serve as a representative to the Paris Peace Conference. There, Schneiderman claimed to represent not only the "women of America and the world" but the "rights of labor everywhere." Schneiderman stopped in London en route to the conference to meet with Mary MacArthur, a leading suffragist and candidate for the British Labour Party.[204] Now, back in a country that had less than a year prior denied women full citizenship rights, she stood to run for one of the nation's highest offices. Schneiderman knew she had no chance to win, but it seemed to her a worthy cause.[205] The new FLP had, after all, adopted a far-reaching platform that called for the immediate restoration of peacetime civil liberties, sovereignty for Ireland and Soviet Russia, an end to American "dictatorship" in Haiti, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, public ownership of natural resources, and most ambitiously a demand that workers receive "an increasing share in the responsibilities and management of industry."[206] The future, Farmer-Laborites believed, would bring industrial democracy and worker control.

Despite her joy over the new party, Schneiderman could not hold back her ire when it came to the Labor Party's once committed ally, the Committee of 48. Like the labor men and women who joined the FLP, the 48ers were vocal proponents of

[204] Schneiderman and Mary Anderson, another WTUL representative, were slated to present to the inaugural meeting of the International Labor Organization, though they arrived too late to address the assembly. Rose Schneiderman and Lucy Goldwaite, *All for One* (New York: Paul S. Eriksson), 132; "Two American Women to Join Parley as Labor Delegates," *New York Herald Tribune* (March 7, 1919), 13.
[205] As she recalled her thoughts in a later memoir: "Campaigning might be a lot of fun." She also noted that "Hopes were high" for Dudley Field Malone, a noted liberal, lawyer, and Collector of the Port of New York under Wilson who was on the FLP's ticket for governor. Schneiderman, *All for One*, 146.
[206] "Platform of the Farmer-Labor Party of the U.S.," *New Majority* (July 24, 1920), 5.

reconstruction. The former Bull Moosers and other progressives who filled its ranks believed in curtailing economic privilege, extending legal protections to organized labor, and employing government ownership to close general inequality, or in their words, limit "privilege." But after the Chicago convention, Schneiderman unleashed a particularly bitter invective against the Committee, which, after a few tempestuous days, broke over whether to join hands with the Laborites. The 48ers leadership, Schneiderman told the *New York Times*, "do not really believe in democracy." Further, she added, "they distrust plain, average people."[207] The labor leader heaped scorn on four Committee leaders in particular– Amos Pinchot, Allen McCurdy, J.A.H. Hopkins, and George Record– who had all bolted the proceedings rather than put the question of joining the new party to a membership vote. The break came after a dispute over democratic management of industry and whether or not workers should control and directly profit from American business.[208]

Schneiderman's critiques of the 48ers echoed those of a chorus of labor radicals who all took issue with the Committee's withdrawal. It escaped nearly no one's notice that the four leaders who most vocally critiqued the FLP's plank to expand democracy in industry were all exceptionally wealthy, or in the words of one conference attendee, "plutocratic philanthropists."[209] Parley P. Christensen, a Western attorney, former Bull Mooser, and Utah state politician whom the FLP ultimately nominated to run for president, went even further, calling Record, Pinchot, Hopkins, and McCurdy a "quartet

[207] "Replies to Amos Pinchot," *New York Times* (July 19, 1920), 3.
[208] The most comprehensive detailing of the actual conference proceedings remains Stanley Shapiro's dissertation *Hand and Brain: The Farmer-Labor Party of 1920.* Stanley Shapiro, "Hand and Brain," (Ph.D. Dissertation, UC Berkeley, 1967), 188-208.
[209] "Committee of 48 Menaced By Labor," *New York Times* (July 13, 1920), 1.

of coupon-clipping intellectuals from New York, whose arteries ran ice waters, when what they intended to be a pink tea for the uplift got lost in a convention of the plain people."[210] Christensen also insisted that the rebel 48ers did not hold a "mortgage" on the Committee's membership, that indeed notable members, including attorney and former Collector of the Port of New York, Dudley Field Malone, came to support the Farmer-Labor Party.[211]

Amos Pinchot wasted no time in returning fire, calling the Labor Party leaders "well-meaning mush-heads."[212] For the Committee members who left the Chicago conference, the FLP had self-sabotaged its election chances by adopting a revolutionary ideology at odds with American values. "We have been thrown together with a group who are working consciously for Marxian socialism," Allen McCurdy declared. On the matter of the FLP's advocacy of industrial democracy, McCurdy parsed no words: "they want to sink the foundation of the new party deep into communism, to be ready to deliver the industries of this nation into the hands of the workers in those industries, to be owned, controlled, operated for the benefit of the workers in them instead of for the whole people."[213] The fallout from the caustic exchange between the two groups demonstrated just how brittle the bonds holding self-styled reconstructionists together could be.

To outside observers hopeful for a new political vehicle, the split spelled certain doom. Frank Walsh, the former labor board head who had for months prior to the convention publicly supported a new party, now expressed an ambivalent attitude regarding the Farmer-Labor experiment. As he wrote privately in late July, "here I am,

[210] "Farmer-Labor Candidate Assails Leaders of 48-ers," *New York Times* (July 19, 1920), 1.
[211] "Christensen on the 48 'Bolt'," *New Majority* (July 24, 1920), 1
[212] "After-the-Event Wisdom," *New York Herald Tribune* (July 20, 1920), 10.
[213] "Labor Planks Bar Out La Follette," *Washington Post* (July 15, 1920), 1.

floundering around, trying to get my 'thoughts on straight' as to whether or not I shall just relax all of my muscles and do nothing, or try to continue some sort of a fight throughout the campaign." Emma Wold, acting secretary of the National Woman's Party, perhaps captured the feeling of progressive unease best when she stated, "We appear to be between the devil and the deep, deep sea, unless the Third Party really amounts to something."[214]

Enter Stage Left: An Overview of the Farmer-Labor Party

The Farmer-Labor Party did not, as it turned out, amount to much. Indeed, it is difficult to describe with much precision who the Farmer-Labor Party represented and who it could count on for votes. The Laborites of Chicago hoped their convention would bring several of the nation's political insurgencies together: in particular, the Central Federated Union's Labor Party in New York, the Committee of 48, and the Nonpartisan League (NPL), a political organization of farmers that had successfully won control of the North Dakota Republican Party, put its candidate Lynn Frazer in the governor's office, and at the end of the war, sponsored a state-run bank with subsidized mortgages and formed at cost grain elevators and mills [215] By the time Schniederman made her remarks, however, the Labor Party had gained a new name but few additional members. The New York Labor Party agreed to a shared ticket, though by that point had lost the support of most of the Central Federated Union– the labor federation that had made up

[214] "Labor Party Will Win—Walsh," *New Majority* (June 26, 1920), 1; Emma Wold to Frank Walsh, July 28, 1920; Walsh to Emma Wold, July 29, 1920, Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 9 Folder July 22-31, 1920.

[215] The Nonpartisan League and the North Dakota government briefly became an obsession for American progressives, who hoped such results could be replicated at a federal level. See Michael J. Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 139-184.

the heart of the organization. The national NPL and most of its state-wide branches saw no reason to abandon its working strategy of boring from within the main parties and ultimately turned down amalgamation. The only branch of the League to join the new party was in Washington State, which helped make the Pacific northwest the epicenter of the FLP's *relative* electoral success—several candidates won more than a quarter of their electorates, though no one emerged victorious. One of the Washington FLP's congressional candidates, Knute Hill, would eventually make it to the House of Representatives, but as a Democrat and not until 1932.[216]

The Socialist Party did not agree to help the new party and the FLP refused to give up its independence to support Eugene V. Debs, the party's leader and perennial presidential candidate. Certainly, some former socialists joined the Farmer-Labor Party. The labor parties both in New York and Chicago presented themselves as a non-Marxist alternative to the SPA. This promise of a mass movement untainted by doctrinaire ideology helped Rose Schneiderman to defect, beginning her transition from Laborite to New Deal Democrat.[217] John Spargo also fell into this group. In 1919, Spargo discounted the Socialists as "a mere grouping together of persons who have intellectually adopted a certain theory of economics," not a "genuine, clean cut" working-class party.[218] Spargo

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[216] Though no candidate won office, C.L. France, brother of Maryland Senator Joseph France, received just under one hundred thousand votes for Senate on the FLP line, and three other candidates, including Washington NPL leader William Bouck, won at least thirty percent of the vote in their congressional contests. Of Christensen's 290,000 votes, some 78,000 came from Washington. James Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism in America*, 272-273; Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 218; House of Representatives, "Statistics of the Congressional and Presidential Election of November 2, 1920.

[217] In a 1927 letter to Carrie Chapman Catt, Schneiderman identifies herself as a "Socialist by conviction" not by party. Schneiderman to Catt, June 8 1927. Carrie Chapman Catt Papers. Library of Congress. Box 8 Schneiderman, Rose.

[218] "U.S. Needs Labor Party, Says Spargo," *New Majority* (January 25, 1919), 7; Markku Ruotsila, "Neoconservatism Prefigured: The Social Democratic League of America and the Anticommunists of the Anglo-American Right, 1917-21, *Journal of American Studies* 40 no. 2 (August 2006); Ruotsila, *John Spargo and American Socialism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

was a member of the Social Democratic Federation, a pro-labor party faction of socialists which left the SP in protest of its stridently anti-war position. The 1919 Red Scare helped harden the Socialist and Laborite divide. After the October Revolution brought the Bolsheviks to power in Russia, the SPA found itself firmly in what party historian Jack Ross calls a period of "fatal alienation." Not all socialists approved of Bolshevik methods—many, including Eugene Debs and Morris Hillquit, admired the Soviets but were unwilling to abandon a democratic road to power-- but the presence of a distinct pro-communist wing of the SPA was enough to drive more members toward a labor party approach.[219]

Still, while some notable members of the Socialist Party defected, most socialists remained loyal to their standard bearer, Debs. Despite, or perhaps because of its persecution, the party continued to attract new high-profile members with its message of major systemic reform.[220] Harriot Stanton Blatch, daughter of famed suffragist and

[219] World War I sharpened the firm, and ultimately inflexible, divide between the left wing of the Socialist Party, which countenanced violent methods of seizing state power, and the right wing, which remained steadfast in its support for collective bargaining and a democratic road to socialism. After the Bolshevik revolution, both right and left wing Socialist Party members celebrated the rise of a genuine worker-run government. Though, after the Bolsheviks conditioned invitations to join the Third International with demands that all affiliated parties follow Moscow's orders and advance global communist revolution, the right wing expelled pro-soviet locals. The expelled socialists formed two new communist parties, the Communist Party of America and the Communist Labor Party, and aligned with the third international. The communist factions went "underground" and stoked revolution amongst striking workers, instigating Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer to conduct raids arresting around 5,000 alleged communists, socialists, anarchists, and other radicals— hundreds of foreign citizens were deported back to eastern Europe. Even right wing Socialists, who had denounced Soviet communism, faced reprisals. In January 1920, the New York State Assembly expelled five elected representatives because they belonged to the supposedly "unamerican" Socialist Party. Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism in America*, 192-233; Shannon, 126-149; Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 289-292; Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York: Viking Press, 1957), 148-163, 204-212; Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 381-383; Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 216-246.

[220] Eugene V. Debs's arrest and incarceration for violating the Espionage Act made him a standard bearer not just for socialism, but for free speech and civil liberties as well. This likely drove some of the turnout for his campaign in 1920.See Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs* ,301-328; Ernest Freeberg, *Democracy's Prisoner: Eugene V. Debs, the Great War, and the Right to Dissent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

abolitionist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, joined the SPA in 1920 because "It is the only party striking at the root evils-- at capitalism, which permits of men harvesting where they do not sow."[221] Socialist Party publications monitored and generally complimented the Farmer-Labor Party for its radicalism, often pausing to call FLP presidential candidate Christensen the only other "honest" candidate besides Debs. Most Socialists, however, considered the Farmer-Labor Party a poor imitation of the SPA. The editors of the socialist daily, *New York Call*, concluded that the party had "little to fear" from the FLP. "Third Parties, to become permanent, must make a complete break with capitalism," they wrote, "just as the Socialist party has for 20 years."[222] Party leader Morris Hillquit concurred, claiming the FLP had "produced a platform which is little more than a heterogeneous assortment of meaningless liberal and radical phases utterly devoid of the cohesive cement of the modern working-class philosophy." Hillquit believed the primary function of a working-class party was to educate working people to see socialism as the only remedy to their material concerns. By failing to get the official backing of organized labor and watering down their platform to appeal to liberal voters, all while promising its followers electoral victory, Hillquit concluded that "the FLP had doomed its chances of survival. "The Farmer Labor Party has killed the Labor party and committed suicide in one blow," he wrote.[223]

To Hillquit's point, some liberal and progressive 48ers did find enough to agree with the Farmer-Labor platform, and like Parley P. Christensen, had diverse reasons for doing so. While Christensen joined the party for its economic platform, others likely

[221] Harriot Stanton Blatch, "Why I Joined the Socialist Party," *Socialist World* (September 1920), 17.
[222] "Third Party Movement," *New York Call* (June 18, 1920), 8.
[223] Morris Hillquit, "Radicalism in America," *Socialist World* (October 1920), 19.

followed Dudley Field Malone, who specifically supported the FLP's definitive stand on a free and united Ireland– as did Jeremiah A. O'Leary, an American-born Sinn Feiner who ran for Congress on the FLP ticket.[224] O'Leary had, in 1916, founded a satirical anti-war magazine called *Bull*– which he used to not only convince Americans not to join the war, but to deny any aid at all to the British so long as Ireland remained part of the Empire. In November 1917, the federal government indicted O'Leary under the Espionage Act. Caught in Washington state after six months on the run, O'Leary became something of a celebrity for Irish nationalists after successfully defending himself in court. One of his tactics was reading lengthy anti-British excerpts by Thomas Jefferson and George Washington to prove his Americanism. He published his experiences in a nearly six-hundred page book titled *My Political Trial and Experiences*. O'Leary saw the FLP– which had Irish nationalists John Fitzpatrick and Dudley Field Malone in its leadership, and was the only party in 1920 to make republicanism a key component of its platform– as the only ticket worthy of his support. He would ultimately run as a Laborite congressional candidate in New York City.[225]

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[224] The Chicago Federation of Labor had several Irish leaders—including President John Fitzpatrick. After initial peace talks at Versailles failed to provide for Irish independence, the CFL became highly critical of Woodrow Wilson and integrated Irish nationalism into their platform. This was at least in part what initially attracted Frank Walsh to the party—Walsh had personal contact with several high-ranking members of Sinn Fein and accompanied Irish Republican President Eammon De Valera on his trip to Chicago. As will be explained more in the next chapter, Irish nationalism was a major component in the initial reconstruction drive of 1918-1920. When Malone campaigned for New York governor on the FLP ticket, he tried to carry the Irish vote. In August 1920, Malone asked Walsh for advice on how to do this. Walsh instructed Malone to get rid of old phrases like "Free Ireland" and "Self Determination," and that "Irish Independence" should be "carefully avoided." He encouraged Malone to use the Labor Party's platform and only use "Republic" and "DeValera Government" to refer to Ireland. Walsh to Malone, August 21 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 9 Folder August 20-31, 1920; Elizabeth McKillen, *Chicago Labor and the Quest for Democratic Diplomacy, 1914-1924*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 126-191; McKillen, "The Irish Sinn Fein Movement and Dissent in America," *Labor* 16 no. 3 (September 2019), 28-33.

[225] O'Leary actually ran one of the FLP's most competitive elections, New York's 18th District was effectively a four-way race between the Democrats, Republicans, Farmer-Laborites, and Socialists. John Carew, the incumbent Democrat won, but with only thirty percent of the vote compared to O'Leary's twenty-five. Jeremiah A. O'Leary, *My Political Trial and Experiences* (New York: Jefferson Publishing

In sum, support for the Farmer-Labor Party was diverse. Presenting itself outwardly as a mass movement of working people, in reality, it was born in July 1920 as a political sect of *some* trade unionists, *some* socialists, *some* disaffected progressives and liberals, and *some* Irish nationalists. This heterogeneous base was appealing to at least William Hard, a progressive journalist. After the convention, Hard attempted to describe the varying composition of the new party. "Among them there are nuts," Hard wrote to Senator La Follette, "But, unlike the general run of nuts, they all now seem to desire to hang from one tree." It was indeed because of this diversity that Hard decided to link his fate with what he hoped would be a promising venture: "the mass of the votes must come from the wage-earners and the farmers, and their representatives strike me as being a real nucleus for real further growth." Hard even allowed himself to become hopeful for FLP's prospects. "Here I think that for the first time in my life in America we see the makings of a sound seed," he admitted.[226] Its poor performance aside, the creation of the Farmer Labor Party brought out in many Americans intense feelings of both progress and revulsion. This chapter examines why the party won the support that it did and why it drew so much opposition.

Rose Schneiderman's willingness to serve as a public face for the new party demonstrated the real draw the Farmer-Labor Party had amongst labor leaders deeply invested in reform. Schneiderman was no political lightweight -- she had cut her teeth in the needle trades (specifically the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers) at the turn of the

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Co, 1919); "Treason Charged to Seven Persons by United States," *Atlanta Constitution* (June 8, 1918), 1; "J.A. O'Leary Is Arrested On Farm in Far West," *New York Tribune* (June 16, 1918), 1; "O'Leary Jury Is Worried," *New York Times* (March 5, 1919), 19; "O'Leary Case Jury Is Locked Up for Night; No Verdict," *New York Tribune* (March 22, 1919), 20; "Jury Fails To Agree On Jeremiah O'Leary," *Atlanta Constitution* (March 24, 1919), 1; David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1955), 158; Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 243.

[226] William Hard. July 9, 1920. La Follette Papers. Box B85 1920, Hard, William.

century, when few in American organized labor believed the heavily immigrant and majority-female workforce could ever be unionized. Organizing for both the ILGWU and the New York Women's Trade Union League, she coaxed nearly sixty thousand garment workers out on strike in the "uprising" of 1909-1910. The uprising not only swelled the ILGWU's membership but eventually brought about some of New York State's first workplace safety regulations.[227] Certainly, her endorsement and willingness to run demonstrated the FLP's ability to generate excitement.

The thrust of Schneiderman's criticisms of the Committee of 48, however, point to the stark reality of the Farmer-Labor Party's almost immediate decline. As numerous historians have commented, ideological challenges over the meaning of "industrial democracy" marked both the beginning and end of the Farmer-Labor Party's history as a national force.[228] Lacking a stable foundation, the party struggled to present itself as a viable option to potential supporters prior to election day. The isolation Laborites faced from all potential allies in the progressive movement and from their fellow trade unionists became all consuming. Aside from the energetic approval of a few reformers like Schneiderman and soft endorsements from a few state and municipal labor federations, a nod from associations like the NAACP and Women's Trade Union League,

[227] Daniel Katz, *All Together Different* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 50-63; Jennifer Gugliemo, *Living the Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 187-192; Nell Painter, *Standing at Armageddon* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 249-251; Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 382.

[228] As Joseph McCartin writes, "The most important bone of contention between [the Labor Party and the 48ers], as it turns out, was industrial democracy." Elizabeth McKillen adds, the Farmer-Labor Party's "uncompromising emphasis on rank-and-file assertiveness and direct forms of democracy in industry and politics alienated moderate supporters who could provide the party with crucial funding, publicity, and prominent candidates." McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, 198; McKillen, *Chicago Labor and the Quest for Democratic Diplomacy, 1914-1924*, 127. See also, Shapiro, "Hand and Brain," *Labor History* 26 (Summer 1985), 418-420. Shaprio, "Twilight of Reform," *Historian* 33 no. 3 (May 1971), 360-364.

and articles in support from disaffected liberal publishers like *The Nation* and *The New Republic*, few joined hands with the Farmer-Labor Party.

"Public Ownership and Private Liberty:" Progressive Critiques of Labor Militancy

On July 10, 1920, a little over a week before Schneiderman's tempestuous comments, representatives of the Committee of 48, a collection of mostly former Bull Moose progressives who had taken an interest in British Labour-styled reconstruction after the war, met at Chicago's Morrison Hotel with representatives of the Labor Party to discuss amalgamation.[229] The 48ers were The Labor Party's nominating convention for the 1920 election was set to begin nearby at Carmen's Hall the next day and both sides were eager to hammer out final details and arrange the political theater. Ideally, they would present to the press and the assembled delegates a united front and a strong new party for election season. Both the 48ers and Laborites, however, sat uneasy over the details surrounding one particular plank-- *who* would control industry in the brave new world?

The 48ers platform, developed during their first national convention in St. Louis the year prior, remained vague as to how much nationalization would suffice and how workers themselves factored in. From its first sounding call of "Reconstruction or Revolution?," the Committee had done its best to appear forward-thinking and practical, not radical. This certainly did not stop the St. Louis American Legion from threatening the city's Hotel Statler with mob violence if the convention indeed took place. So real was the threat to the hotel's owner, hospitality magnate Ellsworth Milton Statler, that he

[229] On the Committee of 48's founding, see pp. 48-55.

barred the convention's attendees from entry. It took an order from a federal judge in New York and a five thousand dollar bond to allow the meeting to proceed as planned.[230] Even though no violence occurred at any point during the convention, false rumors of malfeasance spread unimpeded. A few weeks later, H.E. Moss, assistant secretary of the pro-business Greater Iowa Association, told a rally in Ottumwa that the convention "was a meeting of long-haired men and short-haired women. The free-love doctrine prevailed, and the convention applauded every act of soviet Russia."[231] There were, in actuality, no planks endorsing "free-love" or praising the Soviet Union.

The 48ers in attendance, including notable progressives J.A.H. Hopkins, Amos Pinchot, Lincoln Colcord, and George Record, ultimately produced a national platform impressive in its brevity. Less than one hundred words, it consisted of only three general planks-- the "public ownership" of transportation and natural resources, no land or patents held for speculation, and "Equal economic, political and legal rights for all, irrespective of sex or color." Attached to the third plank was the statement related to worker control: "We indorse the effort of labor to share in the management of industry and labor's right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of its own choosing."[232] Publicly, the Committee of 48's first official document summarized a liberal and progressive critique of late-Wilsonian democracy in a succinct and quickly

[230] "The Fearsome Forty-Eight," *New York Times* (December 11, 1919), 12; "'Committee of 48' Meets in St. Louis; Wins Injunction," *New York Herald Tribune* (December 10, 1919) 10; "Legion Threat Bars Radicals Out of St. Louis Hotel," *New York Herald Tribune* (December 9, 1919), 6; "Committee of 48 Meets," *New York Times* (December 10, 1919), 4; "Legion Member Here Answers Williams," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (December 5, 1919), 23; "Telegram to Legion Commander Regarding Protests," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (December 9, 1919), 2.
[231] "The Greater Iowa Association and the Committee of 48." Pamphlet published by the Iowa Headquarters of the Committee of 48, 1920. Amos Pinchot Papers. Library of Congress. Box 87. Folder "Committee of 48, 3 of 6"
[232] "This Was Not the Third Party," *Dearborn Independent* (July 24, 1920), 1; "The Three Planks," *Facts* (December 12, 1919), 1. Amos Pinchot Papers. Box 87 "Committee of 48, 3 of 6"

readable format, but below the surface it also presented deep insecurities of exactly how to implement these chosen reforms.

For months, 48 dignitaries fought an internal battle regarding the extent of nationalization and who would hold new public ventures accountable. Supporter of the Committee of 48, New Jersey attorney and former Bull Moose Progressive, George Record, constantly qualified his support for radical economic reform. In September 1919, Record asked Pinchot to write the preamble for the Committee's December convention, adding that the rough draft he saw, written by the progressive economist and businessman Oswald Knauth was "too general" and used "socialistic language" which was likely to scare away potential voters. Interestingly, Record believed the British Labour Party's (BLP) *Labour and the New Social Order* avoided socialistic language exceptionally well: "Mr. Webb, who is supposed to have written the British Labor Party statement, seems to avoid" overt socialism "and seems to have made a very impressive statement, although it is too long for our purpose."[233] While Record neither elaborated, nor listed what exactly he objected to, his views on *The New Social Order* demonstrated how wide the appeal of the document was amongst left-leaning Americans. Radicalized trade unionists and socialists believed the document laid the tracks for a popular uprising against capitalism driven by the working class, progressives like Record read it differently.

Record was correct in the sense that the BLP's guiding document did discuss replacing a capitalist system but avoided all mention of proletariat revolution or dictatorship. Sidney Webb and the pamphlet's drafters deliberately used democratic

[233] George Record to Amos Pinchot, September 24, 1919. Pinchot Papers. Box 30 Folder September 1919.

language and invoked the "common good."[234] "What the Labour Party looks to is a genuinely scientific reorganisation of the nation's industry, no longer deflected by individual profiteering, on the basis of the Common Ownership of the Means of Production," Webb stated. The proceeds, he continued, would be shared equitably between "all who participate in any capacity."[235] Record was suspicious of industrial democracy, but most probably saw the Labour Party's insistence on a rational reorganization and shared profit structure as a reasonable presentation on the subject.

Record's outlook on worker control, however, was carefully channeled and easily fell prey to his doubts. He wanted to abolish privilege, which he defined as "the advantages, artificial and natural, by which a few people are able to absorb the earnings of the many."[236] This meant major reform: the busting of trusts and monopolies, government regulation of finance, transportation, and natural resources, but certainly not collectivization or worker control. When writing to liberal journalist Lincoln Colcord, who had just met with Glenn Plumb, the labor lawyer who developed the Plumb Plan to nationalize America's railroads and operate them on a cooperative basis, Record insisted that any transportation nationalization plan that would hand management over to the workers would not "stand discussion" amongst progressive thinkers. "If I understand it a[l]right," he told Colcord, "I do not believe any laws can be passed to carry out any such program, except that the government takes over and operates industry, which is nothing but socialism." Record was sure that any association between the 48ers and Plumb would only strengthen the Labor Party's calls for collectivization over the Committee's call for

[234] For more about the early century notion of a societal "common good" and why some progressives gravitated toward *Labor and the New Social Order*, see Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 293.
[235] *Labour and the New Social Order* (London: the Labour Party), 12.
[236] George Record to RML, June 25, 1920. RM La Follette Papers. Box B86 Folder: Record, George.

a capitalism devoid of privilege. "Every political instinct that I have is antagonistic to Plumb putting his plan out at this time," he wrote.[237]

Amos Pinchot shared Record's concerns. Glenn Plumb had "the best intentions in the world," Pinchot observed to fellow Progressive Party member William Josiah MacDonald, but he posed the risk of saddling the nascent third party with "half thought out economic propositions, such as his latent plan for the democratization of industry." Pinchot's critique of the Plumb Plan, and industrial democracy generally, was multifaceted. First, from a practical standpoint, Pinchot believed the scheme was politically toxic. Or, as he put it, the plan was "sheer rot" and a "millstone around the neck of any group that supported it." Along those lines, he questioned how far the fervor to democratize workplaces would go. This, Pinchot argued, would be particularly repellent to small business owners: "You would have every little baker and steam laundry man in the United States asking whether you were going to make him receive his employees as partners." Finally, he argued that this degree of collectivization would certainly lead to the end of democracy, as an armed militia would be required to maintain order.[238]

After the Committee of 48 published its platform, Pinchot, Record, and the rest of the Committee's leadership believed they had settled the debate over nationalization and worker control in their own ranks. Still, some 48ers dissented. P.W. McConaughy believed that even Pinchot and Record's compromise plank went too far. "But the fact remains that the first four words of our platform commit us to public ownership,"

[237] George Record to Amos Pinchot, Sept 24 1919. Pinchot Papers. Box 30 Folder: September 1919; George Record to Lincoln Colcord, December 29, 1919. Pinchot Papers. Box 31 Folder: December 1919.
[238] Pinchot to W.J. MacDonald, February 5, 1920. Pinchot Papers. Box 31 Folder: February, 1920.

McConaughy wrote. "The third plank commits to a program of management of the railroads by which labor shall share in the management… Mr. Record says that when the second plank was adopted in St. Louis you did not have this in mind. Then I can only say that I am sorry for your minds."[239] The Committee had hoped that by avoiding an overly-long platform, it could bring in both those who favored *limited* redistribution of wealth and privilege and those who believed stricter regulations on monopoly speculation would suffice.

After receiving word that Senator Robert La Follette was open to running on a third party-- if the Labor Party and 48ers presented a workable coalition-- Record defended the Committee's choice to remain vague: "Every additional idea that is put in the platform loads it down and divides our own forces, and the more we put into the platform the more we offer to the enemy the opportunity of picking upon what they consider our weakest point of attack. For that reason I would keep out such phrases as 'the Democratic control of industry', or 'the railroads when we take them over.'"[240] Committee chairman J.A.H. Hopkins agreed. Though he defended the 48ers platform writ-large, when speaking to the press, he distilled the documents into only five words: "public ownership and private liberty."[241]

Writing to the Labor Party's Executive Board just prior to their amalgamation talks, Pinchot claimed that he and the rest of the Committee's leadership "strongly favored" the "representation of the workers on the board of management" of large industries, and that they favored the government operation of railroads, telegraphs, and

[239] P.W. McConaughy to Pinchot, February 6, 1920. Pinchot Papers. Box 31 Folder: February, 1920.
[240] George Record to Robert La Follette, June 25, 1920. La Follette Papers. Box B86 Folder: 1920, George L. Record.
[241] "Committee of 48 Explains Platform," *New York Times* (December 22, 1919), 5.

post offices, but they would not countenance the nationalization of additional manufacturing outlets. While the Labor Party never *explicitly* called for the nationalization of all industrial output, its initial Statement of Principles insisted on government ownership of warehouses, grain elevators, stockyards, packing plants, flour mills, and "all basic industries which require large-scale production and are in reality on a non-competitive basis."[242] The Party's proposed 1920 platform gave the Committee even more pause. In a plank developed by Connecticut labor lawyer, and leader of that state's labor party, Toscan Bennett, the Laborites insisted upon "The right of labor to an *increasing share* in the responsibilities and management of industry."[243] Convinced that this platform meant complete worker control, and that this could only be accomplished through state seizure, Pinchot responded: "Mr. Bennett's plank in regard to nationalization of large industries means, if put in practice, the end of private initiative in large industries. We are sincerely opposed to this."[244] The question over nationalization and the degree of acceptable labor power only became more fraught when both sides arrived in Chicago.

Even Senator Robert La Follette, the ideal presidential candidate for both sides in the debate, could not work out a compromise. La Follette sent his son, Robert Jr., Frank Walsh's alternate and successor as co-chair of the War Labor Board, Basil M. Manly, and close friend and attorney Gilbert Roe to Chicago with a platform calling for "unqualified right" of all workers to bargain collectively, the "inviolate" right to strike, the "reduction

[242] "Principles of the Labor Party Adopted at the National Convention, Chicago, November 25, 1919," *New Majority* (December 4, 1919), 8.
[243] "Platform of the Farmer-Labor Party of the U.S.," *New Majority* (July 24, 1920), 5.
[244] Pinchot to Executive Committee of the Labor Party of the United States, July 10, 1920. Pinchot Papers. Box 32 Folder: July 1920.

of unemployment" through public works, and labor's right to "share" in the management of industry. The La Follette platform still received pushback from both the attendees, who believed that the language regarding democracy in industry addressed the question only through vagaries that left key questions unanswered. Ultimately, and with the Senator's approval, Basil Manley updated the plank to read an "effective share" of management and the "democratic operation of the mines under government ownership," but by this point the conference had deteriorated to a point where not even La Follette could relieve the acrimony.[245]

On July 13, after a joint committee of ten representatives (five Laborites and five 48ers) failed to agree on a compromise candidate, both parties agreed to a joint convention and a floor vote on a new platform. Despite the initial excitement of the 48ers marching into Carmen's Hall, marked by rousing renditions of the 19th century hymn and old Progressive Party anthem, "Onward Christian Soldiers," and the 1917 singalong, "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here," once the Laborites realized they had a commanding majority of delegates they passed their platform with no substantive changes made to their position on industrial democracy. Incensed, the 48ers bolted.[246] Pinchot's prediction that defining industrial democracy would prove fatal to any amalgamation proved fortuitous.

While the newly minted Farmer-Labor Party (named thus though no farmer organization fused into the original organization) claimed it had a platform "worth fighting for" and a "political party that will reclaim all power for the people to govern

[245] Statement from Senator La Follette taken over the long distance at 1 PM today," July 1920. La Follette Papers. Box B180 Folder, "Committee of 48".
[246] Shaprio, *Hand and Brain* (Ph.D. Dissertation, UC Berkeley, 1967), 200-204.

themselves in the United States," other observers doubted these assertions.[247] Aside from the obviously enraged 48ers, who tried, in vain, to form a new "Liberal Party" to draft La Follette and compete against the FLP, a broad range of reconstructionists either backed away from the new party or denounced it outright.[248] A reporter for Henry Ford's *Dearborn Independent*, which had expressed interest in a progressive third party, wasted no time tarring the party as "openly and shamelessly on the side of confiscation, robbery and destruction."[249]

A few weeks after the convention, Gilbert Roe privately complained to La Follette that Labor Party supporters "wanted to include their extreme plans for democratising industry whatever that might mean, while we admitted that the application of the principle should be attempted but that we should be governed in our effort by actual experience with the working of the principle instead of the opinions of some social theorist or labor union."[250] By early August, Frank Walsh, popular amongst progressives, liberals, and organized labor for his stewardship of the War Labor Board, admitted to Robert La Follette Jr. that he had given up entirely on the Farmer-Labor Party and felt that he could not vote in good conscience for any presidential candidate in the upcoming

[247] "Farmer-Labor Ticket in Field," *The New Majority* (July 24, 1920), 1.
[248]Basil Manly, August 2, 1920. "Memorandum, Conference at Madison, Wisconsin July 25 to 27." La Follette Papers. Box B86 Folder, 1920 Manly, Basil M.
[249] At the time, Henry Ford had positioned himself as both an advocate for peace—his failed 1915 "Peace Ship" initiative to broker an end to World War I earned him some good will amongst non-interventionists—and a humanitarian capitalist who built technologically marvelous factories, paid decent wages, and pumped out affordable automobiles. Ford had some political popularity—he had won several Republican presidential primaries in 1916 without announcing a run and stood for Senate as a Democrat in Michigan in 1918 at Wilson's behest—and some thought he might run for President in 1920. He made it absolutely clear through the *Dearborn Independent* that he was not running with the FLP. "This Was Not the Third Party," *Dearborn Independent* (July 24, 1920), 1; Michael Kazin, *War Against War: The American Fight for Peace, 1914-1918* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 70-76, 119-120; Freeman, *Behemoth: A History of the Factory and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: W.W. Norton and co., 2018), 118-132.
[250] Gilbert E. Roe to RML, July 16, 1920. La Follette Papers. Box B86 Folder Gilbert E. Roe, 1920.

election. "Under the present circumstances, I feel even further afield as to what my action should be in this campaign than I have ever been in my life," he wrote, "and from correspondence and conversation with countless of our friends; I find them in the same unfortunate position."[251] La Follette Jr. agreed, and blamed the failure of a new national party on the "doctornaires[sic] in both groups" who "attempted to dominate the situation."[252] Having cut itself off from key support, the FLP limped on to election season.

"The Worst Traitors to the Labor Movement:" The AFL and the Labor Party

The Committee of 48 may have been a small sect of wealthy progressives, but their departure ended any chance of the FLP gaining any significant outside support. Compounding the FLP's impending doom was its financial woes. The Farmer-Labor Party's main source of revenue, its newspaper, *The New Majority*, was estimated to be *losing* one thousand dollars a month.[253] Robert Buck, a leader of both the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) and the FLP, devised a dues system to divert more money to the party, similar to the one established by the Nonpartisan League in North Dakota, but to no avail.[254] Another party leader, and primary party fundraiser, Charles Patrick Sweeney, charged that the FLP's finances were the main reason why the FLP had "not the ghost of a show to pile up a large vote."[255] Indeed, writing to Frank Walsh, Sweeney

[251] Walsh to La Follette Jr. Aug 13 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 9 Folder August 11-19, 1920.
[252] La Follette Jr. to Walsh. Aug 17 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 9 Folder August 11-19, 1920.
[253] McKillen, *Chicago Labor and Democratic Diplomacy*, 152.
[254] Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 20, 45.
[255] Robert M. Buck, "The Farmer-Labor Party," *The Nation* (August 7, 1920), 157; Sweeney, "The Farmer-Labor Campaign," *Nation* (September 25, 1920), 344.

claimed: "I'm certain we could get five or six million votes if we had even $150,000 to spend on publicity, literature, and organizing work in certain of the states."[256] But no influx of cash came.

The Chicago Federation of Labor, the FLP's main contributor, had by 1920 also involved itself deeply in campaigns to maintain the stockyard and packinghouse unions, organized during the war but under fierce attack now by employers, and the massive drive in 1919 to organize some 350,000 steel workers.[257] Both campaigns cost the CFL a great deal and both generally ended in defeat. The Chicago Federation often claimed the support of several state federations in the mid and pacific northwest.[258] What was unclear was the extent to which these federations had the support of union locals or especially the rank and file. Shortly after the Chicago Federation announced its full-throated support for a labor party, Fitzpatrick, Nockles, and their lieutenants sought to transform the Illinois Federation of Labor (IFL) into a statewide party nucleus. And though they ultimately succeeded in securing a labor party endorsement with a 333-38 vote at the 1919 IFL convention, several local leaders voiced their dissent.[259]

Despite the labor militancy of the post-war era, AFL stalwarts continued to stand firmly against forming a labor party. Edward Cook, a leader of the Chicago Teamsters and a delegate to Illinois Federation convention, stood wholly against a new party, adopting the AFL's initial argument that American labor had achieved economic gains by avoiding independent politics. "I am not now in favor of starting a new political party,

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[256] Charles Sweeney to Frank Walsh. August 29, 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 9 Folder August 20-31, 1920.
[257] Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 39, 43-45.
[258] McKillen, *Chicago Labor and the Quest for a Democratic Diplomacy*, 128-130, 143-144; Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics*, 282-283.
[259] Illinois State Federation of Labor, *Proceedings Thirty-Seventh Annual Convention* (Peoria: Edward J.Jacob, 1919), 55.

and never have been, within the State Federation of Illinois, and I was sorry to see it started in the Chicago Federation of Labor," Cook told his fellow convention delegates. "I do not think we can possibly afford to throw over our shoulders the wisdom of the pioneers of the American labor movement." Other delegates noted that the rank and file had varying political allegiances throughout the state and had decidedly not provided union leadership with a mandate to form a new party. James Reilly, a miner from Staunton worried that without a statewide referendum, the question would "cause fights" at the local and international level.[260] A machinist from Danville, Edward M. Methe, explained his situation succinctly, "If I vote for this I will be criticized in my organization. In the machinists' organization, if we have a proposition like this, we put it to a vote of the rank and file." The final vote on the measure demonstrated that dissenters were rare at least among local union leadership. It is possible that those in opposition had political allegiances of their own and were simply trying to stall a vote they could not win. But perhaps representatives like Cook, Reilly, and Methe did voice the greater concerns of the rank and file, who ultimately did not vote for either the Illinois or national Labor Party in great numbers.[261] The Illinois Federation of Labor appeared to be an epicenter of labor politics, but it hardly stood on solid ground.

Even if the Farmer-Labor Party could count on firm support from several state federations of labor, it failed to attract the sustained financial or moral backing of any major union international. Non-left leaders in the AFL remained uninterested in political

[260] Illinois State Federation of Labor*, Proceedings Thirty-Sixth Annual Convention* (Chicago: Faehse & Dienhart Co., 1918), 136-143.
[261] The FLP presidential ticket garnered just over two percent of the vote. Only in the two congressional districts (21st and 22nd) with a high number of union coal miners did FLP candidates break even ten percent of votes cast. House of Representatives, "Statistics of the Congressional and Presidential Election of November 2, 1920."

adventurism. While the Laborites would have rejoiced upon hearing the news that the United Mine Workers had adopted a resolution to form a new party at their September convention, the miners failed to deliver.[262] While there had always been socialists and other third-party advocates in the UMW, there had never been enough support to challenge the union's non-partisan policy. That changed in 1919. "The argument that is now heard is that within recent months organized capital has forced the fight all along the line," one reporter noted. "Labor leaders generally seem convinced now that neither of the older parties has proven itself labor's champion in the industrial battle now in progress."[263] The federal government's aversion to trade union plans for reconstruction continued to spark new militancy.

The committee had passed the new party resolution around the time Woodrow Wilson announced details for his "national industrial conference"-- a summit of labor leaders, industrialists, and public officials tasked with finding a path toward industrial peace. After seeing that the list of voting delegates included anti-labor business magnates like John Rockefeller and Elbert Gary, and that the rules included a provision that representatives of business could exercise veto power over any proposal, UMW delegates refused to attend. The UMW also passed the resolution before the rolling strike wave of

[262] The plank, passed unanimously in committee, read: "Whereas, the need of the times so far as labor is concerned is to organize our forces so that labor will be represented as it should be in the Congress of the United States and the legislatures of the various states, and we feel that this can be accomplished only by the organization of a labor party that will be representative of and under the control of the workers of hand and brain of the United States…" *Proceedings of the Twenty-Seventh Consecutive And Fourth Biennial Convention of the United Mine Workers of America Held at Cleveland, Ohio September 9, 1919* (Indianapolis: Bookwalter Ball Printing, 1919), 868-869.
[263] "Labor Party Imminent," *Baltimore Sun* (October 27, 1919), 2; "United Mine Workers to Launch Labor Party," *New York Tribune* (September 23, 1919), 5.

late 1919 to 1920 took place, before harsh federal reprisal sapped the union of members and dues.[264]

Perhaps the most important change, however, was the ascension of new UMW president, John L. Lewis in 1919. From the beginning of his forty years in power, Lewis wasted no time centralizing his authority and clamping down on dissident members. As David Montgomery writes, since the early twentieth century union miners "were more concerned with sustaining an effective fighting organization than with democratic procedures."[265] The international wielded exceptional decision-making power and most organizers and field representatives were appointed, not elected. Lewis spent the immediate post-war years attempting to strike a balance between militancy and survival. After the federal government lifted war-time price supports for coal and ended strict regulations on hours and wages, mine operators were once again free to bust organized mine workers with impunity-- often using armed thugs to do so.[266]

When Lewis finally called a strike over wages in the fall of 1919, Judge Albert Anderson enjoined the workers from doing so-- he claimed that wartime legislation making it illegal to interfere with the transport of fuel and food was still in effect. Though Lewis ultimately yielded and ordered union miners to stay on the job, hundreds of

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[264] David Montgomery, *Fall of the House of Labor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 385-395; McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, 123-128, 196-197.
[265] Montgomery, *Fall of the House of Labor*, 340.
[266] While sometimes violent strikes occurred anywhere coal mining took place, including southern Illinois, Kansas, and Alabama, the most well-known example of miner wildcat militancy took place in Matewan, West Virginia over the course of several months in 1921. There, more than ten thousand miners took up arms and determined to make war against the company. Harding put an end to the uprising by declaring martial law and detaching an armed regiment of the US army. Robert Weir, *Workers in America vol. 1* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 67-68; for more see: David Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners,1880–1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981); Robert Shogan, *The Battle for Blair Mountain* (Boulder: Westview, 2004); Lon Savage, *Thunder in the Mountain* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990).

thousands of miners refused to call off their strikes. In the following months, army soldiers and federal agents rounded up union officials and broke picket lines where they could. The situation became so unstable that Woodrow Wilson ultimately reconvened the war-time Fuel Administration and negotiated a wage increase. Over the next two years, Lewis managed to protect union wage scales, but at the cost of tens of thousands of members. Without the support of the federal government, locals facing hostile bosses often shuttered. Several coal companies also moved production south, particularly to Alabama, where several UMW locals had collapsed due to violent repression and heightened racial animosity between white and Black miners.[267]

The UMW's support for a new independent party was an early casualty of the union's new circumstances. Not all the rank and file took this in stride. An anonymous mine worker wrote to the international during the summer of 1920 questioning what happened to the resolution. The editors of the *United Mine Workers Journal*, proxies of the union's leadership, responded with a twofold argument. First, that the union was "not a political party adjunct" or "sideshow for any political party." This followed the AFL's general line, that independent politics could cost labor's ability to make economic gains. Second, that the political climate of 1920 was indeed not opportune for this kind of project. "It should be the plain duty of every member of the United Mine Workers first to give his whole attention to the upbuilding and protection of the union as a labor organization rather than to divide his talents between the union and something else," they

[267] Over the course of the 1920s, Lewis's weakened position lost him about 300,000 members, mostly in coal mining regions outside of Appalachia. [Montgomery, *Fall of the House of Labor*, 395-399, 408-409; McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, 206; William E. Leuchtenburg, *Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 75-76; Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 375-376; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 4-5; Letwin, Brian Kelly, *Race, Class, and Power in the Alabama Coal Fields* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); 132-203, Daniel Letwin, *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

wrote. William Green, the Secretary Treasurer for the AFL, and future successor to Sam Gompers, doubled down on this line. "Only those who are enemies of the workers or misguided theorists would favor a new and untried form of organization," he told his fellow members.[268]

For its part, the American Federation of Labor continued its rhetorical attacks on labor party politics. The Federation's executive council maintained the line it had since the boom of reconstruction plans at the end of 1918-- that third parties were divisive and would only serve to alienate labor from what friends it still had. The AFL leadership sympathized to an extent with labor radicals. Gompers, for instance, spoke regularly with John Fitzpatrick in coordinating the massive multi-state steel strike and publicly supported the right of all legitimate unions to strike for better contracts.[269] But the executive council drew a hard line between militancy on the shop floor and militancy at the ballot box. And when provided with an opening to encourage trade union leaders to follow a more conservative path, whether by intervening in elections or making public pronouncements in the press, the AFL leadership always took the opportunity.

In February 1920, the executive council formally created the National Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee (NNPCC)– an AFL agency with a small appropriation tasked with compiling voting data on politicians and encouraging its affiliate members to vote for acceptable candidates. Samuel Gompers himself helped direct the NNPCC. He tapped several of his loyalists like Frank Morrison, James

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[268] William Green, "The Bona Fide Labor Movement the Hope of the Workers," *United Mine Workers Journal* (September 1919) 802; "A Labor Journal's Duty," *ibid.,* (November 15, 1920), 7; "Political Party Freedom," *ibid.,* (June 15, 1920), 6.

[269] McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, 160-161; Barrett, *William Z. Foster and the Tragedy of American Radicalism* (Urbana: University of Chicago, 1999), 83-101; Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 39-44.

O'Connell of the Metal Trades department, and Sara Conboy of the United Textile Workers to assist him.[270]

The new committee sent out two circular letters to all internationals and state and local federations requesting that they form their own temporary committees dedicated to receiving and distributing NNPCC materials. These local committees would also decide their own best methods for encouraging union members to vote. "Labor can not, Labor must not, permit its political strength to be divided in the present crisis. Organized labor owes allegiance to no political party. It is not partisan to any political party," the committee's circular reiterated.[271] The committee would provide a list of candidates up for reelection, provide a list of their votes on relevant labor legislation, and, if their records were acceptable, encourage union members to offer their support. For challengers and new office seekers, the NNPCC would often send out a questionnaire or scour their campaign platforms to make a determination. The committee promised to weigh a candidate's record regardless of party affiliation.

Labor Party boosters questioned whether or not its candidates would qualify for AFL support. Could union locals and central bodies, in a situation where neither major party nominated an acceptable candidate, support a new ticket? Ed Nockels of the Chicago Federation of Labor certainly believed the FLP deserved Federation support. The CFL had complied with the Federation's request to establish a committee for

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[270] "Labor's Political Campaign," *American Federationist* (March 1920), 233-236.
[271] A.F. of L. National Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee to All Organized Labor, February 12 1920; A.F. of L. National Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee to All Organized Labor, February 20, 1920 (both located in AFL Executive Council Minutes of Meetings, February 24-28, March 1-3, 1920, American Federation of Labor Records: The Sam Gompers Era (Microfilm) Reel 6A.; AFL Executive Council Minutes of Meetings, February 24-28, March 1-3, 1920, p. 6. American Federation of Labor Records: The Sam Gompers Era (Microfilm) Reel 6A; American Federation of Labor, *Report of the Proceedings of the Thirty-Ninth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor* (Washington, D.C.: The Law Reporter Printing Company, 1919), 374-375.

political work, Nockels told AFL secretary Frank Morrison. But the CFL found no major party candidate worth supporting. All of greater Chicago's ten congressional representatives were "labor baiters" who were "financed fifty-fifty by Wall Street and the vested interests." In this case, the Federation's mantra to "reward" friends would be best fulfilled by voting for the Labor Party.[272]

Gompers did not respond positively. He accused Nockels of playing a dangerous game, splitting votes, and electing real "enemies of Labor" in Chicago. He further defended Illinois representatives Carl Chindbloom, Thomas Gallagher, Niels Juul, William Mason, John W. Rainey, and William W. Mason as having had a "fair labor record." The representatives may have voted in labor's favor on bills like the Clayton, Seaman's, or Adamson Acts, but they were not perfect candidates, Nockels replied. Four of these representatives had voted for the Esch-Cummins Bill to return railroads to private hands, he noted, and Rainey was friendly to Chicago's notorious packing industry. Labor Party candidates would be much more reliable. "We believe in voting for something we want even if we lose rather than to vote for something we don't want and win," Nockels wrote. Fitzpatrick, Nockels, and their fellow Labor Party boosters could not understand the Federation's desire to write them off entirely. "We did not force the consideration of the Labor Party upon you but you forced your national political program upon us," Nockels lamented, "and when we… state our desires to cooperate... we are administered a castigation which you might well pause and consider if you were directing it against the worst traitors to the labor movement."[273] Gompers issued no defense of the

[272] Nockels to Frank Morrison, March 10 1920. In *American Federationist* (May 1920), 438-439. Shapiro, *Hand and Brain* (Ph.D. Dissertation, UC Berkeley, 1967), 183.
[273] Gompers to Nockels March 16; Nockels to Gompers. *American Federationist* (March 25 1920), 439-440.

congressmen he listed, explaining that the Non-Partisan Political Committee had thoroughly researched the candidates and made sensible endorsements.[274]

The Executive Council continued to critique its opponents harshly throughout the election cycle. At one point, Gompers conscripted Algie Martin Simons, a former socialist turned pro-war Wilson loyalist, to theorize the "uselessness" of protest parties. "A labor party in America must always remain a protest party," Simons wrote. "Its main function will always continue to be to provide activities for politicians too small, fanatics too narrow and idealists too impractical to find a place in the real fight for power."[275] Nockels took to the *New Majority* and repaid these attacks in kind-- accusing Gompers of playing "Blind Man's Bluff" with the old capitalist parties.[276] The competing visions over labor's political future saw little common ground.

"No Longer a Tail on their Political Kite:" Opposition at the Grassroots

The Federation's executive council made similar attacks against the Labor Party in New York. As detailed in the previous chapter, New York's Central Federated Union (CFU) had enthusiastically thrown its weight behind the formation of a new party in 1919. Alternatively called the Labor Party of Greater New York or the American Labor Party, the CFU made up the heart of the venture.[277] After the AFL sent out its circulars on non-partisan action in February 1920, the CFU followed the Chicago Federation of Labor

[274] Gompers to Nockels, April 2, *American Federationist* (May 1920), 440.
[275] "A.M. Simons, "Uselessness of Protest Parties," *Am Fed* 331; Kent and Gretchen Kreuter, *An American Dissenter: The Life of Algie Martin Simons* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1969) xi-xii .
[276] "Mr. Gompers' 'Political' Method," *New Majority* (Feb 28, 1920), 4.
[277] As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Central Federated Union enthusiastically endorsed a labor party in January, 1919. They ultimately chose the name "American Labor Party" for their new movement. "Platform of the New 'American Labor Party,'" *New York Tribune* (January 19, 1919), C5.

and vowed to run independent candidates.[278] The CFU could no longer support Democratic and Republican candidates, it claimed. Its members needed a thorough and pro-worker reconstruction. "Only in the United States, where the workers and toilers waste their enormous political strength between the enemy parties, is organized labor despoiled of its right of free speech, free press, collective bargaining, free assembly, freedom to organize, and, if necessary, strike."[279] Gompers remained unconvinced. He insisted that union members preferred a non-partisan approach.

The following few months proved that Gompers had a point. While CFU leaders remained convinced that its members wanted a Labor Party, dissent amongst some of its affiliated members suggested otherwise. The trouble started after "conservative" New York trade unionists members raided a Central Federated Union meeting in May 1920. William Kohn, member of the Upholsterer's Union and chairman of the Labor Party, described the raucous incident at a subsequent press conference: "Men who had not appeared at the C.F.U. for months, men who had never attended and who had no legal right to vote were delivered to the Labor Temple in motor cars in approved Tammany style. The sergeant at arms was pushed aside and his place taken by a gang of intruders."[280] Edward Hannah, President of the CFU, alongside Edward C. Rybicki, head of Typographical Union no. 6, attempted to adjourn the irregular meeting, but a "crowd of husky delegates of the conservative faction" blocked the doors and refused to let them leave. Ultimately, the conservatives, headed by Peter J. Brady, a ranking member of the State Federation of Labor and the Allied Printing Trades, carried the vote to withdraw

[278] "C.F.U. to Support Labor Candidates," *New York Times* March 20, 1920), 11.
[279] J.C. Laue, "N.Y. Central Body Replies to Gompers," *New Majority* (March 27, 1920), 7.
[280] "Charges Campaign of Terror to Check Labor Party Growth," *New York Tribune* May 23, 1920, 7.

from the labor party 122 to 18.[281] A month later, Brady carried another vote to end any remaining financial support for the ALP. Even though CFU leaders called the meeting illegitimate, their opponents used the votes to sow confusion amongst the press and organized workers in the city.[282]

Labor Party leaders believed Gompers and the Executive Council orchestrated the coup at East 84th Street directly and many journalists present reported the same. The brawl "was said to mark the first step in a campaign to oust the radicals from control of the Central Federated Union in accordance with a program arranged by officials of the American Federation of Labor," reported the *New York Times*.[283] William Kohn referred to the intruders as Gompers's "gangsters" and noted that AFL organizer Hugh Frayne "watched the outlaw business with apparent satisfaction."[284] Kohn also made sure to tie the AFL to the city's notorious machine, announcing during a press conference that "The Tammany labor politicians have made a thriving industry of delivering the votes of working men to corrupt political parties owned and controlled by the arch-enemies of labor.[285] In reality, however, Gompers likely had little to do with the action and his interference with the CFU was limited. Opposition to labor party politics at the local level was strong enough on its own.

The main push against the CFU came from the Allied Printing Trades, a coalition of printing, bookbinding, and typographical unions. In the fall of 1919, as the economic contraction of the post-war era continued, the New York City-based Pressmen's Union

[281] "City's Unions Sever Labor Party Ties," *New York Times* (May 22, 1920), 5.
[282] "Unions Fight Labor Party, *New York Times* (June 26, 1920), 5.)
[283] "City's Unions Sever Labor Party Ties," *New York Times* (May 22, 1920), 5.
[284] "Charges Campaign of Terror to Check Labor Party Growth," *New York Tribune* (May 23, 1920), 7.
[285] "Anti Labor Party Men Raid New York C.F.U.," *New Majority* (May 29, 1920), 5.

no. 51 and Press Feeder's no. 23 struck for a forty-four hour week and a fourteen dollar a week raise. The internationals did not sanction the local strikes. By October 1, the representatives of the Printing internationals had denounced the rebellious locals as outlaws, under control by a "Bolshevist element." In a public statement, the Printers revoked the local's charters and called upon all unions affiliated with the AFL to withhold support and sympathy.[286]

Locals 51 and 23 found a solid backer in Typographical Union no. 6, a powerful New York union known locally as "Big Six." Hoping also for job protection, pay raises, and a shorter week, Big Six went out in sympathy with the pressmen. Edward Rybicki, a leading official in both Big Six and the Labor Party, introduced and passed a resolution pledging the Central Federation Union to tender "its sympathy and moral support in the fight of the allied printing trades of Greater New York for better working conditions and a living wage."[287] Responding to the resolution, Gompers preached restraint and urged the striking locals to accept arbitration. "The situation is part of the general fight all over the country to determine whether agreements are to mean what they say and are to be kept in good faith or are to be mere scraps of papers," Gompers claimed, "There can be no compromise on the issue of keeping contracts or on secession."[288]

By November, the strikers returned to work. Pressmen's 51 and Press Feeders 23 voted to rejoin the international and accept a smaller six dollar a week raise. Big Six attempted to salvage the strike and stay out longer, but they too eventually folded. The strikers could not find a sympathetic ally in the city. Behind the scenes, the Allied

[286] "Union Heads Oppose Strike of Printers," *New York Times* (Sep 19, 1919), 2.
[287] "C.F.U. Supports Outlaw Unions in Pressmen's Strike," *New York Tribune* (October 11, 1919), 2; "'Big 6' Rushes to Defence of Central Union," *New York Tribune* (October 15 1919), 6.
[288] "'Big 6' Rushes to Defense of Central Union," *New York Tribune* (October 15, 1919), 6.

Printing trades appealed to the city government, claiming that a prolonged strike would result in long-term printing contracts fleeing the city and decimating the industry. President of the Board of Aldermen Fiorello LaGuardia offered his services in bringing Big Six back to the table.[289] On November 23, the Typographical International mandated Big Six return to work and the local's membership voted three to one to comply.[290]

The Allied Printing Trades never forgave the Central Federated Union for its defiance, holding it responsible for the "failure to immediately unseat the local unions of Printing Pressmen and Feeders." Peter J. Brady, who would also lead the fracas at the CFU meeting the following May, brought a Printers' delegation to the AFL executive council and requested that the Federation intervene in a way to limit the power of radicals in the CFU. Brady suggested combining the labor federations of all five boroughs into one new organization. The Executive Council agreed and formed an official sub-committee. At the end of January 1920, Gompers declared that the merger would proceed.[291]

The AFL called the five New York City federations together for a convention in September 1920. The meeting was predictably tumultuous. Amid multiple fistfights one onlooker described the entire conference as a scene of "wild disorder." The particulars of disbanding the CFU and building the new Central Trades and Labor Council of Greater New York and Vicinity (CTL) were difficult for the delegates to agree on. Gompers' suggestion that Brady and New York State Federation of Labor president James P.

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[289] "Printers' Heads Here," *New York Times* (November 22, 1919), 8.
[290] "'Big Six' Accepts Anti-Strike Mandate," *Atlanta Constitution* (November 24, 1919), 3.
[291] AFL Executive Council Minutes of Meetings, December 11-18, 1919, 6, 49-50; "Four Big Unions To Be Merged Into One Central Body," *New York Tribune* (January 30, 1920), 5; C.F.U. Meeting Cool to Gompers Plan," *New York Times* (January 31 1920), 6; "Labor Chiefs Here Agree to Merger," *New York Times* (February 3, 1920), 40.

Holland, another noted labor conservative, join the committee of fifteen to draft the constitution for the new federated union sparked the initial bout of violence and disruption. Holland did little to allay the CFU's anger. "I know where the booing comes from, and I also know the reason," Holland told the hecklers, "I fought the Bolsheviki during the war and I will fight them as long as I live." Brady followed in theme, addressing the CFU's partisan politics directly: "I can see in this disturbance only disappointment because the labor movement is no longer a tail on their political kite. I will accept the appointment… and will do all I can to place the labor movement in New York City upon a plane of respectability."[292] If the radicals lost key battles in nominating for the constitutional convention, they showed some strength on smaller resolutions.

Two declarations, both introduced by the former CFU, reignited violence. The first offered to extend moral support to the British Trade Union Congress, which formed a "Council of Action" and threatened a coal strike if Lloyd George's government declared war on the Soviet Union.[293] The second issued a statement of support for

[292] "Riots Over Control of Big Labor Union," *New York Times* (September 11, 1920), 1.

[293] Between 1919 and 1920, the newly founded Soviet Union fought an armed conflict with Poland, a nation that sought to assert its independence from the former Russian and German empires. After a strong Soviet advance, the British government contemplated sending arms and potentially soldiers to anti-Polish forces. The British Trade Union Council, and its political arm, the British Labour Party, driven by both sympathy with the revolution and a desire to prevent the outbreak of another war on the continent, formed a "Council of Action" and vowed a general strike if Prime Minister Lloyd George sent the weapons or looked to intervene in any way. It is unclear just how much the Council of Action did to actually prevent a possible intervention in Poland. As numerous historians have pointed out, most of Parliament and George's cabinet opposed any escalation that would embroil them in further armed conflict. Regardless, Great Britain never intervened in Poland and the British Labour Party declared victory. It remains unclear if the councils succeeded in halting or limiting arms sent to Poland, or how much credit the councils deserve in ending the threat of further war. Editorials, *New Statesman* (June 24 1920), 433, 435; The Great Insurrection, *New Statesman* (August 21 1920), 540-542; Harold J. Laski, "British Labor and Direct Action," *Nation* (September 11, 1920), 291; Percy Sarl, "Labor Serves Ultimatum on British Government Against War on Russia," *Atlanta Constitution* (August 14, 1920), 1; "British Labor Council of Action," *Messenger* (October 1920), 102; Stephen White, "Labour's Council of Action 1920," *Journal of Contemporary History* 9 no. 4 (October, 1974), 99-122; L.J. Macfarlane, "Hands off Russia: British Labour and the Russo-Polish War, 1920," *Past and Present* 38 (December 1967), 126-152; Duncan Bowie, *Reform and Revolt in the City of Dreaming Spires: Radical, Socialist and Communist Politics in the City of Oxford 1830-1980* (London: University of Westminster, 2018), 150-151.

Terence MacSwiney, the Sinn Fein mayor of Cork, who languished through a hunger strike at London's Brixton jail. Both resolutions, not coincidentally, would have put the new body squarely in line with the British Labour Party.[294] Upon hearing these resolutions, the factions again turned on one another. Amid cries of "Red! Reds! Bolshevik! Lenin!" attendees gathered "chairs, cuspidors, and anything else that came handy" for the coming battle royale. Gompers, for his part, tried to maintain order, shouting until he was hoarse and reportedly smashing two gavels to splinters. "You are not reflecting credit either upon the labor movement or yourselves," he told them.

Demonstrating the political power the former CFU members held in the new organization, as well as the continuing general appeal of international reconstruction after World War I, both resolutions passed.[295] The resolution likely also received a boost from the strong presence of delegates of Irish and Jewish ancestry. Sympathy for Irish republicanism was strong amongst many immigrants and descendants of immigrants, including Frank Walsh, Dudley Field Malone, and Jeremiah O'Leary. Further, Jewish immigrants, many of them having left the Russian empire during the Pogroms of the 1890s, celebrated the downfall of the old Imperial aristocracy and the rise of a new Soviet government.[296]

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[294] Geoffrey Bell, *Hesitant Comrades: The Irish Revolution and the British Labour Movement* (London: Pluto Press, 2016), 125-146; Kevin Grant, *Last Weapons: Hunger Strikes and Fasts in the British Empire, 1890-1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), 70-99; Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People* (London: Methuen and Co., 1961), 553.

[295] "Police Quell Riot as Labor Forms Union," *New York Tribune* (September 11, 1920), 1; "Spit Threatened in Union Ranks Here," *New York Times* (September 14, 1920), 29; "Mr. Gompers and His Enemies," *New York Times* (September 13, 1920), 13; "Says Capital Plots to Intimidate Labor," *The Sun* (September 11, 1920), 2; "Riots Over Control of Big Labor Union," *New York Times* (September 11, 1920), 1.

[296] McKillen, "The Irish Sinn Fein Movement," *Labor*, 11-38; Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts*, 217-222.

These were, however, some of the radicals' last victories. When the Central Trades and Labor Council held its first election in December, thirteen of the fourteen elected positions went to candidates backed by Gompers and the State Federation of Labor. Thomas Curtis, who carried broad support for his work on the New York State Compensation Board, was the only Labor Party member to win a seat.[297]

The rise and fall of the Central Federated Union is an important example of the kinds of barriers independent Labor Party politics faced amongst organized labor after the war. While numerous studies have pointed to Gompers and the AFL's authoritarian methods of dealing with ideological opponents, the CFU case provides a slightly different interpretation.[298] The events follow somewhat in the track of what Joseph McCartin calls a "Thermidor" in "postwar intraunion politics."[299] No doubt, the AFL executive council opposed the radical stances advocated by the New York Laborites. Just as they did to their colleagues in Chicago, the AFL leadership launched public denunciations and

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[297] "Sullivan Elected Labor Council Head As a Conservative," *New York Tribune* (December 4, 1920), 18; "Conservatives Win New Labor Council," *New York Times* (December 4, 1920), 1; "Radical Labor Men Display Power in New Central Union," *New York Tribune* (November 7, 1920), 4; "First Ticket Named by New Labor Body," *New York Times* (November 7, 1920), 4.

[298] New Left historian James Weinstein writes that "Under steady and heavy pressure from Samuel Gompers and the AFL officialdom, many locals of international unions and, especially, the central labor bodies, had been pressured into withdrawing support." Julie Greene concurs. Responding to Dorothy Sue Cobble's assessment that the AFL had distinctly radical elements, especially in periods like the late nineteenth century and the years following World War I, Greene concludes that "A central dynamic in the history of the AFL was the effort by Samuel Gompers and other leaders to consolidate their power, ensure the dominance of their political and economic views, and suppress dissent— particularly from the Left." Though separate from the Federation's disdain for the Labor Party movement, there is little doubt that, as Jennifer Luff shows, that the AFL's executive council helped the federal government break the IWW and identify communist trade union leaders. Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism in America*, 273; Dorothy Sue Cobble, "Pure and Simple Radicalism: Putting the Progressive Era AFL in its Time," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History* 10 no. 4 (2013), 61-87; Greene, "Not So Simple: Reassessing the Politics of the Progressive Era AFL," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History* 10 no. 4 (2013), 106; McKillen, "The Irish Sinn Fein Movement and Dissent in America," *Labor* 16 no. 3 (September 2019), 28-33; Jennifer Luff, *Common Sense Anti-Communism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

[299] McCartin uses the example of the International Association of Machinists, a fairly progressive union, but one that had swiftly to isolate and undermine militant locals that had gone out on wildcat strikes after the war. McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, 206.

warnings at rallies and in print. Still, on balance, the Executive Council did little to directly undermine the CFU and its connection to the ALP. Rather, that pressure came from other locals and internationals who feared the CFU would compromise their ability to negotiate contracts and wield political influence. Put more succinctly, organized labor's rejection of labor party politics was not enforced entirely top down, indeed, in New York's case, much of the opposition came from labor's middle ranks and from below.

Seeking Outside Support: The Farmer Labor Party, Liberals, and the NAACP

The Farmer-Labor Party lost any meaningful support from organized labor and its former ally, the Committee of 48, but it did retain the support of the liberal press that had excitedly called for a new party since 1918. In the weeks before election day, the Farmer Labor Party received endorsements from the editors of *The New Republic* and *The Nation*. The staff at both publications were early proponents of international reconstruction and remained unable to support either the Democratic or Republican ticket. When it came to the pressing issues of labor relations, housing availability, and the impending coal shortage, Oswald Garrison Villard of *The Nation* editorialized, "They [Democrats and Republicans] are either ignoring them altogether or dismissing them with windy phrases and meaningless generalizations." Given the bankruptcy of both major parties, Villard ventured that liberals should "choose neither." Supposing that there was no "human probability" of either the Socialist Party or the Farmer-Labor Party winning

the election, he nevertheless asked his readers to vote for either to show interest in "a radical movement in America."[300]

Herbert Croly and his staff at the *New Republic* concurred with their colleagues at *The Nation* insofar that the upcoming election was hopeless: "Certainly, the possibility that we are in for a period of reaction, prolonged and untempered, must be faced by every progressive who sees no hope in Harding and has no faith in Cox." Unlike the *Nation*, however, the writers at *The New Republic* did not split their endorsement with the Socialist Party, but endorsed the FLP outright. The SPA's opposition to the war had damaged its chances for becoming a mass party, Croly claimed, and its belief in the ultimate extinction of capitalism was off putting to the majority of Americans. "It is a sect rather than a party," he wrote. "Its doctrinal basis has been long fixed, and however adroit the party statesmen may be in distinguishing between ultimate aims and immediate aims, and in adjusting the latter to the times, the fact remains that the ultimate aims act to repel from the party important elements whose support is necessary to the prosperity of any real third party." Unlike the socialists, the FLP had "no solid nucleus of zealous partisans, inured to discouragement and defeat."[301] A vote for the Farmer-Labor Party was a vote for the future.

These endorsements were some of the only ones the party ever received. The isolation and its effect on party morale was palpable. The FLP's main fundraiser, Charles Sweeney, could hardly drum up enthusiasm to run Christensen's campaign. "I don't know whether the thing is worth while or whether it isn't, " he wrote in a private letter.

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[300] "How Will You Vote," *The Nation* (September 4, 1920), 260; "Don't Throw Away Your Vote," *The Nation* (September 18, 1920), 314.
[301] "The Use of a Protest Vote," *The New Republic* (October 27, 1920), 204-205.

"If there were three or four people in it with pep and go I'd think more about it."[302] Frank Walsh, one of the country's leading exponents of "industrial democracy," who had, in March 1919, told attendees at a Chicago Labor Party rally that they were "the vanguard of the mightiest industrial army that ever swept through this world," planned to give his "protest vote" to Eugene Debs and not Parley P. Christensen. With the party hemorrhaging support, he had lost faith in the FLP's ability to sustain itself.[303]

Ranking members of the Farmer-Labor Party had, from the FLP's inception, attempted to draw women and urban African Americans to boost their voting base-- from the incipient days of the Chicago Labor Party onwards, official platforms and messaging supported racial and gender equality outright.[304] But by election day 1920, this strategy had shown only mixed results. Many in the FLP had hoped to keep civil rights near the top of the agenda as it met with the Committee of 48 to devise a new platform in the summer of 1920. In June, Toscan Bennett, eager to see the Labor Party take "an advanced stand on the negro problem," reached out to NAACP field director James Weldon

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[302] Charles Sweeney to Frank Walsh. August 29, 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 9 Folder August 20-31, 1920.

[303] Walsh to H.L. Fagin, October 11 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 9 Folder October 1-14, 1920.; "Labor Party is Mightiest Army," *New Majority* (March 15 1919), 1.

[304] With regards to racial equality, according to Mark R. Schneider, the Farmer-Labor Party, like the Socialist Party, "said nothing about African American rights," aside from how it pertained to the labor movement. A look into the NAACP's records casts doubt on this assertion. [Mark R. Schneider, (*We Return Fighting: The Civil Rights Movement in the Jazz Age* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 116.]

While William P. Jones refutes the assertion that the Socialist Party was vague on the race question in his 2008 article, "'Nothing Special to Offer the Negro,'" little has been written specifically on the Farmer-Labor Party and its approach to the color line. For primary source examples, see "Colored Workers Ask Equality in Unions," *New Majority* (June 21, 1919), 5; "Principles of the Labor Party Adopted at the National Convention, Chicago, November 25, 1919," (December 4, 1919), 8-9. William P. Jones, "Nothing Special to Offer the Negro," *International Labor and Working Class History* 74 no. 1 (Fall 2008), 212-224.

Elizabeth McKillen briefly discusses the Farmer-Labor Party's efforts "to attract women voters to the party," though does not investigate at length the actions and goals of FLP women. (McKillen, *Chicago Labor and Democratic Diplomacy*, 144.)

Johnson and invited the Association to send a representative to address the convention.[305] Johnson responded affirmatively and likewise hoped that the new party emerging from the convention would "mark an epoch in political history."[306] Unable to attend himself, Johnson sent Reverend Robert Bagnall, an NAACP organizer in Detroit, to observe and address both the meetings held by the Labor Party and the Committee of 48. Johnson was clear on what Bagnall's mission was-- he was not to offer any endorsement or support, but merely make a case for prioritizing the needs of Black Americans and observe the response. "It is needless for me to say that we do not contemplate obligating or pledging the National Association to either one of the political parties. Our mission is simply to state the Negro's case and cause and ask for a definite statement regarding the same in the various platforms."[307] Bagnall understood the mission and hurriedly departed for Chicago.

Bagnall had little reason to expect a racially progressive convention. Swinburne Hale, an attorney and committed 48er, expressed his concern to Johnson that some of his colleagues sought to "to side-step the negro question, which so far has been honestly faced in our platform."[308] He apparently reiterated these fears to Bagnall on his arrival. "Swinburne Hale said that there was a small reactionary group who wanted to dodge the Negro question for fear of alienating the Southern wing, but that he thought a good ringing speech would win the convention to commit itself to the cause of Negro

[305] James Weldon Johnson to Toscan Bennett, June 30, 1920; Toscan Bennett to James Weldon Johnson, July 2, 1920. NAACP Papers. Part I: Box C88 Folder: "Politics: Labor Party. June 30-Aug. 6, 1920."
[306] James Weldon Johnson to Toscan Bennett, July 6, 1920. NAACP Papers. Part I: Box C88 Folder: "Politics: Labor Party. June 30-Aug. 6, 1920."
[307] JWJ to Robert W. Bagnall, June 30 1920; JWJ to Rev. R.W. Bagnall, July 7, 1920. NAACP Papers. Part I: Box C88 Folder: "Politics: Labor Party. June 30-Aug. 6, 1920."
[308] Swinburne Hale to JWJ, July 7 1920. NAACP Papers. Part I: Box C88 Folder: "Politics: Labor Party. June 30-Aug. 6, 1920."

freedom," Bagnall reported.[309] Indeed, elements within the Committee of 48 had suggested burying calls for racial equality to preserve interest amongst white voters. Walter Jasper Spillman, a progressive from Missouri, wrote to Amos Pinchot that "If the party is to make any headway in the South, and it might just as well carry most of the Southern States as not, it must give the southern people assurance that they shall be allowed to maintain civilized government in that section."[310] Spillman's advice seemingly left an impact. Even after the 1920 election, as reconstructionists looked to the future, Pinchot looked south of the Mason-Dixon line for allies. "We ought not in my judgment to overlook the South," he wrote to Senator La Follette, "I am told that there is a widespread desire among people in the South, particularly in Texas, to get away from the Democratic party, but they will not go to the Republican party or any other party which threatens to raise the negro issue."[311] That such a large divide on racial justice existed with the Committee of 48 is unsurprising. Even during their political heyday, progressives were never of one mind when it came to race.[312]

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[309] Bagnall to JWJ, July 14, 1920. NAACP Papers. Part I: Box C88 Folder: "Politics: Labor Party. June 30-Aug. 6, 1920."
[310] Walter Jasper Spillman to Pinchot, November 23 1920. Pinchot Papers. Box 32 Folder November, 1920.
[311] Pinchot to La Follette, November 9 1920. Pinchot Papers. Box 32 Folder November, 1920.
[312] As Pero Gaglo Dagbovie claims, "The Progressive Era was synonymous with widespread Jim Crow segregation, unprecedented racial intolerance and violence." Indeed, most progressive reformers did little to address racial inequality. As Shelton Stromquist notes, the vast majority of settlement houses were segregated, many progressives, including Theodore Roosevelt, touted Booker T. Washington's notion of voluntary separation, and the Progressive Party of 1912 sidestepped race in an attempt to break the political section divide. Even the early members of the NAACP, which was integrated from its inception, could not agree on how far social equality should go. As Stromquist writes, "The racial gulf that separated the worlds of white and black reform reflected the dominant racial order of Progressive Era America. Few bridges crossed this racial divide. Ironically, as white reformers gained influence and widened the network of reform organizations… they did so by further marginalizing the cause of interracialism." Glenda Gilmore, in her case study of middle-class black women in North Carolina, finds that in rare instances when white reformers crossed the color line, mostly in regards to public health and education, it was only because black reformers forced their attention by highlighting common concerns. "Black women's task was to try to force those white women who plunged into welfare efforts to recognize class and gender similarities across racial lines. To that end, they surveyed progressive white women's welfare initiatives and political style and found that both afforded black women a chance to enter the political." Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 149-150; Stromquist, *Reinventing 'the People'*, 148-164; Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, "Reflections on the

The plea to avoid the "race issue" and embrace some form of white nativism was hardly unique to the 48ers. Basil Manly, the attorney who took over Frank Walsh's position on the National War Labor Board and was generally close to the militant wing of the AFL, briefly suggested in early 1920 that any new labor party should brand itself as the "American Party," and that it should adopt the slogan "America for Americans, not for Alien Labor or International Capitalists."[313] The Railroad Brotherhoods – unions of white engineers, trainmen, conductors, and firemen -- were not universally for a new party but were strongly for active political participation; they put maintaining a lily-white membership first and foremost in their charters and spent the years during and after the war vigorously enforcing racial hierarchy in their shops.[314]

During the 1920 nominating convention, the race question even threatened to derail Labor Party support for its ideal candidate, Robert La Follette. La Follette's platform, which called for large scale nationalizations and the universal right to organize and bargain, did not initially have a plank on racial equality. This omission caught the attention of AFT-leader Abe Lefkowitz and C.J. France, a Seattle Attorney, 48er, and brother of Senator Joseph France, a progressive Republican representing Maryland. Both men took the floor and condemned the lack of a firm equality plank, which they blamed on La Follette's desire for "political expediency" and white southern voters.[315] Gilbert Roe, La Follette's chief representative, insisted that the platform read to the assembly

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Conventional Portrayals of the African American Experience during the Progressive Era or 'the Nadir,'" *The Journal of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era* 13 No. 1 (January 2014), 22.

[313] Basil M. Manly to Frank P. Walsh. January 17 1920. Walsh Papers. Box 9. January 1-19, 1920.

[314] See Paul Michel Taillon, *Good, Reliable White Men: Railroad Brotherhoods, 1877-1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Eric Arnesen, "'Like Banquo's Ghost, It Will Not Down,': The Race Question and the American Railroad Brotherhoods, 1880-1920," *American Historical Review* 99 No. 5 (December 1994), 1601-1633; Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 5-41.

[315] "Salt Lake City Man Wins," *New York Times* (July 15, 1920), 1.

was hastily assembled and such a plank had simply not come up. Perhaps confirming Roe's telling of events, or at least demonstrating the limits of La Follette's expediency, the senator wired a telegram to Roe during the convention and personally approved the addition of a "color plank" to his original document.[316] Word of La Follette's change did not reach the entirety of the convention or the press. For months after the conference, left-wing circles talked about La Follette's omission. A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen reported in the September issue of *The Messenger* that the "alleged liberal" La Follette pandered to "the bloody shirt, mob law, disfranchisement, the jim-crow car of the backward, unprogressive and reactionary South."[317]

Regardless of this internal turmoil, Bagnall reported positively on his meetings with the Committee and the Labor Party. After receiving credentials, he attended the Labor Party convention and connected with Tarak Nath Das, a Bengali expat and leading spokesman for the Friends for Freedom of India, who gave, in Bagnall's report, a "splendid" speech.[318] The following morning he addressed the 48ers and told Johnson

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[316] Statement from Senator La Follette taken over the long distance at 1 PM today," July 1920. La Follette Papers. Box B180 Folder: "Committee of 48".

[317] "La Follette," *Messenger* (September 1920), 93.

[318] Many left-leaning circles in the United States expressed sympathy for Home Rule or independence in India after during and after World War I. The Chicago Labor Party, which was heavily Irish and sympathetic toward independence movements there, saw other anti-colonial uprisings across the British Empire as in league with their own. Robert Buck, editor of the *New Majority* published a public letter "To Workers in India," in which he encouraged Indians to join unions and form a labor party of their own and insisted that "The Labor Party of the United States wants all peoples to be free, and its heart goes out especially to India for the fearful persecution that the workers on India have suffered."

Tarak Nath Das was a frequent guest of the Labor Party, in print and in person. Das left India around 1905, after British officials targeted him for participating in the mass uprisings in protest of the partition of Bengal. Making his way to the United States via Japan, he attended the University of Washington and received a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Political Science. During World War I, though prior to the US entering as a combatant, Das attempted to muster German aid for a Indian revolution against British rule. Caught and prosecuted, Das served twenty-two months in prison for violating neutrality laws. He subsequently started his work toward a doctorate degree at Georgetown in 1919 and became a field secretary for the Friends of Freedom for India—an organization built to fundraise and raise American awareness of British misrule in India. The group was particularly active between 1919 and 1920 when anti-colonial agitation again reached major heights—culminating with a British-led massacre of civilians in the

that he was "greeted with a tumult of enthusiasm, hats turned in the air, standards waved, and prolonged applause." The Laborites reacted similarly: "This speech too was greeted with much applause, and a resolution immediately passed instructing the platform committee to insert a plank making lynching a federal offence." At a later private meeting with the Labor committee, Bagnall spoke of the NAACP's legislative concerns over "disenfranchisement, lynching, Jim-Crowing-here, and the state of affairs in Haiti." He approved of their suggested plank demanding equal suffrage and a withdrawal from Haiti, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines and Puerto Rico.[319]

Ultimately, Bagnall praised both groups, despite acknowledging their ideological differences, telling James Weldon Johnson that "Both conventions were seemingly very much advanced in their attitude on the color line; the one from a humanitarian viewpoint and the other from an economic standpoint." Bagnall also remarked on the integrated nature of both conventions, noting that the Committee of 48 had ten Black delegates and the Labor Party twenty-five. Though he did not believe the party had any chance of winning, Bagnall did hope for a good showing. "As protest groups," he added, "both are exceedingly interesting." He followed Johnson's orders strictly and promised no endorsement of their third party run, even if he did wish them well.[320]

Punjab city of Amritsar in April 1919. See, "Taraknath Das, Scholar, Political Scientist, Dead," *Washington Post* (December 26, 1958), B2; "Dr. Taraknath Das, 64," *New York Times* (December 30, 1958), 35; Ed Gammons, "The Tragedy of India," *New Majority* (August 23, 1919), 8; Robert M. Buck, "To Workers in India," New Majority (May 8, 1920), 8; Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London: Verso, 2019), 177-180; McKillen, *Chicago Labor and Democratic Diplomacy*, 186; Joseph Kosek, *Acts of Conscience: Christian Nonviolence and Modern American Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 81-82.

[319] "The Political Conventions," *Crisis* (September 1920), 230.

[320] Bagnall to James Weldon Johnson, July 14, 1920. NAACP Papers. Part I: Box C88 Folder: "Politics: Labor Party. June 30-Aug. 6, 1920."

The NAACP would maintain an interest in the FLP, but it was clear that the organization would not, and could not, persuade its sizable membership to support a party doomed to failure. In the months leading up to the election, Johnson and Bagnall were far from the only NAACP leaders to express discontent with the Republicans. Walter White, at this time Assistant Secretary, wrote a white Republican staffer that "the patience and faith of all the colored people of America have been sorely tried by the dishonesty of the Republican party." White demanded that only "positive action in correcting the evils of American life" would repair distrust.[321] W.E.B. Du Bois editorialized that he could not, in good conscience, endorse Harding since the Republicans had "for 25 years joined the white South in disenfranchising" Black voters. He also believed that the Republican platform represented "reaction and privilege." The Democrats, backed by the "solid South," of course meant "lynching, oligarchy, mob-rule, disfranchisement, systematic ignorance and rotten-borough voting." And while both the socialists and Laborites spoke "bravely" in defense of Black Americans, neither could win.[322] He ultimately backed away from endorsing any candidate.

Du Bois's dismay became only more acute after the election, when both the socialists and Farmer-Labor Party failed to attract even a modest protest vote. "The third parties have made a singularly spiritless campaign," he wrote. "Not the ultimate dogma of Marxian socialism or the undigested hodge-podge of Farmer Laborers sufficed." Pointing to his continued interest in international reconstruction, Du Bois also decried the radicals for not following the model of the "great Labor party of England and the right

[321] Walter White to C.P. Dam, March 2, 1920. NAACP Papers. Part I: Box C88 Folder: "Politics: Labor Party. June 30-Aug. 6, 1920."
[322] Du Bois, "Opinion," *Crisis* (September 1920), 213.

wing Socialists of Italy" closely enough. The groups needed to commit more time to organizing and make clearer and less dogmatic appeals to working people, he concluded.[323]

That the great majority of Black political energy had gone to the Republicans after all is no surprise. The Republican Party was favored to win and maintained its support for an anti-lynching law.[324] Du Bois himself acknowledged the Harding campaign's appeal in this regard-- citing the potential for further racial violence if African Americans did not have even the watered-down support the Grand Old Party offered. "Because of our defenseless position the triumph of one of the greater parties without our aid might be the signal for further aggressions upon our rights as citizens," he wrote.[325] 1919 had been an exceptionally deadly year for Black Americans. The Great Migration of Black people from the rural south into the urban north had resulted in fundamental change to the racial makeup of many American cities, and these changes sparked considerable racist violence.

The neighborhoods surrounding the stockyards of Chicago, where the racially progressive Chicago Federation of Labor had organized the Amalgamated Meat Cutters across the color line, had devolved into an orgy of violence after a white mob stoned a Black teen on Lake Michigan in late July.[326] The CFL, by this point already trying to

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[323] Du Bois, "Opinion," *Crisis* (December 1920), 55.
[324] Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 165-167; Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Hill and Wang), 232-273; Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: Haper Collins, 2009), 93-132; Ann Hagedorn, *Savage Peace: Hope and Fear in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster), 192-200; Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 211-213; Schneider, *We Return Fighting*, 172-193.
[325] Du Bois, "Opinion," *Crisis* (September 1920), 214.
[326] Hagedorn, *Savage Peace*, 312-318; Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 36-37; Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 362-365; Cameron McWhirter, *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 the Awakening of Black America* (New York: St. Martins, 2012), 113-161

recruit Black workers into the Labor Party, had tried to salvage the union and its reputation as a multiracial defender of the oppressed. To the Federation's credit, Carl Sandburg, a poet who launched a serialized investigation of the riot, defended the Amalgamated Meat Cutters-- interviewing Black members like A.K. Foote, who insisted: "I'll tell you the one place in this town where I feel safest is over at the yards, with my union button on. The union is for protection, that's our cry."[327] But these isolated efforts, and the successful wooing of Bagnall, Johnson, and Du Bois, did not result in Black northern workers voting for Labor Party candidates. Republicans held onto real levers of power and could plausibly offer protection.

The Republican Party in 1920 still offered some influential positions to influential Black leaders. The Lincoln League, organized by Robert R. Church Jr., was a highly successful Black political organization that recognized the benefits of voter mobilization on behalf of the Republican Party. Church, who inherited a sizable sum of money from his father, a freedman who acquired large tracts of property in Memphis during the 1870s, had formed the Lincoln League in 1916. That year, Church had registered more than ten thousand voters, many of whom he had welcomed in his "voter academies" that taught Black Tennesseans how to get around Jim Crow voting restrictions. The League adopted platforms related to defeating segregation in interstate travel, passing a federal lynching law, and voting restrictions. In 1918, the League elected Church to represent the tenth district at the state Republican convention and had defeated a "lily-white" faction of Republicans in the Shelby County elections. Gaining recognition for integrated "black-

[327] In a special proclamation preceding their August 9th issue of *New Majority*, Nockels and Fitzpatrick insisted that "Workers, white and Black, are fighting the same battle." Carl Sandburg, *The Chicago Race Riots July, 1919* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1919), 45-46

and-tan" factions of state and local Republican machines became a crucial goal for the Lincoln League.[328] By that time, the Lincoln League had gone nation-wide with a well-attended convention at the Iroquois Club in New Orleans in 1919. The meeting included not only Church, but Roscoe Simmons, a journalist and Booker T. Washington's nephew, and Albert Workman of the Longshoreman's Union and Tom Woodland of the Screwman's Union, at that time both prominent Black trade unionists in the Crescent City. Recognizing the significance of New Orleans in Black political representation, the League also named P.B.S. Pinchback, who served as the first African American governor of Louisiana during Reconstruction, as honorary president.[329]

After the Lincoln League's first nominating convention in February 1920, Will H. Hays, the Republican national chairman brought Church on as an unofficial advisor for the Harding campaign in 1920. Church's influence may have played a hand in a July 1920 speech from Harding strongly condemning lynching and race hatred. In return, Church helped deliver nearly 200,000 Black votes to Republicans in Tennessee alone. Harding gave him a position in the Republican Party where he dispensed federal patronage jobs in the South.[330] While the Lincoln League may have generated more votes than left-wing laborite movements, this did not mean that individuals did not find value in the Famer-Labor experiment. The vast majority of Black voters may have stuck with Harding and the Republican Party, but there were a few notable Black community leaders

[328] For an excellent summary of Church's struggle against lily-white Republicanism see, Elizabeth Gritter, *River of Hope: Black Politics and the Memphis Freedom Movement, 1865-1954* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 51-92.
[329] "Lincoln League Stirs South," *Chicago Defender* (28 June 1919, 1; Gritter, *River of Hope*, 51-68; Darius Young, "It is the Race's Own Organization:' Robert R. Church Jr., The Lincoln League, and the Politics of the Black Freedom Struggle, 1916-1920," *The Griot* 34 no. 1 (Spring 2015), 1-14.
[330] Gritter, *River of Hope*, 61; Darius Young, "It is the Race's Own Organization,'" 1-14.

who believed the Farmer-Labor Party offered a unique opportunity to push for political, social, and economic betterment.

The Friends of Negro Freedom (FNF), an organization brought together by Chandler Owen and A. Philip Randolph, but which also included Robert Bagnall on the Executive Board, stated in its founding document: "We urge that Negroes no longer base their political affiliation on that of their fathers, and until they are wholly satisfied that a political party represents their aspirations, their economic and social needs." The resolution also maintained that "Negroes who are chiefly workers, should therefore note that parties composed of large land-owners, manufacturers, bankers, railroad magnates, trusts, syndicates and monopolists cannot represent a race of workers."[331] Randolph and Owen were proponents of the Socialist Party, but were also sympathetic to the Farmer-Labor Party, which they saw as holding a reasonable stance on racial equality and industrial democracy.

The FNF refused to come out for Harding simply because it was "customary" to do so– the organization belonged solidly on the left.[332] Du Bois, too, made his antipathy known, citing the Republicans' tendency, since at least the McKinley administration, to bridge the sectional divide between North and South by accepting a lily-white party apparatus.[333] "The Republican party has for 25 years joined the white South in disfranchising us; it has permitted us to be 'Jim-Crowed', deprived of schools and segregated. It has partially disfranchised us in its party councils and proposes practically to eliminate us as soon as this campaign is over," he suggested.

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[331] "Resolutions of the Convention of the Friends of Negro Freedom," *Messenger* (September 1920), 89.
[332] Editorials, *Messenger* (November 1920), 127-129.
[333] Race and Reunion, Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 278-281, *Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 67-110.

Grace Wilson Evans and Mary Townsend Seymour were two Black women who bucked the Republicans specifically in favor of the Farmer-Labor Party. Little is known about Evans's time in the Farmer-Labor Party, though Bagnall believed she was crucial in early negotiations between the Labor Party and the Committee of 48. Evans was a leading member of the Terre Haute NAACP. In January 1919, she led an effort to desegregate the city's theaters. A few months prior to the FLP's convention, she had made Bagnall's acquaintance at the Association's annual meeting in Atlanta. Shortly after meeting Bagnall, the Indiana State Labor Party elected Evans to the Labor Party's National Committee-- a body that set the convention's agenda.[334] On this committee, Bagnall referred to Evans as "exceedingly influential." Evans sat on the inter-conference committee that had worked, ultimately unsuccessfully, to bring the 48ers and Laborites together. Writing a few days before the convention fell apart, Bagnall informed James Weldon Johnson that "If the two parties coalesce she [Evans] will be responsible for it, more largely than any other person." She had evidently succeeded, single handedly, in Bagnall's retelling, in convincing Amos Pinchot and one other "conservative" attendee to return after they had stormed out the amalgamation talks. It was also Evans, Bagnall reported, who had introduced him to Max Hayes and Toscan Bennett and issued him credentials to address the convention.[335]

It appears, however, that Evans's time in the Labor Party was short. She remained active in the NAACP, served as president of the Indiana State Association of Colored Women, and headed the Executive Board of the National Association of Colored

[334] "Honored By Labor Party," *Chicago Defender* (February 21, 1920), 1; "Theater Manager Sued," *The Indianapolis News* (January 29, 1919), 9.
[335] Bagnall to James Weldon Johnson, July 14, 1920. NAACP Papers. Part I: Box C88 Folder: "Politics: Labor Party. June 30-Aug. 6, 1920."

Women, though she left independent politics after 1920. By the mid 1920s, Evans worked on behalf of Republican candidates and by 1938 Evans ran the Indiana "Race Voters Bureau," the first woman ever to do so in the state. As she told the *Indianapolis Reporter*, "I am a simple Christian woman who labors untiringly in the interest of God, my family and the Republican Party." Indeed, her obituary in the *Chicago Defender* noted she was "the most outstanding woman of color in the Republican Party of Indiana."[336] More than likely, Evans left the FLP after it became clear there was little chance of achieving a permanent presence. Still, for a time, Evans was an indispensable member of the Labor Party.

Almost the same could be said about Mary Townsend Seymour.[337] Seymour was Vice President of the Hartford branch of the Connecticut NAACP and an energetic member of the state's labor party. She had earned her political stripes during the war. Deciding her city needed an organization to integrate Black migrants from the South into "total community life," she founded the Hartford Branch of the NAACP in her living room in 1917. The following year, Seymour addressed a meeting in Hartford and encouraged attendees to write to the Red Cross in protest of its exclusion of Black nurses on the Western Front. She quickly moved up the ranks of the NAACP and also in suffrage groups run primarily by wealthy white women.[338]

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[336] "Terre Haute G.O.P. Leader at Conclave," *Chicago Defender* (July 2, 1932), 3; H.E. Capehart, "Grace Wilson Evans Heads Indiana Race Voters Bureau," *Chicago Defender* (October 1, 1938), 17; Rebecca Stiles-Taylor, "Activities of Women's National Organizations," *Chicago Defender* (February 22, 1941), 17; Rebecca Stiles-Taylor, "Mrs. Grace Wilson Evans Noted Club Woman Dies," *Chicago Defender* (June 21, 1952), 8.

[337] For a short biography on Seymour see, Mark H. Jones, "'To Tell Our Story' Mary Townsend Seymour and the Early Years of Hartford's Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1917-1920," *Connecticut History* 44 No. 2 (Fall 2005), 206-223.

[338] "Co-Operative Mass Meeting at Zion Church," *Bridgeport Times and Evening Farmer* (December 15, 1919), 13; "Speaker Denounces Lynching of Negroes at W.C.T.U. Meeting," *Hartford Courant* (May 28,

Her connections to these reform circles likely put her in touch with Josephine Bennett, a suffragist, a member of Alice Paul's National Woman's Party, and one of the "silent sentinels" jailed for burning Woodrow Wilson's speeches in front of the White House in January 1919. Bennett's mother, Katherine Beach Day, was also active in the movement and was a founding member of Connecticut's NAACP as well. Josephine Bennett's husband, Toscan Bennett, a lawyer with a growing interest in post-war reconstruction, was an early leader in the Connecticut Labor Party (CLP) and the national Farmer-Labor Party. It was Toscan Bennett who initially communicated with James Weldon Johnson and asked him to send a representative to the Chicago convention.[339]

Through the Bennetts, Seymour became increasingly involved in the Labor Party and trade unions, more generally. Like in other states, trade unionists in Connecticut sought relief from the "imminent danger" posed by the "constantly increasing cost of living." Many of them believed that a labor party pledged to deliver price controls, union protections, and taxes on war profiteers might remedy the problem. The munitions workers of Bridgeport, who had threatened to strike multiple times during the war offered the most potent base of support. Toscan Bennet claimed that these workers founded the Connecticut Labor Party in September 1918– largely as the "result of their disillusionment in attempting to obtain justice from the government officials and due consideration of the demands which rose out of the munitions factories in Bridgeport."

1919), 7; "Socialists Protest Alleged Discrimination," *Hartford Courant* (July 3, 1918), 15; Frank T. Simpson, "They Seek Equity for All Our People," *Hartford Courant* (September 14, 1952), 6.

[339] "11 Women Sentinels Start Hunger Strike," *Atlanta Constitution* (January 10, 1919), 9; "M. Toscan Bennett, Connecticut Lawyer, Gets Paris Divorce," *New York Herald Tribune* (December 5, 1926), 10; "M. Toscan Bennett," *New York Times* (December 17, 1940), 25; "Farmer-Labor Party Names Mrs. Bennett to Run for U.S. Senate," *Hartford Courant* (September 3, 1920), 1; "Hartford Labor Party Starts in City Campaign," *Connecticut Labor Press* (January 14, 1921), 4; "I.S.S. to Discuss Russia at Its Parley Tonight," *New York Call* (June 22, 1920), 3.

After the armistice, when munitions contracts dried up, these workers raged at their loss of employment and, oftentimes, housing– Bridgeport employers had provided dwellings for employees new to the city. It was "frightful" to think that the Wilson administration would expend so much energy on peace in Europe and so little on the "starving" unemployed, one CLP advocate told the press.[340]

In 1919, Seymour won a seat on the Hartford Central Labor Union (a strong CLP booster) for her role in organizing a small tobacco workers local. The predominantly Black and female workforce approached the local NAACP over concerns of long hours and irregular pay. Rates for processed tobacco ranged widely by the day and even the hour-- workers simply did not know how much pay to expect each week. Seymour, determined to investigate the charges directly, "donned working clothes, entered the factory and for a time worked at tobacco stripping and stemming." She discovered that there indeed was no "regularity regarding payment." Josephine Bennett put Seymour in touch with organizers from the International Ladies Garment Workers for advice.[341]

Considering that both Josephine Bennett, a suffragist with labor connections, and the ILGWU helped Seymour organize tobacco workers in Hartford, it is unlikely that the National Women's Trade Union League was unaware of Seymour's campaign. The WTUL was also one of the very few predominantly white labor organizations to appeal directly to Black women workers. This likely had to do with the strong presence of women from the needle trades, one of the few unions to organize comfortably across

[340] "Adopts Resolutions for Labor Party," *Hartford Courant* (January 20, 1919), 8; "Wage Earners Constantly Chase Increase Costs in a Circle," *Connecticut Labor Press* (July 26, 1919), 4; "Party Stand is Revolutionary, I.S.S. Informed," *New York Call* (June 27, 1920), 3. McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, 143-145.

[341] William Pickens, "The Value of the N.A.A.C.P.," *Crisis* (June 1920), 87-88; Jones, "'To Tell Our Story," 215.

racial and ethnic lines.[342] The wartime labor shortage was so dire that Black women, whom business owners had systematically excluded from most industrial jobs, began filling several northern factories. These women workers were almost always the first to go as the war economy slowed and white men began returning home from the front--even before their white counterparts. Unemployment amongst Black women became so acute that the editors of the Trade Union League's monthly, *Life and Labor*, hired Forrester B. Washington, an Urban League organizer who had taken a job with the U.S. Employment Service, to write a reconstruction plan for "the Colored Woman." Forrester's report painted a dire portrait of mass unemployment and suffering, noting that despite often increasing industrial output in the factories that hired them, Black women were universally the first forced out the door. "If either the American employer or the American laborer continues to deny the colored woman an opportunity to make a decent living, the Bolshevik cannot be blamed for proclaiming their affirmation of democratic principles a sham," Forrester concluded.[343]

Ultimately, Seymour's local only organized sixty-two dues paying members and broke under employer pressure after a year.[344] Seymour kept her seat in the central union, however, and worked diligently to keep African-American issues on the Connecticut Labor Party's agenda, telling NAACP field director William Pickens, who wrote an enthusiastic article on Seymour, "Not a month goes by that I have not taken the *Crisis* and read some article to the Central Labor Union, sometimes racial, sometimes on

[342] Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 81-83.
[343] Forrester B. Washington, "Reconstruction and the Colored Woman," *Life and Labor* (January 1919), 3-7.
[344] Jones, "'To Tell Our Story,'" 215-216

labor."[345] For her efforts, the Farmer-Labor Party nominated her for public office twice. In the spring of 1920, the Labor Party endorsed her for a seat on Hartford's board of education-- Josephine Bennett helped her win campaign support from the National Women's Party and the Hygiene, Health, and Culture Club as well.[346] And in the fall, the Labor Party nominated her to run for the Connecticut state legislature. That endorsement put her on the front page of the *Chicago Defender's* pre-election issue. "She is proud of the Race to which she belongs, and has done a great deal for the women in her city," the editors remarked. "She has stopped dishonest employers from exploiting among women employees. She is the only woman member of the race who is out for a seat in any state legislature."[347] Seymour thanked the editors for the spotlight, insisting that Black voters learn to shuck the Republican Party: "Somehow we, as a people, must begin to learn that the color of our skin and the texture of our hair must not always determine our politics. We evidently have a long way to go though. Why not be Negroes first, party after that."[348] Unlike Evans, it is unclear whether or not Seymour went into the Republican Party. She ran for Connecticut Secretary of State in 1922 again on a Farmer Labor Party ticket. In 1924, Seymour attended the NAACP's annual convention where she presided over a discussion on "Meeting the Challenge of the Klan." That convention also recommended the NAACP make inroads to the Conference for Progressive Political

[345] William Pickens, "The Value of the N.A.A.C.P.," *Crisis* (June 1920), 87;
Johnson, Charles. "The Negro Population of Hartford, Connecticut". Department of Research and Investigations of the National Urban League, New York, 1921. Connecticut State Library. Available from the Trinity College Digital Repository, Hartford, Connecticut (http://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu).
[346] "Indorsed for Education Board," *Chicago Defender* (March 27, 1920), 18; "Trend Towards Republicans is Early Indication," *Hartford Courant* (August 7, 1920), 1.
[347] The Crisis falsely reported that Seymour was a US congressional candidate. "Candidate for Connecticut Legislature," *Chicago Defender* (October 30, 1920), 1; "The Horizon," *Crisis* (December 1920), 79.
[348] Mary Townsend Seymour, "Editor's Mail," *Chicago Defender* (November 20, 1920), 16.

Action, the body that would inherit the Labor Party mantle and orchestrate the La Follette presidential run that year. She remained active in the NAACP until her death in 1957.[349]

That both Seymour and Evans lost their elections is not surprising; likely few anticipated a victory. Rather, both were examples of the changes in Black political life in the post-war reconstruction era. The Farmer-Labor Party reached out to established Black political organizations, primarily the NAACP, and occasionally found an energetic and receptive audience. The FLP's reach with Black supporters was not as effective as party organizers hoped for, but these small organizational efforts set future alliances in motion. The NAACP leadership involved itself much more directly in the La Follette campaign of 1924, largely because of Mary Townsend Seymour, Robert Bagnall, and W.E.B. Du Bois, all of whom were third party boosters sympathetic to a labor party.

Rose Schneiderman and the Limits of Women's Participation in the FLP

Evans and Seymour's cases also reflect the growing role of women in reconstructionist labor politics during the Postwar Era. Many prominent women activists were, after the war and the ratification of the nineteenth amendment, eager to organize women both in the workplace and the polling booth.[350] The National Women's Trade

[349] "Negro Woman on Party Ticket," *Savannah Tribune* (October 12, 1922); "Coolidge Sends Greetings to N.A.A.C.P. Delegates," *Chicago Defender* (July 5, 1924), 3.

[350] For examples on women and post war labor reform, maternal and child and protections, and political mobilizing left and right, see Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Robyn Muncy, *Relentless Reformer: Josephine Roche and Progressivism in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 97-142; Eileen Boris, *Making the Woman Worker: Precarious Labor and the Fight for Global Standards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 17-53; Dorothy Sue Cobble, "A Higher 'Standard of Life' for the World: U.S. Labor Women's Reform Internationalism and the Legacies of 1919," *Journal of American History* 100 No. 4 (March 2014), 1052-1085; Suellen Hoy, "Sidelined: The Chicago Women's Trade Union League in the Interwar Years," *Labor* 15 no 4 (December 2018), 13-36; Amy Aronson, *Crystal Eastman: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 223-242; Kirsten Marie Delegard, *Battling Miss Bolsheviki: The Origins of Female Conservatism in the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

Union League, in particular, hoped that independent politics would sweep working women into positions of power. The League, with its strong connections to its sister organization in Great Britain, was one of the earliest and most vocal proponents of reconstruction and a labor party in the United States. This enthusiasm lasted throughout 1919 and into the summer of 1920, but ultimately waned by election day. The WTUL like the NAACP sought greater relevancy and political capital and were therefore intrigued by the sentiment of a new party that seemed to prioritize their interests. Not only did the FLP put women like Schneiderman, Seymour, and Evans into public-facing roles in a way both major parties had been very hesitant to do, but the new party appealed to the League ideologically. "Every mother of children who need her care should be able to remain at home with them, and industrial legislation should provide for this," WTUL member Margery Currey wrote. "The Labor Party in carrying out its platform will see that it is so."[351] The Farmer-Labor Party offered labor women support for the protective legislation they sought, and also provided opportunities to run as candidates for office at the state, local, and federal level. No doubt, the FLP hoped to win over wage-earning women in return.

By the end 1919, the WTUL had moved even closer to international reconstruction. In October of that year, the League hosted the International Congress of Working Women, which attracted delegates from most western European nations. Small delegations from Cuba, Argentina, and Japan attended as well. The Congress eventually

[351] Margery Currey, "The Labor Party for Women," *Life and Labor* (March 1919), 64; Suellen Hoy, "Sidelined: The Chicago Women's Trade Union League in the Interwar Years," *Labor* 15 no 4 (December 2018), 13-36.

formed the International Federation of Working Women (IFWW).[352] The body proposed a litany of reform measures ranging from the eight-hour day and forty-four hour week to more open borders and state-run health insurance. League president Margaret Drier Robins also encouraged WTUL participation in the International Labor Organization, a body formed parallel to the League of Nations and often flaunted by Gompers as a truly liberal solution to advance the cause of labor on a global scale.[353] WTUL members like Rose Schneiderman believed both international connections and a domestic labor party remained vital for workers. These international congresses could help women in the American labor movement figure out how to best harness the spirit of reconstruction.

Schneiderman's campaign, however, demonstrated the many barriers women in the movement faced. By nominating her for US Senate in New York, the FLP made Schneiderman its most prominent woman member. She had name recognition and, at least theoretically, the support of her base in the needle trades. By election day, however, it became all too clear that the Farmer-Labor Party was not willing to dedicate any of its meager resources to Schneiderman's campaign. According to Schneiderman, even when donations for her campaign came in, they were often funneled to Dudley Field Malone, a liberal attorney who had served as a federal official for the Port of New York under Wilson, who was running for governor under the FLP banner. An Irish Catholic and

[352] For details on the IFWW, see Dorothy Sue Cobble, "A Higher 'Standard of Life' for the World: U.S. Labor Women's Reform Internationalism and the Legacies of 1919," *Journal of American History* 100 No. 4 (March 2014), 1052-1085; Aronson, *Crystal Eastman*, 238, 270; Boris, *Making the Woman Worker*; Elizabeth McKillen, *Making the World Safe for Workers: Labor, the Left, and Wilsonian Internationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 181-207.
[353] On women and the ILO, see Aronson, *Crystal Eastman*, 238, 270; Boris, *Making the Woman Worker*; Elizabeth McKillen, *Making the World Safe for Workers: Labor, the Left, and Wilsonian Internationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 181-207.

vocal proponent of independence from Britain, Malone had the potential to siphon votes from Tammany Hall.[354]

As Schneiderman recalled in her memoir, she discovered only after the election that Dorothy Payne Whitney, a philanthropist who had helped found the *New Republic* and the New School for Social Research, had "contributed a thousand dollars" toward her campaign. Schneiderman claimed she "was not told about it" and instead "the money was used to print posters of Malone." Indeed, the entirety of Schneiderman's campaign support came from her network of New York women reformers. Her partner and colleague Maude Swartz, a longtime veteran of the suffrage movement, secretary of the New York Women's Trade Union League, and future New York Department of Labor official during the depression, virtually ran her campaign single handedly. Swartz and Schneiderman traveled across New York's boroughs, touring factories to have the women workers take photos with the candidate, and generally attempting to "offset the campaign of silence inaugurated" by the press.[355] On one particularly good day, Swartz had found a sympathetic and wealthy woman who had "shown her independence" and allowed the pair to use her automobile to make multiple campaign stops. Ultimately, Schneiderman polled around 28,000 votes-- a dismal result, but still nearly ten thousand more than the FLP received from the state on the presidential line.[356]

[354] Walsh to Malone, August 21, 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. Box 9 August 20-31, 1920.
[355] Geneva M. Marsh, "Campaigning for Senator with Rose Schneiderman," *Life and Labor* (December 1920), 303-305
[356] House of Representatives, "Statistics of the Congressional and Presidential Election of November 2, 1920.

Conclusion

When the dust settled after the 1920 election, the Farmer-Labor Party won less than 300,000 votes-- about one percent of the total vote cast. Despite the FLP's best attempts to present itself as a better left-wing alternative to the Socialist Party, it could not match one third of the SPA's anemic nine hundred thousand votes.[357] The slight disparity likely came down to having Eugene V. Debs, a well-known figure and a symbol of anti-war resistance and federal repression, as its standard bearer. As Max Danish, editor of the Ladies' Garment Worker magazine *Justice* wrote, Debs was the candidate of Americans "who fell upon the fields of France" and the "candidate of all the tortured and martyred conscientious objectors."[358]

In the election's aftermath, the *New Majority's* editor, Robert Buck, wasted no time lambasting the "helpless voters" who "stampeded" to Warren G. Harding. Bitter that Christensen had not only underperformed, but that not a single Farmer-Laborite had won a federal election, Buck surmised that the voters "didn't give a damn. They wanted to punish the Democrats and the only sure way, since Wall street finances and maintains two old parties on fake issues to keep the workers divided-- the only sure way to hammer Wilson and the Democrat party and Cox over the head was to vote for Harding."[359] Buck had a point about punishing "Wilson's Party." The election was nothing short of a repudiation of Woodrow Wilson's handling of the immediate post-armistice era. His support for the League of Nations had alienated all sorts of non-interventionist voters

[357] McKillen, *Chicago Labor and Democratic Diplomacy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 156.
[358] Max D. Danish, "The Last Week of the Campaign," *Justice* (October 29, 1920), 2; "Our Candidates," *ibid.,* 4. Ernest Freeburg, *Democracy's Prisoner: Eugene V. Debs, The Great War, and the Right to Dissent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).
[359] "Democrats Buried in Big Landslide," *New Majority* (November 6, 1920), 1.

nation-wide, many of whom kept him in the White House in 1916 when he promised to keep America out of a European war.[360] Further, his support for the Treaty of Versaille offended both German Americans, who felt the treaty's proposed reparations and territorial concessions harsh on their country, and Irish Americans, who resented that Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom.[361] Domestically, the Democrats had not planned for economic reconstruction. As agricultural prices plummeted and industrial leaders sought to make up for demobilization by cutting jobs and slashing wages, laborers, both skilled and unskilled, and farmers looked to exact revenge.[362]

A short-lived body, the FLP failed to change the political landscape-- at least directly or substantively. Historians have been mostly content with a single explanation for the FLP's ineffectiveness and collapse: a doctrinal dispute within its ranks, the American Federation of Labor's open hostility to the project, or a failure to properly differentiate itself from American socialism. These explanations are valid, but limited.

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[360] Even WTUL president Margaret Drier Robins, originally a Labor Party backer, ultimately voted for Harding because of Wilson's acquiescence on barring Germany, Austria, and the Soviet Union from the League. See Michael Kazin, *War Against War: The American Fight for Peace, 1914-1918* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 58-145; Hoy, "Sidelined," *Labor* 15 no 4 (December 2018). 22.

[361] Douglas B. Craig, *After Wilson: The Struggle for the Democratic Party* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 15-29; McKillen, *Chicago Labor and Democratic Diplomacy,* 166-192; McKillen, *Making the World Safe for Workers: Labor, the Left, and Wilsonian Internationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 152-207.

[362] The collapse of the post-war economy was indeed devastating for American workers. As wartime inflation continued to soar, industrialists refused to raise wages to match—instigating strikes in virtually every major sector. As early as February 1919, nearly one hundred thousand workers walked off in Seattle alone, sparking a general strike. Hundreds of thousands more workers would follow suit in the coming months. Many small farmers, by 1920, had also found themselves overextended in acreage, material, and debt. In North Dakota, twenty-six banks collapsed by 1921. Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 347-349; Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy*, 231; Theodore Saloutos and John D. Hicks, *Twentieth Century Populism: Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West, 1900-1939* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1951), 538-539; Russel B. Nye, *Midwestern Progressive Politics: A Historical Study of Its Origins and Developments, 1870-1958* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), 295-297. For case studies on laborers and the post-war economy, see Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 243-252; Peter Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive-Era Philadelphia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 111-127.

Internal ideological differences went far beyond small disagreements and indeed the hostility demonstrated by men like Amos Pinchot and George Record presaged progressive-liberal critiques of the New Deal some fifteen years later. Further, while the AFL's executive council was no friend to the trend toward labor parties, a push from trade unionists and councils at the local level proved to be more consequential.

But while the Farmer-Labor Party failed to last as an institution, its legacy endured. Some individuals typically excluded from formal labor and political circles, Black women especially, found opportunity in the Farmer-Labor Party, ultimately, the party's meager resources could not maintain the level of excitement generated by the beginning of 1919. The FLP did help bring several reformers together for the first time. The party helped the WTUL engage in electoral politics, eventually bringing the organization into the Conference for Progressive Political Action and the 1924 La Follette campaign and later into adult education and Brookwood Labor College. The FLP also provided some in the NAACP with an avenue to connect civil rights, the labor movement, and independent politics in a way neither major party offered.

Perhaps most importantly, the Farmer Labor Party, through its failure, convinced post-war reconstructionists that their political goals could not be accomplished with an independent party-- at least not at a national level. While the FLP groped for a foothold before election day, organized labor and its progressive and liberal allies worked to achieve the same goals of industrial democracy and a more egalitarian society without creating a new party– choosing instead to found militant political action committees like the Plumb Plan League and Conference for Progressive Political Action to "capture" state and local parties for their own purposes. What the FLP's collapse represents was the end

of electoral radicalism brought on by the end of the war. The 1920 elections provided the first test for reconstruction, and the methods utilized to bring it about were experimental and disorganized. As the next chapter will demonstrate, the FLP was only one aspect of reconstruction and by no means signaled the end or even the highwater mark of postwar interest in social democracy or labor's involvement in electoral politics.

Chapter 3: We Utter "Jericho": Labor and Politics After the Armistice

This chapter attempts to reconstruct organized labor's political ventures during the 1920 election season. Though many historians point to the post-war era's unprecedented unrest in the nation's factories, mills, mines, offices, and workshops, fewer have looked toward labor's campaign to seize the ballot box. Unwilling to surrender its wartime gains and profoundly influenced by the rise of European working-class political insurgencies, particularly the spectacular electoral growth of the British Labour Party, the AFL and Railroad Brotherhood's constituent internationals directed their members to not take an active role in electioneering.

Outright campaign victories were few, but many results were encouraging. Labor candidates swept the mayoral and council offices of many towns and small cities, elected congressional representatives from the great plains to the Lower East Side, and came within striking distance of winning a handful of state gubernatorial and senatorial contests as well. Importantly, the 1920 campaign proved to Federation and Brotherhood leaders, as well as to politicians like Robert La Follette, who hoped to capitalize on labor's ambitions, that a non-partisan strategy remained the best way forward.

These lessons resulted in labor fine tuning its political structure. The Conference for Progressive Political Action, American labor's first real attempt at a permanent and independent body to coordinate political work, came directly out of the 1920 campaign. So too did the People's Legislative Service, a think tank managed by former War Labor Board head Basil Manly, chaired unofficially by La Follette, and underwritten by the Machinists and Locomotive Engineers. The 1920 election season was a turning point. From the late nineteenth century until the formation of the War Labor Board in 1918, the

majority of American labor leaders remained indecisive, leery, or ambivalent toward permanent political involvement on a national level. After the war, many in the American Federation of Labor concluded that workers needed to elect candidates dependent on their votes– only then could they be sure of a politician's loyalty to the movement.

Of course, 1920 was not the first time the American Federation of Labor launched a political crusade. It was during the 1906 campaign that Gompers coined the AFL's perennial phrase, "reward our friends and punish our enemies," to describe the AFL's non-partisan strategy. Also in 1906, Gompers, Morrison, and the rest of the Executive Council published a *Bill of Grievances*, designed as a document to guide its members, which outlined ten of their most pressing political concerns.[363] The Federation converted its news organ, *The American Federationist*, into a chronicle of its political efforts, used its printing presses to turn out educational material by the thousands, and hired nearly forty full-time organizers to traverse the nation and assist labor-backed candidates. An underwhelming result forced Gompers and the executive council to reconsider their strategy. The AFL once again threw itself into the fray in the 1908 election, but this time to fully support William Jennings Bryan's third presidential campaign. Bryan's loss resulted in retreat with the Federation shifting toward lobbying for labor legislation like the Clayton Act. While labor showed strong support for Wilson in 1916, it was less the result of Federation-backed organizing and more the efforts of the Democratic Party, which promised more support, and the energetic campaigning of Frank Walsh, who

[363] Their grievances included the enforcement of the eight hour law for government contractors, an end to forced conscription of Seaman, prohibition of prison labor, a bar to new immigration, and limits on the use of injunction; Julie Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics: The American Federation of Labor and Political Activism, 1881-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 108-109; "Bill of Grievances," *Samuel Gompers Papers Project*. <http://www.gompers.umd.edu/Bill%20of%20Grievances%201906.htm#:~:text=Recently%20the%20President%20issued%20an,any%20improvement%20in%20their%20condition.>

assured workers that another four years of Wilson would bring about a permanent Committee on Industrial Relations, a congressional subcommittee that investigated labor disputes and recommended government-backed bargaining rights. In the remaining Gompers years between 1908 and 1925, historian Julie Greene writes, "Popular mobilization of AFL members, and the highly political posturing by Gompers that accompanied it, never dominated AFL politics the way they had between 1906 and 1908."[364]

Gompers personally failed to drum up the same enthusiasm for political action as he had in years prior. By the war's end he remained a loyal democrat who was, understandably, more concerned with preserving union strength on the shopfloor. But he also understood the necessity of a political drive to stave off imminent reaction. The Federation's post-war political involvement significantly outpaced its 1906 record. While only fifty internationals sent representatives to draft the *Bill of Grievances*, well over one hundred sent delegates to a similar drafting conference in 1919. Further, while official expenditures for the AFL's 1906 campaign totaled only $8,225.94, the same receipts totaled $53,439.45 in 1920-- three times as much, adjusted for inflation.[365] Perhaps most importantly, the Federation could count on more supporters. Not only had its ranks grown during the war, the Federation had made common cause with the independent Railroad Brotherhoods. Though the Brotherhoods had stood alongside the AFL in supporting Bryan in 1908, their participation in that election cycle was half-hearted.[366]

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[364] Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics,* 225.
[365] $241,868 compared to $683,710, adjusted for inflation via measuringworth.com. New York State Federation of Labor, "Report of Secretary-Treasurer," *Official Proceedings Fifty-Eighth Annual Convention* (Albany: New York Federation of Labor,) "Non-Partisan Campaign of 1920," 24-26.
[366] Even though Greene writes that the Brotherhood delegates attended the Federation's 1908 campaign planning conference, she argues that the railroad unions stood apart from direct campaigning until 1916,

A nuanced discussion of the changes labor underwent in the 1920 election adds important context to the larger discussion of working-class engagement with and investment in liberal democracy. Historians have long been interested in labor's relationship to electoral politics and the state. As Joseph McCartin argues, since the late 1980s, historians have increasingly critiqued works that "romanticize shop floor militancy" and hold high the "great upheaval" as offering an alternative to industrial capitalism-- preferring instead interpretations that recognize "nuanced patterns of conflict and accommodation." Scholars including Philip Taft, Shelton Stromquist, Michel Taillon, Dorothy Sue Cobble, Julie Greene, Michael Kazin, and Leon Fink have all produced work dispelling the notion that late nineteenth and early twentieth century labor was in any way apolitical or disinterested in participating in electoral politics.[367] Almost all of

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when the promise of the Adamson Act for the eight-hour day won their loyalty. Peter Taillon concurs with this assessment. Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics,*156, 262; Taillon, *Good, Reliable White Men*, 183-188.

[367] During the late nineteenth century, the Knights of Labor encouraged its members to engage themselves politically. Across the nation, workers affiliated with the Knights of Labor committed to electoral work, uniting toilers on a program of curbing the abuses of industrial capitalism and advancing a cooperative commonwealth. From the 1870s through the early 1890s, KoL members demonstrated pockets of local electoral strength, winning even a mayoral stint in Kansas City, Kansas, and, in a few western states, helped the Populists win state and federal elections. The Knights, however, seemed to only ever engage in political work at the local level and proved to be mostly unhelpful partners in coalition with the Populists. Still, the Knights did manage to mobilize some workers across ethnic lines to work political angles for economic change. As Leon Fink argues, "Born in the locally bounded world of the nineteenth century, the Knights of Labor struggled to come to grips with a dynamic corporate capitalism that transcended local community authority and its sanctions." The building trade unions in San Francisco had better luck at the ballot box.

At the turn of the century, craft unions briefly held much influence in city hall and sent John Nolan, a Republican iron molder to congress for five terms. Nationally, the American Federation of Labor, with the exception of the elections of 1906 and 1916, spent most of its political capital lobbying congress for legislative relief from the use of strike-breaking injunctions, immigration restriction, and the eight hour day for American workers building the Panama Canal. In New Orleans, dock workers found support in the city's Democratic Party Machine. Similarly, as Michel Taillon shows, union members on the nation's railways used their position as vital transport workers, and leveraged themselves as "good, reliable, white men," as opposed to "socialistic" organizations like Eugene Debs's American Railroad Union, to win passage of the 1898 Erdman Act, which encouraged government arbitration for Brotherhood Unions, and the 1916 Adamson Act, which granted railroad workers the eight-hour day. The Brotherhoods did not, however, prioritize direct electoral action until the war era. During this era, the Socialist Party claimed to be a political vehicle for the working class, though outside Milwaukee could only reliably count on the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers to supply meaningful numbers of votes.

these studies end their analysis immediately after World War I, when reaction ushered in labor's "lean years."[368] Most historically-minded articles discussing labor's efforts focus on the 1940s through the 1980s, when the AFL and CIO built political action committees and called upon their millions of organized workers to construct, maintain, defend, and revive the New Deal Order.[369] The inter-war period remains a somewhat blank slate in regards to labor politics.

See Philip Taft, *Labor Politics American Style: The California State Federation of Labor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1983), xvi; Michael Kazin, *Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building Trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America's Empire at the Panama Canal* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009); Paul Michel Taillon, *Good, Reliable White Men: Railroad Brotherhoods, 1877-1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Charles Postel, *Populist Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015); James Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969); David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1955); Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 237-244.

[368] In his 1987 essay, "Thinking about American Workers in the 1920s," David Montgomery stresses the "more continuous lines of social and political developments between the world wars" and points to the limited utility of labor historians viewing the two decades of the interwar era as entirely dichotomous. Since then, historians on the American working class have been increasingly less bound to Irving Bernstein's categorization of the twenties as "the lean years" and the thirties as "the turbulent years." For instance, Greene's *Pure and Simple Politics* includes an epilogue describing labor's political ventures during the twenties, Doug Rossinow, in his book *Visions of Progress*, similarly describes post-war Farmer-Labor formulations, and Lizabeth Cohen views the twenties as an era of working-class culture formation necessary to the explosion of unionization in the following decade. Still, most labor scholarship continues to represent the twenties as either an endnote to the tumultuous post-war era or as a quiet bridge to the raucous Depression years. David Montgomery, "Thinking about American Workers in the 1920s," *International Labor and Working-Class History* No. 32 (Fall 1987), 4-24; Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics*, 274-286; Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 103-142; Sharon McConnell-Sidorick, *Silk Stockings and Socialism: Philadelphia's Radical Hosiery Workers from the Jazz Age to the New Deal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

[369] For an overview of CIO-PAC, see Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 177-188; For recent studies on postwar labor politics, see Robyn Muncy, "The Strange Career of 'the Working Class' in US Political Culture Since the 1950s," *Labor* 15 No. 4 (December 2018), 37-58; Thomas W. Devine, *Henry Wallace's 1948 Presidential Campaign and the Future of Postwar Liberalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Nelson Lichtenstein, "Labor, Liberalism, and the Democratic Party: A Fruitful but Vexed Alliance," *Making Sense of American Liberalism* eds. Jonathan Bell and Timothy Stanley (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012); William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2013); John D'Emilio, *Lost*

This chapter begins with a debate between Samuel Gompers and Kansas Governor Henry J. Allen. After the war, Allen created a state-run "industrial court" to mediate labor-management disputes. The court's decisions would be binding. Allen's law made him a national celebrity and brief Republican presidential contender. Both progressive and conservative Republicans saw the court an effective way maintain labor peace. Gompers worried that the law would lopsidedly favor business owners seeking to save costs and drive down wages. Without the strike weapon, labor could be purely at the whims of unfriendly politicians. The episode highlighted just how dire the post-war environment had become for labor– and how important it had become to elect politicians who supported collective bargaining and defended the right to strike.

Following this opening section is an analysis of the Plumb Plan for government ownership of the rails, which, more than any other worker-driven initiative, united organized labor behind a common political agenda. In 1919, the Railroad Brotherhoods

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Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 417-439; Lane Windham, *Knocking on Labor's Door: Union Organizing in the 1970s and the Roots of a New Economic Divide* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Matthew Pehl, "'Apostles of Fascism,' 'Communist Clergy,' and the UAW: Political Ideology and Working-Class Religion in Detroit, 1919-1945," *Journal of American History* (September 2012): 440-465; Alex Lichtenstein, "Putting Labor's House in Order: The Transport Workers Union and Labor Anti-Communism in Miami during the 1940s," *Labor History* 39, No. 1 (1998); Keona K. Ervin, *Gateway to Equality: Black Women and the Struggle for Economic Justice in St. Louis* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2017); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," JAH (March 2005), 1233-1263; Eric Arnesen, "Reconsidering the Long 'Civil Rights Movement'," *Historically Speaking* (April 2009), 31-34; Katherine Turk, *Equality on Trial: Gender and Rights in the Modern American Workplace* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Kim Phillips-Fein, *Fear City: New York's Fiscal Crisis and the Rise of Austerity Politics* (New York: Picador 2017); Daniel Soyer, "Executed Bundists, Soviet Delegates and the Wartime Jewish Popular Front in New York," *American Communist History* 15 no. 3 (2016), 293-332; Joshua B. Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II* (New York: The New Press, 2000); Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010); Elizabeth Tandy Shermer and Nelson Lichtenstein (eds.), *The Right and Labor in America: Politics, Ideology, and Imagination* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Timothy J. Minchin, *Labor Under Fire: A History of the AFL-CIO since 1979* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Joseph McCartin, *Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers, and the Strike that Changed America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Jennifer Delton, *Rethinking the 1950s: How Anticommunism and the Cold War Made America Liberal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

and the American Federation of Labor sponsored a joint statement of purpose, titled *Labor's Bill of Rights*. That document opened nearly a year of grassroots campaigning in states the AFL and Brotherhoods deemed symbolically important: Iowa and Wisconsin, where Senator Albert Cummins and Representative John Esch, authors of the Transportation Act returning railroads to private ownership, had their seats; West Virginia, where reactionary coal operators threatened total control over the state's politics; and, of course, Kansas, where Governor Henry J. Allen faced reelection. This chapter will pay close attention to both labor's local initiatives and the high-level machinations of the AFL, Brotherhoods, and their allies in government to elect friends and eject their foes from office.

The Grandstander and Doctor Frankenstein

On May 28, 1920, nearly three thousand people buzzed excitedly as they crowded the sidewalks around Carnegie Hall. Those who had purchased tickets in advance counted themselves lucky. A few hundred more hopeful spectators waited eagerly as fire marshals argued with event promoters over possible standing room. Long lines on seventh avenue were a familiar sight on Friday nights, but the evening's event was not the usual concert or theatrical production. Rather, attendees traveled to midtown Manhattan that day for a debate between Samuel Gompers, the longtime head of the American Federation of Labor, and Henry J. Allen, the governor of Kansas. The Press Debates Association contracted the two to speak on whether labor in "crucial" industries had the legal, and moral, right to strike. Eager journalists stalked the venue, likely wondering what Allen would say to defend curbing one of trade unionism's foundational tenets. They also pondered how Gompers could convince a worried public that a strong

labor movement was not only just, but necessary. With an upcoming slew of primary and statewide elections, the debate appeared to be an opening salvo in labor's campaign to restore its voice in representative government and claw back its wartime gains. The host of the evening's performance, former judge and 1904 Democratic presidential nominee, Alton B. Parker, took to the stage and thanked everyone for their patience. With a flair for the dramatic, he explained to the audience that the evening's proceedings would "command at the outset wider consideration by both the press and the people than the famous Lincoln-Douglas debate."[370] Perhaps the attendees believed they were witnessing history.

New York City itself served as a fitting backdrop for the evening's topic. If anyone in the audience had traveled from New Jersey or the outer boroughs, or had simply walked the few blocks to either the Hudson or East River, they would have seen congested ports, piled cargo, and hundreds of picketers nearby. Since March of that year, thousands of New York's waterfront workers, with aid from Teamster-affiliated truck drivers, had quit work for a pay raise. Like almost all waged employees, inflation had all but wiped out their wartime cost of living adjustments.[371] The disruptive strike was

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[370] "Boos and Cheers Mark Gompers-Allen Debate; Right to Strike Is Issue," *New York Tribune* (May 29, 1920), 1; Governor Allen and Gompers Debate Kansas Law and Labor's Right to Strike," *New York Times* (May 29, 1920), 1; "In Duel of Words Gov. Allen Meets Samuel Gompers," *Atlanta Constitution* (May 29, 1920), 1; *Debate Between Samuel Gompers, President American Federation of Labor, and Henry J, Allen, Governor of Kansas, at Carnegie Hall, New York, May 28, 1920* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1920), 1-2; "Flood of Answers to Gov. Allen Concerning Labor and the Public," *New York Call* (June 8, 1920), editorial; "Unionist and Capitalist Speak Through Gompers and Allen," *New York Call* (May 29, 1920), 2.

[371] As mentioned in the last chapter, runaway inflation was a leading cause of worker discontent. Wages no longer matched the precipitous rise in consumer prices. Nell Painter, *Standing at Armageddon* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 347-349; Michael Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy: the Nonpartisan League in North American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 231; Theodore Saloutos and John D. Hicks, *Twentieth Century Populism: Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West, 1900-1939* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1951), 538-539; Russel B. Nye, *Midwestern Progressive Politics: A Historical Study of Its Origins and Developments, 1870-1958* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), 295-297. For case studies on laborers and the post-war economy, see Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New*

increasingly unpopular amongst the city's residents. Shipping companies told New Yorkers that to raise longshoreman salaries the Interstate Commerce Commission would have to increase the minimum freighting rates, which could pass the financial burden onto consumers.[372] Moreover, strikers had occasionally prevented incoming shipments of staple foods, like eggs, milk, poultry, and butter for days at a time, creating panics over looming shortages.[373] New York's business elite, operating largely out of the local Chamber of Commerce and Merchants Association, threatened the maritime workers with an open shop. They also warned that "volunteer" citizen brigades would begin delivering the halted cargo to the expecting vendors. Merchants Association president, William Fellowes Morgan, claimed to have the names of four hundred volunteer shippers who would begin moving cargo if the mayor could "guarantee entire security of movement and ample police protection for truck drivers engaged in the movement of freight to and from the steamship lines named." Within a few weeks, Morgan hoped to

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Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 243-252; Peter Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive-Era Philadelphia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 111-127. This economic distress was a global phenomenon and led to worker uprisings in Europe, Australia, and Asia as well. See, James E. Cronin, "Labor Insurgency and Class Formation: Comparative Perspectives on the Crisis of 1917-1920 in Europe," in *Work, Community, and Power: The Experience of Labor in Europe and America, 1900-1925*, eds. Cronin and Sirianni (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 20-48; Shelton Stromquist, "Domestic 'Dogs of War' Unleashed: The Comparative Fates of Municipal Labor and Socialist Politics in the United States and Australia during the Great War," in *Frontiers of Labor: Comparative Histories of the United States and Australia*, eds. Stromquist and Greg Patmore (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 61-81; Robin Archer, *Why Is There No Labor Party in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 1-22.

[372] "Governor Offers Aid for Pier Pay; Men Defer Action," *New York Times* (June 3, 1920), 1.

[373] "Harper Men Strike, Tying Up Ferries; Food Cut Off," *New York Tribune* (April 2, 1920), 1; "'Butter-Egg' Strike Ended By $5 Rise," *New York Times* (April 16, 1920), 1; "Pier Unions Reject Plea of Governor," *New York Tribune* (June 5, 1920), 1.

raise five million dollars to organize a "Citizens' Transportation Committee" on a permanent basis.[374]

While labor leaders, including Gompers himself, maintained that the strike would cease within hours if company executives and government overseers negotiated in good faith, capital remained recalcitrant. With no clear end in sight many of these business owners looked to political solutions to their vexing labor problem. By April 1920, the Merchants Association, likening the tie up on the docks to the 1894 Pullman Strike, hoped the federal government would once again use the courts to arrest strike leaders and force an end to the unrest. Morgan asked President Wilson to engage the "appropriate departments of the Government to take such action as shall bring this intolerable situation to an end. Until it is terminated by the forces of law the people of this city will suffer from a partial stoppage of their food supplies and will be burdened as they now are by ever-increasing prices due to unlawful restriction."[375] Amidst the ongoing chaos, New York's business class saw hope in Henry J. Allen.

Five months prior, Governor Allen had effectively outlawed strikes for food, clothing, and fuel workers in his state, establishing an "industrial court" to arbitrate disputes instead. Allen's plan rationalized industrial conflict, providing for governor-appointed judges to investigate workplace grievances and issue decisions that would be

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[374] "'Butter-Egg' Strike Ended By $5 Rise," *New York Times* (April 16, 1920), 1; "Seek $5,000,000 to Fight Strikes," *New York Times* (June 4, 1920), 1; for an overview of the longshore worker economy at the end of World War I, see Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 204-252.

[375] "Merchants Appeal to the President," *New York Times* (April 17, 1920), 4. Federal courts ordered the American Railroad Union to quit its boycott of Pullman cars and arrested ARU president, Eugene Debs, when he refused to comply. For decades, business leaders invoked Pullman to enlist the federal judiciary against striking workers, while labor unions pointed to the event as indicative of the federal government's antipathy to collective action. William E. Forbath, *Law and the Shaping of the American Labor Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 73-78.

binding on both parties.[376] Allen's law offered the nation's business community the legislative solution to labor unrest that they had been looking for.

Politically, the 52-year-old Allen was a rising star. For decades he had earned his living as a newspaper editor with a generally progressive outlook. He supported trust-busting and limits on monopoly, advocated for both prohibition and women's suffrage, and in 1912 followed Teddy Roosevelt into the "Bull Moose" Progressive Party. Six years later, the Kansas Republican Party nominated Allen for governor while he was on the western front in France. During the war, Allen managed the Red Cross's communication network in Paris and directed YMCA activities for the 35th army division. Allen later claimed that he only learned of his successful election after leaving the front to check on his office in Paris the day before the armistice.[377]

A little over a year later, this time in Topeka, the new governor faced a different kind of relief crisis: a labor-induced fuel shortage during a particularly harsh winter. The showdown brought him face to face with United Mine Workers District 14 president, Alex Howat. Kansas had a small domestic coal industry centered in the state's southeast corner. District 14 followed its fellow unionized coal miners in Illinois, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, in a massive strike wave beginning in the fall of 1919, and stayed out well after President Wilson offered arbitration in November, against the wishes of UMW President John Lewis.[378] Howat stood defiant even after federal judge

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[376] Leon Fink describes the court as a "three-judge panel charged with adjudicating disputes respecting wages, hours, and working conditions in any business 'clothed with a public interest." Leon Fink, *The Long Gilded Age: American Capitalism and the Lessons of a New World Order* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 112-113.
[377] Henry J. Allen, *Unpublished Autobiography of Henry J. Allen*. Allen-Holmes Collection. Kansas Historical Society. Box 2 Folder 23. Digitally available https://www.kansasmemory.org/.
[378] David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 385-399; Joseph McCartin, *Labor's*

Albert B. Anderson passed down a court-ordered injunction that permitted law enforcement to arrest any striker.[379]

Amidst the struggle, Allen organized volunteers, many of them war veterans, to work the mines themselves. Howat called Allen's actions "a blot on American history and a disgrace to a great republic."[380] Personally visiting the Pittsburg mines, Allen hired a motion picture crew to show him working alongside his volunteers and had the reels played in theaters across the state. The miners derided Allen as a "grandstander" who "continually pranced forth and back between the camera and the scabs."[381] By mid-December, however, the unionized miners returned to work. Pressured by the Wilson administration, which promised meaningful wage increases, and by the United Mine Workers International, which was unsure of its ability to win a nation-wide coal strike, District 14 could simply not afford to continue its fight-- though wildcat strikes would plague the state's industry for years to come.[382]

With the strike over, the governor easily signed his new "industrial court" bill into law. He heralded the legislation as a solution to damaging labor unrest, which would

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Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 125, 196.

[379] The Food and Fuel Control Act, or the Lever Act, was a 1917 law designed to halt interruptions in food and fuel production. At first, the Wilson administration used the act to settle disputes in favor of the UMW, but turned its mechanism against the union after the war. "Strike Formally Called Off in Federal Court," *Workers' Chronicle* (November 21, 1919), 2; "Labor Defies the Government," *Workers' Chronicle* (November 14, 1919), 2; McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, 75, 124 Montgomery, *Fall of the House of Labor,* 387, 402.)

[380] Mrs. L.C. Laswell, "Communication," *Workers Chronicle* (December 12, 1919), 3; "State's Action Only Strengthens Miners," *The Workers Chronicle* (Pittsburg, Kansas: December 5, 1919), 1.

[381] "Allen-- Grandstander," *Workers' Chronicle* (December 5, 1919), 1; "The Allen Movies No Hit at Wichita," December 26, 1919, 2.

[382] "Miners Will All Be At Work By First of Week," *Workers Chronicle* (December 12, 1920), 1. Montgomery, *Fall of the House of Labor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 385-399; Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 375-376; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 4-5; Letwin, Brian Kelly, *Race, Class, and Power in the Alabama Coal Fields* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 132-203, Daniel Letwin, *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

benefit all good-faith actors involved. "Today all over this land there are men who demand that such government as Lincoln loved should be destroyed and who would rear in its place a government by intimidation and violence," asserted the governor as he introduced his bill. "It is of the utmost importance that we should wade into the fact that the battle is not alone between employer and employee. It is between government and those classed minded organizations which seek to supplant it."[383] His stand against organized labor garnered national attention. Hiram Johnson, California Senator and Republican presidential hopeful, told William Allen White, a famed newspaper editor from Emporia, that he was "very, very fond of the governor." So fond, that he hoped Allen would consider a run for federal office.[384] In April, Allen traveled to Atlantic City as an honored guest at the Chamber of Commerce's national convention. During his speech to the Chamber, he claimed to be "pro-labor," but he also flatly denied AFL Vice President Matthew Woll's claims to patriotism. "Go ask Mr. Gompers about [labor's] connection with communism and bomb-throwing," he shouted at the long-time trade unionist. Woll had attended the Chamber's convention in an demonstration of good will to show that the Federation was not anti-business. He could have been none too pleased at the result.[385]

The consequences of Allen's "despotic" legislation horrified Gompers. "Kansas can not legislate men into serfdom," he claimed. "Kansas can not enact a measure that will compel workers to accept at par a dollar worth fifty cents."[386] He fully understood

[383] "Industrial Court Needed Says Governor in Message," *Western Kansas Journal* (January 8, 1920), 6.
[384] Hiram Johnson to William Allen White, December 8, 1919. William Allen White Papers. *Library of Congress*. Box C48, Folder, Johnson, Hiram.
[385] "U.S. Chamber Members Hiss A.F. of L. Chief," *New York Tribune* (April 30, 1920), 2.
[386] Samuel Gompers, "Editorials," *American Federationist* (February, 1920), 155-156.

the growing threat of nation-wide anti-strike laws. By taking away labor's most potent weapon and giving state-appointed bureaucrats absolute authority to resolve disputes, there would be little to stop unsympathetic governments from depressing wages and compelling trade unions to accept lackluster contracts. If Allen went unchallenged, more state governments could declare open war on labor.[387] The upcoming debate provided Gompers a chance to fight back on a national level, to defend labor's interests in the war of public opinion. By the spring of 1920, trade unions had only limited support from a general public wary of shortages and increasing prices. With his court, Allen promised a *seemingly* equitable solution to the problem of work stoppages— his scheme for forced arbitration could easily spread nationwide, especially if Republicans captured the White House and both houses of Congress.

Clearly, both sides knew the stakes. Not only did the Chamber of Commerce and Merchant's Association fete Governor Allen, R.J. Caldwell, a New York-based cotton merchant on the board of no less than seven manufacturing, shipping, and investment firms, chaired his debate committee.[388] Caldwell had recently published a paper titled "Industrial Democracy in Great Britain and Its Lessons for America," which argued that, by striking, organized labor would succeed only in "raising prices on itself." At some point, he believed, workers would see cooperation with employer-run councils as the only sensible choice. Caldwell made a tour around greater New York, reading his paper to

[387] Samuel Gompers, "Toilers, Sanctify Your Vote," *American Federationist* (August 1920), 745.
[388] R.J. Caldwell, "How Great Britain is Financing Half a Million Homes," *Industrial Management: The Engineering Magazine* (February 1, 1921), 106. Caldwell had recently become US Industrial Commissioner to Europe. Around 1920, he was Chairman of the Connecticut Mills Company, Canadian Connecticut Mills, Knitted Padding Company, Taunton Cotton Mills, Salt River Valley Cotton, Seaboard National Bank, and Continental Clay Company. Harding would appoint him as Chairman of industrial relations for the Republican National Convention.

interested audiences at National Civic Federation events.[389] Big business was very invested, ideologically and financially, in Allen's performance.

Organized labor reviled Allen and hoped for a rousing sortie from Gompers. But so too did reformers like Frank P. Walsh, an attorney and former National War Labor Board co-chair, who became almost single-mindedly focused on defeating Allen's law. As head of the Labor Board, Walsh supported mechanisms for government arbitration, but he believed *forced* and *binding* arbitration, coupled with a prohibition on striking, would do little to prevent labor stoppages and do everything to repress unionization and expand existing inequalities. Stirred to action, he traveled personally to Topeka shortly after the legislature passed the bill to "fire the first gun in the fight."[390] While there he met with several officials of the Kansas Federation of Labor, including Alex Howat. He believed Howat, who told him "If the organized workers of Kansas submit tamely to this law I am fully convinced that, in a few short years, they will enslave the working class of America with this same law by having it adopted in the various states throughout the country."[391]

For much of the debate, Gompers made the same defense of organized labor that he had for decades-- that halting one's labor was an inalienable right for American working men. He referred to strikes as "axiomatic" -- stoppages would occur at work so long as unfair conditions did. No law would ever stop labor unrest, but would only serve to make criminals of "honest, patriotic citizens." This resultant criminalization of working men was not worth the relatively few strikes the industrial court might prevent,

[389] "Labor Leader Stirs Speakers at Davison Home," *New York Tribune* (September 7, 1919), 4.
[390] "Oppose Every Part But Its Purpose," *Workers Chronicle* (January 9, 1920), 1.
[391] Alex Howat to Frank Walsh, February 14, 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 9. Folder February 2-14, 1920.

Gompers argued. "I agree that strikes and cessations of work are uncomfortable, make for inconvenience," he told the crowd, "but my friends, there are some things worse than strikes, there are some things worse than cessations of labor, and among them is a degraded manhood."[392] His point was simple, the United States constitution could not compel free citizens to work and, therefore, had no authority to prohibit strikes.[393]

Allen, in response, placed his law squarely in the trajectory of progressive era reform. Just as the Pure Food and Drug Act protected Americans from unsanitary foods, the creation of the Federal Reserve stabilized investment banking, and women's suffrage expanded the franchise to newly eligible voters, his industrial court would rationalize labor relations and protect the public from harmful disruptions. The governor spent most of his time convincing the audience that his industrial law protected both civil liberties and democracy. In his view, the overwhelming majority of Kansans were the victims of a senseless class war between industrialists and union workers. "Society in Kansas is stratified according to the following percentages," Allen explained. "At the top, possibly 1 ½ percent of employing capital… At the bottom 5 ½ per cent, representing organized labor… In the center, is ninety-two per cent, representing us-- a good-natured, protoplasmic mass, having no power save the good-natured power of passive resistance." Indeed, he claimed both industrialists, who profited from inflated prices, and workers,

[392] William E. Forbath, *Law and the Shaping of the American Labor Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 156-158; "In Duel of Words Gov. Allen Meets Samuel Gompers," *Atlanta Constitution* (May 29, 1920), 1; "Governor Allen and Gompers Debate Kansas Law and Labor's Right to Strike," *New York Times* (May 29, 1920), 1; "Boos and Cheers Mark Gompers-Allen Debate," *New York Tribune* (May 29, 1920), 1.
[393] *Debate Between Samuel Gompers, President American Federation of Labor, and Henry J, Allen, Governor of Kansas, at Carnegie Hall, New York, May 28, 1920* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1920), 2,17. 38-48.

who demanded continuously higher wages, were equally "guilty of unspeakable profiteering" during and after the war.[394]

Reflecting his progressive background, the governor recounted the various ways in which the state increased its regulatory powers for societal good. Full of zeal and near messianic fervor, he claimed that liberal government had, since the nation's frontier days, "done away with every other conflict from duelling to fist fighting" and substituted law in order in their stead. The state served to right wrongs, his new court could step in on the factory floor and the mines as well, Allen insisted. Throughout the evening, he did his best to avoid the word "arbitration," which he knew labor looked upon with suspicion.[395] "It is not a court of arbitration or conciliation," he assured the skeptical. "It is a court of justice, and its aim is to protect labor against capital, capital against labor, and the public against them both or either of them." It would be true economic justice for all, the many and the few. The state would see that labor would not get undo wage increases, capitalists would not earn undo profits, and the public would not be charged excessively for goods and services.[396]

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[394] *Debate Between Samuel Gompers, President American Federation of Labor, and Henry J, Allen, Governor of Kansas, at Carnegie Hall, New York, May 28, 1920* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1920), 17-38, 48-62.

[395] Since the 1890s, both the AFL and the Brotherhoods supported initiatives for *voluntary* federal arbitration. Whether the 1898 Erdman Act or the 1917 National War Labor Board, union representatives believed that an arbitration process offered legitimacy and ensured, at the very least, a modicum of recognition of trade unions as legitimate representatives of working people. After the First World War, however, as employers backed away from the voluntary War Labor Board and the government grew increasingly hostile, organized workers grew understandably concerned that arbitration would result in wage decreases and longer weeks. (Paul Michel Taillon, *Good, Reliable White Men: Railroad Brotherhoods, 1877-1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 111-117; McCartin, *Labor's Great War*, 90-93.)

[396] *Debate Between Samuel Gompers, President American Federation of Labor, and Henry J, Allen, Governor of Kansas, at Carnegie Hall, New York, May 28, 1920* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1920), 25-33. New Zealand developed a system of compulsory arbitration in the early twentieth century. As historian Peter J. Coleman notes, New Zealand's "League of Industrial Courts" was wildly popular amongst American progressives. It is like these industrial courts were an influence for Allen. Peter J.

To Allen, union labor had grown too powerful during the war. The previous year had shown that unions could regularly paralyze entire cities and states. Hardly a week went by without a new strike or at least the threat of one.[397] For this reason, Allen painted Gompers as akin to Mary Shelley's Dr. Frankenstein-- a deluded man with noble intentions unaware of the monster he created. "Organization has become a huge thing, like a Frankenstein in its potentiality. Its power seems unsuspected by Mr. Gompers, who has watched it since its inception as a crude, rudimentary thing, devoted to simple and laudable objects." Organized labor had grown into a monster, one large and powerful enough to exert its will over the people unchecked. If the duty of government was to represent the "greater good" and use its powers to protect individual rights from entrenched power and "privilege," then the labor disruptions had to end.

Gompers took issue with Allen's grave summations. Even if the Federation unions had grown as strong as Allen supposed, Gompers found no fault in their collective societal vision. He reminded the audience of labor's "constructive" role in American life. "What would have been the fate of the boys in the coal mines, the breaker boys who, from six to eight years old, were put into the mines and seldom saw daylight," he asked the crowd, reminding them of the UMW's role in ending child labor. Work safety, higher wages, and more days off benefitted all who toiled, he insisted. To counter Allen's claim

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Coleman, "New Zealand Liberalism and the Origins of the American Welfare State," *Journal of American History* 69 no. 2 (September 1982), 372-391.

[397] Post-war strikes particularly plagued critical industries like transportation and steel. For descriptions on the disruptive nature of strikes and the public response, see Peter Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive-Era Philadelphia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 111-127; Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 243-252; Montgomery, *Fall of the House of Labor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 388-89; Painter, *Standing at Armageddon* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 370-376; James Barrett, *William Z. Foster and the Tragedy of American Radicalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 83-101; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (2nd Edition) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11-52.

that that unions were somehow noxious to representative democracy, Gompers pointed to recent events in Germany. Referring to the so-called Kapp Putsch of March 1920, during which German nationalists attempted to overthrow the Weimar Republic, Gompers correctly noted that "it was a strike of the people, of the working people of Germany, that prevented the reaction... to restore the old regime."[398] American workers would unquestionably do the same as their German counterparts, he assured the crowd.

While neither side could claim an outright victory, both Allen and Gompers could leave Carnegie Hall assured that their respective fights received considerable publicity. The debate was, for all intents and purposes, a campaign stop. Across the country, millions of trade unionists, farmers, and disaffected liberals and progressives, geared up for what was certain to be a grueling election season. Allen was likely personally frustrated that two months prior the Kansas State Federation of Labor joined hands with the Railroad Brotherhoods and a few farmers' organizations to form a non-partisan committee dedicated almost solely to unseating him. Tellingly, during one heated exchange at Carnegie Hall, Allen accused Gompers of issuing an "*ukase"* for American unions to "assemble themselves around the political effort to see that no man goes to Congress who is not in favor of his program." His use of a Russian word, essentially translated as an imperial edict, was another poorly veiled attempt at red baiting, or as he explained during the debate, an homage to the "country from which so much radical thought and philosophy have been borrowed recently by radical union leaders." The AFL's political campaign was a movement "to unionize the Congress of the United

[398] In March 1920, German nationalist Wolfgang Kapp staged a coup against the Weimar Republic. In response to Kapp's "Putsch," German trade unions called a general strike and successfully restored democratic control. Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 91, 101.

States," Allen quipped. "What I have done was to carry out the instructions of more than five and one-half million organized industrial workers and farmers of the United States," Gompers shot back.[399]

As will be detailed, far from decreeing that union-affiliated workers join political campaigns, labor leaders, political reformers, and rank and filers had worked for months to get Gompers to commit to aiding such a plan. But even the politically conservative Gompers knew that a sweeping victory for Allen-styled Republicans and Democrats could set labor's progress back decades. Conversely, even a few high-profile victories for labor-backed candidates would prove that labor had real power in America, that union labor spoke for workers still outside their ranks, and that proposed anti-labor legislation lacked moral legitimacy. Labor's campaign to wield real national power in American politics was on.

The Plumb Plan and the Promise of Labor Politics

On December 13, 1919, delegates of the American Federation of Labor and the Railroad Brotherhoods met in Washington, D.C. The two federations represented some six million workers across hundreds of occupations—indeed, every international affiliated with the AFL sent at least one member to conference. Fraternally in attendance were representatives of organized farmers, many of whom grew increasingly concerned over the prospect of deflating farm prices and increased production costs as transportation slowed, fewer industrial goods rolled off the lines, and consumer demand dried up. Those

[399] *Debate Between Samuel Gompers, President American Federation of Labor, and Henry J, Allen, Governor of Kansas, at Carnegie Hall, New York, May 28, 1920* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1920), 30, 40-41, 60.

assembled agreed to address one central question: how "industrial democracy" could "be established and maintained in the United States of America." Former congressman Ed Keating and B.M. Jewell, president of the Railway Employees Department of the American Federation of Labor, editors of the newly minted magazine *Labor*, had long anticipated the meeting, calling it "one of the momentous conferences of organized labor and farmers ever called in the United States."[400] The attendees ultimately produced a document loosely titled "Labor's Bill of Rights," which demarcated labor's political agenda for the next several years.[401]

In some ways, the Bill of Rights was antiquated, if not rooted, in the previous century. The convention's discussion of "industrial democracy" remained lofty and steeped in notions of free labor and "republicanism."[402] The drafters, for instance, declared war on the "Autocratic, political and corporate industrial and financial influences" seeking "to infringe upon and limit the fundamental rights of the wage-earners guaranteed by the constitution of the United States." Embedded throughout the

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[400] "Organized Labor and Farmers Meet to Define Policy," *Labor* (December 6, 1919), 1;"Labor Conference On," *Labor* (December 13, 1919), 1. Only members of the Socialist Party seemed to dismiss the conference outright, calling it a meeting of "the old Bourbon generals of the unions who speak a language other bourbons understand." They claimed that the union leaders behind the meeting, like Gompers, sought to rid AFL unions of "radicals." "The A.F. of L. "'Bill of Rights,'" *New York Call* (December 16, 1919), editorial.

[401] The document appeared in many different publications under many different names-- it is difficult to determine an exact title that workers consistently used. Some referred to the document as "Labor's Magna Charta." The *American Federationist* employed a much clunkier name: "Labor, Its Grievances, Protests and Demands." The Machinists, however, called it "Labor's Bill of Rights," and I will use this title going forward. ("Labor, Its Grievances, Protests and Demands," *American Federationist* (January 1920), 33-40; "Labor, Its Grievances, Protests and Demands," *Railway Clerk* (January 15, 1920), 58-62; "Labor's Bill of Rights," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (January 1920), 43-47.)

[402] For examples on the rhetoric of "labor republicanism" see Sean Wilentz, "Whigs and Bankers," *Reviews in American History*, 8 (Sept. 1980), 344-50; Sean Wilentz, "Artisan Origins of the American Working Class," *International Labor and Working Class History* (no. 19, Spring 1981), 1-22; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (2nd edition) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982). For a historiographical overview, see Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: the Career of a Concept," *Journal of American History* 79 No. 1 (June 1992), 11-38.

document was a central belief in the rights of laboring men to reap the benefits of their toil. "Wage-earners aspire to be something more than numbers on the books of an industrial plant," the conference decided, "something more than attendants of a machine, something more than cogs in an industrial system dominated by machinery owned and operated for profit alone." Without industrial capitalism, monopoly, and "privilege," working men would be "masters of themselves."[403] The document brimmed with the kind of "producerist" rhetoric prevalent amongst labor movements since the nineteenth century.[404] The legacy of the Knights of Labor, who presented organizing workers as an almost utopian project, was apparent.[405]

The conference recalled the days of Populism as well. While the political fortunes of the People's Party seemed increasingly distant, some veterans of the movement remained active. Wharton Barker, who had taken part in bimetallism debates since the Garfield administration, and ran for president as an independent Populist in 1900, summoned War Labor Board attorney, Basil Manly, for a meeting shortly after the December labor convention. Barker insisted that only a new "commonweal" party could

[403] "Labor's Reconstruction Policies Are Proclaimed," *Labor* (December 20, 1919), 3; "Labor, Its Grievances, Protests and Demands," *American Federationist* (January 1920), 33-40; "Labor, Its Grievances, Protests and Demands," *Railway Clerk* (January 15, 1920), 58-62; "Labor's Bill of Rights," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (January 1920), 43-47.

[404] On producerist language and Populism, see Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (Revised Edition) (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 1-48. For Populism in its late-nineteenth century historical context, see Charles Postel, *Populist Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

[405] On the Knights of Labor as a radical organizing campaign, see Susan Levine, *Labor's True Woman: Carpet Weavers, Industrialization, and Labor Reform in the Gilded Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Peter J. Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South: Richmond Virginia, 1865-1890* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1983); Steven Parfitt, "Constructing the Global History of the Knights of Labor," *Labor: Studies in Working Class History* 14 No. 1 (March 2017), 13-38; For more critical interpretations, see Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989); Ileen A. DeVault, *United Apart: Gender and the Rise of Craft Unionism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 53-74.

unite the producing classes and hold back reaction. He presented a platform that Manly determined was "made up largely of issues which hark back to the Populist days of the eighties."[406] William Jennings Bryan similarly watched labor's progression closely, hoping to win union support for his unprecedented *fourth* attempt for the Democratic nomination.[407]

Though beyond these perennial attacks on monopolistic control and the modern capitalist economy, *Labor's Bill of Rights* anchored itself firmly in the present crisis and looked boldly into the future. The drafters addressed cost-of-living adjustments, which had become standard for tens of thousands of industrial workers during the war. Focused on inflation's steady erosion of wartime gains, the AFL and Brotherhoods denounced the "system of fixing wages solely on the basis of family budgets and bread bills." Rather than accepting small adjustments as standard, "putting progress in chains and liberty in fetters," they demanded a "progressively advancing standard of life." Further, labor called for stiffened penalties for profiteering, taxes to prevent "hoarding," a government agency to issue credit from "a public trust in the interest of all the people," a mechanism to make all income tax returns and dividend declarations publicly available to reveal "excessive" profits, and the stripping of "any authority for the Federal courts of our

[406] Basil M. Manly to Frank P. Walsh, January 17 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. Box 9 Folder: January 1-19, 1920. New York Public Library.
[407] Missouri Senator James A. Reed expressed interest in capturing labor's political energy and asked Frank Walsh for advice in this regard. So, too, did former Missouri governor, Joseph W. Folk, who promised to deliver a series of Walsh's labor proposals to William Jennings Bryan in advance of the Democratic National Convention. See Walsh to Senator James A. Reed. April 14, 1920; Walsh to Joseph W. Folk May 4, 1920; Joseph W. Folk to Walsh, April 29, 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. Box 9 Folders: April 13-30, May 3-16. New York Public Library.

country to declare unconstitutional any act passed by Congress." [408] The most ambitious portion of labor's 1919 platform, however, had to do with the railroads.

Crucially, the American Federation of Labor agreed to limited railroad nationalization– a position it had rejected in its own reconstruction proposal.[409] Gompers and the AFL Executive Committee joined the rail workers and farmers to recommend continued nationalization of the tracks, trains, and facilities "for at least two years" after January 1920. Though not the full-throated backing of the Plumb Plan for government ownership and cooperative management that the Brotherhoods hoped for, it was a welcomed compromise. By the time of the December meeting, the Plumb Plan had become the railroad unions' political center-- the source of its political and industrial ambitions. Historian Nell Irvin Painter writes that the plan "reflected organized labor's new confidence" in the post war era. Indeed, the Plumb Plan proposed an ambitious overhaul of the American economy. What the railroad unions, and later the overwhelming majority of the nation's organized labor force, demanded was a fundamental reimagining of wage labor and management under industrial capitalism.

Before becoming the Brotherhood's chief theorist, Glenn E. Plumb was an attorney who specialized in railroad law. After representing railroad companies,

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[408] Gompers himself had battled "government by injunction," or a federal judge's ability to prohibit striking until a legal hearing, since the federal government "enjoined" the American Railroad Union during 1894 Pullman Strike, arresting the union's leadership and forcing trains to resume service. By 1919, however, the AFL had determined that the judiciary itself had to be radically stripped of power. Specifically, many labor leaders had begun to see judicial review as extra-legal and unconstitutional. As the drafters wrote in Labor's Bill of Rights, "We assert that there can not be found in the constitution of the United States or in the discussions of the Congress which drafted the constitution any authority for the Federal courts of our country to declare unconstitutional any act passed by Congress." Whether by constitutional amendment, or by simply expressing its ultimate authority, labor expected congress to dismantle judicial review. Forbath, *Law and the Shaping of the American Labor Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 59-127; "Labor's Bill of Rights," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (January 1920), 44.

[409] Gompers and the Executive Committee sought to avoid nationalization, a scheme they believed would lead to antagonisms between capital and labor and subjugate workers to the state. See pp. 73-78.

municipalities, and labor unions for more than twenty years, Plumb joined the Railroad Brotherhoods as their chief counsel in 1918. What drew Warren Stone, president of the Locomotive Engineers, to Plumb was the attorney's theories on rail valuation. When the federal government initiated its temporary takeover of the nation's rails in 1917, Plumb argued that rail executives had deliberately "watered" their stock by inflating and exaggerating the value of their property holdings. By doing this, transportation companies sought higher lease rates from the Interstate Commerce Commission and the newly formed United States Railroad Administration. By law, the wartime agency had to issue returns commensurate with what private lines would expect under normal operation. Because so many companies had acquired their lines through a complicated mixture of mergers, hostile takeovers, government land grants, and speculation, Plumb believed there was no way to accurately assign standard "fair market value" to properties used strictly for transport.[410] Unlike commercial or private property, which was abundant and changed owners frequently, railroads had no comparable market to base value.

Debates over valuation swirled yet again after the war. At the end of 1918, when the federal government discussed returning railroads to private ownership, transportation company heads and investment bankers, equipped with the latest, and allegedly "watered," figures of their property holdings, again eagerly set appointments with the Interstate Commerce Commission. These new ICC financial assessments decided whether or not the government owed additional money for the leasing period. The ICC

[410] There was, of course, significant precedent for railroad companies "watering" stock. As historian Richard White describes, financier Jay Gould made his vast fortune during the 1870s through deceptive stock trading, hostile takeovers, and disguising debt. Though Populist and Progressive Era reformers worked to limit the excesses of railroad profits through antitrust legislation and institutions like the Federal Reserve, the roads themselves laid upon a complicated financial legacy. See Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2011), 186-223.

would also fix the initial price of company shares on the stock market once trading resumed.[411]

Plumb's solution to inflated market price was to anchor valuation on actual company investment-- capital spent on service improvements, machinery, and labor. "Investment actually, honestly and prudently made, measures the full extent of the property interests which railway corporations may possess," Plumb argued, "They are entitled to earn a fair return on such investments, but no more."[412] The Brotherhood's initiative in this regard was not to sink company valuations, though a precipitous fall would almost certainly occur, but rather to highlight the benefits of continued government ownership. Brotherhood leaders like Warren Stone, Timothy Shea, and Lucius Sheppard insisted that by effectively allowing companies to justify their own valuation, the federal government had allowed the rail industry to levy "an extortionate tax" on the public.[413] Privatization would pledge the government to an enormous expense for the privilege of inefficient service, they maintained.

Plumb's "plan," first articulated in a February 1919 address to the Interstate Commerce Commission, was for the government to purchase the railroads, based upon

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[411] Glenn E. Plumb, *Labor's Plan for Government Ownership and Democracy in the Operation of the Railroads: Based on Statements by Glenn E. Plumb Before the Interstate Commerce Committee of the United States Senate with Additional Material* (Washington, D.C.: Plumb Plan League, 1919); It should be noted that not all ICC valuation hearings ended with results pleasing to investors. One appraisal of a stretch of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company prompted an observer to write: "The share capital of the New Haven road is $157,000,000 and is selling at $30 a share or $47,100,000-- less than the assessed value of the land under the plant in the city of Boston. And still people think railroad wages should go up and fares and freights should not be increased." "Commission Rules on K.C. Southern Valuation," *Wall Street Journal* (October 11, 1919), 4; "Railroad Valuation Hearing," *Wall Street Journal* (April 22, 1919), 6; "Railroad Valuations Important to Market," *Wall Street Journal* (November 4, 1919), 15; "Railroad Valuations," *Wall Street Journal* (May 6, 1919), 2.

[412] Glenn E. Plumb, *Labor's Plan for Government Ownership and Democracy in the Operation of the Railroads: Based on Statements by Glenn E. Plumb Before the Interstate Commerce Committee of the United States Senate with Additional Material* (Washington, D.C.: Plumb Plan League, 1919), 28.

[413] Warren S. Stone, W.G. Lee, Timothy Shea, L.E. Sheppard, B.M. Jewell, "The Constructive Railway Plan," *Railroad Democracy* (August 7, 1919), 6.

his formula of investment valuation, and issue all stockholders government bonds permanently fixed at a four percent annual return. Plumb openly acknowledged that four percent was far lower than what investors could expect on the open market-- even Stone admitted that some low-income stockholders, primarily widows and orphans, could see a decline in earnings.[414] But Plumb hoped investors would accept the lower amount in exchange for the "absolute security" of a government bond for the volatility of the open market.[415] Further, he predicted that his plan to restructure the transportation economy under government ownership, and thus ending speculation and market volatility, could help stabilize the cost of living throughout the country.[416]

Beyond valuation, the core of the Plumb Plan's stabilizing theorem involved cooperative "tripartite" management of the nation's railroads. Though the federal government would own the rails, the cars, and the workshops, under the Plumb Plan it would have virtually no bureaucratic oversight of operations beyond the ICC's ability to

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[414] Warren Stone, "The Labor Campaign Is On," *Railroad Democracy* (July 22, 1919), 3.
[415] Glenn E. Plumb, *Labor's Plan for Government Ownership and Democracy in the Operation of the Railroads: Based on Statements by Glenn E. Plumb Before the Interstate Commerce Committee of the United States Senate with Additional Material* (Washington, D.C.: Plumb Plan League, 1919), 4.
[416] Government ownership did move more cargo more efficiently than private ownership. The Railroad administration was estimated to have made $125,000,000 in savings through efficiency. The problem was that these economies did not prevent the administration from running up a $900,000,000 deficit for the two years of public management. Proponents of privatization maintained that the government had run up the tab with undue wage increases for railroad workers, kept rates artificially low, and stuck tax payers with the bill. Proponents of public ownership noted that the wage increases were required to keep workers on the job, that the necessity of calming markets pushed the administration from raising rates on producers, and that the government was financially obligated not only to pay wages, but make repairs, pull dilapidated train cars into service to ship more goods, and pay the private companies $900,000,000 a year to lease their tracks regardless of earned income. Further, the economic slump of 1919 would have affected the bottom lines of private companies just as harshly, economist Isaiah Leo Sharfman wrote—at least the federal government could run absorb a deficit better than a private company.

In short, there is no way to definitively evaluate Plumb's hypothesis. The government might have failed to operate the rails with much greater efficiency in the long term, or it could have operated more reliable service at less of a cost.

Isaiah Leo Sharfman, *The American Railroad Problem: A Study in War and Reconstruction* (New York: The Century Co., 1921), 134, 145-149, 152-157.

set rates for freight and passenger service. Instead, the ICC would sponsor a new quasi-board to manage operations. The board would have fifteen members, five selected by the unions, five selected by white-collar management, and five selected by the president and confirmed by the senate. Similar to a private company, these directors would make an accounting of fixed annual costs, primarily wages and the four percent maturation of government bonds, and determine how to best expand service to cover expenses. The corporation would share all profits as dividends-- fifty percent going to the federal government for repairs and physical expansion, and fifty percent going to the workers. If returns equaled more than five percent of the annual operating costs, the ICC would be legally obligated to decrease national shipping rates. Only by consistently improving service could railroaders improve their pay.

Because workers would see that excess dividends could be more profitable than wages, the return system would also serve as a check on the desire to unduly increase their own salaries and burden term sheets with unnecessary overhead. Further, Plumb stipulated that management receive a slightly higher amount of the dividend than manual laborers, making it more difficult for workers to muster the votes for higher wages without sufficient cause. As Plumb told the Senate, his plan would "supplant the old system of competition under which the profits of the laborer's industry went to another… by a new system where… all employees were united by a common purpose, all working toward a common end, inspired by the same motives, by the same incentives."[417] Under

[417] Glenn E. Plumb, *Labor's Plan for Government Ownership and Democracy in the Operation of the Railroads: Based on Statements by Glenn E. Plumb Before the Interstate Commerce Committee of the United States Senate with Additional Material* (Washington, D.C.: Plumb Plan League, 1919), 9.

this new system, workers were given the opportunity to directly increase their salaries, all while consistently lowering the nation's cost of transportation.

Of course, such a fundamental restructuring of the nation's primary form of transportation met stiff resistance from the business world, especially as national interest in the Plumb Plan grew over the spring and summer. In July, the Brotherhoods provided the funds to start the Plumb Plan League (PPL), which quickly became an efficient lobbying group. It rented office space in the Munsey Building, one of the tallest commercial structures in D.C. and only three blocks from the White House. It published its own newspaper, *Railroad Democracy*, and in its first two weeks sent out more than one million pamphlets in response to "telegraphic inquiries."[418] Plumb himself was the subject of extensive journalistic coverage, including a full-page write-up in the *New York Tribune*. Over the next several months, the attorney rarely stayed still. By December, he had hosted so-called "Plumb Plan Days" in more than a dozen states, traveling from Maine, through the Chesapeake Bay, and to the Dakotas.[419] Plumb's message was simple. Under the old system, railroad executives and shareholders would profit by buying land for speculation, preventing competing lines from opening, and cutting service to drive up demand. The carriers put shareholders first. These tactics hurt consumers. The attorney's board would put workers and consumers above the privileged few who sat in boardrooms. Invoking the Old Testament and the Israelite invasion of Canaan, during which besieging armies, blessed by God, blew their horns and knocked down the walls

[418] "Glenn E. Plumb: The Man Who Has Set the Nation Talking," *New York Tribune* (August 17, 1919), E4.
[419] Frederic C. Howe to Pinchot, October 27, 1919. Amos Pinchot Papers. Box 30 Folder: 1919, Nov. Library of Congress

blocking their path, Plumb told audiences "To this system of public plunder we utter the word Jericho. It must fall."[420]

Plumb's travels in the summer and fall of 1919 reflected the growing popularity of his economic theory. Not only did railroad unions like the Brotherhoods, Machinists, and Railway Clerks give their full-throated support, the half-a-million strong United Mine Workers endorsed the plan at its 1919 convention. Even unions with little direct connection to the rails, like the International Journeymen's Barbers' Association, adopted the Plumb Plan at its annual meeting.[421] Beyond conventions, demonstrations of Plumb Plan enthusiasm reached a fever pitch in some cities. In the town of Olean, an oil producing region in the Southern Tier of New York, the local Plumb Plan League convinced local theaters to show newsreels explaining the plan prior to feature films. They also built a float symbolizing "tripartite management" to lead the city's Labor Day parade (four thousand marchers in a city of twenty thousand people), and hired an airplane pilot to drop thousands of informational pamphlets from above.[422]

Enthusiasm went beyond labor's ranks. Farmers, too, grasped onto a plan that would, theoretically, lower their overhead. J.M. Pierce, a newspaper editor who managed the *Iowa Homestead*, *Wisconsin Farmer*, and *Farmer Stockman*, encouraged his more than three hundred thousand subscribing households to join their local PPL. George P. Hampton, director of the Farmers' National Council followed suit, asserting that the roads must be "operated for the benefit of the American people and not for the financial

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[420] Glenn Plumb, "The Heart of the Plumb Plan," *Railroad Democracy* (August 21, 1919), 1.
[421] UMW Cleveland 391-392; "Official Circular No. 47," *Machinists' Monthly Journal* (August 1919), 746; "Barbers Strong for Labor's Plan," *Labor* (October 11, 1919), 2; "What Should be Done with the Railroads," *Locomotive Engineer's Journal* (August 1919), 578-586.
[422] "Make Up Of Big Parade On Labor Day," *Olean Evening Times* (August 26, 1919), 7; "Monster Labor Day Celebration," *Olean Evening Herald* (August 30, 1919), 7; "Aerial Stunts At Ball Park," *Olean Evening Times* (August 28, 1919), 7; "Olean Wins Prize," *The Railway Clerk* (October 1, 1919), 673-674.

interests." The influential Nonpartisan League of North Dakota also backed the plan and turned out in large numbers when Glenn Plumb visited and made his speeches. Months after these visits, progressive writer William Hard reported seeing NPL members from the Great Plains still wearing their Plumb Plan League buttons at political rallies in the Midwest.[423]

The Plumb Plan also made its rounds in intellectual and spiritual circles. Reverend John A. Ryan, a Catholic priest well-known for his espousal of progressive causes, reviewed the plan positively, arguing that industrial democracy would "have to be gradually brought to realization" if the nation's industrial system was "to remain stable." Ryan was not the only religious official to come out in favor of the Plan. A Catholic priest and a Presbyterian minister gave Plumb a joint introduction during a stop in Des Moines, for instance. Many Christian denominations in the United States demonstrated an openness toward labor-friendly reconstruction after the war, and the Plumb Plan was part of that turn.[424]

Perhaps the most famous intellectual convert to the Plumb Plan was Frederic C. Howe, the epitome of a progressive era reformer. An interest in Henry George, whose 1879 political treatise, *Progress and Poverty*, outlined a tax to put land held for

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[423] "Labor and Farmers United in Purpose," *Labor* (November 15, 1919), 3; "Farm Editor Urges Plumb Plan in Iowa," *Labor* (November 15, 1919), 3; "Rail Plan Praised by Dakota Crowds," *Labor* (November 1, 1919), 1; William Hard to Robert La Follette Sr., July 9, 1920. La Follette Family Papers. Box B85 Folder 1920, Hard, William. Library of Congress.

[424] "Plumb Plan Day in Iowa Crowds the Capital City," Dec 6; Rev. John A. Ryan, "The Plumb Plan for the Railroads," *Labor* October 11, 1919, 3. As written in the first chapter, "Reconstruction" sentiment had a strong impact on reforming circles in the Catholic Church. The National Catholic War Council published a brief titled, *Social Reconstruction: A General Review of the Problems and Survey of Remedies* and demanded workers share in both profits and management. "Social Reconstruction: A General Review of the Problems and Survey of Remedies," 5-6. Amos Pinchot Papers, Box 94 Folder: Labor 1914-1921 1 of 7; John A. Ryan, "the Catholic Church and the 'Unlovely Thing We Call Modern Capitalism,'" Reconstruction (May 1919), 145.

speculation into productive use, led Howe to get a PhD in political science from Johns Hopkins University-- the same program Woodrow Wilson attended. After graduating law school, Howe settled in Cleveland, where he won election to city council in 1901. While in office, Howe cooperated with Mayor Tom Johnson, a reformer dedicated to municipal ownership of public transport and utilities. During World War I, Wilson appointed Howe to manage immigration coming through Ellis Island. He ultimately resigned in 1919, in response to the president's unyielding red scare. Howe had done his best to stall what he deemed unwarranted deportation of alien radicals and arrange legal counsel, instigating withering criticism from A. Mitchell Palmer, the attorney general.[425]

At a loose end, Howe took a job as director of the Conference for Democratic Control of the Railroads. Closely affiliated with the Plumb Plan League (they shared office space), the Conference hoped to enlist progressive support outside of labor's ranks. This was not always an easy task. Even generally pro-union members of the Committee of 48, like Amos Pinchot and George Record, regarded the Plumb Plan as "sheer rot" and applied Bolshevism.[426] Kansas newspaper editor and political commentator William Allen White could not bring himself to support collective ownership. In his view, America was a "middle class" country, where "the right of the consumer was the paramount right in all industrial disputes." But since the war, labor had followed Europe

[425] Kenneth E. Miller, *From Progressive to New Dealer: Frederic C. Howe and American Liberalism* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2010); Rossinow, *Visions of Progress*, 21, 54, 55; John Higham, *Strangers In The Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, 253, 303; Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), 204-205.

[426] Pinchot to W.J. MacDonald, February 5, 1920. Pinchot Papers. Box 31 Folder February, 1920; George Record to Amos Pinchot, Sept 24 1919. Pinchot Papers. Box 30 Folder September, 1919; George Record to Lincoln Colcord, December 29, 1919. Pinchot Papers. Box 31 Folder December 1919.

in becoming "a class by itself," advancing trade union interests above all else.[427] As a nationalist progressive in the vein of Theodore Roosevelt, White opted for government management of the rails, rationalized service, fair wages, and structured arbitration to end strikes. He was, relatedly, a strong supporter of Governor Henry J. Allen. In a letter to Howe, White worried that the Plumb Plan, by handing control over to wage-hungry workers, would disincentivize the pursuit of profit. Howe countered that only the Plumb Plan, or something similar, would ensure equality in opportunity and allow employees to gain materially through efficiency and diligent work. "It is not the purpose to operate the railroads without the motive of profit," he wrote, "The Plumb Plan shifts the profit motive from four great banking syndicates in New York to two million men… Profit is not to be 'de-horned' as you suggest. It is to be re-distributed." Howe was also sure to remind White of Plumb's rate-lowering mandate, insisting that the public would see more efficient service at a lower cost.[428]

Howe continued to outline the positive attributes of collective ownership over government ownership. The two concepts, as far as Plumb Plan advocates believed, were not interchangeable. Government ownership, Howe explained, would "socialize" labor and reduce workers to bureaucratic cogs in a spiritless machine. "It is terrible what we do

[427] More fully, White wrote: "Heretofore America has been a middle class country. The right of the consumer was the paramount right in all industrial disputes… But now we have a brand new phase of things: Labor is seeking to control not in the interests of the consumer but in the interests of labor. We have the railroad men asking for the nationalization of the railroads, not to give us better rates and better service-- which is the middle class aim-- but to give labor better wages. This is quite the European attitude of labor. It is a social and political attitude, not an economic attitude… Now strikes for political purposes are direct action in government; force against the ballot. This kind of action is old in Europe where labor is a class by itself, and where it aims as it aimed in Russia and Hungary to get by force what it could not get by parliamentary methods." "The Soviet," *Emporia Daily Gazette* (August 6, 1919), 2. For more on White and labor, see "The Strike or the Ballot," *Emporia Daily Gazette* (December 2, 1919), 2; "State Legislature Completes Work," January 24, 1920, 1

[428] Frederic C. Howe to William Allen White, September 29, 1919. William Allen White Papers. Box C48 Frederic C. Howe, 1919. Library of Congress.

to the classified employee in socializing him," he lamented. "He is afraid of his record sheet. He hardly dares to vote, and he dare not take any part in politics." He also worried that, as government employees, railroaders would lose the right to strike making it "impossible for them to do anything to better their conditions."[429] Plumb plan for quasi-public entity, which made room for independent labor unions, was far superior.

Howe also truly believed that collective ownership of the rails would prevent disruptive strikes in a far more permanent way than forced government arbitration. Top-down arbitration conducted by government officials rarely resulted in permanent gains for aggrieved workers, Howe insisted: "I have listened to hearings on the hill and with politics organized as it is, men in any industry would get short shrift if they were disarmed and left only to plead before Congress, or before any boards of arbitration that could be devised." Explaining his view to White, and why his Kansan friend would have to come to terms with collective ownership, he wrote "We may try to blink it, but class interests are very ascendant…not only in our politics, but in our thought as well." Strong unions, coupled with a voice in management, would be a boon to American society, Howe believed. Empowered workers would fight for justice, improve the quality of goods and services, and exercise democracy from the ballot box to the shop floor. Far from fearing a future marked by the "ascendency" of "class interests" he claimed to be "perfectly willing to see teachers, Federal employees and everybody else get into the

[429] Howe had some reason to fear this result. Since the Grover Cleveland presidency, the federal government had eagerly repressed union drives amongst government employees. Most notably, postal workers, who, until 1912, also faced a "gag rule" preventing them from even petitioning congress for changes in working conditions. William P. Berzak, "Rights Accorded Federal Employees Against Whom Adverse Personnel Actions Are Taken," *Notre Dame Law Review* 47 No. 4 (April 1972), 853-864; M. Brady Mikusko and F. John Miller, *Carriers in a Common Cause: A History of Letter Carriers and the NALC* (Washington, D.C.: A Publication of the National Association of Letter Carriers, 2014), 20-24. Frederic C. Howe to William Allen White, September 29, 1919.

labor movement as quickly as possible." Collective ownership, not repression or the top-down marshaling of labor, would herald in a promising new era. Shared management would be a panacea to both socialism and encroaching bureaucracy, Howe explained to progressive non-believers.[430]

Certainly, many non-radical Americans viewed collective ownership as too akin to the Soviet experiment. The Plumb Plan faithful quickly learned that promoting their agenda required them to clearly differentiate it from Bolshevism. Language and presentation were important. As one acquaintance "in favor" of Plumb, but skeptical of phrases like "collective ownership" and "democratic control," wrote to Howe. "You are one who is not inclined to damn a flower because of its name, if its odor is right, but many perfectly good people would damn me as a Bolshevik who would put up with me as a 'nationalist.'"[431] That the Socialist Party (SPA) itself seemed to mostly ignore the Plumb Plan made no difference to most of the plan's opponents. While the SPA printed explanations of the plan and advertised talks in favor of it, party papers like the *New York Call* stayed clear of an endorsement-- favoring instead the party's longtime call for the removal of the profit system all together.[432] Organized workers managing a capitalist enterprise was still capitalism. Max Eastman, editor of the pro-Bolshevik *Liberator*, perhaps summarized the left's view of the Plumb Plan best. "Of course the establishment

[430] Frederic C. Howe to William Allen White, September 29, 1919. William Allen White Papers. Box C48 Frederic C. Howe, 1919. Library of Congress.
[431] Bob Paine to Fred. C. Howe, October 8, 1919. Amos Pinchot Papers. Box 30 Folder October 1919. Library of Congress.
[432] National Platform Socialist Party, 1920. "All publicly owned industries should be administered jointly by the government and representatives of the workers, not for revenue or profit, but with the sole object of securing just compensation and humane conditions of employment to the workers and efficient and reasonable service to the public." "R.R. Issue to Dominate Campaign; Rails Won't Go Back, Says Plumb," *New York Call* (January 3, 1920), 1, 3; "Announcements," *New York Call* (January 2, 1920), 6; "Catechism Tells How Roads Would Be Run Under Plumb's Plan," *New York Call* (December 29, 1919), 3.

of a fixed hereditary aristocracy of government bondholders is not actually a revolutionary step," he wrote, "but it brings us to a point from which a revolutionary step appears more simple and its necessity more obviously apparent."[433] Socialists welcomed labor's growing confidence, even if it had not yet accepted a full end to the profit system. Still, despite the Plumb Plan League's confidence that their plan was not socialistic, members still worried about red baiting. "Ask them for a definition of Socialism," the League instructed its supporters, "Ask them for a definition of the Plumb Plan. You'll find that they know nothing about either. They're merely parroting what the interests in one way or another have suggested them to say."[434]

As expected, the "interests" did indeed declare war on the Plumb Plan. Francis H. Sisson, vice president of the Guaranty Trust Company, and member of the Merchants' Association, called the plan "another case of labor trying to get the whole thing into its own hands without regard to the economic principles involved." R.S. Lovett declared openly that Glenn Plumb and the Brotherhoods sought to "Russianize American railroads." Writers at the *Wall Street Journal* prodded public panic as well, warning that converting stock assets to government bonds would yield rates "25% to 50% lower" than investors expected and that even the *possibility* of a Plumb Plan caused speculative markets in industrial stocks to go "off the rails." Financial analysts, Wall Street bankers, and anti-labor politicians consistently described the railroad unions as "threatening" the American public with a hostage scenario.

Some recalled the Adamson Act, which won rail workers the eight-hour day, but only after they had threatened a nation-wide tie up. As Thomas L. Blanton, a Democratic

[433] Editorials, *The Liberator* (September 1919), 5.
[434] "The People Hear," *Railroad Democracy* (August 14, 1919), 5.

congressman from Texas, claimed, "Now is the time for the tail to quit wagging the dog and for some action to be taken… There must be a conclusive showdown, and Congress must quit truckling and quit being held up by threats." One anonymous contributor to the *Baltimore Sun* suggested that "The railroad workers have a right to living wages; they have no right to say that the country shall or shall not have Government ownership of railroads, and threaten a nation-wide paralysis of transportation, industry and business if their views are not accepted."[435] Plumb Planners certainly had an entrenched opposition to overcome.

It likely frustrated Plumb Planners that Samuel Gompers sat amongst these critics. Indeed, the plank supporting continued government ownership in *Labor's Bill of Rights* only came about after some four months of pageantry and negotiation by the Brotherhoods and PPL. A year prior, the AFL's Reconstruction Committee, staffed by Gompers loyalists like John Frey and Matthew Woll, had not called explicitly for rail nationalization, but rather insisted on collective bargaining rights for all railroad workers "whatever final disposition" the government might take on "ownership, management, or regulation."[436] When Gompers returned from the International Trades Union Congress in Amsterdam on August 26, 1919, one of the first questions reporters asked him was whether or not he supported the Plumb Plan. Gompers declined to comment. Adding to the frenzy of press speculation were conflicting reports of Gompers's actual thoughts.

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[435] "Labor's Rail Plan Arouses Hot Criticism," *New York Tribune* (February 8, 1919), 15; "Plumb Plan Would Reduce Railroad Stock Equities," *Wall Street Journal* (July 29, 1919), 10; "Serve Notice On Congress," *New York Times* (August 3, 1919), 1; "The Stock Market: A Bad Break," *Wall Street Journal* (August 5, 1919), 4; "Congress Unfavorable to Plumb R.R. Scheme," *Wall Street Journal* (August 19, 1919), 15; "Plumb Plan is Soviet Scheme, Asserts Lovett," *Binghamton Press and Leader* (August 30, 1919), 1; "What The American People Will Not Tolerate," *Baltimore Sun* (August 5, 1919), 6; "Union Pacific Head Hits Plumb Plan As Soviet Measure," *New York Call* (August 31, 1919), 2.
[436] "American Federation of Labor Reconstruction Program," *American Federationist* (February, 1919), 134.

Though Glenn Plumb had told reporters that the AFL had "absolutely indorsed" government ownership, one journalist claimed several people "close to Mr. Gompers" assertively denied this was the case.[437] Speculation as to the AFL's commitment to government ownership several times made the front page of New York's largest dailies. Gompers had worked fiercely during the war to position labor as patriotic and invested in the growth of private industry. He had grown not only close to Wilson and the Democratic Party, but the pro-business National Civic Federation as well. If Gompers could sway the Federation to accepting a return to private railroads, it could possibly prevent strikes across the nation's most crucial transportation network.

For months, Gompers continually refused to satiate the press's desire for his exact stand on the Plumb Plan and nationalization. He did, however, let his lieutenants attack government ownership for him. In October, John Golden, president of the United Textile Workers of America, and UTW Vice President Sarah Conboy, both key Gompers allies, instructed their union to abandon a motion endorsing the Plumb Plan.[438] In one expose comparing Gompers and Warren Stone, leader of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, an anonymous Gompers aide argued that the AFL's greatest virtue was its resistance to "new theories." By sticking purely to defending collective bargaining rights, and nothing else, the AFL had grown to more than four million members, they argued. In a thinly veiled assault on the Plumb Plan, the Gompers "follower" claimed, "We want the right to bargain for our labor, without restrictions. We do not want the Government to say

[437] "Gompers Returns But Is Silent on the Plumb Plan," *New York Times* (August 27, 1919), 1; John J. Leary, "Gompers Has Not Approved Plumb Plan," *New York Tribune* (August 27, 1919), 1.
[438] "Plumb Plan Rejected by Textile Workers," *Atlanta Constitution* (October 26, 1919), 8.

what we shall receive."[439] To the progressive reformers in the Committee of 48 who hoped to bring organized labor into a new party, the reasoning behind Gompers's flippant response to the Plumb Plan was obvious. Journalist Lincoln Colcord predicted that the AFL president would take part in the Plumb Plan movement "only to pull the teeth out of it, as he has done over and over again with constructive measures."[440]

Gompers's previous statements considered, even a change in attitude as minor as the one present in Labor's Bill of Rights was significant. Unlike progressive 48ers who thought winning Gompers over was a "delusion," Brotherhood leaders worked tirelessly to win the American Federation of Labor over to its reform agenda. Stone first met with the AFL's Executive Committee to discuss railroad policy on August 28, 1919, only a few days after Gompers returned from Europe and refused to answer any questions on the Plumb Plan. He brought with him not only Glenn Plumb but the leadership of Trainmen, Railway Clerks, Boilermakers, Firemen, Sheet Metal Workers, Conductors, Telegraphers, Machinists, and Locomotive Engineers -- all of whom were stridently for the government ownership -- as well. Also present was Ed Keating, the former congressman who edited *Labor*, the Brotherhood and Plumb League's joint weekly paper, served as the group's de facto legislative strategist. The only tangible outcome of the first meeting was Gompers promising an AFL subcommittee to analyze the current political landscape.[441]

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[439] Paul Thompson, "Gompers or Stone to Control Labor Federation," *New York Times* (January 25, 1920), 42.

[440] Lincoln Colcord to George L. Record, December 29, 1919; George Record to Lincoln Colcord, December 29, 1919; Lincoln Colcord to George Record, December 26 1919. Amos Pinchot Papers. Box 31 Folder December 1919. Library of Congress.

[441] American Federation of Labor Executive Council, "American Federation of Labor Executive Council Minutes of Meetings, August 28-30, 1919." American Federation of Labor Records: The Sam Gompers Era (Microfilm) Reel 6A.

By this point, even Gompers had begun to acknowledge the weight of anti-labor sentiment in Washington. Though not out of committee yet, excerpts of the prospective railroad legislation on Capitol Hill-- what would become the Esch Bill in the House and Cummins Bill in the Senate-- had reached the public. What truly frightened Gompers were rumors of a no-strike provision in both bills. A no-strike rule for railroad workers, if upheld by the Supreme Court, would almost certainly spread to other industries. If Congress deemed the railroads too essential for labor disruption, little would stop a similar prohibition in the coal industry. The Senate bill's chief architect, Iowa Senator Albert Cummins, later confirmed these fears. "Not only has there been no hesitation, so far as I am concerned, with respect to these provisions of the railroad bill," Cummins insisted, "but I intend, when the measure comes before the Senate, to propose an extension of the principles of the bill, which are now applied only to transportation, to the basic industries of America, to the production of fuel, of iron and steel, the production of foodstuffs, and of lumber and of building material and of clothing." He added that he could "not conceive that the people of this country are to be continuously at the mercy of any class so far as these fundamentals in American life are concerned."[442] The senator's threat was real and apparent.

Of course, Cummins's outburst shocked and appalled virtually every labor leader. Locomotive Fireman President Timothy Shea argued that the provision undermined craft unionism and provided revolutionary groups like the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) with a "logical argument for direct action." Gompers agreed, adding in his congressional testimony that the law "wouldn't stop strikes; it would just make

[442] Congressional Record Senate November 13, 1919. Volume 56 Part 8 66 Cong Session 1, 8411.

lawbreakers."[443] If passed, the bill would force a strike across numerous industries, Gompers predicted, causing the exact kind of unrest the government hoped to avoid, and providing easy precedent to quash organized labor in sectors deemed "crucial" for public welfare. "The most immediate danger confronting organized labor as well as the Republic and the Republican form of government is contained in the provisions of that bill," Gompers told the railroad unionists. "Now it places us in the same category as the wildest, wild-eyed anarchist, I.W.W., insane bolshevist." It horrified Gompers that by making what he deemed acceptable and legal union behavior illegal, the federal government could revolutionize the AFL.[444]

It was during this conversation that Stone suggested that the Brotherhoods and AFL call a joint meeting for the fall or winter. Before agreeing to extend invitations, Gompers demanded to know whether the Brotherhoods intended to form a third party. Stone mollified his concerns and answered directly: "It is not the intention of my men or the men I have been talking to form a new political labor party." George P. Hampton, Managing Director of the Farmers National Council, added that most of the organized farmers he had spoken with in groups like the Farmers National Grange and the Farmers' Union also disapproved of a new party and suggested everyone's interests would be better served under a non-partisan "joint legislative committee." Gompers agreed to consider such a request. The final barrier for the AFL was the menace of government ownership. The Executive Council feared that the Brotherhoods would align farmers and sympathetic

[443] Shea Warns on Cummins Bill, *New York Times* October 27, 1919, 1; "To Keep Anti-Strike Provision in R.R. Bill," *Wall Street Journal* October 9, 1919, 10; "Unions Fight Cummins Bill," *Los Angeles Times* (September 24, 1919), 18; "Cummins Bill Scored," *Baltimore Sun* (September 24, 1919), 12.
[444] American Federation of Labor Executive Council, "American Federation of Labor Executive Council Minutes of Meetings, October 5-7, 9-12, 15-21, 1919," 72-74. American Federation of Labor Records: The Sam Gompers Era (Microfilm) Reel 6A.

unions in the AFL and force a vote committing the Federation to railroad nationalization. After Stone admitted that it probably would, Gompers acquiesced and told all he was "glad to cooperate in any way," but could "not depart from the declarations of the American Federation of Labor."[445] To some extent, Colcord's estimation that Gompers "pulled the teeth" of constructive movements had some merit. The Executive Council orchestrated much of the December conference's pageantry well in advance.

Still, the Railroad Brotherhoods, industrial unions, and organized farmers won a small political victory in December with *Labor's Bill of Rights*. Adopting Hampton's suggestion, the conference attendees agreed that their goals for America's producers required participation in "both the economic and political field." To that end, the delegates agreed "that every practical action be taken by the American Federation of Labor, with the co-operation of all other organized bodies of workers, farmers and sympathetic, liberty loving citizens of the United States, to carry into effect the principles and purposes set forth in the declarations of this conference." With that declaration, the American Federation of Labor made common cause with the two-million-member Railroad Brotherhoods and possibly hundreds of thousands of organized farmers. Together, the conference attendees opened what was at that point labor's largest political campaign ever. The staff at *Labor* called the joint statement the "Magna Charta for American Workers" as did the editors of the *Railway Clerk*, the official publication for the Federation-affiliated Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks. William H.

[445] American Federation of Labor Executive Council, "American Federation of Labor Executive Council Minutes of Meetings, October 5-7, 9-12, 15-21, 1919," 72-74. American Federation of Labor Records: The Sam Gompers Era (Microfilm) Reel 6A.

Johnston hoped the *Bill of Rights* would finally "arouse" workers to "take a greater interest in politics than they have in the past."[446] He was not disappointed.

"Never More Alone:" The Transportation Act of 1920

Two months after the Washington meeting, Congress easily passed the Esch-Cummins Transportation Act of 1920. The bill, which formally terminated federal control of the railroads on March 1, confirmed Ed Keating's estimation that labor "was never more alone" than it was in the immediate post-war era.[447] Not only had Congress failed to take the Plumb Plan seriously, it had come dangerously close to adding Cummins's no-strike clause in the new legislation.[448] Even without the clause, the Act's final language on arbitration incensed the Brotherhoods. While Congress created a permanent "Railroad Labor Board " representing the public, labor, and management to arbitrate disputes, something rail workers had long demanded, the Brotherhoods and AFL rail unions disapproved of its structure. First, under the act, the President and Senate had to confirm all appointees to the new board and the ICC had the power to determine which "subordinate officials" were eligible as representatives, opening the possibility of the Commission seating non-union workers. Second, any group of one hundred workers could file a grievance with the board and initiate arbitration. Union leaders worried that management could exploit this practice and find employees to sign petitions to hobble

[446] "Labor's Reconstruction Policies Are Proclaimed," *Labor* (December 20, 1920), 3; "Editorial," *Machinists Monthly Journal* (January 1920), 69-71; "Labor in the Coming Presidential Elections; The Workers' Independent Political League," *Machinists Monthly Journal* (February 1920), 136; "Labor, Its Grievances, Protests and Demands," *Railway Clerk* (January 15, 1920), 58.
[447] Editorial, "Government and Labor," *Labor* (November 8, 1919), 4.
[448] A similar clause was defeated in the House bill and, to ensure easy passage the second time, lawmakers removed the no-strike provision in reconciliation. (Raymond Lonergan, "Anti-Strike Clause Beaten," *Labor* (November 22, 1919), 1, 3; "Wall Street Now Willing to Trade Strike Penalties For a Guarantee," *Labor* (January 31, 1920), 1.

union authority. Congress also empowered the board to "suspend the operation" of any agreement between carrier and employee that would "necessitate the substantial readjustment" of freight rates. The Brotherhoods believed the provisions to be "based upon a determination to annul existing agreements and destroy the organizations which negotiated them."[449] Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the law gave the Board no authority to enforce its own arbitration. If the carriers disapproved of the Board's resolution, they could easily ignore it and seek injunctions from sympathetic judges to break any resultant strike.[450]

Unions that supported the Plumb Plan saw Esch-Cummins as nothing short of a complete capitulation to Wall Street. The law not only upheld the ICC's power to accept independent valuations for railroad capital, but appropriated an additional two hundred million dollars, on top of the more than one billion dollars already paid under wartime leasing agreements, to make up for the supposed deficits. Additionally, Congress appropriated three hundred million dollars for the purpose of providing low interest loans to carriers to "serve the public during the transition period" following privatization. Adding insult to injury, the new law guaranteed each company's profitability for six months following the end of federal control. Robert La Follette, one of the only senators to defend labor unequivocally during railroad negotiations, claimed that Esch-Cummins made "soap bubble stock" as "good as gold" and was overall a "raw deal" for the public. In La Follette's telling, the railroad industry had profited generously from a failure of its

[449] "2,000,000 Railway Workers Hog-Tied by Terms of Bill," *Labor* (February 28, 1920), 1-2; U.S. Congress, *Statutes at Large* 66th Congress, Session 2, Chapter 91, 469-474.
[450] Isaiah Leo Sharfman, *The American Railroad Problem: A Study in War and Reconstruction* (New York: The Century Co., 1921), 431; Jon R. Huibregtse, *American Railroad Labor and the Genesis of the New Deal, 1919-1935* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 32; "The Transportation Act of 1920," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (April 1920), 364.

own making. "The big outstanding fact is that private ownership and private operation of transportation broke down, failed, utterly collapsed, when the demands for a prompt, efficient and adequate service became imperative," he claimed. The inadequate response of the dozens of American railroad companies to effectively meet the needs of a war economy *forced* the federal government to nationalize transport. After acquiring the roads, the government replaced decaying infrastructure, updated train car technology, laid new tracks, expanded service areas, and increased wages and benefits to keep employees working-- all steps needed to improve transportation, all steps private companies refused to make. During these two years, he insisted, the government paid these companies for the use of their property while devoting tax-payer dollars to increase its value.[451] That Congress was now fully willing to return the rails to private ownership and ensure the profitability of a less-efficient system was too much for the Wisconsin senator remained baffled at the support for the "bail out."

While many workers loudly derided the "subsidies and guarantees of billions of dollars to Wall street bankers and railroad stock jobbers," Esch-Cummins supporters in Congress maintained that financial support was necessary to ensure the viability of the nation's transportation system. For most, government ownership was always meant to be a temporary solution and few supported permanent government ownership. Even Wisconsin's junior senator, Irvine Lenroot, who while serving in the Wisconsin state assembly backed then Governor La Follette's ambitious railroad reform agenda (essentially creating a state transport commission to set rates and timetables), stated that

[451] Robert M. La Follette, "Soap Bubble Stock Made Good as Gold by the Cummins Bill," *Labor* (January 24, 1920), 1. Isaiah Leo Sharfman, *The American Railroad Problem: A Study in War and Reconstruction* (New York: The Century Co., 1921), 166-167.

private operation "had to be given another trial." Indeed, labor found almost no allies in Congress willing to back a temporary extension of federal leasing and failed to secure Wilson's veto. Wilson seemed eager to hand off control to private hands. Railroad executives were some of the most powerful business leaders in the country. They had strong connections with virtually every industrial sector and their fortunes were intricately tied with Wall Street's rise and fall -- it is not difficult to imagine why Congress was in a rush to return the roads. Further, the Transportation Act did include progressive-friendly provisions to rationalize the industry. The new law empowered the ICC to take a regional approach to setting minimum and maximum rates and mandated these rates to be made public. It also barred companies from charging more for shorter trips than longer ones, provided the treasury with enforcement power to collect on federal loans, and removed antitrust restrictions to allow for the consolidation of small lines into larger conglomerates. As Albert Cummins argued, the guarantee, conflict arbitration, and access to loans would add stability to prices and more reliable service. Passing the bill seemed to confirm his theory. The stock market immediately shot upward in anticipation of privatization and the law's implementation.[452]

It also became clear that many in Congress saw the Transportation Act as a way to issue labor a public rebuke. Senator Joseph T. Robinson, a Democrat from Arkansas, exclaimed from the floor of Congress, "Threats of industrial revolution, boasts of political vengeance to be reeked on contemptible cowards who occasionally disgrace

[452] "Should Guarantee Mothers Against Sacrifice of Sons," *Labor* (March 6, 1920), 2; "House Approves the Railway Bill by 250 to 150," *New York Times* (Feb 22, 1920, 1; "6% As Rail Return Lifts Stock Prices," *New York Times* (February 18, 1920), 22; "Rise in Rails Reflects Progress of Railroad Bill," *Wall Street Journal* (February 19, 1920), 10; "Chic., Rock Island & Pacific Bonds in Strong Position," *Wall Street Journal* (February 28, 1920), 5; Jon R. Huibregtse, *American Railroad Labor and the Genesis of the New Deal, 1919-1935* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 27-33.

public office, vengeance through the manifest ill temper of labor leaders who mistakenly regard themselves as dictators of public policy, may even secure temporary advantages detrimental to the general public interests for the organizations which they represent, but in the end the public will know and understand." Even the more progressive Lenroot acknowledged, "The vote I am about to cast may place me on the labor blacklist, but I cannot help that, and I am not going to worry about it." An editor of the *Wall Street Journal* congratulated Congress for finally showing the "courage to call its soul its own" by depriving unions of "the power to extort limitless increases in wages regardless of the earnings of the roads or the value of the service the employes render."[453] Without question, the easy passage of the Transportation Act was final proof that the Brotherhoods and American Federation of Labor could no longer count on political help in their struggle to maintain relevancy in the post-war workplace.

Despite being a staggering defeat, it was by no means an entirely unexpected one. Warren Stone had long anticipated hostility from the current Congress and, when asked to testify in front of the House Committee on Interstate Commerce in August, 1919, made no secret of his desire to "create enough sentiment throughout the country to compel Congress to adopt the plan."[454] Three weeks before Esch-Cummins became law, Keating printed a bold notice in *Labor*: "WANTED: 200 Workers and Farmers in Congress." Pointing to recent farmer-labor victories in Denmark, Australia, Ontario Province, and Great Britain, Keating told his PPL and union readers that labor *had* to gain political power in the United States or face destruction. So long as "privilege" controlled

[453] "Rail Bill to President," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (February 24, 1920), 1; "Will the Labor Unions Sue?" *Wall Street Journal* (February 27, 1920), 1.
[454] "Stone Says No Strike to Force Plumb Plan," *Wall Street Journal* (August 7, 1919), 14; "Congress Unfavorable to Plumb R.R. Scheme," *Wall Street Journal* (August 19, 1919), 15.

American politics, he argued, it would continue to increase living costs, decrease wages, and generally oppress wage earners. In short, Keating warned that the powers-that-be wanted "political and economic slavery" for the masses. "Labor and the farmer will continue to be the Cinderellas of politics in this country so long as they are willing to sit in the chimney corner," Keating wrote. "They have the votes, they have the power, and by the very spirit of democracy they should control this Government of ours."[455] His suggestion was to quickly mobilize, as primary season was quickly approaching.

Labor's Electoral Victories

When the Transportation Act officially became law and government operation dissolved, the staff at *Labor* drew a single conclusion: "Labor was defeated by politics. Labor must enter politics. Labor has no other alternative." Virtually all interested groups in the AFL, Brotherhoods, and PPL agreed that participation in the electoral sphere needed to begin in the primaries. After the AFL officially chartered its National Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee (NNPCC) in February, its members instructed each of the AFL's state and local central bodies to meet on March 22, develop a political committee, and select five of its most "able and devoted members" to work solely on campaigning. Later, these five-member councils would work with the NNPCC to determine if any local candidates were eligible for endorsement. "There never has been a time in the history of organized labor that the workers must make their political power felt more than now," the AFL's circular reported. The Federation stressed unity above all, insisting it could "not permit its political strength to be divided in the present crisis."

[455] "WANTED: 200 Workers and Farmers in Congress." *Labor* (February 7, 1920), 1.

Further, councils could not afford to be "partisan to any political party."[456] Keating agreed, writing, "Labor will take a leaf from the book of special privilege. It will refuse to wear the party collar."[457] But while the NNPCC hoped that AFL members would stick with endorsing pre-approved candidates and stick close to the Federation's moderate reconstruction plan, local labor committees often went further. It would not be enough to simply endorse candidates who honored labor's values, trade unionists needed to build their own platforms and run their own candidates in as many races as possible.[458]

Many central bodies took this more militant position. In early April, Glen Willette, a locomotive engineer and officer of the Kansas Federation of Labor (KFL), told Frank Walsh that he and his fellow organizers had been quite busy "working in carrying out the program adopted last December by the American Federation." On March 22, when 856 central labor federations met in state capitals, cities, and towns across the country, Willette and several dozen delegates met in Topeka. While the KFL's top priority was defeating that "skunk of a governor" Allen, it endorsed more far-reaching proposals as well. Founding a new "Kansas Legislative Board," and inviting all labor unions and organized farmers to participate, Willette and the Federation called for "All workers, whether of the city of country, of mine or factory, firm or transportation" to join together on a platform of collective bargaining rights, cooperatively owned meat and grain storage facilities, and expanded public education. Board members divided themselves into Democratic and Republican committees to "clean house within these

[456] American Federation of Labor Executive Council, "American Federation of Labor Executive Council Minutes of Meetings, February 24-March 3, 1920." American Federation of Labor Records: The Sam Gompers Era (Microfilm) Reel 6A.
[457] "Labor's Political Pronunciamento," *Labor* (February 14, 1920), 4.
[458] "Labor's Political Move," *Workers Chronicle* (April 16, 1920), 3; Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 199-204.

parties." Willette, a Republican, subsequently won nomination to his party's Sumner County convention where he reportedly "put the Allen faction out of business." Though Kansas labor prided itself on this kind of slow and careful work, workers, particularly on the rails, threw themselves into direct campaigning as well.[459]

This wave of organizing resulted in a series of small-town electoral wins. In early April, Kansas labor-nominated candidates won mayoral races in Wellington, Caldwell, Ottawa, Emporia, and Newton.[460] In nearby Iowa, union candidates took the city halls of Waterloo, Burlington, and Sioux City. In Waterloo, Ed Keating eagerly pointed out, locomotive engineer Nelson W. Frisbie defeated an incumbent mayor with personal connections to Wilbur Marsh, treasurer of the Democratic National Committee.[461] Despite the small size of these cities and towns, the elections still worried observers concerned with labor's growing confidence. In Wellington, newspaper editor H.L. Woods looked upon J.P. Naylor's close mayoral victory in horror. A few days before the election, he took to the front page of the local paper and warned his neighbors that local unions had foisted an "incompetent" candidate, whose only qualification was a membership in the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, on the city to institute "class government." G.H. Kitterman, who supported Naylor, did not take kindly to Woods's allegations. "You seem to be afraid there is a boss somewhere on the sidelines. I don't think you need to be alarmed," he wrote to the *Wellington Daily News*. "You see people

[459] Glen Willett to Frank Walsh, April 10, 1920; Willett to Walsh, July 31, 1920, Frank Walsh Papers Box: 9 Folders: 1920 April 1-12, 1920 July 22-31; "Howat Greets Mass Meeting," *Workers Chronicle* (April 16, 1920), 2; Charles M. Kelley, "Workers Are Awakening," *Workers Chronicle* (March 26, 1920), 2.
[460] Glen Willett to Frank Walsh, April 10, 1920. Box: 9 Folders: 1920 April 1-12.
[461] "Union Labor Wins Many Municipal Contests in Iowa," *Labor* (April 10, 1920) 1, 3.
"Union Labor Wins Many Municipal Contests in Iowa," "N.W. Frisbie is Elected Mayor by Lead of 772," *Waterloo Evening Courier* (March 30, 1920), 1; "How Iowa Cities Voted Yesterday," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette* (March 30, 1920), 1; "Campaign From Same Platform," *Waterloo Evening Courier* (March 24, 1920), 5.

are beginning to think for themselves, and are getting away from this boss you are talking about, or rather afraid of."[462] Trade unionists were confident in their abilities to govern.

Helping direct campaign materials, fundraising, and stump speakers at a national level, were Keating, Howe, and the staff at *Labor* and Plumb Plan League, which in February had grown in staff to occupy its own floor in the Machinist's seven story headquarters. Keating and Howe worked long hours in D.C. turning their incipient network into an engine capable of winning competitive races. Plumb himself ceaselessly toured the country and booked speaking arrangements. He spoke not only to Brotherhood strongholds in the Midwest, but to crowds of more than ten thousand as far west as Los Angeles. Also speaking at the California rally was George Isaacs, general secretary of the Operating Printing Pressmen and Assistants' Union of Great Britain, who gave an "interesting review of the progress of the labor movement in England" and "stated there was complete adherence to a political program that gave assurance of ultimate complete control of the political government and the enactment of labor's policies."

Energized by these meetings, local PPL branches often wrote to the main office in Washington for direction and clarification. "We are ready to go, but we do not know much about politics and we want instructions," one PPL local in Ohio telegraphed the main office. Keating acknowledged that workers had learned by necessity "to use their economic power," but had unfortunately "neglected their political power." Above all, the former congressman stressed unity with like-minded and more established forces. "The first thing needed is to see that the labor forces in every community are united," he wrote in his return message. "There must be no division between the American Federation of

[462] H.L. Woods, "The City Election," *Wellington Daily News* (April 2, 1920), 1; G.H. Kitterman, "The City Election," *Wellington Daily News* (April 5, 1920), 1.

Labor unions, the railroad brotherhoods, the Plumb Plan leagues, and the progressive farm organizations."[463] Many who read *Labor* seemingly followed the suggestion.

In Montana, the twenty thousand strong Nonpartisan League joined with AFL and Brotherhood locals into the "Montana Labor League." The League swept the state's Democratic primaries. Its candidate for governor, a lawyer and upstart politician named Burton K. Wheeler, promised that the "N.P.L and the Labor League program is going to be carried out."[464] Closer east, NPL organizers helped the United Mine Workers back Samuel B. Montgomery, a former state senator and state labor secretary, for a challenge against Ephraim P. Morgan, the coal operator's candidate, in the Republican gubernatorial primary. Montgomery lost the late-May contest, but came within two thousand votes, or one and a half percent, of clinching the nomination. Labor insisted that the coal operators had manipulated the election through fraud. Montgomery supporters noted that several striking mining towns remained in "state of siege," as national guard units filed in to keep coal pouring out of the mountains. As reports circulated that voters in several mining towns experienced ballot shortages, Montgomery sought a federal investigation-- ultimately in vain. Still, that the primary was so close surprised even seasoned political commentators. The progressive William Hard, for instance, had attended a British Labour Party convention in 1917 and had, up until the summer of

[463] While *Labor* claimed 15,000 attended, the *Los Angeles Times* reported 3,000 workers and their families attended the talk. "Plumb Planners Are Busy as Bees in Field of Clover," *Labor* February 14, 1920, 3; "Producing Forces of Nation Unite in Battle of Ballots," *Labor* (March 20, 1920), 1; "Park Picnics Draw Crowds," *Los Angeles Times* (September 7, 1920), 12; "Plumb Speaks at Los Angeles on Railmen's Plan," *Labor* (September 11, 1920), 3.

[464] Michael Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy: the Nonpartisan League in North American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 220-226; Burton K. Wheeler and Paul F. Healy, *Yankee From the West: The Candid, Turbulent Life Story of the Yankee-born U.S. Senator from Montana* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1962), 173-184; "Farm-Labor Ticket Named in Montana at Great Meeting," *Labor* (July 17, 1920), 3. Marc C. Johnson, *Political Hellraiser: The Life and Times of Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019), 26-40.

1920, remained skeptical that American workers could conjure the same intensity. Now, he could hardly believe that "an outright labor candidate with no concealments" could do so well. [465]

The Nonpartisan League in Minnesota welcomed increased cooperation from labor. The NPL invested its resources heavily during the prior state election. Minnesota of course neighbored North Dakota, the NPL's stronghold, and had both a similar grain-based agricultural economy. Having an ally in St. Paul would do much to expand the NPL's membership and influence on the national stage. But in 1918, the League's favored candidate, congressional representative Charles Lindbergh, failed to capture the Republican gubernatorial spot, and its independent candidate won barely a quarter of the popular vote. Two years later, the effect of labor's participation was palpable. Thomas Van Lear, a one-term socialist mayor of Minneapolis, hoped to fully integrate organized labor with the NPL's farmer insurgency. He successfully positioned his organization, the Minnesota Working People's Nonpartisan Political League (MW-NPL), formed in 1919, as the AFL's and Brotherhood's primary political vehicle. Van Lear further connected the working people's league to his other venture, the *Minnesota Daily Star*, a newspaper dedicated to advancing Farmer-Labor interests.

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[465] "Lawrence Todd, "Mine War is Imminent in the West Virginia District," *Workers Chronicle* July 9, 1; "Corruption and Fraud is Charged in West Virginia," *Labor* July 31, 1; "Primary in West Virginia Goes to Root of Liberty," *Labor* June 12, 1; William Hard to Robert La Follette Sr., July 9, 1920. La Follette Family Papers. Box B85 Folder 1920, Hard, William. Library of Congress; Hard to Robert La Follette, July 11, 1920. *Ibid.; History of West Virginia Old and New and West Virginia Biography: Volume III Biographical* (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1923), 8-10 "Morgan's Lead Down to 2,068," *The Wheeling Intelligencer* (June 2, 1920), 1; "Republican Executive Committee Will Meet," *Charleston Daily Mail* (July 14, 1920), 5; "Statements Are Issued on Montgomery Action," *Charleston Daily Mail* (July 23, 1920), 3; "Both Montgomery and Morgan Claim Gubernatorial Nomination," *Wheeling Intelligencer* (May 27, 1920), 1; "Montgomery Asks Recount," *Wheeling Intelligencer* (May 28, 1920), 1; "Judicial Probe May Follow Primary Regularities in West Virginia," *Wheeling Intelligencer* (May 29, 1920), 1.

The MW-NPL's first gauntlet was the St. Paul mayoral primary. In late March, William Mahoney, a progressive newspaper editor, placed first in the contest-- polling more votes than Lawrence Hodgson, the incumbent mayor. Though he went on to lose the general election, organized labor in the Twin Cities won three out of four city commissioner races. Local Republican papers heaved relief after Hodgson's reelection. "The issue in the mayoral campaign was clear cut," the editors of the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* decided. "It was a question of electing a man who stood for Americanism and one who was on record as a Socialist."[466] Both Mahoney and Van Lear had prior connections to the Socialist Party of America, but shifted their prior loyalties after the war to work more firmly within non-partisan farmer and labor circles. Convinced that organized labor would never accept the Socialist Party, they sought other ways to direct worker power in politics.[467] Shortly after Mahoney's defeat, the Minnesota Working People's Nonpartisan Political League readied for its first statewide campaign, the election of Henrik Shipstead, a rural dentist, for governor. Edward Keating and *Labor* enthusiastically predicted his victory in the June Republican primary.[468]

The spring election that most excited the staff at *Labor* was one seemingly few anticipated. On April 6, Wisconsin Republicans selected their delegates to the national convention. Up until March, most Wisconsinites viewed the election as a formality. Governor Emanuel Phillips instructed the state party to nominate delegates unpledged to

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[466] Hodgson Wins St. Paul Race for Mayoralty," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* (May 5, 1920, 1). ("Mahoney Yields, Runs for Mayor," "Call Is Issued For State Meet," "Duluth Men in State League," *Labor World* (February 7, 1920), 6. "Labor Wins in St. Paul," *Labor* (March 27, 1920), 1. "St. Paul Labor Men Win First Election Bout," *Labor World* (March 27, 1920), 1.

[467] The two went so far as to defeat Socialist Party efforts to secure a MW-NPL endorsement for Eugene Debs's 1920 presidential campaign. Townley, Insurgent Democracy. "Working People's Political League Out For Shipstead," *Labor World* (July 24, 1920), 1.

[468] "Farmer-Labor Ticket Will Win Minnesota," *Labor* (April 17, 1920), 3.

any one candidate-- freeing the delegation to back the contender with the strongest support on the convention floor. Robert La Follette, however, soon upset the balance. The senator nominated a rival slate of delegates pledged to his progressive "Wisconsin Platform." As described in the previous chapter, La Follette's document included strong labor protections, an end to American intervention in Haiti and the Philippines, taxes on war profits, and nationalization of large swaths of the transportation, communication, and extractive economy.[469]

Though always on the radical side of the senate, "Fighting Bob" lurched even further into labor's corner after World War I. Historian Richard Drake describes La Follette's ideological positioning in 1920 as sounding "some new notes of class war." There were some practical reasons for the noticeable change. His experience in government during World War I-- when his opposition to American participation nearly caused his expulsion-- convinced him that a grassroots campaign of working people against entrenched political and economic power was the only path that would ensure his survival. He would certainly never again get help from the Republican Party.[470] La Follette's energized relationship with organized labor was rooted in this political philosophy. Only a new mutually agreeable coalition at the grassroots could maintain his influence. Keating, Howe, Basil Manly, William Johnston, and Warren Stone reveled in La Follette's defense of collective bargaining, his call to defang injunctions, his affirmations of free speech, and his promise to repeal the Cummins-Esch Railroad Law

[469] "La Follette Progressive Republican Platform." La Follette Papers. Box B181 Folder: Wisconsin Campaign. Library of Congress.
[470] Richard Drake, *The Education of an Anti-Imperialist: Robert La Follette and U.S. Expansion* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 337-338.

and advance "the ultimate public ownership of the railroads."[471] The primary became a test of labor's ideas and the feasibility of winning statewide elections while defending them.

Wisconsin was the ideal stage for labor's test of strength. Apart from the aid a nationally known figure like La Follette could provide, the state had some 25,000 union railroad workers, thousands of radical farmers in the countryside, and a legion of craft and industrial unionists in Milwaukee. When Wisconsin's election commission certified the results on April 8, the results stunned not only La Follette and his allies, but observers around the nations. The progressive slate won all four at large elections and captured all but two of the eleven district races.

Frederic C. Howe wrote La Follette in a state of near euphoria. "I cannot tell you how happy I am over the news of the election on Tuesday. It surpasses all my expectations," he claimed. "It is fine that we have this reservoir of protest that is ready to make itself felt." As Correspondents for *Labor* remarked, the "plain people in Wisconsin" had won a "great victory" and dealt a "severe blow to Wall Street candidates and reactionaries." Labor journalist Raymond Lonergan proudly noted that organized workers "went down the line a hundred per cent in practically every section of the state." Encouraged by the results, La Follette announced his intention to issue state primary challenges to the sitting governor and his fellow Senator, Irvine Lenroot, whom his supporters believed had gone "over body and boots to the Wall street crowd." In the following weeks, Keating, now the chair of the Railroad Brotherhood's campaign

[471] "The opening battle for labor," *Labor* (March 27, 1920), 4.

committee, offered his full support in the endeavor. Of particular interest to Keating was unseating John Esch, co-author of the Transportation Act.[472]

The sixth months following the December conference and Gompers's supposed *Ukase*, organized labor rode a wave of agonizingly close defeats and small but meaningful victories. No labor candidate had yet won a state-wide office or the executive of any city of more than one hundred thousand residents. Still, few could doubt that labor was growing in confidence.[473] Internally, however, the increase in electoral activity aggravated the divisions between progressive union leaders and the more anti-statist Gompers wing of the AFL. Though they applauded the Federation chief for forming Labor's Non-Partisan Coordinating Committee and cheering after he instructed them to "exhaust all resources to defeat every enemy of labor," many of state and local level committees, including the Kansas Legislative Board, questioned Gompers's continued hedging on popular legislative initiatives. Namely, the Plumb Plan. These conflicts came to a head at the AFL's fortieth annual convention in Montreal.

Despite agreeing to a temporary extension of government ownership at the December meeting, the Federation Executive Council continued to undervalue cooperative ownership of the rails in its messaging-- regardless of its popularity amongst the rank and file.[474] Even as Gompers and the Committee demanded the repeal the Esch-Cummins Act, they made no call for new legislation to nationalize the roads. The

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[472] Edward Keating to RML, May 21 1920. La Follette Papers. Box B85 Folder 1920 Keating, Ed. Library of Congress; "Victory of Plain People in Wisconsin Severe Blow to Wall Street Candidates and Reactionaries." *Labor* (April 17, 1920), 1; Frederic C Howe to RML, April 8, 1920. La Follette Papers. Box B85 Folder 1920 Frederic C. Howe. Library of Congress; "The opening battle for labor," *Labor* (March 27, 1920), 4; "La Follette Ticket Seems Beaten in Wisconsin," *New York Times* (April 7, 1920), 1; "La Follette Loses Two," *New York Times* (April 9, 1920), 17.
[473] "Labor Unlimbers For Crucial Grip With Its Enemies," *Labor* (June 19, 1920), 1.
[474] "Political Action by Producers is Necessary to Rescue Nation," *Labor* (June 12, 1920) 1,3; "Labor's Great Convention," *American Federationist* (July 1920), 625-641.

Executive Council exacerbated the conflict by marking some candidates who had voted for the Transportation Act as suitable for labor's endorsement, so long as they had voted for worker-friendly legislation in the past.[475]

Laurence Todd, a left-wing labor journalist with ties to the NPL and newly minted Federated Press, noted the AFL had endorsed congressional representatives for their vote against the "Borland Resolution" (which would have increased the workweek for federal employees), but made no remark on their vote for the Transportation Act. "If three votes against a Borland resolution can give a congressman a good labor record and two votes against the whole labor movement on the issue of national anti-strike legislation are set down as only one-third as important," Todd wrote, "then the influence of these official records with the voters represented in central labor bodies throughout the country is likely to be slight." He called for the Federation's "political bookkeeping" to be "fully scrutinized" at the Montreal convention and for the votes on railroad legislation to become the standard test for endorsement. Reporter Charles M. Kelley agreed, stating that with Esch-Cummins "Labor can now pick out its friends blindfolded." Though Keating was far too diplomatic to openly critique the AFL in *Labor*, many articles asked Plumb Plan Leagues to "revise" the lists of its supposed friends based solely on railroad nationalization.[476]

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[475] As the last chapter states, the Chicago Federation of Labor pointed out that several of the AFL-endorsed congressional candidates in Northern Illinois had voted for the Transportation Act. The CFL hoped that pointing this out could result in Gompers and the Executive Council funding the Cook County Labor Party's independent slate of candidates. Nockels to Frank Morrison, March 10 1920. In *American Federationist* (May 1920), 438-439. Shapiro, *Hand and Brain* (Ph.D. Dissertation, UC Berkeley, 1967), 183; Gompers to Nockels March 16; Nockels to Gompers. *American Federationist* (March 25, 1920), 439-440; Gompers to Nockels, April 2, *American Federationist* (May 1920), 440.

[476] Charles M. Kelley, "Government Control Necessary to Interests," *Workers Chronicle* (March 12, 1920), 1; Laurence Todd, "Must Elect Officials Favorable to Labor," *Workers Chronicle* (April 30, 1920), 1; Labor Hog-tied By Predatory Interests, *Workers Chronicle* March 12, 1920, 1; Lawrence Todd, "A.F. of L. Realizes Need of Labor Press," *Workers Chronicle* (June 11, 1920), 1; "Candidates Are Revising Lists of

The Executive Council's equivocation on the Plumb Plan was the final straw for Warren Stone, who up until June 1920, had even considered chartering the long-independent Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers into the AFL. For months Stone and the Council had adjudicated jurisdictional concerns between the engineers and streetcar unions, both of whom feared raids by one another. But when Stone abruptly ended the talks just prior to the annual convention, he made clear that a potential loss in membership was not the cause. "The thing that has caused us to take the step we have is our experience of the last year in trying to cooperate and work in harmony with the American Federation of Labor," Stone insisted. He was aggrieved to report that there had "not been a single thing [railroad unions] recommended that has been approved by the Executive Committee." Stone rejected any further cooperation. During a subsequent Executive Council meeting, Vice President James Duncan told Gompers that only their prolonged disagreement over the Plumb Plan could have provoked Stone's reaction.[477]

A Reckoning in Montreal: Bridges and Divisions at the AFL Convention

As Laurence Todd predicted, those assembled in Montreal engaged in much "bookkeeping." The convention exposed ideological fault lines concerning both domestic and international labor politics. Primarily, the meeting doubled as a referendum on the Plumb Plan and AFL support for collective ownership and nationalization. On the

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Their 'Friends,'" *Labor* (May 22, 1920), 1-3; Clint C. Houston, "Labor Federation Meets Monday in Montreal, Quebec," *Labor* (June 5, 1920), 1; U.S. Congress, House of Representatives Subcommittee of the Committee on Labor, "H.R. 11876: A Bill to Fix the Compensation of Certain Employees of the United States," 64th Congress, 1st Session, March 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 30, April 3 and 5, 1916 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 47-48.

[477] American Federation of Labor Executive Council, "American Federation of Labor Executive Council Minutes of Meetings, June 5-26, 1920," 3-5, 11-12, 16. American Federation of Labor Records: The Sam Gompers Era (Microfilm) Reel 6A.

meeting's fourth day, Glenn E. Plumb addressed the convention. It was his second time speaking at a national meeting of the AFL. He had addressed the labor delegates in Atlantic City the June prior, when he introduced his plan and heralded its potential to extend the "glorious hope of free men" to wage earners across industries: from the "president of this great corporation down to the humblest office boy." Asking the Federation for its endorsement, he told the delegates "The future of the world lies in your hands."[478] The audience reportedly gave Plumb an applause so rapturous that Warren Stone briefly thought the Federation had adopted the measure, though, officially, the Executive Council held no vote.[479]

Now in Montreal, with more than a year of publicity work under his belt, Plumb detailed his plan with precision. He assigned the cooperative management of the railroads an almost messianic importance. "Men of America," Plumb concluded, "ye who as individuals have neither wealth nor power, whose judgment is not swerved from the common good by selfish interests, only in the hearts and minds of such as you is salvation to be found." Knowing that this time a vote on his plan was scheduled, Plumb insisted that only labor, who had "no interest but the common weal," could be trusted

[478] *Convention of the American Federation of Labor Held at Atlantic City, N.J.* (Washington, D.C.: The Law Reporter Printing Company, 1919) 205-207

[479] A transcript of June 1920 meeting minutes read: "Vice-President Duncan referred to the fact that Mr. Stone had considered the action of the Atlantic City convention as an endorsement of Government ownership, and because of the applause and lack of anything of a negative nature to the address of Mr. Plumb to the convention, that government ownership meant things along the line of the Plumb Plan. His colleagues came before the Executive Council and addressed it and because the Executive Council did not go along with it, he has put into the letter that the Council is a body unto itself and decrees and declares other directions." American Federation of Labor Executive Council, "American Federation of Labor Executive Council Minutes of Meetings, June 5-26, 1920," 16. American Federation of Labor Records: The Sam Gompers Era (Microfilm) Reel 6A.

with such a momentous decision. "I pray to God that you will be equal to the task," the labor lawyer pleaded.[480]

It appeared, at first, that the convention was not up to the task. Five days later, the majority of the Committee on Resolutions, headed by James Duncan and John P. Frey, two Executive Council members and Gompers loyalists, produced a report calling for a repeal of the Esch-Cummins Act, increased regulation on profiteering, and stronger workplace bargaining rights on the rails, but not for government ownership or cooperative management. William H. Johnston of the machinists quickly demanded a floor vote to replace the resolution with a minority report, co-drafted by representatives of the Carmen, Blacksmiths, and Stationary Fireman, which endorsed the Plumb Plan in all but name. Desperate to scuttle the vote, Frey delivered a lengthy rejoinder. Like Plumb, Frey believed the convention stood at a "turning point in the entire policy and viewpoint of the American trade union movement." Frey, however, thought it best the AFL avoid the turn. He pleaded with the audience not to abandon the "distinct philosophy" of trade union anti-statism that had guided the Federation so far. He asked the delegates to recall the "heart rending tales" of government employees, postal carriers in particular, who worked long hours for small wages and had no legal right to strike or bargain. Yes, he admitted, private ownership of the rails was inefficient and workers in that industry were hardly on solid ground. "But proving that a man is sick, that he is approaching death," Frey insisted, "does not furnish a cure." He had no faith in Plumb's near scientific level of certainty.[481]

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[480] *Report of the Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor: Held at Montreal, Quebec, Canada June 7th to 19th, Inclusive, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: The Law Reporter Company, 1920), 318-325.
[481] *Ibid.,* 399-406.

Frey quickly found himself in the minority. Two of his fellow Executive Council members, Frank Morrison of the Tunnel and Subway Constructors and William Green of the United Mine Workers, broke ranks to speak in favor of the minority resolution. "I well understand that we have pursued diligently a trade union philosophy that has brought to us improved conditions of employment, shorter hours of labor and increased wages," Green said, addressing Frey directly. A strategy having worked well in the past, Green surmised, did not justify avoiding potentially new paths to victory: "My friends, I have always understood that that philosophy was sufficiently flexible to permit the trade union movement to go forward and never stand still." Likely noticing support slipping away from the majority resolution, filling Montreal's St. Denis theater seemingly unconvinced by Frey and Woll's protestations, Gompers himself begged for the floor's attention.[482]

He kept his opposition brief. Echoing Frey's initial hesitations, which he no doubt inspired, the Federation president challenged his colleagues to name a strong central government that had not at one point devolved into "tyranny." He retold the hardships faced by federal employees, which had no right to strike, and at various points had lost the ability to form unions, or even petition Congress for wage increases. He wondered aloud whether railway workers were ready to face these challenges after nationalization.[483] Having spoken his mind, Gompers lamented that so many workers would vote to "willingly enslave themselves." His last-ditch persuasion did not carry the

[482] *Ibid.,* 407-418.
[483] Gompers, Woll, and Frey all made arguments similar to this one, often alluding to, or directly invoking Postal Service employees. Beginning with Grover Cleveland and accelerating under Theodore Roosevelt's administration, the White House had issued a series of "gag rules" preventing government employees from forming unions. Though these rules applied broadly, they were most pointedly directed at letter carriers, who had attempted several organizing drives to increase pay.

day. In perhaps the most stinging rebuke of Gompers's long career, Federation delegates voted three-to-one in favor of the minority resolution and cooperative management.[484]

Conclusion

Between 1919 and 1920, much of the federal government had declared war on organized labor. As workers across the country walked off the job for higher pay to meet the cost of living, politicians in both parties crafted legislative methods to thwart them. Henry J. Allen's industrial court was one attempt, the Esch-Cummins Transportation Act was another. In the face of these challenges trade unionists in the AFL and the Brotherhoods agreed to place a new emphasis on political action. In response, local union leaders from coast to coast mobilized their members and urged them to the polls.

Fissures between these trade unionists, however, quickly began to appear. The American Federation of Labor's National Nonpartisan Coordinating Committee hoped that workers would stick to the tried-and-true method of supporting politicians willing to give labor a fair shake. And while this often occurred, these workers just as regularly instigated their own primary challenges and ignored the NNPCC's endorsement unless the candidate in question supported railroad nationalization. The post-war economy had fueled reconstruction amongst working people. They wanted not only a government that supported their right to organize, but one that would nationalize broad segments of the economy to protect industrial democracy.

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[484] *Report of the Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor: Held at Montreal, Quebec, Canada June 7th to 19th, Inclusive, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: The Law Reporter Company, 1920), 419-420.

Chapter 4: "The New Sun of Freedom:" Labor's Divisions and the Election of 1920

Trade unionists had many competing visions after the armistice. The Federation's 1920 annual convention in Montreal quickly became an arena for organized workers to debate the role of the state, the utility of nationalization of key industries, the Federation's relationship with European communist and social democratic parties, and the degree to which women reformers and workers across the color line deserved a voice in the House of Labor. Delegates to the 1920 meeting addressed labor's growing unease with its diversifying membership. Though white men still overwhelmingly dominated the Federation, Black members and multi-ethnic groups of women constituted an increasing presence-- much to the consternation of unions dedicated to maintaining a segregated and all-male shop. Many arriving in Montreal had conflicting visions, but the shared desire for the Federation to strike a new direction was palpable. The Federation's non-white and women members hoped that the spirit of reconstruction would lead to reckoning on labor's discriminatory policy. It was a busy and eventful twelve days.

This chapter will detail the 1920 convention and how labor progressives could win support for the Plumb Plan and political participation, while remaining deeply divided on most other issues. It begins with a brief look at how European social democracy, and the British Labour Party in particular, inspired the Plumb Plan and encouraged additional trade union militancy. The Farmer-Labor Party was hardly the only group of union activists interested in political realignment. It will then examine how reconstruction sentiment led many workers, excluded from full membership in the trade union movement because of their race or gender, to demand institutional equality.

This chapter will conclude with labor's non-partisan strategy during the summer and fall of 1920. Erasing the promise that several early victories provided, conservative politicians defeated labor-backed candidates across the country. Politically oriented trade unionists and their allies could neither surmount the animus leveled against them nor their own internal divisions. Arguably, progressive labor leaders and Plumb Plan supporters had their best results in Wisconsin. There they secured the help of Senator Robert La Follette and successfully primaried several sitting congressional representatives and nearly unseated popular senator Irvine Lenroot, providing a potential formula for success in the future.

The AFL's "Fighting Ranks:" The Plumb Plan and the British Labour Party

The vote for the Plumb Plan left progressives jubilant. A correspondent for the *Machinist's Monthly* called the resolution a "sweeping victory" and the beginning of a new "epoch in the history of the Labor movement." John Fitzpatrick of Chicago Federation of Labor agreed, predicting the AFL had "turned the big corner, into the road of the future that belongs to workers."[485] Others shared this sentiment. "Union Labor's High Point of Progress Seen at Montreal," Ed Keating printed in bold letters on the front page of *Labor*. Sparing no extravagance in language, the staff at the PPL saw the vote as the beginning of a new era. "Democracy in industry is the new sun of freedom now rising over the misty horizon," they wrote. "Its effulgent rays will soon penetrate every corner

[485] Lawrence Todd, "A.F. of L. Convention Endorses Gov. Control," *The Workers Chronicle* (June 25, 1920), 1; "Union Labor's High Point of Progress Seen at Montreal," *Labor* (July 3,1920), 3; "Report of the Delegates of the I.A. of M. to the A.F. of L. Convention," *Machinist's Monthly Journal* (August 1920) 705-727.

of the United States. It means the extinction of profiteers and exploiters, and the dethronement of Wall Street as the industrial and commercial dictator of the nation." Certainly, Resolution 66 was a victory for the reconstructionist wing of labor. No longer could Gompers publicly claim the Federation opposed government ownership.

The Plumb Plan resolution was just one of many proxy fights between the "progressive" and "conservative" wings of the AFL at the 1920 convention. A second battle occurred during a seemingly perfunctory vote to select a pair of Federation delegates to the next meeting of the British Trade Union Congress. The two labor bodies had exchanged delegates since 1895, but the practice had, since the war, become something of a third rail. Gompers and the more conservative wing of the Federation disapproved of TUC's apparent turn to the left after 1914. Indeed, fully rejecting its on-again-off-again alliance with the Liberals, the TUC now aligned itself with the Labour Party and rallied behind its ostensibly socialist platform, *Labor and the New Social Order*. In the year after the armistice, the TUC threatened general strikes if parliament refused to nationalize wide swaths of the British economy, build affordable housing, increase wages, and slash the cost of living. Internationally, large segments of the BLP and TUC demanded a British withdrawal of black and tans and regular troops from Ireland and called upon transport and mine workers to drop their tools if Prime Minister Lloyd George declared formal war on the fledgling Soviet Union or rendered further aid to its enemies. Seeing Labour as hopelessly left-wing and pro-Soviet, Gompers grew increasingly resentful of elements in American labor idolizing the party and using its model to stoke political action at home.[486]

[486] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2005), 12-13; *Labour and the New Social Order* (London: the Labour Party), 12; Stephen White, "Labour's Council of Action 1920," *Journal of*

It would not have escaped his notice that Keating, Howe, and the writing staff at *Labor*, filled their columns with glowing reports of Labour Party meetings and electoral gains. Nearly a year prior, they praised the TUC's vote in favor of mine and rail nationalization-- specifically asking the AFL to take notice of the staggering number in favor: 4,478,000 to 77,000. They beamed when a correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* called American interest in the Plumb Plan a "startling development" that would "surprise those who have hitherto believed that the American labor attitude towards industry has been almost Early Victorian." The Plumb Plan League believed both the BLP and independent American labor would soon bring about "an honest party alignment… between those who produce the wealth and those who seek to take it from them." If labor politicians on either side of the Atlantic won power, Keating prophesized, they would "make life safer for the wage-earner," guarantee a "certain independence in his declining years," and "wipe out forever the bogey of the poorhouse." Voting in favor of Resolution 66 would put the AFL on the right course. "The American Federation of Labor has placed itself behind a movement that is world wide," a correspondent for *Labor* celebrated.[487]

Contemporary History 9 no. 4 (October, 1974), 99-122; L.J. Macfarlane, "Hands off Russia: British Labour and the Russo-Polish War, 1920," *Past and Present* 38 (December 1967), 126-152; Duncan Bowie, *Reform and Revolt in the City of Dreaming Spires: Radical, Socialist and Communist Politics in the City of Oxford 1830-1980* (London: University of Westminster, 2018; Geoffrey Bell, *Hesitant Comrades: The Irish Revolution and the British Labour Movement* (London: Pluto Press, 2016); Gary Dorrien, *Social Democracy in the Making* (New Haven, *Yale University Press*, 2019), 311-408.

[487] S.G. Hobson, "The American Railway Crisis," *Railroad Democracy* (September 18, 1919), 2; "All British Labor for Nationalization," *Railroad Democracy* (September 18, 1919) 7; "Labor Wins in England," *Labor* (November 8, 1919), 1; Arthur Gleason, "Joint Control of British Railroads," *Labor* (November 15, 1919), 1; "British Labor to Secure Premier in Next Election," *Labor* (January 10, 1920), 2; "British Labor in Politics," *Labor* (February 14, 1920), 4; "Labor is a Prime Political Factor the World Over," *Labor* (April 24, 1920), 3; "Industrial Democracy Endorsed," *Labor* (June 26, 1920), 4.

Since the war, the TUC had sent speakers to the United States who were either sitting members of parliament, parliamentary candidates, or otherwise involved in political efforts. The AFL, conversely, had routinely sent to Britain either Executive Council members or their close allies.[488] In 1919, for instance, the AFL nominated two craft union representatives, John J. Hynes of the Sheet Metal Workers and William L. Hutcheson, president of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and a staunch labor conservative. That same year, TUC sent Samuel Finney, a miner and MP representing West Staffordshire, and Margaret Bondfield, a socialist, suffragette, Women's Trade Union League leader, and political candidate. Bondfield spent several months in the United States, promoting political action at union and American Labor Party events. At the Atlantic City convention, she took Gompers to task for his repeated suggestions that the BLP operated against the will of most British workers.[489] In 1920, the TUC nominated John William Ogden, chairman of the Congress's Parliamentary Committee. He most assuredly did not please the Gompers. Ogden saw no issue with workers striking for political aims and not just workplace grievances and supported strikes against militarism in Ireland and the Soviet Union. Addressing the Federation's unconvinced, he supposed "that an individual who sets himself up to discriminate where an industrial question stops

[488] *Report of the Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor: Held at Montreal, Quebec, Canada June 7th to 19th, Inclusive, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: The Law Reporter Company, 1920), xxiv.

[489] As detailed in chapter one, during the spring of 1918, Gompers offended both the British Labour Party and TUC by inviting a delegate of the significantly smaller General Federation of Trade Unions as an official delegate of British labor. William Appleton, head of the federation, was both a Liberal and solidly pro-war. Though Gompers backed away from his clear assaults on the BLP, visitors from the Trade Union Congress made a point of correcting the Federation leader. At the Atlantic City meeting, Bondfield called the supposed conflict between the BLP and TUC an "entirely erroneous impression." *Convention of the American Federation of Labor Held at Atlantic City, N.J.* (Washington, D.C.: The Law Reporter Printing Company, 1919), 274; "International Labor Relations," *American Federationist* (April 1918), 295-296; Paul U. Kellogg, "American Labor Out of It," *Survey* (March 9, 1918), 626; A Member of the British Labor Party, "Mr. Gompers and the British Labor Party," *Public* (April 27, 1918), 537.

and a political question begins sets himself up a very difficult task indeed." For Ogden and British laborites like him, the AFL's disdain for political action could have real consequences-- especially if Gompers continued to refuse cooperation with the International Federation of Trade Unions, an organization the Federation president denounced as irredeemably socialistic.[490]

After passing the Plumb Plan resolution, labor progressives hoped to retain a bloc strong enough to select fraternal delegates sympathetic to European labor's marked turn toward social democratic political action. Led by William Johnston, the bloc rallied behind Timothy Healy, president of the Stationary Firemen, and Benjamin Schlesinger, president of the Garment Workers Union. They stood against William F. Clark of the Flint Glass Workers' Union and Sarah Conboy of the United Textile Workers, who received the backing of the Executive Committee. Johnston's bloc was only partially successful. Healy won his race in a narrow upset, though Conboy defeated Schlesinger.[491]

Healy's victory very much pleased Keating and the Plumb Planners.[492] Though Healy frequently called himself a "conservative," he had long been an advocate of industrial unionism and political action. Capital's attack on organized labor after the armistice radicalized Healy. He surprised several journalists, who recalled his many years

[490] By 1920, the AFL's Executive Council had all but formally removed the Federation from the International Federation of Trade Unions, otherwise known as the Amsterdam International. Founded by several European labor conglomerates in 1919, IFTU hoped to foster greater cooperation between unions across the world. Gompers derided the organization as controlled by Europe's socialist parties. As Gompers and Woll wrote in October 1920: "The main criticism of the new international executive at Amsterdam was that it had issued a statement of purely socialist character, even including the phrase, 'Down With Reaction, Up With Socialism,' and calling for a first of May celebration which amounted to a one-day strike for socialism." (Samuel Gompers and Matthew Woll, "The European Brainstorm," *American Federationist* (October 1920), 919).
[491] *Ibid*., 451-453.
[492] "Timothy Healy," *Labor* (July 10, 1920), 4.

seated next to Gompers at National Civic Federation events, when he joined the "fighting ranks" of the Plumb Plan League and accepted a position as vice president. Healy turned even more heads in May 1920, when at a meeting of the ICC's Railroad Labor Board, he launched into a bitter tirade against government overreach in the hunt for supposed radicals. "If the government officials and Congress had given as much attention to limiting the profits of the profiteers as they did to pounding and hounding the wage earners the cost of living would have been decreased to figures within reason," he shouted. Though Healy never formally endorsed New York's American Labor Party, he attended several meetings of the Central Federated Union that formed it and maintained close contact with the party's leaders.[493]

Schlesinger, a leading voice in the Garment Workers since the turn of the century, had long been on the Federation's left wing. Indeed, a reporter for *Justice*, the ILGWU's English weekly paper, noted how significant his nomination was "considering the fact that President Schlesinger is regarded as an ultra-radical, and our International is looked upon as a Socialistic organization." Schlesinger was a proponent of Socialist Party politics, especially in New York City, where leftwing pockets of primarily Jewish immigrants held palpable voting strength. His union had already begun its support for Meyer London's congressional campaign against Democrat-Republican fusion candidate,

[493] Born in Ireland, Healy immigrated to New York City where he took a job manning boilers on transatlantic ships. In the 1890s, he joined the Knights of Labor and pursued a variety of political offices--having the distinction of serving as New York's elected coroner for several years at the turn of the century. More poignantly, Healy had long been interested in government ownership of railroads and in 1906 he traveled to Europe to study the effects of municipal ownership of streetcars. "May Day Scare is Resented by Labor as Slur," *New York Tribune* (May 7, 1920), 9; "Labor Leader Stirs Speakers at Davison Home," *New York Tribune* (September 7, 1919), 4; "May Day Warning Assailed by Healy," *New York Times* (May 7, 1920), 17; "May Day Warning Called a Crusade," *Washington Post* (May 7, 1920), 2; "Mr. Healy's Curious Talk," *New York Times* (May 8, 1920), 14; "Timothy Healy, Labor Veteran, Is Dead at 67," *New York Herald Tribune* (June 21, 1930), 11.

Henry Goldfogle. But Schlesinger's loyalty to the Socialist Party was beginning to fade. At the Montreal convention, Schlesinger and his delegation aligned themselves squarely with the decidedly non-socialist Railroad forces. They voted enthusiastically for the Plumb Plan, despite the SPA's ambivalent stance on the proposal. Describing the plan as "one of the most forward-looking and hopeful signs of the new tendency in the American labor movement," Schlesinger had firmly begun his drift from committed socialist to labor social democrat. Within two years he would follow the Brotherhoods into the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Two years after that he and his union would work to elect Robert La Follette.[494]

Healy and Schlesinger shared a similar international outlook. Both were vocal defenders of the Soviet experiment and served together on the board of the American Labor Alliance for Trade Relations with Russia (ALA). Some in the ALA, like labor educator Alexander Trachtenberg, were outright communists. Benjamin Schlesinger was of a socialist persuasion-- joining the labor movement through Eastern European radical Yiddish circles-- but rejected overtures from the Communist Party and revolutionary Third International.[495] Others, like Healy, were ideologically uncommitted. Healy had little love for Lenin's revolutionary politics, but he believed the United States had no right to intervene in Russian domestic affairs. He disapproved of the allied blockade of Soviet ports from a humanitarian standpoint and decided that the resumption of trade

[494] "The A.F. of L. Convention at Work," *Justice* (June 18, 1920), 3; "A.F. of L. Convention Adopts New Measures," *Justice* (June 25, 1920), 1; Gordon J. Goldberg, *Meyer London: A Biography of the Socialist New York Congressman* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Co., 2013), 229; David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1955), 158; Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 110-112, 159-160, 243.

[495] Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 217-250; Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 293-294; Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 72-97.

would both end the famine and fuel shortage in Russia while providing additional markets for American goods.[496]

But even a view as seemingly pragmatic as Healy's drew withering criticism from the Federation's Executive Council. At the Montreal convention, the ILGWU and Seattle Federation of Labor both submitted resolutions calling upon the AFL to urge the withdrawal of all remaining foreign troops in Eastern Europe and the immediate "lifting of all blockades, barriers, and obstacles" to commercial correspondence. Not entertaining these notions, the Council had John Frey promote a substitute resolution insisting the AFL withhold "any action which could be construed as an assistance to, or approval of, the Soviet government" so long as it fomented revolutions in "well-established, civilized nations" or turned its state security apparatus against trade unions, the press, and lawful assembly of its own citizens.[497] Abraham Greenstein of the Jewelry workers requested a fact-finding mission to Russia, but was held out of order. James A. Duncan, who helped lead the Seattle general strike and later won over forty percent of the vote in a run for mayor against a Democrat-Republican fusion candidate, asked Frey "Would we for one moment allow the people of Russia, of Germany, of Great Britain, or of any other nation to come to the United States and dictate to us what form of government was best for us?" Frey repeated that the Executive Council would not consider any recognition of the USSR until "there is evidence that it is a government representing the people of Russia" and not one propped up by "the gun and the bayonet." Joseph D. Cannon, a socialist and

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[496] "American Alliance for Trade Relations With Russia," *Machinists' Monthly Journal* (January 1921), 18-19; US Senate, "Relations With Russia," *Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate* 66 third session on Res. 164 "A Resolution Providing for the Reestablishment of Trade Relations With Russia, and so forth. 6-31; "Recognition of Soviet Russia," *Unity* (October 5, 1922), 47; Philip S. Foner, *The History of the Labor Movement in the United States Vol. 8: Postwar Struggles, 1918-1920* (New York: International Publishers, 1988), 61-62.

[497] Finding Aid, ILGWU Mary Goff Schuster Papers, 1912-1982. Kheel Center, Cornell University.

metal worker, recommended a new resolution withholding support for Bolshevism but facilitating the flow of medical supplies and foodstuffs. Frey and Gompers denied him.[498]

The ILGWU's outspoken support for aid to the struggling Bolshevik government was likely a major contributor to Schlesinger's loss. Conboy, a "staunch conversative," agreed to represent Gompers and Frey's foreign policy while abroad. A few weeks after the Montreal convention, as Conboy prepared for her trip abroad, one attendee at her send-off dinner summarized her farewell speech as "declaring that the policy of the American Federation of Labor in meeting foreign labor organizations must be one of radical economic or political ideas." Radical, in this case, did not mean left leaning. "There were hints that America might have to 'go it alone,'" the source said.[499] That Healy, openly progressive as he was, outperformed Schlesinger almost certainly hinged on his ethnicity and outspoken Irish republicanism. Delegates like James P. Holland, President of the New York State Federation of Labor and fierce anti-communist, voted for Healy because he would visit Ireland on the same trip and report on the ongoing rebellion against British rule.[500] Though still controversial, the large presence of Irish and

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[498] American troops formally withdraw starting in the winter of 1920, though no formal recognition until 1933 and no flow of aid until the end of 1921. Laura Engelstein, *Russia in Flames War, Revolution, Civil War, 1914-1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 304-307, 383-416; Christopher Lasch, *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 103-107; Nell Irvin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon* (2nd ed.) (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 382-383; Douglas Smith, *The Russian Job : the Forgotten Story of How America Saved the Soviet Union from Ruin* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020); Soviet Accepts Hoover's Terms for Famine Relief," (July 31, 1921), 1; William Allen White, "Litmus Papers of the Acid Test," *Survey* (June 5, 1920), 343-346; "End of the Blockade," *Survey* (January 24, 1920), 452; *Report of the Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor: Held at Montreal, Quebec, Canada June 7th to 19th, Inclusive, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: The Law Reporter Company, 1920), 367-371.

[499] Editorials, *Kansas City Labor Bulletin* (August 25, 1920), 2.

[500] As detailed in the previous chapter, James P. Holland led the NYFL's effort to undercut support for the Farmer-Labor Party, which briefly held a great deal of influence in the Manhattan Central Federated Union. Holland claimed the CFU had been taken over by "Bolsheviki" and that he would fight them as long as he lived. "Anti Labor Party Men Raid New York C.F.U.," *New Majority* (May 29, 1920), 5; "Gompers Plan Indorsed by CFU," *New York Times* (Aug 14, 1920) 7; "Riots Over Control of Big Labor Union," *New York Times* (September 11, 1920), 1.

Catholic trade unionists ensured a resolution urging the president to extend self-determination to Ireland passed easily, despite more radical proposals, like an Embargo on English goods, failing. Healy he won over enough of the Irish vote to augment his solid radical and progressive support.

A Modest Beginning: Working Women and the American Federation of Labor

That Schlesinger lost while supporting a platform so similar to Healy's reflected the unquestioned strength that native-born and English-speaking white men continued to hold in the American Federation of Labor. Still, that Schlesinger lost his race to a woman demonstrates a simultaneous softening of that hegemony. It stands to reason that the TUC sending Bondfield as its first woman delegate abroad inspired the AFL to do the same. Given that both Great Britain and the United States passed limited enfranchisement laws in the year and a half prior, selecting Bondfield and Conboy was a meaningful gesture.

Conboy earned her proximity to Gompers and the Executive largely because of her long-proven labor conservatism. In 1913, she stoked the ire of many radicals by urging textile workers to abandon the Industrial Workers of the World during the famed textile strike in Paterson. After the war, she convinced her United Textile Workers members to avoid the Plumb Plan and root out socialists in their ranks. But behind her labor conservatism was a deep sympathy for the plight of working women.

Born in Boston, she began working in factories at age 11. In 1909, she organized her coworkers at a Roxbury carpet factory and won both recognition and higher wages. Conboy's unexpected win earned her an organizer position with both the Women's Trade Union League and the UTW. Two years later, she made a survey of working women in

Passaic, New Jersey on behalf of UTW president John Golden and composed a brief on the miserable conditions in most at-home production facilities. During the war, the UTW not only elected Conboy as secretary treasurer, but Woodrow Wilson appointed her to the National Defense Council and New York governor Al Smith selected her for a committee to survey struggles in the post-war economy. Prior to the nineteenth amendment, she used her positions to fiercely advocate for suffrage, as well. "Women are taking their places side by side and shoulder to shoulder with men in all commercial and industrial fields. They should therefore have an equal voice in the governing of their destinies," she told an assemblage of textile workers in 1918.[501]

Conboy's ascendancy did not mark a radical shift in labor's outlook toward women joining its ranks. The majority of unions remained male dominated, with core industries like rail transport deliberately excluding women from membership. Unions representing female-dominated professions, like the needle trades, often drew its leadership from the upper-strata of trained and better paid male employees. This organizational paradigm would not meaningfully shift until the 1970s.[502] And even

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[501] Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 195; Meredith Tax, *The Rising of the Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 305; "Paterson Strikers May Leave I.W.W.," *New York Times* (April 20, 1913), 8; "Campaign of Education for Woman Suffrage," *The Garment Worker* (July 19, 1918), 5; "Names 36 to Study Post-War Problems," *New York Times* (January 21, 1919), 4; "Textile President Attack Radicals," *The Garment Worker* (October 22, 1920), 1; "New York Woman Made Unemployment Conferee," *New York Tribune* (September 23, 1921), 13; "Sara A. Conboy, Labor Leader, Dies Here at 57," *New York Herald Tribune* (January 9, 1928), 17; "Sara A. Conboy's Funeral Held in Brooklyn Church," *New York Herald Tribune* (January 11, 1928), 25;

[502] There were, of course, some exceptions of women rising to prominent positions in organized labor, but for the most part, women faced an uphill battle for union leadership and recognition. It was not until the 1970s, when more women joined the workforce and the AFL-CIO moved its focus from blue collar industrial workers that this paradigm began to shift. Lane Windham, *Knocking on Labor's Door: Union Organizing in the 1970s and the Roots of a New Economic Divide* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 201-202, 417-418; Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 57-59; Robyn Muncy, *Relentless Reformer: Josephine Roche and Progressivism in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton

though the number of women trade unionists increased during the war, hardly any change occurred in the leadership of any international. At the Montreal convention, the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, despite its thousands of women workers, had only one woman, Mary Goff, on its six-person delegation. The American Federation of Teachers, founded in 1916 and considered one of the Federation's most progressive unions, had all-male representation, despite having at least six women vice presidents.[503] Of the other unions which claimed large numbers of women members, only the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers offered one attendance credential. Julia S. O'Connor, president of the Telephone Operators' local, who led her members through strikes and negotiations with federal wage boards during government ownership of the telegraphs, represented one of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers' seven spots.[504]

Though they were few in number, Goff, Conboy, and O'Connor attendance in Montreal should not be discounted. They would have likely had to fight for the places they occupied. There was, as mentioned in prior chapters, a noticeable trend of labor women and reformers who participated in reconstruction-oriented politics in the run up to the 1920 election. Just as Gertrude Fitzgerald of the Labor of Illinois, who demanded and won equal committee representation, Grace Evans, who patiently held the Farmer-Labor

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University Press, 2015), 36-37, 163-164, 301n18; Joseph McCartin, *Labor's Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 195; Keona K. Ervin, *Gateway to Equality: Black Women and the Struggle for Economic Justice in St. Louis* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2017), 53-78, 121-144; Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010), 41, 237-238.

[503] V.B. Turner, "The American Federation of Teachers," *Monthly Labor Review* (August 1919), 247.

[504] The other unions who recorded having more than four thousand women workers were the Hotel and Restaurant Employees, the Laundry Workers, and the Tobacco Workers. The IBEW claimed to represent 17,000 women. Frank Morrison to Emma Steghagen, July 16, 1921. Library of Congress. National Women's Trade Union League Papers. Folder, "American Federation of Labor, 1915-April 1924; Steven Parfitt, "Whither Industrial Democracy? The Federal Government and Organized Labour in the Telegraph Industry During the First World War," *Journal of American Studies* 48 No. 2 (May 2014), 517-539.

Party together at its convention, or Mary Townsend Seymour and Rose Schneiderman, who ran for office on a radical platform and recruited support for the party across the color line and amongst the poorest workers, women eagerly participated in the AFL and Brotherhood's non-partisan campaign as well. When the AFL first launched its electoral initiative in February 1920, Conboy pushed the Executive Council to add herself and three other women– Anna Fitzgerald of the Women's International Union Label League, Melinda Scott of the United Felt, Panama and Straw Hat, Trimmers and Operators, and Anna Neary, International Brotherhood of Bookbinders, to the previously all-male National Non-Partisan Committee. Though they made up only one-third of the committee, the appointments demonstrated the Federation's acknowledgement that its women members and auxiliaries were a vital resource for electioneering.[505]

As Ethel M. Smith, legislative director of the WTUL argued, her fellow members had long fought "to improve the working conditions and living conditions of women and men" through legislation limiting hours, protecting children, and mandating safety best-practices. Pointing to the WTUL's recent triumph with the nineteenth amendment, she told those reading *Labor* that women organizers had both the belief in political progress and the institutional knowledge necessary to defeat a reactionary congress. "For the reason, doubtless, that women's long struggle for suffrage has fixed their minds upon the ballot as the readiest instrument of achievement… the National Women's Trade Union League has always stood for and utilized political methods for the establishment of its

[505] "American Federation of Labor Executive Council Minutes of Meetings," February 24-March 3 1920. American Federation of Labor Records: The Sam Gompers Era (Microfilm) Reel 6A. The; "Labor Casts Hat Into Political Ring," *Atlanta Constitution* (February 9, 1920), 1.

program," she wrote in March 1920.[506] The same was true for the WTUL's British counterpart, which largely participated in Labour Party politics.[507]

The Federation's Executive Council and the Plumb Plan League seemed to have only partially accepted the WTUL's earned political experience. In one telling example, the Executive Council invited Ethel Smith and Anna Fitzgerald, another ranking member of the WTUL, to the Montreal convention, but only informed them last minute that they were expected to address the convention. The surprise filtered into Fitzgerald and Smith's impromptu speeches-- both explained they were "somewhat surprised" and "did not know" the Federation expected them to take the stage.

Fitzgerald used her time to ask the men in attendance to "interest the women in your homes in the label movement" so that they might focus purchasing power toward union made goods. Smith's approach was two-fold. First, she subtly admonished the attendees for ignoring women workers and learning nothing of their conditions. "One of the things… trades unionists do not fully know is the low wage for which women are now working," Smith stated. She praised her organization's work in winning federal appropriation for a permanent Woman's Bureau to investigate wage gaps and other abuses. Finally, Smith focused upon the importance of political action and the WTUL's adeptness at coalition building. "That is one thing the Women's Trade Union League is trying to do constantly," she stated, "to reach out into new groups of women and secure

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[506] Ethel M. Smith, "Women Workers are Combining for Battle at Polls," *Labor* (March 6, 1); Amy E. Butler, *Two Paths to Equality: Alice Paul and Ethel M. Smith in the ERA Debate, 1921-1929* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002).

[507] Suellen Hoy, "Sidelined: The Chicago Women's Trade Union League in the Interwar Years," *Labor* 15 No. 4 (December 2018), 13-33; Dorothy Sue Cobble, "A Higher 'Standard of Life' For the World: US Labor Women's Reform Internationalism and the Legacies of 1919," *Journal of American History* (March 2014), 1054-1058; Diane Kirkby, "'The Wage Earning Woman and the State," *Labor History* 28 no. 1 (January 1987), 54-74; Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 35.

from women who are not trade unionists themselves support for our legislation and our organizing work." The WTUL's seasoned campaigners could be a real asset in the work to come, Smith predicted.[508]

Gompers understood the importance of labor's reaching out to women in the upcoming campaign, though he clearly did not grasp fully what Smith suggested. Just prior to the election, Gompers heralded the millions of newly enfranchised women entering the election: "Certain it is that the entrance of women into American governmental responsibilities co-equal with men is the dawn of a new civilization." But in his editorial praising women's participation he both minimized the role gender played in the workforce, softened the degree to which trade unions deliberately excluded or retaliated against women, and elevated his ideal of the male bread-winner. "Industrial freedom is not a sex problem; it is a human problem," he explained. "The equality of women in the trade union has long been recognized." Gompers recognized that women suffered, just like male workers, but by overstating the AFL's contribution to winning suffrage-- he asserted that "the final adoption and enactment of the nineteenth amendment… is due in no small degree to the persistent and courageous struggle of the American Federation of Labor"-- he dismissed what Smith had told him, that women were already well-informed, seasoned, and willing to lend a hand.

Keating wrote a similar article for *Labor*. Politics "affects the woman in countless ways," he explained. "It controls the education of her children. It determines the size of the pay envelope, and far it will go. It determines her status as a worker and that of her

[508] *Report of the Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor: Held at Montreal, Quebec, Canada June 7th to 19th, Inclusive, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: The Law Reporter Company, 1920), 352-353

husband as well." Keating did acknowledge the "powerful unions" some women had built and the "class consciousness" they demonstrated, but, like Gompers, he viewed their primary role as ancillary to the male breadwinner. Though he made clear that union wives should not "vote as their husbands vote, necessarily," Keating only occasionally published articles by or about women-- offering little encouragement for active participation.[509] Perhaps unsurprisingly, Keating, who managed a paper owned by a series of unions hostile to women joining their ranks, also undervalued their potential contributions.

The Federation's enduring policy of seeing women in industry as a threat to its members' wages and employment remained firmly in place. Still, women in the AFL won small but significant representational victories leading to the Montreal convention. With women's suffrage ingrained in the constitution, and increasing numbers of women joining the workforce, some politically-minded union leaders understood the importance of mobilizing these new voters. It was a modest beginning on a long journey to meaningful change. In this regard, the conflict over women and work at the 1920 convention mirrored similar debates over race.

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[509] "Labor and Woman Suffrage," *American Federationist* (October 1920), 937-939; "Our Women in Politics," *Labor* (July 3, 1920), 4. In one notable exception, Keating, influenced by a British Labour Party meeting for working women, published a quizzical article regarding the prospective role in movement:

> This is a question which the women themselves must answer. They can vote as their husbands vote, but that is not enough. They bear the burdens of the industrial struggle. They suffer from the empty or shrinking pay envelope. They and their children carry the burden of profiteering. Ultimately they pay the taxes that are taken from labor. The coal and the burdens of industrial injustice is largely borne by the women of America… We ask the women readers of Labor to think over this question. Write us your opinion. Tell us what you think our women can do.

It does not appear that the staff at *Labor* conducted much in the way of follow-up research, however. "Women in the Labor Movement," *Labor* (May 1, 1920), 4.

"Equal Rights and Democratic Rule:" Black Workers and the AFL

Black trade unionists were not an all-together unfamiliar presence in the AFL. In certain industries, primarily in southern mines and ports, white trade unionists understood, often reluctantly, the need to for interracial cooperation.[510] But as more Black workers traveled to cities north and south for the higher wages and stability of wartime industrial employment, many unions increasingly adopted defensive postures. The cyclical pattern of employers using Black workers as strikebreakers and trade unions excluding Black men and women had sewn mutual distrust for decades. By charter, some industrial unions like the Machinists and most of the Railroad Brotherhoods excluded non-white membership and often enforced that provision with violent reprisals and lynchings.[511] As Lieutenant George L. Vaughn, a World War I veteran and NAACP member argued, these exclusionary provisions created two barriers to Black employment. First, in an industry where a union was not stable, African American workers could expect outright hostility and violence on the shop floor. Where unions were well-established, employers used their contracts "as an excuse to keep Negroes out of better positions."[512] Some Black organizations, the NAACP, in particular, saw post-war

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[510] Brian Kelly, *Race, Class, and Power in the Alabama Coal Fields* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); 132-203, Daniel Letwin, *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Peter Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive-Era Philadelphia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); James R. Barrett, *William Z. Foster and the Tragedy of American Radicalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).
[511] Paul Michel Taillon, *Good, Reliable White Men: Railroad Brotherhoods, 1877-1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 32-33; Eric Arnesen, "'Like Banquo's Ghost, It Will Not Down,': The Race Question and the American Railroad Brotherhoods, 1880-1920," *American Historical Review* 99 No. 5 (December 1994), 1601-1633; Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 5-41.
[512] George L. Vaughn, "The Negro in Labor and Industry" Tenth Anniversary Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, June 24, 1919, 4. NAACP Papers. Library of Congress (Proquest # 001412-008-0447) Box I A23 1919 Annual Conference (May 1-17), Press releases and Speeches

reconstruction and a progressive turn in labor as a strong opportunity for bridge mending and cooperation. Reverend Robert Bagnall, whom the NAACP sent to the Labor Party convention, wrote glowingly of the radical potential of the integrated class-centered approach that body offered. Black trade unionists in the AFL had similar hopes for their organization.

The NAACP had greatly expanded its communications with AFL leaders during World War I. As the federal government increased its regulatory powers in order to more smoothly transition into a war economy, Black reform organizations increased their efforts to use these new governmental avenues to enforce racial justice. On the rails, Black workers circumvented discriminatory brotherhoods by appealing directly to the US Railroad Administration with their grievances.[513] Other African American workers appealed to the newly formed Division of Negro Economics, housed under the Department of Labor and headed by George E. Haynes, a professor of economics and sociology. Some of these workers, like a group of carpenters from Virginia or four workers at the US Customs House in New York, asked the NAACP or Urban League to present their grievances to Haynes, or the appropriate government branches.[514] Eugene

[513] Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 42-83; Steven A. Reich, "The Great War, Black Workers, and the Rise and Fall of the NAACP in the South," in *The Black Worker: Race, Labor, and Civil Rights since Emancipation*, ed. Eric Arnesen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 147-177.

[514] James S. Joseph, R.L. Johnson, John H. Lewis, and Walter A. Mason, all employed as weighers and assistant gaugers for the Port of New York, and members of Federal Employees' Union Local 4, complained that the US treasury had passed over their seniority to promote less qualified white workers for clerical duty and inspection. After the NAACP investigated, Byron R. Newton, collector for the port, agreed to enroll the four in preliminary training courses. John R. Shillady dealt with a similar situation in Petersburg, Virginia, where white carpenters turned away black carpenters assigned to the same government contract. Shillady had a local Baptist minister, S.A. Brown, investigate. Brown discovered that both the white and black carpenters belonged to the same union and were promised the same wages--making the case one purely of racial discrimination. George Haynes at the Labor Department promised an investigation. Newton to James R. Shillady, November 20, 1918; Memorandum RE Conference with J.S. Joseph, November 21, 1918; John R. Shillady to George Haynes, October 19, 1918; JRS to S.A. Brown,

Kinckle Jones, executive secretary of the National Urban League, wrote Shillady in November to commiserate on the "many instances" of workplace discrimination they both had under investigation. Jones recommended another meeting with the AFL's executive council to "devise ways and means" of coordinating their attacks on the color line.[515]

The AFL had adopted anti-discrimination statues at every one of its national conventions since 1916, but as the summer of 1919 approached, little on the ground had changed. The growing militancy of Black workers facing continued abuses in AFL-controlled shops, coupled with the marked increase of NAACP and Urban League investigations, resulted in a slew of resolutions submitted to the Federation's 1919 conference in Atlantic City. Black delegates to the convention, representing the boilermakers, Freight Handlers, and Coach Cleaners, sponsored four resolutions cumulatively demanding paid African American organizers and a new chartered union for Black workers that other internationals excluded. Jordan W. Chambers, a coach cleaner from St. Louis, acknowledged that this type of separatism was not ideal, but the "lack of realization on the part of Organized White Laborers that to keep the organized Colored Laborers out of the fold… has only made it possible for the unscrupulous employer to exploit the one against the other to the mutual disadvantage of each." Expressing a common sentiment born out of World War I and the Red Summer, John A.

October 19, 1918; S.A. Brown to JRS, November 7, 1919. NAACP Papers. Library of Congress (Proquest # 001418_009_0716). Box I: C319. Folder: General. October 1918-December 1918.

[515] "So many instances, in fact, that some of the representatives of the organizations that were present at our conference in Washington have thought that we should hold another conference with Executive Council of the A.F. of L. to check up on the results of our previous conference and devise ways and means of making the decision which we reached more effective." (Eugene Kinckle Jones to JRS, November 19, 1918. "John R. Shillady to Frank Morrison," October 14, 1918. NAACP Papers. Library of Congress (Proquest # 001418_009_0716). Box I: C319. Folder: General. October 1918-December 1918.

Lacey of the Norfolk Labor Council defended Chambers's position. "We don't ask any favors," he remarked, but "we ask for a chance to live like men, with equal rights and democratic rule."[516] The AFL refused to sanction a new international for Black workers, citing almost certain jurisdictional conflict, but did promise more Black organizers and insisted that it would offer any group of employees deliberately excluded by an international the option to establish a "federal charter" and affiliate directly with the AFL.[517]

A week later, at the NAACP's tenth anniversary convention in Cleveland, Eugene Kinckle Jones greeted the news out of Atlantic City with guarded optimism. The AFL convention resolution existed "only on paper," he told the crowd. "It may mean a great deal; it may mean nothing." Black workers needed to demand membership in every union, Jones concluded. Only with pressure would the AFL bend. The predominantly Black service workers on trains should push for entry into the Brotherhood's lily-white Big Four (the Engineers, Conductors, Fireman, and Trainmen), and "tie up the passenger traffic that affords" the ability to work if they refuse. Jones suggested an African American labor conference to formulate a combined national strategy to break down historic opposition to union membership-- which he attributed to decades of white opposition and an antebellum notion that Black workers should "be slavishly loyal to the man who employs him." He did not have much faith in the prospects for small

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[516] *Convention of the American Federation of Labor Held at Atlantic City, N.J.* (Washington, D.C.: The Law Reporter Printing Company, 1919), 304-306; "The Negro and the Labor Union," *Crisis* (September 1919), 240-241.

[517] As Paul D. Moreno describes, "In 1900 the AFL amended its constitution to permit separate black locals to affiliate directly with the AFL as 'federal' labor unions… Originally conceived as temporary organizations, to exist until a large enough number of workers were able to form a national union, the federal unions became the predominant and permanent Jim Crow organization in the AFL." Paul D. Moreno, *Black Americans and Organized Labor* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 79.

independent unions of rail service workers determined to go it alone, including New England dining car waiters and cooks, and a "group mainly of Pullman porters" in Chicago. Only nation-wide unity and coordination between organized Black workers would do. "So we have got to get these men who are leading in the desultory formed organizations in the railroad world," Jones insisted. "We must get together the men in New Orleans who are making a fight for their rights on the riverfront. Not only in the American Federation of Labor, but the colored men in the I.W.W. on the river fronts in Philadelphia should be getting together."[518] Walter White agreed with Jones, calling the AFL's commitment to equality "an excellent barometer as to the future of Negro labor," but one that would "only be permanent when Negroes make good in large numbers and present their case in strong enough terms to force consideration and recognition."[519] There was still much work to be done, Jones and White argued.

Despite some modest progressions– the ILGWU claimed to have organized more than six thousand black women in New York and Chicago, Chicago's Amalgamated Meat Cutters maintained an integrated membership despite the exceptionally brutal race riot, Black steel workers walked out with their mostly European coworkers across the Midwest, at least initially, and the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International hired its first African American organizer to operate in Atlantic City– the AFL executive council soft-peddled its promise to assault the color line.[520] In the year following the Atlantic

[518] Eugene Kinckle Jones, "The Negro in Labor and Industry," June 24, 1919. NAACP Papers. NAACP Papers. Library of Congress (Proquest # 001412-008-0447) Box I A23 1919 Annual Conference (May 1-17), Press releases and Speeches.
[519] Walter White, "The Success of Negro Migration," *Crisis* (January 1920), 112-114.
[520] "The Negro and the Labor Union," *Crisis* (September 1919), 240-241, "The Horizon," *Crisis* (April 1920), 339; James Barrett, *William Z. Foster and the Tragedy of American Radicalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 83-101; Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 81-83; Lizabeth

City convention, the Executive Council denied charters to the Colored State Organization for the state of Arkansas and the Memphis Colored Association of Railway Employes. Further, the executives deferred charters for the Houston-based Colored Trainmen's Protective Association and the Missouri Train Porters' Union until they could talk to the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen and Railway Clerks. AFL Vice President James Duncan also refused to deal with the National Brotherhood Workers of America, an amalgamated union of mostly black shipbuilders from coastal Virginia.[521] To be certain, these attempted organizations would have challenged the sovereignty of the AFL's established internationals and there was a slim chance of the Executive Council granting a charter. But given the ongoing barriers to black equality in trade unions, a showdown at Montreal convention was all but assured.

Eugene Kinckle Jones and Urban League's steering committee won an initial victory when Abraham Lefkowtiz, Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers and fellow NUL board member, submitted an Urban League-drafted resolution mandating a "periodic conference with the Executive Council of the [AFL] white and colored leaders who can suitably represent and express the point of view of negro

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Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (2nd Edition) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11-52.

[521] Though short lived, National Brotherhood Workers of America grew to a few thousand members and sought to become a home for Black workers across industries. Walter F. Green, an employee at the Portsmouth, Virginia navy yard and the Brotherhood's founder, also had connections to Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen worked with the fledgling organization for a time. Claudrena N. Harold, *New Negro Politics in the Jim Crow South* (Auburn: University of Georgia Press, 2016), 13-28; Alec Fazackerley Hickmott, "'Brothers, Come North': the Rural South and the Political Imaginary of New Negro Radicalism, 1917-1923," *Intellectual History Review* 21 No. 4 (November 2011), 395-412; American Federation of Labor Executive Council, "American Federation of Labor Executive Council Minutes of Meetings, February 24-March 3 1920," 74-75. American Federation of Labor Records: The Sam Gompers Era (Microfilm) Reel 6A. The US Railroad Administration has a small set of archival correspondence with the National Brotherhood. U.S. Railroad Administration. National Archives, College Park. File No. E-38-11-D, National Brotherhood Workers of America, Lewis H. Brown, President, General Correspondence on Colored Employees, 1919. (Proquest: Black Freedom Struggle in the 20th Century: Federal Government Records # 001337-010-0770]

workingmen" and requesting that headquarters add a "competent negro agent, taken from the ranks of labor," to its staff. The convention easily passed the resolution.[522] Not coincidentally, Lefkowitz was also a leading figure in the Farmer-Labor Party and played a large role in pushing through a plank for racial equality in that organization.[523]

Richmond Freight Handler Robert E. Burford, however, met a much cooler response upon taking the floor. Burford had attended the 1919 conference, where the EC rebuffed his request to organize his almost exclusively black craft into a new union.

The decision that Freight Handlers must remain affiliated with the Railroad Clerks put him, and his coworkers, in limbo. The Clerks was a "white only" organization, and therefore denied dedicated funds, office space, or grievance support to the freight handlers-- even if they held cards and paid dues. The freight handlers across the country reportedly paid $135,000 in "taxes" to the Brotherhood in 1919 alone and had also followed the Clerks on strike when requested. Burford asked the assembled AFL "use every means in its power to have the words 'only white' members stricken out of the constitution of the B. of R.C. and admit the colored workers to full membership." Alternatively, the convention could honor his initial request of a new international. After secretary Frank Morrison refused the resolution, which would infringe on "the trade autonomy" of an affiliate, an open floor fight ensued.[524]

Burford charged hypocrisy and questioned how any union could deny a dues-paying worker equal membership. He also maintained his preference for equality in the

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[522] *Report of the Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor: Held at Montreal, Quebec, Canada June 7th to 19th, Inclusive, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: The Law Reporter Company, 1920), 311; "The Horizon," *Crisis* (August 1920), 193.
[523] "Salt Lake City Man Wins," *New York Times* (July 15, 1920), 1.
[524] *Report of the Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor: Held at Montreal, Quebec, Canada June 7th to 19th, Inclusive, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: The Law Reporter Company, 1920), 307-310.

Clerks over a smaller and weaker "federal union" of Freight Handlers ripe for raids and harassment. Burford maintained that he did "not want social equality" but "industrial equality" and "representation on the executive." R.P. Dee, a white Clerk from New Orleans, promised to take Burford's matter into consideration, but also insisted that his claims of discrimination were exaggerated, that the Clerks had secured wage raises for the handlers during the war, and that black members had "betrayed" the union during a strike ten years prior.[525]

During the increasingly tense exchange, one Southern delegate, O.D. Gorman, a Railroad Telegrapher from Mauk, Georgia, nearly provoked a "race war," in the words of one correspondent, after he derided Burford's group as those "n--ger freight handlers."[526] "To allow Negroes to be taken into the white organizations in the south will kill the organizations there," Gorman explained. AFL Vice President James Duncan immediately held the delegate's hateful slur out of order, drawing audible approval from around the hall. Several Black trade unionists stood to demand justice for the Freight Handlers. David E. Grange of the Seaman's Union and Albert Workman, a longshoreman from

[525] H.F. Plummer, "Colored Problem Gently Treated by Convention," *Times Tribune* (Altoona, Pa.) (June 16, 1920), 8. Dee could refer to a 1911 strike in New Orleans on the Illinois Central line, in which several Black locals stayed on the job, limiting the effect of the stoppage. Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 208-209.

[526] The AFL's transcript of the convention did not record the exchange, but detailed that "Delegate Gorman, Railroad Telegraphers, spoke in favor of the committee and opposed the adoption of the resolution." The papers that did note a violent verbal exchange between delegates, all noted specifically that it was a southern delegate, not of the Clerks, who used the racial slur. H.F. Plummer of the Altoona *Times Tribune* was the only one to name Gorman outright. ("No Color Line," *Washington Bee* (July 3, 1920), 7; "A.F. of L. Wipes Out Color Line," *Baltimore Afro-American* (June 18, 1920), 1; Wade Shurtleff, "Report of the Fortieth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor," *Railway Clerk* (August, 1920), 540; H.F. Plummer, "Colored Problem Gently Treated by Convention," *Times Tribune* (Altoona, Pa.) (June 16, 1920), 8; "The AFL and the Color Line," in Philip S. Foner and Ronald L. Lewis, eds*., The Black Worker, Volume VI: The Era of Post-War Prosperity and the Great Depression, 1920-1936* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981) (Online Edition). <https://temple.manifoldapp.org/read/the-black-worker-during-the-post-war-prosperity-and-the-great-depression-1920-1936-volume-vi/section/ffd5e3ef-1945-4af8-9e46-eaf26a39f0ba>

New Orleans, both insisted that Burford and his fellow delegates deserved more respect "than they were getting." The resolution at hand, and the ugly response it drew out of the convention, prompted several sympathetic white unions to rush to the Freight handler's side as well.

A delegate of the Hod Carriers and Common Laborers' Union promised to charter the men if the Clerks refused. C.F. Foley of the Barbers' proudly claimed his craft drew no color line, though he, too, took a barb from Seattle's James A. Duncan for his union's exclusion of women. Charles A. Sumner, a white stereotyper from Kansas City, Missouri, maintained that discriminating trade unions "should be made to surrender their charters." Summer challenged the delegates for their sympathies with plights for freedom abroad, but not at home: "It seems to me that we plead the cause of oppressed people everywhere, and then stand for this condition of affairs, and after the fight of '61-65, which was because of discrimination that was in the United States Constitution in the first place." Perhaps moved by collective denunciations, the convention overwhelmingly adopted Burford's proposal and demanded the Clerks remove outright discrimination from their charter.[527]

As they did a year prior, Black papers across the country celebrated the AFL's "definitive" stance against discrimination in labor.[528] But the AFL had really only begun

[527] *Report of the Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor: Held at Montreal, Quebec, Canada June 7th to 19th, Inclusive, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: The Law Reporter Company, 1920), 307-310; H.F. Plummer, "Colored Problem Gently Treated by Convention," *Times Tribune* (Altoona, Pa.) (June 16, 1920), 8.

[528] "Organized Labor Erases Color Line," (St. Paul) *The Appeal* (June 12, 1920), 2; "A.F.L. Wipes Out Color Line," *Cleveland Gazette* (June 19, 1920), 2; "A.F.L. Wipes Out Color Line," *Negro Star* (July 2, 1920), 1; "No Color Line," *Washington Bee* (July 3, 1920), 7; "Natl. Urban League Bulletin," *Savannah Tribune* (July 10, 1920), 2; "A.F. of L. Wipes Out Color Line," *Baltimore Afro-American* (June 18, 1920), 1.

its agonizingly slow reckoning with the race question.[529] Nevertheless, racial minorities had battled for and won a victory for visibility in 1920. Few in number, and more often than not shut out from positions of power, Black laborers demonstrated that they could occasionally sway a majority of their white colleagues to vote in their favor. At the very least, by asserting this presence and strength, Black trade unionists built the momentum required to keep racial inequity a perpetual talking point in the House of Labor.

Minority Trade Unionists and the 1920 Elections

Taking to the 1920 elections, women and Black trade unionists made it increasingly difficult for national leaders like Gompers and Keating to undervalue them. They would make a fight for post-war reconstruction politics that few could ignore. In three of labor's battleground states, Colorado, Kansas, and Minnesota, trade union women involved themselves closely in non-partisan affairs. With help from organized labor the NPL, May Peake, president of the Machinist Auxiliary, won the Democratic primary to represent Denver in the Colorado senate. At the Auxiliary's annual conference in Washington D.C., she told her fellow labor women to start seeing themselves as a political force and educate others to use the ballot. "We are just as vitally interested in securing democracy in industry as our brothers, husbands and fathers," Peake asserted.[530]

[529] In 1958, NAACP labor director, Herbert Hill, noted that three internationals prohibited black members by charter and that ten more allowed segregated locals. Three years later, he encouraged congress to use anti-racketeering laws to investigate unions accused of discrimination-- including the ILGWU, considered by many to be diverse and egalitarian. That same year, the AFL-CIO censured A. Philip Randolph for demanding the Executive Council do more to address inequality in the labor movement. William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2013), 146-147, 156-157. Lane Windham, *Knocking on Labor's Door: Union Organizing in the 1970s and the Roots of a New Economic Divide* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 42.

[530] "Women Will Urge Use of Ballot in Place of Bullets; Grand Lodge of Auxiliary I.A. of M. Meets in Washington," (October 2, 1920), 1, 3; Peake also gained attention for organizing Christmas relief for

At that same meeting, Peake led the charge to officially rename the "Ladies Auxiliary" to the "Woman's Auxiliary," giving, in the words of one correspondent, "a more modern expression of strength" to the group.[531]

In Crawford County, headquarters of Alex Howatt's mining district and a labor stronghold in Kansas, the Farmer-Labor Non-Partisan Committee nominated Margaret Grandle as its presiding officer. Grandle had made history in 1916 after the state Democratic nominated her to run for secretary of state-- the first time a major party nominated a woman for statewide office. She likely earned her friendship with labor during her tenure as secretary of the board on public welfare. Grandle headed a combined meeting of unions and the county's Democratic party. "No such meeting of earnest, enthusiastic and able representatives and advocates of real reform has been held in the county for 30 years," one attendee commented.[532] In Minnesota, the Working Nonpartisan Political League nominated Victoria McAlmon as its vice president. McAlmon, who graduated from the University of Chicago in 1912, had worked for years as a schoolteacher in Minneapolis. During the war, she helped form an American Federation of Teachers local and became an active participant in labor struggles in the twin cities. She also frequently assisted the state in directing employment placement programs for young women. It was likely her influence in the Political League that led the organization to add a demand for a permanent state department of education into its platform.[533]

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striking steel workers. W.H. Young, "Letter of Appreciation," *Machinist's Monthly Journal* (April 1920), 327.

[531] "Washington D.C.," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (December 1920), 1099.

[532] "Mrs. Margaret Grandle," *Pittsburg Kansan* (September 30, 1916), 3; Mabel Traer Harding, "The Survey," *The National Field* (July 26, 1917), 6; "Farmer-Labor Party Items," *Workers Chronicle* (September 17, 1920), 1.

[533] "Working People's Political League Out For Shipstead," *Labor World* (July 24, 1920), 1.

It appears that Black men and women also sought to participate in labor's political endeavors, despite ambivalence from national planners. During a meeting of the Minnesota Federation of Labor and Nonpartisan Political League, the same assemblage that nominated McAlmon, representatives of a newly formed union of sleeping car porters pushed delegates to enshrine calls for civil rights and racial justice in their upcoming campaigns. Much like Sumner in Montreal, the porters viewed the Minnesota Federation's urgent calls for Irish self-determination as an insulting gloss over the more domestic and timely need for Black equality in America. As a reporter for the Duluth-based *Labor World* witnessed, "The delegates from the Sleeping Car Porters' union argued that before seeking to establish freedom and equality for any foreign people the convention and other organized bodies in this country ought to try to obtain full freedom and protection for the colored race in the United States." Whitford Donavan, a St. Paul porter, accused the state federation of "going thousands of miles to give justice when you do not give justice to the black man at your door. Failing in this you are cowards." Donovan convinced at least Frank E. Miner, a machinist who represented part of Minneapolis in the State House of Representatives. "I say now is not the time to ask freedom for some one outside while we do not recognize the cry for freedom from the negro who is with our midst, nor the cry of the other workers in America, we should not urge the government of the United States-- I won't say it's our government-- to recognize an Irish republic until the freedom of our own workers is first taken care of," he told the

convention. The other delegates agreed enough to unanimously pass a Black equality resolution.[534]

Somewhat similar events took place in Kansas City. John H. Lee, an African American member of the packing house local, sought and earned the Kansas Federation of Labor's endorsement in the Republican primary for the state legislature's ninth district. "While Lee is a colored man, he is a square one, and color doesn't go with the labor movement," the editors of the Kansas City *Labor Bulletin* wrote.[535] Lee's position as a union butcher likely propelled him to the nomination and earned him some institutional support. His neighborhood of Rosedale was an integrated area of town almost exclusively for packing house employees and workers in adjacent industries. The growth of organized labor in the meat industry forced the city's central body to at least soften its line on discrimination. They needed solidarity to take on Henry Allen's industrial court, which claimed jurisdiction over packing houses. Resultantly, Black members were a visible presence at the Kansas City 1920 Labor Day parade, with one observer editorializing, "The number of colored men and women who are members of labor organizations surprised even the colored men themselves. They marched with their shopmates and mingled in the park." Kansas labor's non-partisan committee also proudly stated that it made "no appeal to race prejudice."[536]

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[534] "Delegates Favor Irish Republic," *Labor World* (July 24, 1920), 2; "State Federation of Labor Indorses 'Republic of Ireland," *Star Tribune* (July 20, 1920), 1; "State Labor Meeting Largest Ever Held," *Labor World* (July 24, 1920), 1-2.

[535] "Gossip of the Recent Primary Fakaroo," *Labor Bulletin* (Kansas City, Kansas) (August 11, 1920), 1; "Two Colored Filed for Representative," *Kansas City Advocate* (June 25, 1920), 1; "What Union Labor Thinks of Election," *Kansas City Advocate* (August 13, 1920), 2; "Black and White Making Politics Contribute to the Best Interests of All the People as a White Man Sees It," *Kansas City Advocate* (August 20, 1920), 3.

[536] According to census data, the Lee family's Tangent Street, and the surrounding streets as well, had a fairly even number of white and black families. Though most were American-born, there were some German and Danish immigrants living nearby as well. The majority listed the packing house as their place

These cases in Kansas and Minnesota were small exceptions to the general rule. Even if organized labor's opposition to Black men and women of all races joining its ranks softened by 1920-- largely because of years of protests-- the AFL and Railroad Brotherhoods experienced no great epiphany. The Women's Trade Union League and groups of Black trade unionists may have repeatedly emphasized their place in the movement and the political advantages of their participation, but their protestations went unheard. In some ways, the Brotherhoods, which far and away led the charge for increased political action, renewed their investment in white supremacy as a political strategy and worldview. In one telling interview featured in *Labor* magazine, journalist A.D. Fairbairn pressed Queensland Prime Minister Edward Theodore to identify the differences in Australia that allowed his Labor Party nationalize large swaths of the transportation and energy economy, lower the cost of living, and keep wages high. Answering Fairbairn's question, Theodore made sure to accentuate his party's exclusion of Asian and Aboriginal labor. "Australia, as you know, is a white man's country and is determined to remain such," the prime minister told his American readers.[537] As noted in the preceding pages, organized labor, with few exceptions, saw its entrance into postwar politics as on behalf of the aggrieved white male wage earner. But this belief did not bar more marginalized workers from seeing value in a representative political movement. To borrow a phrase from historian Lane Windham, white women and Black trade unionists were very much "knocking on labor's door" during the early 1920s. Though it would be

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of employment. While few of these streets appear to exist today, those that do remain back up to the railroad tracks, not far from the contemporary University of Kansas Medical Center. Union Labor in Line More than 15,000 Strong," Sept 8, 1; "Republicans Draw Political Color Line," *Labor Bulletin* (October 13, 1920), 1; US Government. 1920 Census. Rosedale Wyandotte Kansas 12B Enumeration District 198, Roll T625, 555. Ancestry.com.

[537] A.D. Fairbairn, "Where Profiteers Are 'Spiked' by Real Democracy," *Labor* (May 8, 1920), 2.

another several decades before American unions began to take a holistic civil rights unionism seriously, there were several notable cases of individuals chipping away at the Brotherhood and AFL's bedrock notion that organized labor-- and by extension, its political outlook-- belonged to the white male breadwinner.[538] Non-white and non-male trade unionists believed in a post-war social democracy that advanced legal and economic equality regardless of race and gender, but their colleagues in power largely disagreed.

"The Supreme Test": The 1920 Election in Minnesota and Wisconsin

Organized labor may have come out of the summer months emboldened by early political victories and more united on the Plumb Plan, but these advances proved fleeting. Despite hopeful signs that trade unions and radical farmers had grown into an electoral force to be reckoned with, most statewide campaigns were unsuccessful in electing their candidates. In Montana, Burton K. Wheeler lost his gubernatorial election. Samuel B. Montgomery, whom the West Virginia United Mine Workers ultimately ran as an independent after he lost a federal appeal for a recount of the Republican primary results, also fell short of expectations.[539] In Kansas, the state non-partisan campaign had some success in boring within the two major parties, carrying Jonathan M. Davis, a former

[538] For discussions on Civil Rights Unionism, see Katherine Turk, *Equality on Trial: Gender and Rights in the Modern American Workplace* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Martha Biondi, *"To Stand and Fight:" The Struggle for Civil Rights in Post-War New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Robert Rodgers Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," JAH (March 2005), 1233-1263; Eric Arnesen, "Reconsidering the Long 'Civil Rights Movement'," *Historically Speaking* (April 2009), 31-34.

[539] "A Statement From Fred Paul Grosscup," *Wheeling Intelligencer* (November 3, 1920), 11; "Democrats Will Sweep State," *The Raleigh Register* (Beckley, West Virginia), 8; "Things for Montgomery to Explain," *The West Virginian* (October 27, 1920), 6; "The Swing to Morgan," *Charleston Daily Mail* (October 31, 1920), 11; "Montgomery Candidacy Scheme to Deliver the State to Cox," *The West Virginian* (October 15, 1920), 1; "All Look Alike to Koontz," *Greenbrier Independent* (October 15, 1920), 2.

state senator and farmer, through a crowded Democratic primary. But Davis failed to win even forty percent of the vote in the general election, crushing the hopes of Gompers and other labor leaders trying to make an example of Henry J. Allen and his industrial court.[540]

Even in Minnesota, where the marriage of the state's labor federation and Nonpartisan League offered a real threat to the Republican Party, electoral efforts failed to materialize. Henrik Shipstead, the NPL's candidate for governor, finished second in the Republican primary and lost as an independent in November. But the race in Minnesota did at least show promise for the future. In the primary, Shipstead swept fifty-four counties and came within eight thousand votes (or two and half percent of ballots cast) of defeating J.A.O. Preus, the state's incumbent auditor and heir-apparent for the vacant governor's office. While the mass of Shipstead's support came from Scandinavian farmers in rural counties, it was the energized ranks of labor that delivered the campaign's competitive edge. Election reporters noted that Minneapolis' "labor wards" went "strong for Shipstead." The rural dentist did trail Preus fairly significantly in the

[540] The state non-partisan group did not challenge Allen directly in the Republican primary, though they did endorse George B. Snow, an itinerant farmhand whose campaign strategy largely amounted to appearing unannounced on doorsteps in rural Kansas, as a "spite candidate." The governor's office eventually found evidence that the state had, years prior, incarcerated Snow in a mental health facility. Some newspapers reported that Allen considered having the farmhand recommitted. The state federation of labor backed Snow purely in an attempt to embarrass the Governor. In the end, Snow won a third of the primary vote and carried the mining region of Crawford County. "Allen Will Win by 80,000 Votes," *Salina Evening Journal* (August 4, 1920), 1; "Allen, Curtis, Hopkins Win," *The Chanute Weekly Tribune* (August 6, 1920), 1; "Primary to Show Strength of Labor and Soldier Vote," *Topeka Daily Capital* (August 1, 1920), 10; "The Poor Simp," *Emporia Weekly Gazette* (October 21, 1920), 1; "George B. Snow Under Arrest for Red Speech," *The Sun* (Pittsburg, Kansas) (October 17, 1920), 10; A.L. Shultz, "Kansas Ready to Make Known Political Choice," *Topeka State Journal* (October 30, 1920), 1; Farmer-Labor Non-Partisan Political Action Rebukes the Governor," *Worker's Chronicle* (August 13, 1920), 2; "Candidate to Contest With Governor Allen," *The Leavenworth Times* (June 24, 1920), 3; "Strange Ways of the Politicians," *Pratt Daily Tribune* (September 17, 1920), 2; "An Oakland Man Opposes Gov. Allen, *Chanute Daily Tribune and Sun* (June 22, 1920), 1; "A Farm Laborer," *The Parsons Daily Sun* (July 30, 1920), 1.

state's two other industrial cities, St. Paul and Duluth, but the cause was almost certainly defections to the Democratic primary.[541]

By and large, Preus secured the nomination in the state's small towns and suburbs-- which voted for him at a margin as high as ten to one. As the Republican Party's favored candidate, Preus appealed strongly to voters' anti-radical fears. After the summer primary, editors of the pro-Preus *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* cheered the result and marked the end of the battle "between true Americanism and the essential principles of Russian Soviets." The voters had foiled the Farmer-Labor Party's attempt to "convert the state government of Minnesota into class rule," they claimed.[542]

A few weeks later, the Minnesota Nonpartisan League and Working People's Nonpartisan Political League (WPNPL) agreed to run Shipstead in November as an independent. The twin cities became the battleground of the general election. Labor sought to drum up the worker vote for Shipstead while the Preus campaign hoped the menace of Bolshevism would bring out residents of the wealthier "silk stocking" districts. Preus repeatedly referred to Shipstead as the "camouflage" candidate-- suggesting that the Farmer-Laborites were socialist revolutionaries masquerading under a more respectable veneer.[543]

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[541] Both St. Paul mayor Laurence Hodgson, running for governor in the Democratic primary, and W.L. Carss, a democratic congressional representative from Duluth, had fair labor records and came out in support of a "tonnage tax" on iron profits—a popular proposal in trade union circles. "Minnesota Vote Gives Farm-Labor Control of House," July 3, 1920, 1, 3; Cities Give Preus Lead for Governor in State Primary," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* (June 22, 1920), 1; "Preus Leads on City Returns," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* June 22, 2; "The State Primary Election," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* (June 24, 1920), 12; "Hodgson Puts Thorn in Side of Old Guard," Minneapolis Star Sept 18, 6; "Carss is Victor in Friendly Party Fight," *Labor World* June 26, 1. "Start Campaign for W.L. Carss," *Labor World* (June 12, 1920), 8.
[542] "The State Primary Election," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* (June 24, 1920), 12.
[543] "Women to Fight Townleyism," *Princeton Union* (May 20, 1920), 6; "Republican Women Active in Campaign," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* (September 26, 1920), 10; Harvey Fawcett, "Cities Become Battleground of Campaign," *Minnesota Daily Star* (October 25, 1920), 1; "Women Show Independence in Balloting," *Minnesota Daily Star* (November 2, 1920), 1.

The labor forces behind Shipstead made significant efforts to mobilize women voters. Victoria McAlmon, teacher and vice president of the WPNPL, and Bertha Moller, one of the "Silent Sentinels" arrested during National Women's Party suffrage pickets in 1917 and who subsequently started a fundraising campaign for striking telephone operators, actively stumped for the Farmer-Labor ticket. Foretelling a reactionary culling of wartime gains under a Preus regime, Moller asked women to accept the "solemn responsibility not to put over such an outrage on the people of Minnesota." Women's auxiliaries on the Nonpartisan League distributed pamphlets promising higher minimum wages for secretaries, laundry workers, chambermaids, and waitresses. Shipstead himself was the only candidate to affirmatively respond to an open letter published by various women's clubs asking the governor to appoint woman to sit on the state Board of Control-- the regulatory body overseeing state reformatories, hospitals, and "special schools." He also insisted the proceeds of his "tonnage tax," a proposed levy on steel industry profits, would go to improve education, telling crowds that he would give "every boy and every girl in the state of Minnesota a good education."[544]

In Minneapolis, Thomas Van Lear attempted to drive labor members to the polls. He encouraged workers to demand time off to vote-- fearing that many might miss polling hours by waiting too long. Ultimately, Shipstead carried several precincts in the twin cities, largely from the industrial parts of town where Thomas Van Lear had concentrated his organizers. But these voters could not offset the immense outpouring of Preus support from the city's wealthy and middle class neighborhoods. In neighboring

[544] "Shipstead O.K.'s Woman Plea," *Minnesota Daily Star* (October 28, 1920), 1; "Shipstead O.K.'s Woman Plea," *Minnesota Daily Star* (October 28, 1920), 1; "Women Back Mass Meeting at Auditorium," *Minnesota Daily Star* (October 21, 1920), 1; "Urge Support of Shipstead Ticket to Assure Higher Minimum Wage," *Minnesota Daily Star* (October 29, 1920), 2.

Ramsey County, Shipstead won eight of the twelve election wards, but lost his lead almost entirely in St. Paul's well-heeled seventh ward, where he garnered only twelve-and-a-half percent of the 12,300 ballots cast.[545] Shipstead's thirty-six percent of the overall vote was a disappointment to the Farmer-Labor Party. But the rural-labor alliance was set and now had invaluable experience. Minnesota labor was prepared for the next election.

Because Minnesota's most high-profile race was for a state office, it received far less national attention than its neighboring Wisconsin. More so than in any other contest, the Wisconsin state primary and general election reflected progressive labor's hopes for independent political influence and the hurdles labor would have to surmount. After Robert La Follette's supporters cornered the state's springtime presidential primary, labor leaders and sympathetic liberals like Edward Keating, Frederic C. Howe, Basil Manly, and Frank Walsh saw an opportunity to prove the potential power of an energized and progressive working-class coalition. While organized labor had always considered La Follette a friend in Washington, the senator became its champion after World War I. After all, his repeated warnings that American participation in the war would serve most to empower profiteers at home and empires abroad proved prescient after the guns fell silent.[546] Most important, however, was his vocal opposition to the Esch-Cummins

[545] Shipstead lost greater St. Paul 33310 to 25004. In Minneapolis, Shipstead won seven of the thirteen wards, but faced a deficit of more than ten thousand votes in the eighth and thirteenth ward. "Primary Election Returns of Election Held on June 21st, 1920," *Minnesota Legislative Manual 1921*, 100-109. Minnesota Legislative Reference Library. "General Election Returns for Minnesota Held on Tuesday, November Second 1920," 408-416, 470-476.

[546] It must be noted that in 1917, La Follette's anti-war posture—specifically a speech delivered to the NPL in St. Paul, Minnesota—resulted in citizens from across the nations sending nooses to his congressional mailbox and numerous politicians, including a majority of the Wisconsin state senate, calling for his expulsion from congress. Progressive senators like Hiram Johnson distanced themselves from him, Theodore Roosevelt called him a "shadow Hun," and the governor of Minnesota wanted to open charges under the Espionage Act. Michael Kazin, *War Against War: The American Fight for Peace, 1914-1918*

Bill.[547] By 1920, La Follette declared war on every member of his state's congressional delegation who voted to return the railroads to private ownership, including his chief rival: fellow senator Irvine Lenroot.

First elected to the House of Representatives in 1908, Lenroot generally backed the more senior La Follette. That was until 1917, when the representative voted to declare war on Germany. A year later, Lenroot defeated La Follette's pick to fill a vacant Senate seat by appealing to the voters as the "loyalty candidate"-- a clear snub to his more pacific colleague. Still, Lenroot was no reactionary. He styled himself a "sane progressive." Joining the senate, he initially supported many union-backed initiatives, demanding investigations into profiteering and graft, price controls, and an end to child labor. But Lenroot's vote for the Transportation Act put him squarely in both labor and La Follette's crosshairs. According to Keating, Lenroot had failed the "supreme test," abandoned "the people," and chose to fight "under the banner of Wall Street."[548] The senator, and the four Wisconsin congressional representatives who voted for the bill, would have to go.

Convinced that La Follette was their most receptive ally in government, Keating and Howe reached out months in advance of the state's primary to offer Brotherhood and Plumb Plan League assistance. Lenroot aside, the option to primary John Esch, co-author

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(New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 224-229; Michael Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 103-106; Richard Drake, *The Education of an Anti-Imperialist: Robert La Follette and U.S. Expansion* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 196-204.

[547] Robert M. La Follette, "Soap Bubble Stock Made Good as Gold by the Cummins Bill," *Labor* January 24, 1920, 1, 3.

[548] "Re-Elect Senator Lenroot," *The Lake Geneva News* (September 2, 1920), 9; "Hoover Aids Lenroot," *New York Times* (September 1, 1920), 3; "Reactionaries Fake Their Labor Records," *Labor* (August 21, 1920), 1; "La Follette Dies in Capital Home," *New York Times* (June 19, 1925), 1; "Lenroot Runs for Senate on 1 Plank—Loyalty," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (March 8, 1918), 5; "Wisconsin Betting 2 to 1 on Lenroot," *New York Times* (March 30, 1918), 7; "Progressives Bolt," *New York Times* (March 27, 1913), 8.

of the Transportation Act, presented another tantalizing opportunity to enhance labor's political clout. "We are all anxious to help out in Wisconsin," Keating wrote to La Follette, "and we hope you will succeed in picking a candidate in Esch's district who can make the right kind of showing against that gentleman."[549] In the following months, Brotherhoods' legislative committee, now officially under Keating's management, put a high degree of care into its Wisconsin organizing. Making several trips from their D.C. office to the Midwest, Howe, Keating, and Plumb helped Wisconsin workers to mobilize-- first by holding a statewide conference and then by assigning precinct captains. "We must always remember that the boys know a good deal about organizing for industrial action, but very little about organizing for political action," they anxiously wrote La Follette.[550]

Doing his part in the following months, La Follette committed fully to Keating's prospective trade union alliance. Following the advice of the Brotherhoods and AFL railroad union leaders, he decided against accepting the Labor Party's presidential nomination. Though he repeatedly claimed that both Democrats and Republicans represented "plutocracy, and political and industrial servitude for the great mass of people," he believed a third party would hurt rather than help.[551] During a heated meeting with progressive leaders of the Committee of 48, La Follette's personal secretary, John Hannan, urged the Committee of 48 to abandon its plans for a new Liberal Party and instead recommended that "every energy be expended on the congressional campaign,

[549] Edward Keating to Robert M. La Follette, May 21 1920. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B85 1920 Keating.
[550] Edward Keating to Robert M. La Follette, June 29, 1920. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B85 1920 Keating.
[551] 1920 Platform. July 1920. Committee of 48. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B180 Committee of 48.

with the idea of electing as many progressive representatives and senators as possible." In Hannan's thinking, in the event of a near-equal number of Democrats and Republicans, progressive congressional representatives "would have the balance of power"-- in effect becoming a new party.[552] With union workers and organized farmers as his base, La Follette would primary vulnerable politicians and create a bloc in Congress sympathetic to labor's plight. This strategy, he predicted, would be far more successful than a potentially quixotic new party.

Helping both the Wisconsin senator and trade unionists navigate this realignment was Basil Manly. After Congress disbanded the National War Labor Board in the spring of 1919, Manly became a leading figure in post-war reconstructionist intellectual circles. Having witnessed firsthand the rapidity with which politicians could dismantle postwar economic gains, he hoped that labor could exercise a loud and independent voice in Washington. Like the officers at *Labor* and the Plumb Plan League, he believed La Follette was key. Manly worked to convince labor and other "progressive leaders" that "the only hope for the next two years lay in Congress… that the only hope of influencing Congress lay in securing the election of a group of independent representatives and senators who would pledge themselves not to be bound by the action of their party caucuses." Once labor had elected more of its friends to office, Manly believed, La Follette would become head of an "Independent Congressional Campaign Committee."

[552] Basil Manly, August 2, 1920. "Memorandum, Conference at Madison, Wisconsin July 25 to 27." La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B86 1920 Manly, Basil M. Gilbert E. Roe, La Follette's attorney and confidant, echoed this point as well, telling the senator "he would be much better served following the Federation, Brotherhoods, and Nonpartisan League, all of whom were attempting "to secure the election of senators and representatives in certain districts who are friendly and to accomplish the defeat of other[s] who have shown themselves hostile." Gilbert E. Roe to Robert M. La Follette, 22 July 1920. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B86 1920, Roe, Gilbert.

Or, as he called it informally, a "Battalion of Death" which would "stand for the rights of the people" against the monied elite.[553]

Manly viewed Wisconsin's federal elections as a matter of national importance to the broader reform community. After suggesting his "Battalion" to La Follette, Manly worked diligently to actualize his theory, primarily by improving communication between the railroad unions, La Follette's Wisconsin progressive Republicans, and his fellow East Coast liberals. To Manly, organized labor, despite its promise, remained something of a dilettante politically. After traveling to Cleveland for a meeting with Warren Stone and W.S. Carter, chief of the Locomotive Firemen, he told La Follette Jr. that he "did not get from them anything satisfactory or definite with reference to their congressional campaign plans." They were eager to participate, but unprepared to mount a challenge vigorous enough to upset the political establishment.

Manly convinced La Follette to organize a clandestine conference of union leaders, labor-friendly journalists, and sympathetic politicians. The two agreed that "there were numerous groups already interested in securing the election of progressive representatives and senators," but there was "no co-ordination between them." Manly had high hopes for the conference, telling Frank Walsh, whom he sincerely hoped would attend, that "The situation is ripe for the picking." "After the election," Manly wrote, "the Democratic Party will be shot to pieces and the country will be waking up to the cold grey dawn of the morning after… All we have to do is get an embryo organization going and catch them on the rebound." If labor and its organizers did their job "half way,"

[553] Manly to Robert M. La Follette Jr., August 4, 1920; Manly to Robert M. La Follette Jr. August 6, 1920; Manly to Robert M. La Follette Sr. August 6, 1920. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B86 1920 Manly, Basil M.

Manly surmised, "Congress can be turned upside down in 1922 and the foundations laid to go into the 1924 campaign with a strong radical party." Though not as outwardly optimistic as Manly, La Follette confessed that such a meeting carried "unusual possibilities."[554] Ultimately, the La Follette's staff rented meeting rooms at the Atlantic Hotel in downtown Chicago for a conference on October 6, 1920.

Conference organizers hoped to keep the meeting out of the public eye. They invited no journalist to report on the proceedings. The most prominent attendees were the heads of sixteen railroad unions, including Warren Stone and Bert M. Jewell of the AFL's railroad department, a smattering of midwestern congressional representatives, and the Wisconsin delegation of La Follette, Basil Manly, and Gilbert E. Roe. La Follette hoped like-minded Senators William Borah, David I. Walsh, and Joseph France could take part, but they, too, were forced to cancel. Officially, the assemblage voted to establish an informal bloc of independent and progressive members of the Senate and the House. The unions present promised to support these politicians in the press and work toward their reelection.[555] The yet unnamed group was to take up more specific resolutions at a public conference in early December. During the month in between, however, the conference pledged itself to an almost singular goal: establishing a firm base of support in Wisconsin. For the group to have any chance of success, its leader, La Follette, needed a strong position in Congress.

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[554] Manly to Robert M. La Follette Jr., August 4, 1920. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B86 1920 Manly, Basil M.; Robert M. La Follette to Frank Walsh, September 28, 1920; Basil Manly to Frank Walsh Sept 28, 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 9 September 11-30.
[555] Robert M. La Follette to Frank Walsh, Oct 7, 1920; Basil Manly to Frank Walsh. Oct 7 1920; Basil Manly, Memorandum on October 6 Chicago Conference. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 9 October 1-14.

The Wisconsin Progressive Republicans had done exceptionally in the September primary. Of the four house representatives that voted for the Transportation Act, only one, Adolphus Nelson, staved off a La Follette-backed primary challenge. In what would stand as one of labor's crowning achievements of the 1920 campaign, voters rebuked John Esch, head of the prestigious Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, and ended his two decade career in Congress. The Brotherhoods went all in on Esch's defeat. A.R. McDonald, chairman of labor's Wisconsin Joint Legislative Board, sent circulars to every union member and bought ad space in several state-wide newspapers, calling on voters to repudiate the Esch-Cummins Act and "wrest" their liberty from "the financial pirates of Wall Street." Esch's law had sought to "enslave" railroad workers, this was their time to fight back. After results filtered in from the Seventh District, labor lauded Esch's defeat. "These progressive currents when compared to the tide of political events throughout the nation, are regarded by many as insignificant," the editors of the *Railway Clerk* wrote. "But they show that there is a serious, silent research going on in the minds of the people today."[556]

The ferocity of labor's opposition to Esch shocked state and national Republicans who thought the candidate's record of limiting hours for railroad employees and bringing federal worker's compensation to the industry more than made up for his Transportation Act compromise.[557] Campaign managers correctly pointed out that Esch had won his last

[556] "Esch Did Not Play Fair With Himself on Rail Measures," *Labor* (October 2, 1920), 2; Donald Ramsey, "Esch of Rail Bill Fame Given Exit By Joseph Beck," *Labor* (September 18, 1920), 1; "Labor Breaks Party Ties in Congressional Elections," *Railway Clerk* (September-October, 1920), 594.

[557] Esch's campaign literature made strong appeals to railroad workers-- citing his past legislation and signaling his support for the fair government sponsored voluntary arbitration the Brotherhoods favored. The literature also defended the Transportation Act as a "manifest improvement" over government ownership and dispelled the false notion that the government directly private railroad company losses (as written in the prior section, the ICC was to adjust rates to roughly equal a five-and-a-half percent return and

election by more than ten thousand votes, counting on the help of railroad workers. In the 1920 primary, his prior legislative record seemingly pushed aside, Esch found himself "snowed under" by more than two thousand votes in La Crosse county.[558]

The Brotherhoods succeeded in primarying John J. Esch, but Senator Irvine Lenroot survived the assault. His good fortune largely depended on the Republican Party's frenzied campaign to save him. La Follette and his independent-minded supporters were, understandably, a thorn in the Grand Old Party's side. During the 1918 election, the regular faction had made significant progress in rooting out its opponents in the state. Electing Irvine Lenroot over La Follette's candidate was foremost among the Republican Party's cherished victories. The Republican National Committee informally hoisted Lenroot as its new face in the Midwest-- a young, patriotic, and progressive senator dedicated to moderating radical excesses. The party even considered running Lenroot as its 1920 vice presidential candidate.[559] Lenroot losing his office would, in effect, result in Wisconsin's Republican delegation falling almost entirely under the leadership of a Senator strongly supportive of labor and expansive government intervention in the economy.

The Lenroot campaign's strategy involved presenting Lenroot as a progressive purveyor of Harding's "normalcy." His campaign promised an ongoing fight against "profiteers" and the "wanton waste and extravagance of the Democratic administration." Underpinning how seriously the national party took the race, leading Republicans

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issued no cash payments). "John J. Esch: Should He be Returned to Congress?" *La Crosse Tribune* (August 29, 1920), 7.

[558] "Letter Sent Out to Railroad Men," *The Capital Times* (August 18, 1920), 1; "Snowed Under in La Crosse by Over 2,000," *La Crosse Tribune* (September 8, 1920), 1.

[559] "Tenth Ballot Gives Ohio Senator Victory," *Washington Post* (June 13, 1920), 1; "Irvine L. Lenroot Is Dead at 79 Wisconsin Ex-Senator and Judge," *New York Herald Tribune* (June 27, 1949), 14.

dispatched Herbert Hoover-- a rising national star for his work in alleviating famine in Europe and all but assured a cabinet position in the next administration-- to stump for Lenroot in Milwaukee. "The Republican Party must preempt the field of progressiveness. It must be neither reactionary nor radical," Hoover told the crowd. "Radicalism is not satisfied with sane and gradual progress," he continued. Very clearly alluding to railroad nationalization, he added that "The test of any law must be the question of whether it is for the benefit of all the people. The improvement of the mass can come only through improvement of the individual, and there must be no laws to curb individual initiative."[560] Hoover's speech reflected how much Wisconsin had become a battleground for the railroad question and whether or not voters would punish incumbents for the Transportation Act. Out-of-state observers noted the frequency in which would-be voters invoked the "crime of 1920," a stand-in term for Esch-Cummins, and how thoroughly divided the electorate seemed.[561]

Keating, Howe, and the Brotherhoods remained convinced that the Transportation Act would bring about Lenroot's defeat. In response to Robert La Follette Jr.'s request that Glenn Plumb challenge Lenroot to a debate, Keating claimed, "Mr. Plumb's time is too precious to be wasted on a dead politician and Mr. Lenroot is among the deadest politicians of whom I have knowledge." Keating explained that "If Mr. Lenroot is compelled to defend the record he has made in Washington, I do not question for a moment what the verdict of the people of Wisconsin will be in November. He will be

[560] "Hoover Aids Lenroot," *New York Times* (September 1, 1920), 3; "Re-Elect Senator Lenroot," *The Lake Geneva News* (September 2, 1920), 9.
[561] 1920 Platform. July 1920. Committee of 48. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B180 Committee of 48; "Was it Waterloo or Something Else," *Leader-Telegram* (Eau Claire) (September 8, 1920), 4. Originally printed in the *Philadelphia Ledger* and *St. Paul Dispatch*.

retired to private life, not because he was an enemy of labor, but because in order to win the favor of big business, he betrayed the interests of the people."[562] Keating's confidence was overblown.

In a heavy turnout primary, Lenroot bested La Follette's candidate, James Thompson, a lawyer from La Crosse, former District Attorney, and twice delegate to the Republican National Convention, by around twenty thousand votes. Keating and the Brotherhoods were quick to blame Okosh Mayor A.C. McHenry, who entered the Republican primary on a single-issue campaign to repeal prohibition, for siphoning off votes. Indeed, the majority of McHenry's forty-five thousand supporters would have likely gone to Thompson, who stayed silent on the alcohol question, but opposed Lenroot, an out-spoken "dry." Also important was Thompson's substantial deficit in Milwaukee's working-class wards, where a surprising twenty-two thousand voters marked their ballots for a candidate in the unopposed Socialist Party primary.[563] Had even a fraction of McHenry and socialist voters changed their minds, Thompson and La Follette could have triumphed.

After consulting with La Follette, labor, and the Nonpartisan League, James Thompson filed to run for Senate as an independent in October.[564] Manly and Keating gladly accepted another chance to test their brand of independent nonpartisan working-class politics. Though the issues and talking points had changed little since the primary, both the progressive and regular faction dug in for a much more brutal general campaign.

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[562] Edward Keating to Robert M. La Follette Jr., July 9, 1920. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B85 1920 Keating.
[563] *Wisconsin Blue Book* (Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau, 1921), 75; A.M. Brayton, "The Week," *Wisconsin State Journal* (September 12, 1920), 1; "Lenroot Nomination to Senate is Assured," *Appleton Post-Crescent* (September 8, 1920), 1; "Heavy Vote in Primary Today was Indicated," *Daily News* (Neenah) (September 7, 1920, 1; "Lenroot is Facing Defeat," *Labor* (October 9, 1920), 4.
[564] "James Thompson to Enter Race as Independent," *Capital Times* (October 6, 1920), 1.

"The fight has all the aspects of a life-and-death struggle as to which faction will survive," one journalist noted.[565]

Lenroot hoped his record and the massive financial war chest the national party had put at his disposal would be enough to fend off his challenger. William T. Evjue, editor of the few remaining pro-La Follette dailies, *The Capital Times* (and a future co-founder of *The Progressive*), noted the staggering disparity of newspapers advertising in Lenroot's favor-- and the overwhelming number of Lenroot billboards carrying his slogan: "Conspicuously Right."[566] Evjue also hypothesized that the regulars had spent more than $100,000 (around 1.3 million dollars, adjusted for inflation) to reelect the senator, though could only point to testimony by Senator Miles Poindexter claiming that Lenroot received between forty and fifty thousand dollars from the party's general reelection fund. But even this smaller amount was nearly equal to the American Federation of Labor's entire nation-wide political expenditure that year.[567]

Initially, Lenroot avoided attacking his opponents, hoping to campaign on his record in Congress alone. But Robert McCoy, the Democratic candidate for governor that Lenroot had endorsed over La Follette's candidate, John J. Blaine, leaned heavily into his attack on the progressives. "Wisconsin is in Danger," one of McCoy's most-popular

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[565] "G.O.P. In Wisconsin is Split Wide Open," *The Sun* (September 5, 1920), 2; "Fear La Follette May Fight Ticket," *Washington Post* (September 12, 1920), 15; "A Bi-Product of Principle," *La Crosse Tribune* (October 10, 1955), 3; "Republicans Split in Lenroot Fight," *New York Times* (October 4, 1920), 3; "Will This Campaign See the Last of the Political Mohicans," *The Sun* (October 6, 1920), 8; "Wisconsin Break Helps Democrats," *New York Times* (October 12, 1920), 3; "Be Good or Fight Alone: Badger G.O.P. to Blaine," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (October 15, 1920), 18; J.F. Essary, "Party Lines Have Disappeared in Wisconsin's Bitter Fight," *Baltimore Sun* (October 24, 1920), 1.

[566] Carter Field, "Landslide for Harding Seen in Election," *New York Tribune* (September 26, 1920), 1; "Wisconsin Break Helps Democrats," *New York Times* (October 12, 1920), 3.

[567] "Thompson's Great Run," *Capital Times* (November 5, 1920), 12; "Thompson's Great Run," *Capital Times* (November 5, 1920), 12. The AFL's receipts totaled $53,439.45. New York State Federation of Labor, "Report of Secretary-Treasurer," *Official Proceedings Fifty-Eighth Annual Convention* (Albany: New York Federation of Labor,) "Non-Partisan Campaign of 1920," 24-26.

pamphlets stated in large, bold print. The "radicals and agitators, the socialists and professional Nonpartisan league organizers" had nearly succeeded in extending "tentacles" into the state through La Follette's so-called progressive platform, McCoy warned. "The name Republican is the sheep's clothing the league would have the voter regard," he continued. "Blaine is no more a Republican than Lenine and Trotzky, czars of the Bolsheviki, are Republicans." McCoy, the "uncompromising foe of Radicalism" then detailed the Nonpartisan League's record in North Dakota, making dubious claims about enormous tax increases, corrupt banking practices, and state education that undermined religion and advocated the teaching of "free love."[568]

McCoy's pamphlet, while exaggerated to the point absurdity on some issues, was remarkably honest in describing the NPL and La Follette's economic proposal to collectivize "stockyards, terminals, grain elevators, railroads, cold storages, packing plants, terminal warehouses and all other public utilities and national resources." As he did during the primary, Thompson held the Esch-Cummins bill as the beating heart of the federal government's desire to disadvantage workers, farmers, and consumers in the interest of big business and the stock market. "The Esch-Cummins law is now serving practical demonstration of its vicious provisions. It oppressed every housewife, every farmer, working man, and small business man," Thompson wrote in a press release following his independent campaign announcement. "Are you going to lie down and let the financial interests make slaves and serfs of you as they have in Europe or are you going to stand up and fight," a progressive faction circular titled "Wall or Street or the

[568] "Wisconsin is in Danger." La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B181 1920 Wisconsin Campaign.

People," questioned. Basil Manly, who campaigned on multiple occasions in the Badger state, witnessed a "prairie fire" of enthusiasm for Thompson's message. [569]

While Esch-Cummins and railroad nationalization began as the center of La Follette's tilt against Lenroot and the regular party, the League of Nations soon became a coequal portion of his battle cry. The League had been a political shuttlecock since early 1919, when Woodrow Wilson built American participation into the peace treaty the Republican-controlled Senate was to consider.[570] Lenroot was a "mild reservationist" and signaled his intent to vote for a League charter so long as it acknowledged the Monroe Doctrine, removed Article X (the provision for collective security), and provided some mechanism for withdrawal. La Follette was a member of the so-called "irreconcilable" faction-- those who would not support League entry under any circumstance.

The irreconcilables were a loose group with varying beliefs. Indiana Senator Albert Beveridge, like Teddy Roosevelt saw the League as a threat to the "Nation's manhood" and military might. Missouri Senator James Reed saw the League as a threat to America's racial hierarchies. La Follette had a more progressive outlook.[571] For La

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[569] C.B. James, "Wall Street or the People?" La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B181 1920 Wisconsin Campaign; Bail Manly to Frank Walsh, October 19, 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 9 October 15-31.

[570] Nell Painter, *Standing at Armageddon* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 365-368; Ann Hagedorn, *Savage Peace: Hope and Fear in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 118-123, 356-359, Michael Kazin, *War Against War: The American Fight for Peace, 1914-1918* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 277-278; Elizabeth McKillen, "Integrating Labor into the Narrative of Wilsonian Internationalism: A Literature Review," *Diplomatic History* 34 No. 4 (September 2010), 643-662; Elizabeth McKillen, *Making the World Safe for Workers: Labor, the Left, and Wilsonian Internationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

[571] James A. Reed was a virulent racist who worried, for instance, that independent black nations like Haiti or Ethiopia could dismantle debt peonage on southern plantations. There was also a barely concealed anti-Semitism in his worry of "international bankers" taking control of the League. Several years later, Reed would represent Henry Ford and the *Dearborn Independent* in a libel suit aimed at that publication's repeated invocation of a Jewish conspiracy to undermine American government. (Victoria Saker Woeste, *Henry Ford's War on Jews and the Legal Battle Against Hate Speech* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Elizabeth McKillen, "Integrating Labor into the Narrative of Wilsonian Internationalism: A

Follette, the League, as it stood, would benefit Wall Street bankers and international monopolists by strengthening imperial holdings and empire. It simultaneously did too little to demilitarize and prevent another destructive war.[572] The failure at Versailles to consider self-determination for Ireland, India, and Egypt, La Follette believed, further undermined the democratic promise of international cooperation and rendered the League a farcical extension of imperialism.[573]

The La Follette faction combined Lenroot's support of Esch-Cummins and mild support of the League of Nations into a potent attack. Thompson campaign material painted Lenroot as a hapless accomplice of Wall Street-- a senator who caved to profiteers at home and abroad. In his opening campaign rally, Thompson asserted Lenroot would have American soldiers "continue to police the Rhine and act as debt collectors for foreign nations" and almost "certainly embroil us in foreign wars." The same circular that asked voters if they were willing to become "serfs" to financial interests also suggested that anyone "in favor of the League of Nations and making this country a guarantor for Wall Street's foreign investments and a collection agency for J.P. Morgan" to vote for Lenroot or Reinsch. "The little group of men who sat in secret conclave at Versailles were not peace makers. They were war makers," La Follette told a Milwaukee crowd in late October. "They cut and slashed the map of the Old World in violation of the terms of the treaty." In virtually the same breath as his assault on Esch-

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Literature Review," *Diplomatic History* 34 No. 4 (September 2010), 661; William E. Leuchtenburg, *Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 58.

[572] Richard Drake, *The Education of an Anti-Imperialist: Robert La Follette and U.S. Expansion* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 249-250, 279, 289.

[573] Elizabeth McKillen, "The Irish Sinn Fein Movement and Dissent in America," *Labor* 16 no. 3 (September 2019), 28-33; "Platform of the Farmer-Labor Party of the U.S.," *New Majority* (July, 24, 1920), 5; Geoffrey Bell, *Hesitant Comrades: The Irish Revolution and the British Labour Movement* (London: Pluto Press, 2016); Ivan Gibbons, *The British Labour Party and the Establishment of the Irish Free State, 1918–24* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

Cummins, the senior senator lambasted any international association that did not "take the profit out of war… give to the people a referendum on war and abolish conscription and reduce armaments."

In a flier stating his beliefs, James Thompson wrote "Every intelligent man knows that there is a movement on foot in this country to use the war as an occasion for the building up in this country of a vast military establishment to be used in furthering the plans of the imperialistic forces in this country." Noting the nation's acquisitions in the Pacific, especially Hawaii and the Philippines, he continued: "Wherever our captains of industry may go seeking investments and profits there it will be desired to send our captains of military forces to protect the investment of the financiers."[574] Lenroot's ambiguous position in the conflict over self-determination, and its applicability regarding colonial possessions, especially in regards to Ireland, was a weakness Thompson particularly hoped to exploit.

On March 18 and 19, 1919, Lenroot equated the principle of self-determination and self-government with the events precipitating the American Civil War. Senators Joseph France of Maryland, William Borah of Idaho, and Josiah Wolcott of Delaware had introduced a "reservation" to the war treaty advocating the right of national self-determination. Lenroot asked whether it was their intention, "to declare a new policy upon the part of the United States that shall extend to the Hawaiian Islands, that shall extend to Porto Rico, that shall extend to the Philippine Islands, and even to the

[574] "James Thompson to Enter Race as Independent," *Capital Times* (October 6, 1920), 1; C.B. James, "Wall Street or the People?" La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B181 1920 Wisconsin Campaign; "Senator Says Wilson Acts Big Betrayal," *The Capital Times* (October 22, 1920), 2; "Says Only Reactionaries Support the Two Measures in Congress," *La Crosse Tribune and Leader Press* (October 31, 1920), 13; "James Thompson, Candidate for United States Senator; His Biography and Statement of Principles," La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B181 1920 Wisconsin Campaign.

individual States of the Union?" Somewhat mystified by the analogy, France called attention to Lenroot's line of questioning the following day. "Does the Senator make no distinction between the War of the Revolution and the War of the Rebellion," France asked. Lenroot responded affirmatively.[575] Despite Lenroot for the final treaty, which included language for self-determination, the progressives found enough in his somewhat idle comments to claim that the senator opposed Irish independence and approved of British colonialism.

Across Wisconsin, La Follette made speeches asserting that Lenroot, after "voting to conscript every man and boy to fight for the rights of small nations, denounced the people of Ireland on the floor of the Senate as 'secessionists' because, after the war, they asserted their right to self-determination."[576] Thompson and Blaine materials aimed at women illuminated Lenroot's "treacherous" vote for the League as something that would "force mothers once again to send their sons across the seas to be killed in the trenches of future wars." Though perhaps the best articulation of the La Follette coalition's equivocation of Wilsonian foreign policy abroad and predatory capitalism at home was a broadside political cartoon titled "Lenroot--'Conspicuously Right'-- For England." In the image, prime minister Lloyd George presents George V with a document bearing Lenroot's signature and stating, "I approve the League as Proposed." On the far end of the meeting table, a monocled man with crowned regalia representing the House of Lords spins a large globe exclaiming "Bah Jove! I'm for Irvine!" Closest to the viewer, a man

[575] U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record--Senate*. March 18, 4515-4520; March 19, 1920 4575-4576.
[576] "La Follette Didn't Endorse Harding," *Eau Claire Leader-Telegram* (October 23, 1920), 3.

with Wall St. emblazoned on his jacket claps enthusiastically with bills of "foreign loans" stashed in his pockets.[577]

The progressives crafted their message based on real opposition to the League in reconstruction circles.[578] Many labor members and reconstruction liberals worried that the international body was a tool of the British and French Empires and the profiteers that had exploited the people during the war. Writing in *Reconstruction*, Amos Pinchot concluded that the League of Nations existed not to secure international justice, but to "compel the conquered nations to sign the peace treaty, to enforce the terms of the peace treaty after it is signed, and to keep in control of the situation the conservative forces which now dominate in the victorious countries." In *Labor*, Keating had for months painted the League of Nations as a potential extension of Wall Street's mission of plunder. With England and France in command, they would compel the United States (in the name of "collective security") to build "a great army and a great navy to menace the world, to enforce American imperialism and to secure concessions and privileges with machine guns and ships." To illustrate how industrial and banking elites could sway a nation into war, the editors at *Labor* pointed to the American government's long occupation of Haiti. Dipping into troubling anti-Semitic tropes to make their point, they wrote: "We are in Haiti and San Domingo because certain New York bankers want to safeguard investments which they have made in those countries. Our heroic marines have become bill collectors for Wall Street shylocks."[579] For the League to operate correctly, it

[577] "Senator Lenroot Says Irish Are "Secessionists," La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B181 1920 Wisconsin Campaign.
[578] For an overview of radical labor opposition to the League, see McKillen, *Making the World Safe for Workers*, 9-13.
[579] "WANTED: 200 Workers and Farmers in Congress," *Labor* (February 7, 1920,) 1; "Tragedy of Dollar Diplomacy," *Labor* (October 23, 1920), 4. For an overview of the American occupation of Haiti, see

needed to guarantee disarmament and commit to decolonize. It also needed to be more inclusive.

Some trade unionists opposed the League primarily because it did not guarantee Irish independence. This was especially true of the Chicago Federation of Labor.[580] Others, like those in the needle trades, might have opposed it because it denied recognition to the Soviet Union.[581] World War I had soured many Americans on international adventurism. It was a common belief– with some truth behind it– that American banking investments in the Allied cause contributed to the declaration of war.[582] Working people who had either served in the war or otherwise dealt with the economic fallout were not inclined to tie their fortunes once again with England and France.

Of course, certain elements within labor, primarily those with strong ties to the Democratic Party, like Samuel Gompers, supported American entry into the League. Writers for the *Kansas City Labor Bulletin*, in an article supporting Cox and Roosevelt, argued that the League was "the only practical working plan for World Peace."[583] As written previously, the Women's Trade Union League saw promise in the International Labor Organization. But labor was never settled on the question. When AFL declared its

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Brandon R. Byrd, *The Black Republic: African Americans and the Fate of Haiti* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 196-238.

[580] McKillen, *Making the World Safe for Workers*, 152-240.

[581] "American Alliance for Trade Relations With Russia," *Machinists' Monthly Journal* (January 1921), 18-19; US Senate, "Relations With Russia," *Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate* 66 third session on Res. 164 "A Resolution Providing for the Reestablishment of Trade Relations With Russia, and so forth. 6-31.

[582] As Nell Irvin Painter Notes, J.P. Morgan had loaned the Allies nearly Two Billion Dollars, all of which would likely be unrecoverable if they lost the war. Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 328.

[583] "Gompers Asks Labor to Back League," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (June 15, 1920), 9; William English Walling, "Trade Unions' Own Conference," *New York Times* (October 26, 1919), xxx6; "What the League of Nations Is," *Kansas City Labor Bulletin* (October 20, 1920), 1.

support for the League at the Montreal convention, it was voted on *viva voce*, and over several oppositional speeches from AFT, Seaman, Typographical, and Boilermaker delegates.[584] Many trade unionists continued to view Wilson's international covenant as a hollow body ripe for exploitation. These anti-interventionist and anti-imperialist arguments would surface again after the French invasion of the Ruhr in 1923.

The Thompson campaign's two-issue focus on the railroads and foreign imperialism attracted national attention. Basil Manly devoted increasing amounts of energy to the movement as election day neared. Around this time, he once again tried to compel Frank P. Walsh to join the fray. "You can stir the Irish and Labor as no one else in the country can," he wrote to Walsh, with La Follette's blessing. The coalition forming in the upper-Midwest was "the real thing," Manly told his friend and former War Labor Board colleague. Walsh saw tremendous value in the developments Manly described. "The fight in Wisconsin suits me better than any going on in the United States," the labor lawyer replied. Toward the end of October, Walsh agreed to travel to Wisconsin and hold rallies on Thompson's behalf. The decision was easy, he told La Follette, "because I think the Thompson fight has more real meaning in it than any other in the United States." He agreed to stick to Thompson and La Follette's central message: "The burden of my song would be to hammer the hell out of the League of Nations, the Esch-Cummins bill, and make the best appeal I know how for the whole progressive cause." La Follette, Manly, and A.R. McDonald, the Brotherhood's state legislative representative, promoted the talk in newspaper ads and campaign literature. When a personal matter

[584] *Report of the Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor: Held at Montreal, Quebec, Canada June 7th to 19th, Inclusive, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: The Law Reporter Company, 1920), 477-478.

forced Walsh to cancel, La Follette telegraphed and begged him to reconsider.[585] All parties involved knew the vote would be close-- Lenroot remained a popular incumbent, and Harding was nearly guaranteed to run up a massive majority.

To the coalition's dismay, Lenroot held on to his seat by around 45,000 votes, or around six percent of the electorate. Thompson bested the incumbent in the industrial strongholds of Milwaukee, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, and La Crosse. He carried the capital region and a few rural counties as well, but failed to increase his share of the vote in other parts of the state. Medium and smaller-sized cities delivered the critical edge for Lenroot, as they did for Preus in Minnesota. Indeed, Thompson ran up a 17,000 vote deficit in just three counties: Racine, Kenosha, and Rock, where the existence of a more white-collar and suburban economy likely favored a more moderate approach to governance.[586]

Thompson also suffered defections from the left. Again hobbling his chances, Frank J. Weber, the socialist candidate, won around ten percent of the total vote cast, cutting a large hole in the labor vote the La Follette coalition coveted. Weber had joined the labor movement while working as a merchant seaman during the 1880s. He founded the Wisconsin Federation of Labor and served as its president for a quarter century. He left that position to pursue a career in politics, periodically representing Milwaukee in the state legislature. When out of office, Weber maintained his position as General Secretary

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[585] Walsh claimed a reschedule was impossible, but that he remained "heart and soul with Thompson and the principles which he represents[.]" "Reed and La Follette Given Ovation by 1500 People," *Capital Times* (October 27, 1920), 1. Also "F.P. Walsh Will Speak in the State." "Senator Flays League Pact," *Kenosha Evening News* (October 26, 1920), 1; "Lenroot Vote is Questioned," *Capital Times* (October 30, 1920), 2; Basil Manly to Frank Walsh, October 7, 1920; Frank Walsh to Basil Manly, October 14 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 9 Oct. 1-14, 1920; Frank Walsh to Robert La Follette, October 22, 1920; Telegram from Frank Walsh to Robert La Follette, October 28, 1920. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B87 Walsh, Frank P.; Telegram from Robert M. La Follette to Frank Walsh, October 30, 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 9 October 15-31.
[586] *Wisconsin Blue Book* (Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau, 1921), 209.

of the Milwaukee Federated Trades Council. Weber's popularity amongst industrial and craft workers in the state's largest city may have doomed Thompson's chances. Even a Milwaukee branch of the Plumb Plan League endorsed Weber, helping the socialist candidate win 41,000 votes in the city.

Though somewhat aligned ideologically on workers' rights, nationalization, and anti-imperialism, the Progressive Republicans still viewed the socialists, with their belief in capitalism's eventual extinction, as too radical. The SPA, similarly, would only countenance a partnership in which they were given equal footing. Wisconsin socialists pointed to the fact that La Follette's "non-partisan" forces had not even considered throwing their support behind Weber, "a real labor man," despite him having announced his candidacy weeks before Thompson. It would take serious negotiation, and concessions from both sides, to create the working relationship both factions required.[587]

Still, Thompson's run was startlingly competitive, especially given Lenroot's institutional popularity. Despite Wisconsin being virtually guaranteed to go to Warren G. Harding, the presidential candidate held a rally in the state specifically to draw support to Lenroot. In late October, Hiram Johnson and Illinois governor Frank O. Lowden all appeared to build enthusiasm for the imperiled incumbent.[588] Lenroot ran thirty points behind the presidential ticket. But the progressive faction still lost the race and required a readjustment of its strategy. Organized labor, the Nonpartisan League, and the La Follette

[587] *Wisconsin Blue Book* (Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau, 1921), 209; "State G.O.P. Is Split Wide Open," *Eau Claire Leader Telegram* (September 26, 1920), 8; Frank J. Weber, "Milwaukee," *Wisconsin Labor: Annual Publication of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor 1926* (Milwaukee: Office of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor, 1926), 43; "National Campaign is Speeding Up," *New York Call* (September 20, 1920), 7; "Arizona Asks Debs Be Freed at Once," *New York Call* (November 1, 1920), 1; "Non-Partisan Policy," *New York Call* (October 1, 1920) editorial.
[588] "Harding to Speak for Senator Lenroot," *Wisconsin State Journal* (October 11, 1920), 4.

progressives would have to improve their coordination and make inroads to new voters--especially Milwaukee socialists-- to expand their influence and win more elections.

Conclusion

Though Basil Manly repeatedly explained to Ed Keating, Frank Walsh, and Robert La Follette that his "Battalion of Death" would not come about without years of planning, the 1920 election remained an exceptionally blunt reminder of the obstacles still in place. The Senate "according to the latest returns, will be hopelessly reactionary for an indefinite period," Keating reluctantly admitted the week after the people voted. "The new Harding administration is looked forward to as one of the rankest reactions," Frank Walsh wrote a friend abroad, "Under the guise of the 'open shop movement', the industrial masters of America are attempting to thrust the workers back to the horrible conditions that existed prior to the war." Walsh did still have room for cautious optimism, even if the hard times were far from over. "I fear that worse times will be upon us, before the sun bursts forth again, and I have not lost hope," he closed. Keating, too, saw some promise in the results. Of all labor's political accomplishments, Keating saw James Thompson's near victory over Lenroot as a positive omen.[589]

Wisconsin's 1920 election remains the most fitting epitaph for non-partisan labor politics immediately after the armistice. Despite the still smoldering red scare, the Republican Party's full embrace of the progressive anti-labor formulations of Henry J. Allen, and Warren G. Harding's landslide presidential victory, the Wisconsin

[589] Frank Walsh to Alexander Scott, December 13 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library Box 9 December 2-19; "'Big Business' Grabs Presidency, Senate and House," *Labor* (November 6, 1920), 1; "Tim Healy is Home With Dark Picture of Ireland's Fate," *Labor* (November 20, 1920), 1, 2.

"Progressive Republicans" still replaced almost the entirety of the state's congressional delegation, elected a governor, and helped James Thompson hold a popular incumbent to scarcely forty percent of the vote. Thompson had also easily bested the Democratic candidate-- earning nearly three times Paul Reinsch's vote. Most importantly, the result proved the potential popularity of politics with a distinct nod toward class conflict. By fully embracing the spirit of the Plumb Plan, labor's skepticism of Wall Street's role in the League of Nations, and the growing demands for self-determination, specifically for Ireland, La Follette and his circle of supporters learned they could trade the institutional support of a long-established political party for the formal partnership of organized farmers and wage earners.

Clear divisions within organized labor's ranks continued to dilute the potency of independent working-class electioneering. In Wisconsin, the Lenroot campaign's outreach to women voters seemed to help secure the incumbent's victory.[590] Further, the Socialist Party of America's hold over German trade unionists in Milwaukee continued to hamper labor's non-partisan strategy. In years to come, Basil Manly and Machinist president William H. Johnston would work diligently to bring the socialists into a partnership-- often using ex-party members turned non-partisan supporters, like former Minneapolis mayor Thomas Van Lear, to make inroads.[591]

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[590] Theodora Youmans's endorsement of Irvine Lenroot followed a fairly conspicuous pattern of middle to upper class white women in reform movements backing more conservative politicians in 1920. As historian Kristen Marie Delegard notes, many politically-active women entered 1920 determined to dispel rumors spread by groups like the American Legion that women were more susceptible to radical ideology and could become a source of Bolshevism in American politics. Kristen Marie Delegard, *Battling Miss Bolsheviki: The Origins of Female Conservatism in the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 19-53.

[591] Michael Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 176-177; Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 336-378; Tula A. Connell, *Conservative Counterrevolution: Challenging Liberalism in 1950s Milwaukee* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

The Montreal convention proved that members of the American Federation of Labor and Railroad Brotherhoods were rarely of one mind. Even as the majority of the Federation joined transport unions in a demand for collective ownership of the rails and the kind of participatory democracy necessary to implement that change, debates over foreign policy, most notably Soviet recognition and cooperation with European socialist parties, remained deeply contentious. Further, with only a few exceptions, the House of Labor continued to undervalue the potential contributions of Black trade unionists and women reformers. So, too, did many labor progressives. Motivated by a post-war desire for social justice, minority trade unionists tried to force *some* recognition of the overt discrimination they faced. They succeeded in gaining some recognition from reconstruction-minded labor bodies in Kansas and Minnesota, but most trade union leaders continued to affirm their stance as fraternal societies for the single white wage-earner. Reformers hoping to chisel a space for non-partisan labor politics in the United States would contend with these fissures as they struggled to create a unifying viewpoint and worldview throughout the early to mid-1920s.

Part III: The Conference for Progressive Political Action: American Labor in the Atlantic World, 1921-1923

Vignette: "More for Coins than Human Souls:" Frank Hodges, J.J. Mallon, and Transatlantic Labor in the 1920s

Mired in a strenuous campaign for a seat in British Parliament, Frank Hodges had an epiphany. By the fall of 1923, the thirty-six-year-old trade unionist had, despite his relative youth, reached a prominent place in United Kingdom politics. As General Secretary of the Miners' Federation, one of the nation's largest and most militant unions, and a central member of the Labour Party (BLP), Hodges hoped to enter elected office. The BLP, under the leadership of Ramsay MacDonald, saw the upcoming December election as a real opportunity to assert itself not merely as the official opposition, but as a governing body. First, however, the Labourites had to overcome the Conservative Party's two-hundred seat majority.[592]

Prime minister Stanley Baldwin had called the election confident that his promise of a strengthened protective tariff would expand his party's already sizable bloc. The new levy, Baldwin assured the public, would swell state coffers through means "less unfair" to British business, alleviate "unfair foreign competition," reduce unemployment, and check inflation.[593] The Labour Party had, since its inception, fought the erection of new trade barriers. Many of the Party's poorest constituents relied on cheap imported

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[592] Matthew Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate: A History of the British Labour Party Between the Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 24-31, 73-74; Jennifer Luff, "Labor Anticommunism in the United States of America and the United Kingdom, 1920-1949," *Journal of Contemporary History* 53 no. 1 (2018), 117-118; G.D.H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The British Common People, 1746-1946* (London: University Paperback, 1962), 564-567; Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 55-58.

[593] "Baldwin Promises Farm Bounty and 17 New Light Cruisers," *Washington Post* (November 18. 1923), 1; "Baldwin Makes Bid for Women's Vote, In Plea for Tariff," *Washington Post* (December 2, 1923), 9; "Baldwin Faces Crucial Week of His Regime," *Baltimore Sun* (November 12, 1923), 1; Charles M. McCann, "Lloyd George May Head Coalition Cabinet," *Atlanta Constitution* (December 8, 1923), 1.

consumer goods. Yet fighting protectionism during a period of high unemployment and low industrial output could potentially cut the BLP amongst working-class Tories. Secondly, "free trade" had historically been a key pillar of the Liberal Party's platform. In order to increase its share of the vote, the Labour Party would have to meaningfully distinguish itself from its opponents while maintaining its reputation as the key electoral vehicle for Britain's workers.[594]

In late November, only a few weeks before election day, Hodges claimed a way to cut straight through the conundrum. The Labour Party, in his estimation, had to change the conversation from tariffs to wages. Britain was not locked in an antiquated duel between free trade and protectionism, Hodges posited. Rather, the sole root of the nation's fiscal crisis was chronically low wages, which he believed throttled consumer spending and fueled unemployment. The miner based his theorem on his recent travels as a fraternal delegate of British Labour through the United States, a nation whose workers he believed were extravagantly more wealthy than those in Europe.

Hodges credited American labor with staving off the worst of the post-war economic contraction by resisting wage cuts and preserving consumer spending– a view with a mixed degree of truth. As he praised the assembled delegates at the American Federation of Labor's 1923 convention, "I would like to give expression to one conclusion I have arrived at since I have been here, and that is that you have taught the world in America how to maintain the purchasing power of the workers, and therefore

[594] Worley, *Labor Inside the Gates*, 72-74; Brian D. Varian, "Protection and the British Rayon Industry During the 1920s," *Business History* (April 28, 2020), 1-18; Brian D. Varian, "The Growth of Manufacturing Protection in 1920s Britain," *Scottish Journal of Political Economy* 66 No. 5 (November, 2019), 703-711; Stuart Ball, "The Conservative Party and the Impact of the 1918 Reform Act," *Parliamentary History Yearbook* (2018), 23-48; Luke Blaxill, "Lloyd George and the Electoral Decline of the British Liberal Party in the 1920s," *The Historical Journal* (2020), 1-31.

you have maintained a standard of living in America for the workers of America higher than the standard of living in any civilized country." The British labor bemoaned the role trade unions played in allowing British wages to fall after the armistice. British workers allegedly lost "millions of pounds" in earnings "merely because it was the accepted philosophy… to decrease the cost of production down to the minimum point, and particularly through wages."[595] Hodges believed the Labour Party had to correct this wrong.

His experiences in the United States had a profound influence on his campaigning. "High wages alone can maintain and increase the standard of living of the vast majority of consumers in any country," the miner and politician told a crowd in London. As he informed his would-be constituents in Lichfield, "I stand… where the Labour party stands with regard to Free Trade. We are Free-traders in the whole core of our being, but Free Trade has never yet sought to solve our deep social problems. We want a new political direction... High wages constituted the true criterion of economic progress." He remained relentless in his assertion that the United States, with its comparatively low unemployment and blossoming consumer culture, offered a real counterpoint to economically challenged Britain. "America's unemployed problem has been solved, quite naturally, by an internal boom in trade. But the internal boom itself is only an effect, and the cause of this effect is high wages," Hodges wrote in a series of open letters to the British press, "I know this categorical statement cuts across all the wishy-washy economics of our after-dinner capitalist wiseacres, but I base it upon actual

[595] *Report of the Proceedings of the Forty-Third Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor* (Washington, D.C.: Law Reporter Printing Company, 1923), 218-219; "Address of Mr. Frank Hodges," *Quarry Workers Journal* (November 1, 1923), 5.

information supplied by those who knew best in America."[596] Banal as his argument was, the change in tone apparently electrified the Labour Party's rallies in the final weeks of the election season.

Party leader Ramsay MacDonald credited Hodges with spurring the campaign nationwide. "I never saw such meetings," he told an American correspondent. "I can not believe that these earnest men and women, who fill every hall to overflowing, are not going to vote as they cheer." MacDonald admired Hodges's deflection on the trade issue. A tariff would do little to break monopolies, redistribute farm land, or meaningfully address systemic unemployment. "We should still have economics practiced by rich men who care more for coins than human souls," MacDonald claimed. High wages were easy to explain and very much in lockstep with Labour's demand for a more just economy.[597] The election results seemed to vindicate both MacDonald and Hodges. Baldwin and the Tories lost nearly ninety seats-- around fifty to Labour and forty to the Liberals. The loss of the Conservative majority allowed Labour to form a coalition government, elevating an avowedly socialist party of the working class to the state offices of the world's largest empire.

American labor periodicals rushed to highlight the domestic trade union movement's connection to the Labour Party's winning campaign. *Labor* editor Ed Keating secured an interview with Hodges, the Railroad Brotherhood's weekly paper,

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[596] "American Wages Feature in British Campaign," *Labor* (December 1, 1923), 4; J.J. O'Brien, "Labor News and Views," *Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune* (December 1, 1923), 3; Donald Ramsey, "MacDonald in Line as Coming Premier of Great Britain," *Labor* (December 15, 1923), 1; "Mr. Frank Hodges," *The Guardian* (November 24, 1923), 18; "Little Stories of Democracy," *Minnesota Daily Star* (December 5, 1923), 4; "The World of Industry," *Labour Magazine* (July, 1923), 135-136; "Industrial Developments," *Labour Magazine* (January 1924), 425-426.

[597] "American Wages Feature in British Campaign," *Labor* (December 1, 1923), 4.

and stressed his remarks on the United States.[598] News of Hodges and the loose American connection to his race filtered down to local papers, as well, earning features in labor magazines from Barre, Vermont to Muscatine, Iowa.[599] Thomas Van Lear of *Minnesota Daily Star*, the paper of that state's Farmer-Labor Party, too, noted the "live issue" that American workers brought to Britain. He proudly noted how the BLP expanded on high wages to draft a "winning" platform of closing inequality. Van Lear also praised the BLP for its continued promotion of massive public work plans, adequate maintenance for the unemployed, fully free public education, a nationalized system for electric power, transportation, housing, and reforestation.[600]

These accounts of Hodges's speeches, and the favorable reaction to them in Britain, only somewhat pertained to the mining chief's boasting over American prosperity. Indeed, the average American worker had little prosperity to brag about in the early twenties. While overall unemployment had drastically decreased from its height in 1919, real wages had only slightly increased.[601] American trade unionists were acutely aware of their declining influence and the economic precarity their members faced.

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[598] John M. Baer, "The Side Show," *Labor* (December 1, 1923), 4; "American Wages Feature in British Campaign," *Labor* (December 1, 1923), 4; Donald Ramsey, "MacDonald in Line as Coming Premier of Great Britain," *Labor* (December 15, 1923), 1.

[599] "Hodges Lauds U.S. Unionism," *Muscatine Journal* (December 1, 1923), 3; "Address of Mr. Hodges," *Quarry Workers Journal* (November 1, 1923), 5.

[600] "Platform on Which Labor Won Tremendous Victory in Britain," *Minnesota Daily Star* (December 25, 1923), 6.

[601] The discrepancy in wages stemmed in large part from organized labor's weakened position in determining the allocation of wealth. The federal government, through the liberalization of credit at home and abroad, had fueled the investment market-- particularly in manufacturing industries like steel, rubber, and automobiles. Corresponding improvements in assembly line techniques lowered prices on durable goods like radios and cars. The influx of low-cost steel led to urban building booms in large cities across the country. With a growing domestic economy, banks lowered interest rates-- granting credit to millions of waged and salaried employees. But millions still languished in economic insecurity. As compared to the wartime boom, largely unionized industries like the garment trades, rail transportation, and coal mining suffered prodigious losses in jobs and earnings during the interwar period. In rural America, small plot farmers resided in a vicious and unstable cycle of boom and bust.

Indeed, progressive leaders in the American Federation of Labor and Brotherhoods vigorously denounced other European trade unionists for making inflated claims as to the strength of American wages. When noted reformer and BLP parliamentary candidate, J.J. Mallon, spun for his British readers wild tales of the great prosperity he witnessed during a trip through New York City and Washington, D.C. in the summer of 1923, he provoked a caustic response from the editors at *Labor*. Writing in the BLP's *Labour Magazine*, Mallon described the United States as a "temporary utopia" for waged workers and, like Hodges, surmised that "As judged by British standards everybody in America is well off." He detailed the proliferation of union-run banks with millions of dollars in holdings, trade union balls replete with catered dinner and live

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Michael Bernstein notes that while the proliferation of large factories and the boom of consumer spending during the twenties remains undeniable, these changes obliterated entire industries of unionized and often well-paying jobs like cabinet making, wheelwrighting, barrel making, and blacksmithing. The introduction of synthetic textiles wiped out wool and silk makers. Likewise, the electrification of large swaths of the United States produced a mass movement of cotton mills from north to south, leaving shelled-out industry towns behind and creating low-waged deregulated jobs elsewhere.

Arriving at a similar conclusion, economic historian Gene Smiley argues that while already wealthy Americans saw a drastic increase in disposable income between 1923 and 1929, the vast majority of wage earners saw nowhere near the same boom. Using tax return data, Smiley estimates that while the top one per cent of American earners saw between thirty to sixty per cent increase in disposable income, the bottom 93 per cent gained, at most a three and a half percent increase or even lost as much as four per cent of their disposable income over the decade.

In her study of industrial workers in Chicago, Lizabeth Cohen notes that even despite the abolition of the twelve-hour day in the steel industry, workers could still expect to work fifty-six hour weeks with no overtime or holiday pay. In mechanized industries across the US, efficient machinery and notions of "scientific management" pushed workers to produce previously unheard of numbers of goods, leading many commentators then and now to accuse factory owners of speed ups and stretch-outs, maximizing productivity without increasing wages. Joshua B. Freeman, *Behemoth: A History of the Factory and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2018), 118-168; Lynn Dumenil, *Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 56-97; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) (second edition), 187; Gene Smiley, "Recent Unemployment Rate Estimates for the 1920s and 1930s," *The Journal of Economic History* 43 No. 2 (June, 1983), 487-493; Gene Smiley, "New Estimates of Income Shares During the 1920s," in *Calvin Coolidge and the Coolidge Era: Essays on the History of the 1920s*, ed. John Earl Haynes (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997), 215-232; Michael A. Bernstein, "The American Economy of the Interwar Era," in *Calvin Coolidge and the Coolidge Era: Essays on the History of the 1920s*, ed. John Earl Haynes (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997), 191-214.

music, and the streams of automobiles leaving New York's working -class neighborhoods for excursions into nearby mountain resorts.

In response, Denver-based labor journalist, Clint C. Houston, wrote, "Of course, Mr. Mallon didn't know, or least does not tell, that the United States Railroad Labor Board fixed a minimum wage of one shilling (25 cents) an hour for 500,000 employes in the American railroad service, and that 40 cents an hour was the maximum pay for thousands of men working in the iron and steel industry." Further, Houston insisted, the printing trade apprentices whom Mallon allegedly saw attending an elegant dinner and dance would be shocked to hear that their $12.50 a week salary could afford them the eighteen dollar entrance fee they supposedly covered with ease.[602]

Writing only a few months before Hodges, Mallon could not have generated a more different reaction from progressive American labor. The difference in reception likely stemmed from context and not content. Mallon had most assuredly oversimplified the state of the American economy, but he said very little that was controversial. Not only had Hodges made similar comments, but Mallon's claim to riches for American workers would hardly have seemed out of place in the *American Federationist*.[603] But progressive labor leaders were more willing to overlook Hodges's oversimplifications in exchange

[602] J.J. Mallon, "America: A Temporary Utopia," *Labour Magazine* (August 1923), 158-160; Clint C. Houston, "Mr. Mallon Discovers Wage Worker's 'Utopia,'" *Labor* (August 25, 1923), 4.
[603] Mallon's comments mirrored those made by conservative craft unionists, who often weaponized their high wages in order to cast doubt on the need for increased political action or state "doles." Samuel Gompers, largely in an attempt to discredit his more European-inclined colleagues, frequently extolled soaring American wages. Samuel Gompers, "An English Statesman's Economic Fallacy," *American Federationist* (December 1923), 1000-1002; Charles J. Lammert, "Make the Best of 1923," *American Federationist* (January, 1923), 50; J.W. Sullivan, "Other Movements– Transitory; Fruitless; Disruptive," *American Federationist* (August, 1922), 813-818; "American Labor Movement Best on Earth," (October, 1923), 813-819; Samuel Gompers, "Gompers Defends Labor Against European Attacks," *New York Times* (August 5, 1923), XX3; William Atherton Du Puy, "Gompers Fails as Leader, Says European Laborite," *New York Times* (July 22, 1923), XX5.

for a role in the British Labour Party's successful election story. Hodges offered American labor leaders interested in social democracy the opportunity to claim some of the credit for the BLP's gain in seats. Since the end of World War I, progressives in the American labor movement had sought to emulate the BLP's example by entering electoral politics as an independent and potent force. Gaining momentum after the 1920 election, these reformers and insurgents hoped to assert themselves on the world stage and stand alongside the organized and class-based political movements that held real power in Europe. The Hodges connection provided them a potent parable.

Introduction: **"The Sun Will Rise Tomorrow"**

The following chapters discuss the rise of the Conference for Progressive Political Action (CPPA)– the organization that would ultimately nominate Robert La Follette for president in 1924. Historians often present the CPPA as an epilogue of post-war producerist militancy and La Follette's last act as an American political icon. Other scholars of labor and the left portray the organization as a near miss in a decades-long push to create a viable labor party in the United States.[604] Few historical works, however, have deeply investigated in any depth the Conference's roots, strategies, and ideologies.

[604] Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 105-107; Julie Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics: The American Federation of Labor and Political Activism, 1881-1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 282-284; Bruce J. Schulman, "Farewell to the 'Smoke-Filled Room': Parties, Interests, Public Relations, and the Election of 1924," in *America at the Ballot Box: Elections and Political History*, eds. Gareth Davies and Julian E. Zelizer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 139-152; Eric Thomas Chester, *True Mission: Socialists and the Labor Party Question* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 84-112; Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 260-283; Jon R. Huibregtse, *American Railroad Labor and the Genesis of the New Deal, 1919-1935* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 39-31; Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 323-324; David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 434-437; Lynn Dumenil, *Modern Temper* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 64.

The CPPA's three years of life marked the beginning of modern American labor's political maturation. Several of the Conference's founders and central figures– Frederic C. Howe, Mabel C. Costigan, David Sapposs, and Rose Schneiderman, to name a few– became architects of the New Deal state. Similarly, labor leaders like Sidney Hillman, David Dubinsky, and John Brophy, would take the lessons they began to learn in the early twenties and found CIO-PAC, the first Political Action Committee of its kind.[605] Between 1921 and 1924, the Conference for Progressive Political Action united diffuse elements in American reform that had never cooperated successfully. Resultantly, the coalition became a proving ground for long-running debates in American politics. Members of the CPPA openly debated the desirability of a third party, whether organized labor should have a role outside of the shopfloor, and if Marxism could ever find a home in the American panoply of thought. The Conference also became a center for the diffusion of post-war reconstruction in the United States.

American labor's political trajectory during the early 1920s cannot be viewed in isolation from the corresponding rise of European social democracy and the institutional victories of the British Labour Party, in particular. Politically motivated trade unionists in the United States had admired the British Labour Party since the armistice. They saw the BLP's growing power in Parliament as the best possible formula to rebuild union strength and counteract the centralizing power of plutocratic industrialists. This interest intensified

[605] Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 177-188; For a contemporary overview and debate on CIO-PAC, see Adam Dean and Jonathan Obert, "Rewarded by Friends and Punished by Enemies: The CIO and the Taft-Hartley Act," *Labor: Studies in Working Class History* 18 no. 3 (September 2021), 78-113; Dorothy Sue Cobble, "More Reward Than Punishment: Labor Resilience at Midcentury," *ibid.*, 114-119; Devin Caughey and Eric Schickler, "The Democratic-CIO Alliance: The Benefits of Friendship," *ibid*., 120-125; Kristoffer Smemo, "Taft-Hartley and the Contradictions of Republican Anti-unionism," *ibid.,* 126-130; Adam Dean and Jonathan Obert, "Author's Response," *ibid.,* 131-143.

after Congress passed the Esch-Cummins Transportation Act and refused to reconstitute the government-backed arbitration and union election supervision that had maintained industrial peace during the war. Failing to find more than a handful of elected officials willing to wield labor's banner, the BLP provided both a hopeful visage and potential model for victory as organized labor staggered out of its underwhelming performance in 1920.

Far from being immune or separate from European mass politics, American trade unionists and their allies actively linked their movements to those across the Atlantic--building connections that would presage labor's participation in the New Deal and the foundational welfare state. Several British visitors remarked upon the swelling interest in European politics amongst American workers and reformers. Mallon found American progressive interest in the Labour Party almost distracting: "From the subject, whatever it was, on which I had agreed to speak at many meetings in the United States I was deflected again and again to deal with the prospects and personalities of the Labour Party." Hodges strongly believed that Amerrican trade unions were on their way to a labor party. "It is as inevitable as that the sun will rise tomorrow... that [the American movement] will take the form of demanding control and authority and power over" all the institutions that controlled its destiny. "I am convinced of this," Hodges told the AFL convention, "that… you are destined to build up a labor movement, both industrial and political, in America that will be a model and a pattern for the rest of the world."[606] The American labor press seemed to confirm these assumptions.

[606] J.J. Mallon, "America: A Temporary Utopia," *Labour Magazine* (August 1923), 158-160; *Report of the Proceedings of the Forty-Third Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor* (Washington, D.C.: Law Reporter Printing Company, 1923), 218-219; "Address of Mr. Frank Hodges," *Quarry Workers Journal* (November 1, 1923), 5.

After 1920, Edward Keating and the staff at *Labor* expanded their coverage of foreign elections and political happenings. Albert F. Coyle, a staunch progressive whom Warren Stone hired to manage *The Locomotive Engineer*, remodeled the monthly magazine with a solid international outlook. The Socialist Party, hollowed out by government persecution and communist defections, especially looked to the British Labour Party as a model for greater political relevance, instructing its members to work alongside progressives and emphasize reformist legislation. Former SPA strongholds, particularly in southern Illinois and Oklahoma, had already started down this path. Oscar Ameringer, editor of *The Illinois Miner* and *Oklahoma Leader*, cut ties with the Socialist Party and realigned his well-read publications with the state's non-partisan and social democratic Farmer-Labor Reconstruction League.

The *New Leader*, the New York Socialist Party's successor to its daily newspaper, *The Call* (and not uncoincidentally given the same name as a prominent British Labour Party publication), became a leading outlet for Americans interested in European social democracy. But perhaps no publication more fully represented the turn in twenties American labor politics than the *Labor Age*. Helmed by A.J. Muste, a Christian minister, pacifist, and educator, *Labor Age* became a clearing house for news related to industrial democracy and political action.

Two factors accelerated American interest in the CPPA and European social democracy during this period. The first was a string of legislative and shop floor defeats and near catastrophes in the first half of the new decade. Only weeks after the 1920 election, Washington senator Miles Poindexter advanced a new bill prohibiting strikes in industries engaged in interstate commerce. In February 1921, railroad executive W.W.

Atterbury appealed to the rail labor board to invalidate signed labor agreements and enact an across the board wage cut for thousands of transportation workers. Across the Midwest, steel and iron manufacturers, led by US Steel's Elbert Henry Gary, crushed organized labor's hopes for better conditions.[607] Within a two-year span, the Supreme Court had invalidated an Arizona state law preventing injunctions during labor disputes, prohibited demonstrations at any businesses' entrance or egress point, effectively outlawed organized boycotts, and determined that unions could be sued using anti-trust legislation.

The court's 1923 decision to overturn federal minimum wage protections for women and children in *Adkins v. Children's Hospital* was particularly sobering for labor-

[607] "Anti-Strike Bill Faces Long Debate in Senate," *New York Tribune* (December 21, 1920), 5; "Anti-Strike Bill Cause of Debate," *Atlanta Constitution* (December 21, 1920), 4; "Anti-Strike Bill Passed By Senate," *New York Tribune* (December 17, 1920), 1; The Wilson administration had managed to stall any cuts in wages. Under the Harding administration, however, the railroad labor board approved a cut for 50,000 shop workers. "Employes Protest Prussian Tactics to President Wilson," *Labor* (February 5, 1921), 1; "Will Resist Wage Cut Declare Brotherhood Chiefs,," *Labor* (February 5, 1921), 3; "Labor Board Won't 'Stampede'-- Atterbury Foiled," *Labor* (February 12, 1921), 1; "Atterbury Turned Down," *Labor* (February 19, 1921), 1; "National Agreement Added to Roads' Efficiency," *Labor* (April 16, 1921), 2; "Cancel Wage Pact at Once, Roads Plead," *New York Tribune* (February 1, 1921), 1; "National Labor Rules Opposed by Atterbury," *New York Tribune* (March 22, 1921), 1; "Rail Board Cuts 50,000 Express Workers' Wages," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (July 13, 1921), 11; "Labor Board's Proceedings," *Wall Street Journal* (July 9, 1923), 12; Jon R. Huibregtse, *American Railroad Labor and the Genesis of the New Deal* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2010), 42-48; Colin J. Davis, "Bitter Conflict: The 1922 Railroad Shopmen's Strike," *Labor History* 33 no. 4 (1992), 433-455; Theresa A. Case, "Rooted: Black Railroad Shopmen, the 1922 Strike, and Southern Civil Rights Struggles," in *Reconsidering Southern Labor History: Race, Class, and Power*, eds. Matthew Hild and Keri Leigh Merritt (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2018), 159-169; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) (second edition), 38-52.

"Coronado Order Is Denounced By La Follette," *New York Call* (June 8, 1922), 1; John A. Fitch, "Trade Unions Destroyed by Recent Court Rulings, Unless Progressives Win," *Minnesota Daily Star* (October 28, 1922), 4; Decided on January 3, 1921, the Supreme Court outlawed the secondary boycott in *Duplex Printing Press Co. v. Deering*. A few months later, the Supreme Court argued *American Steel Foundries vs. Tri-City Trades Council* and *Traux vs. Corrigan*– further restricting the right to picket and opening up the possibility of an employer suing striking workers for damages. The decision handed down in *United Mine Workers v. Coronado Coal* in June, 1922, expanded on *Corrigan* and formally allowed companies to seek damages from striking workers. *Duplex Printing Press Co. v. Deering* 254 U.S. 443 (1921) (https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/254/443/); *Traux v. Corrigan* 257 U.S. 312 (1921) (https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/257/312/); *American Steel Foundries vs. Tri-City Trades Council* 257 U.S. 184 (1921) (https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/257/184/); *United Mine Workers v. Coronado Coal*., 259 U.S. 344 (1922) (https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/259/344/).

based reformers. Florence Kelley, executive secretary of the Consumers' League, called the decision the "new Dread [sic] Scott" and accused the court of enshrining a "constitutional right to starve." J. J. Mallon, attending the National Conference on Social Work at the time of the decision, was particularly flabbergasted.[608] "It is unthinkable that America will consent to be the first state among the nations of first rank in the world to allow the splendid work of minimum wage commissions to be undone by findings of a question of constitutional law," Mallon wrote.[609] As the head of Toynbee Hall, one of the world's first settlement houses, and a founder of the Anti-Sweating League, which laid the groundwork for Great Britain's first minimum wage laws, *Atkins* left Mallon awestruck.[610]

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[608] "Criticizes Court for Wage Decision," *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.) (May 18, 1923), 2; Mary Dewson, "Position of United States As to the Minimum Wage," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (May 17, 1923), A5; "The Minimum Wage-- What Next?" *Survey* (May 15, 1923), 215-222; "Urges More Judges for Highest Court," *Brooklyn Standard Union* (May 18, 1923), 6; Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 379; U.S. Supreme Court, *Adkins V. Children's Hospital* 261 U.S. 525 (1923) (https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/261/525/).

[609] John A. Fitch, "Industry, Second Day of the Conference Reviewed by John A. Fitch," *The Survey* (June 15, 1923), 335; "J.J. Mallon to Speak," *The Survey* (October 15, 1928), 104; "Neighbors," *The Survey* (June 1, 1923), 292-293; "The Minimum Wage-- What Next?" *Survey* (May 15, 1923), 215-222; Paul Kellogg and Arthur Gleason, *British Labour and the War: Reconstructors for a New World* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), 186-188; Mary Agnes Hamilton, *England's Labour Rulers* (New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1924), 127; "War Against Poverty," *Life and Labor* (December, 1912), 364-365; "Delegates Announced," *The Burlington Free Press and Times* (April 24, 1923), 7; Mary Dewson, "Position of United States As to the Minimum Wage," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (May 17, 1923), A5; "Criticizes Court for Wage Decision," *The Evening Star* (May 18, 1923), 2; "13 Nations' Envoys Guests at Luncheon," *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.) (May 18, 1923), 2; "Hertfordshire," *Manchester Guardian* (December 8, 1923), II; "Conference Notes," *Evening Star* (May 22, 1923), 4; "Hughes to Open Social Work Conference at Poli's Tonight," *Evening Star* (May 16, 1923), 2.

[610] Around the turn of the century, Mallon had helped found the Anti-Sweating League and in 1912 compiled a list of legislative demands including an eight-hour day, forty hours consecutive rest a week, a prohibition on night work for women and minors, and comprehensive health and unemployment insurance. During the World War, Mallon had worked with Britain's coalition government to establish Trade Boards--government-sponsored councils set up on an industry by industry basis-- and set a minimum wage for up to a million industrial workers in clothing and metal trades. Asa Briggs and Anne Macartney, *Toynbee Hall: The First Hundred Years* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 92-94; J.J. Mallon to Charles Sitch, July 30, 1918. Trades Union Congress Papers. Folder: Chain Trade Board, 1918-1923. Warwick Digital Collections; Report on Wage Rates in Tin Box Trade, March 10, 1919. Trades Union Congress Papers. Folder: Tin Box Trade Board, 1914-1922. Warwick Digital Collections: *The 'Sweated Trades': Working Life in the Early Twentieth Century*. "Statement of Reasons Why Workers Changed Their Attitude With Regard to Wages," January 18, 1917. Trades Union Congress Papers. Shirtmaking Trade Board, 1915-1919. Warwick Digital Collections: *The 'Sweated Trades': Working Life in the Early Twentieth Century.*

Undoubtedly, European labor parties faced intense political challenges and economic crises during the interwar years-- it would not really be until the end of World War II that any nation permanently adopted a framework constructing the modern welfare state. Yet when in power during the 1920s, parties like the BLP, the German SPD, the Austrian SPÖ, and the Swedish Social Democrats managed to at least marginally expand or restore social safety nets and labor protections. In one of the decade's bright spots, the German, Austrian, and British labor governments invested a great deal in modern and affordable housing tracts, relieving a decades-long industrial housing crisis. By 1934, twelve percent of Vienna residents lived in public housing networks that also provided childcare and limited health programs. As Daniel Rodgers notes, these European housing schemes had an impact on American reform well into the New Deal.[611] Historian Jennifer Luff may have put American interest in European Social Democracy best: "The British operated in a climate of political possibility, and the formation of a short-lived minority Labour government in 1924… showed that labor could exercise real political influence." American labor, seeking to grow its clout at both the state and federal level, looked enviously across the Atlantic.[612]

The second factor driving interest in social democracy was, perhaps unexpectedly, anti-communism. Though the very worst of the postwar red scare had abated by 1921, labor leaders, progressive politicians, and non-revolutionary socialists constantly deflected charges of Bolshevism and anti-Americanism. These groups looked approvingly on European social democrats who increasingly differentiated their politics,

[611] Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 381-408.
[612] Jennifer Luff, "Labor Anticommunism in the United States of America and the United Kingdom, 1920-49," *Journal of Contemporary History* 53 No. 1 (2018), 116-117.

and genuine belief in liberal democracy, from the authoritarian forced collectivism of the Soviet Union. Officials of the British Labour Party, especially, made a real effort to denounce Bolshevist tyranny in their attempts to win more conservative working-class support as well as middle class former Liberals. When Frank Hodges made his tour through the United States and Canada, for instance, he repeatedly warned trade union audiences about the dangers of communist infiltration. "I feel sure that the American reader and the American workingman is something like the Britisher in this regard," Hodges declared. "He hates, despises and rejects dictatorship of any character or description."[613] Put simply, labor political forces on both sides of the Atlantic, seeking to affirm their patriotism, ability to govern, and belief in the democratic process, Put forward a distinct anti-communism during the twenties. This form of anti-communism would not only undergird the formation of organizations like the CPPA, but would also have a marked impact on the trajectory of American labor and political life for decades to come.

The following chapters outlines the Conference for Progressive Political Action and examine American progressive labor's interest in European social democracy and reconstruct its worldview during the early 1920s. Chapter 5 details the professionalization of American labor politics after the 1920 election and how this development mirrored transnational social democracy. Individuals central to the CPPA, including Basil Manly and Frederic C. Howe, pushed labor publications in the United States to better coordinate their distribution and unify their political messaging. As a result, union papers like *Labor*,

[613] "Secretary of British Miners' Federation Bitterly Scores Bolshevism and Bolshevists," *Buffalo Labor Journal* (October 25, 1923), 2; "Labor's Destiny Is to Rehabilitate the World," *Daily Province* (Vancouver, BC) (September 14, 1923), 3; "American Labor Frowns on Soviet," *Victoria Daily Times* (October 5, 1923), 3; "News and Views of Labor," *Winnipeg Evening Tribune* (October 13, 1923), 1.

Machinist's Monthly Journal, *Locomotive Engineers Journal*, *Justice*, the *Illinois Miner*, and *Labor Age* began pulling from common wells of resources. By building this budding press corps, Labor unions began increasingly relying on intellectuals and professional researchers. Trade unionists like the UMW's John Brophy used researchers to develop his plan for mine nationalization. And groups like the People's Legislative Service supplied progressive papers with a steady stream of pro-labor material. This more unified and professionalized publicity arm helped progressive labor and the CPPA immensely as it prepared for the midterm elections in 1922.

The Chapter Six discusses the Conference's founding and the apparent divisions between the Marxist left, convinced that a societal overthrow of capitalism should remain labor's ultimate goal; the Farmer-Laborites, who believed that workers could make no progress outside of a party of their own; and the non-partisan railroad unions and farmers' organizations that continued to see the open primary as unionism's best tool. These important ideological differences presented the CPPA's constituent forces with a hurdle they could never fully overcome. The first meeting of the CPPA in February 1922 was a stormy one. Yet the attendees defied all expectations by ending their first convention harmoniously and pledging to cooperate going forward. In a result genuinely disturbing to the nation's two major parties, labor-backed candidates rushed center stage the following November.

The Chapter Seven reviews the 1922 elections and explains how the CPPA managed to send numerous candidates to Congress. The chapter also examines American socialism's gradual embrace of more moderate social democracy, its increasing reliance on the garment trades, and its occasional compromise with non-Marxist political actors.

During the early to mid-1920s, Socialists and Farmer-Laborites pushed many American reformers and trade unionists to adopt more radical solutions to economic inequality. In this process, however, the independent left's status as an electoral power began an irreversible decline. The 1922 elections demonstrate exactly how the Socialist Party of America and the Farmer-Labor Party lost ground to standard trade union non-partisan politics.

The example of the British Labour Party and other European Social Democrats was the guiding light of virtually all the CPPA's forces. Chapter Eight examines exactly how European social democracy came to be a driving force amongst American progressive labor. The Socialist Party of America, flanked by standard trade unionists to its right and communist revolutionaries to its left, believed the Labour Party model offered the best route forward. By dropping overt Marxist dogma and appealing directly to trade unionists, SPA leaders agreed, British socialists like Ramsay MacDonald and Sidney and Beatrice Webb had risen into national prominence and gained real power. American socialists would follow suit-- pushing the labor movement to form a new party but making clear that their organizational support came with no cost. The SPA-aligned needle trades (the International Ladies' Garment Workers, in particular) encouraged the Party to reinvent itself in the image of post-war European social democracy. Guided by a "New Unionism," a British-born movement that encouraged industrial unions to involve themselves beyond the shopfloor, the needle trades in New York City even facilitated the birth of the American Labor Party. Modeled explicitly after its British counterpart, the ALP's leadership board consisted of Socialists, Farmer-Laborites, and union leaders. It

adopted a platform nearly indistinguishable from the standard trade unionists of the CPPA.

The railroad unions admired the success of the BLP, which had organized the trade unions of the country politically and fought for important wage, benefit, and housing legislation in parliament. These trade unionists, however, were less inclined toward the Labour Party's professed socialism. Rather, they saw European social democracy as promoting a fairer capitalism, one that rewarded production and fairness over monopoly, scarcity, and greed. Chapter Eight will also explore how Frederic Howe, who came to be the Railroad Brotherhoods and CPPA's chief intellectual, viewed cooperative capitalism in Denmark and Britain as key to America's future. Finally, while European social democracy may have drawn dozens of trade unions and political groups into the Conference, it also kept some organizations from joining. Chief among these dissenters was the American Federation of Labor. Samuel Gompers and his lieutenants continued to see the CPPA as too far to the left. He rejected both the Conference's methods and its ideology.

Chapter Nine investigates the unifying trend of anti-communism, which helped further unite non-Bolshevik socialists and trade union leaders behind a singular liberal democratic vision. The early 1920s was the era of the "United Front"—a Moscow derived initiative that ordered communist parties across the world to make alliances with other labor groups. European social democrats loudly rejected these overtures and renewed their verbal attacks against the leftist revolutionaries. American socialists and trade unionists followed this direction. And while the constituent elements of the CPPA often disagreed, their shared revulsion to Bolshevism held their loose alliance together.

When the relationship between socialists and trade unionists in the Conference deteriorated, they could point to their mutual respect for liberal democracy and core belief in the centrality of trade unionism.

Chapter Ten follows Robert La Follette's trip to Europe during the summer of 1923. As the symbolic head of the CPPA, his experience abroad serves as a defining point in the trajectory of post-war progressive labor. La Follette met with social democrats in Great Britain, toured cooperatives in Northern England and Scandinavia, decried militarism in Germany, and denounced communism in the Soviet Union. His trip was tailor made to appeal to the CPPA and present himself as the champion of post-war reconstruction politics in the United States. La Follette's time abroad demonstrated the CPPA's ideological formations influenced the nation's leading politicians.

The Conference for Progressive Political Action came of age at a crucial time in American history. After the war, organized labor, radical farmers, and disenchanted progressives struggled to turn their interest in reconstruction into an effective political movement. The Socialist Party, hamstrung by accusations of "un-Americanism" attempted without success to lure in new converts. The leftwing trade unionists who founded the Farmer-Labor Party similarly floundered in breaking the existing party system. The non-partisan unionists who gravitated toward the Plumb Plan League had a little more success, but they too fell short of expectations. The CPPA was different. By uniting the labor press, finding common ground, and closely studying European social democracy, the individuals who founded the Conference had found a winning formula to advance reconstruction.

Chapter 5: "Our Servants in Washington:" Creating a Labor Press

On December 17, 1920 a small core of union leaders, reformers, and elected officials met at the Machinist headquarters on 9 St and Mt. Vernon Pl. NW. Located near the heart of downtown Washington, D.C., the newly constructed seven-story office building with ornate Corinthian entablature represented both the new-found wealth and prestige that labor– the Machinists especially– had gained during the First World War.[614] But the tenor of the meeting was hardly celebratory. Representatives of the railroad unions and La Follette progressives had originally planned the meeting during their clandestine Chicago summit some three months prior.[615] Since then, not much had gone according to plan. Despite helping La Follette send his chosen candidate to the governor's mansion in Madison, and flipping a precious few congressional districts in Wisconsin, labor failed to help most of its candidates best their conservative rivals. So thorough was the anti-labor Republican sweep that Washington senator Miles Poindexter plowed ahead with his bill to "prohibit interference with commerce" and threaten strikers with a $10,000 fine and up to ten years in prison.[616] Labor had not reversed its decline in fortunes. It had not even managed to staunch the bleeding.

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[614] The IAM had benefited from lucrative munitions contracts and had become one of the largest and most militant unions throughout the War era. Joseph A. McCartin, *Labor's Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of Modern American Labor Relations, 1912-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 59-63.

[615] At that conference, the trade unionists, including Locomotive Engineers head, Warren Stone, and AFL railroad department secretary, Bert M. Jewell, formally agreed to assist La Follette in supporting insurgent progressives in election contests nationwide. Manly to Robert M. La Follette Jr., August 4, 1920. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B86 1920 Manly, Basil M.; Robert M. La Follette to Frank Walsh, September 28, 1920; Basil Manly to Frank Walsh Sept 28, 1920. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 9 September 11-30.

[616] "Anti-Strike Bill Faces Long Debate in Senate," *New York Tribune* (December 21, 1920), 5; "Anti-Strike Bill Cause of Debate," *Atlanta Constitution* (December 21, 1920), 4; "Anti-Strike Bill Passed By Senate," *New York Tribune* (December 17, 1920), 1; "Anti-Strike Bill Up January 10," *New York Times* (January 9, 1921), 7; "Prepare for Clash on Anti-Strike Bill," *Atlanta Constitution* (January 15, 1921), 5.

Taking place only a day after Poindexter introduced his bill, the D.C. meeting reflected the urgency of the moment. Machinist head William Johnston handled the pageantry of the gathering with a great deal of care. As they did in Chicago, conference organizers did not allow members of the press to observe the proceedings. Johnston did, however, leak details to various news outlets about the summit's time and place. Journalists buzzed around the entrance of the Machinist's building, diligently noting which union leaders and politicians attended. Waiting inside for the fine points to be hashed out, Johnston prepared to announce a new alliance between progressive insurgents in both parties and the political wing of organized labor that had largely coalesced around the Plumb Plan. When he emerged, the Machinist president announced a new and "better coordination of the liberal forces of the country with their representatives in the House and Senate." Several important figures attended the meeting: the heads of several railroad unions, and a small coterie of senators and representatives, including La Follette, Maryland senator Joseph France, George W. Norris of Nebraska, North Dakota's Edwin Ladd, Massachusetts senator and former governor David I. Walsh, and William Carss, a Duluth representative who narrowly lost reelection, but would return to Congress as a member of the Farmer-Labor Party later in the decade.[617]

Charles A. Lyman, secretary of the National Board of Farm Organizations, opposed bill. "Farmers to Oppose Antistrike Bill," *The Sun* (December 26, 1920), SM2. Robert J. Bender, "Organized Labor is Badly Worried," *The Atlanta Constitution* (December 20, 1920), 12. "Poindexter to Reoffer Anti-Strike Bill Today," *New York Tribune* (April 12, 1921), 5.

[617] "Bureau of Information on Legislative Matters Created at Conference," *Labor* (December 25, 1920), 1; "'Liberals' Plan Strike Bill Fight," *Washington Post* (December 18, 1920), 2; "Labor Opens Fight To Kill Anti-Strike Bill Senate Passed," (December 18, 1920), 22; "Labor Framing Plan to Meet Legislation," *The Sun* (December 18, 1920), 1

Founding the People's Legislative Service

Though by no means a large affair, the gathering demonstrated that progressive labor was not willing to accept its underwhelming electoral performance. Johnston and the Brotherhoods had strengthened their ties with some representatives in the capital, especially with La Follette, and it fully intended to expand its influence. The meeting drew curiosity from some news outlets and outright hostility from others. "Radical elements commenced here today the development of a Republican insurgent organization to heckle the Harding administration," one journalist for the *Los Angeles Times* wrote. The meeting "bore all the earmarks of such a secret conclave as one may find in European capitals at any time," the reporter continued.[618]

Perhaps the most lasting impact of the meeting was the attendee's decision to establish a permanent information bureau backed by union money. Former joint chairman of the War Labor Board, Basil Manly, would keep in close contact with progressive congressional representatives, break down complex legislative and economic issues, and then disseminate the literature through the ranks of labor and organized farmers. As Ed Keating summarized in *Labor*, the service would "seek to furnish facts concerning pending and proposed legislation to members of Congress, the press and the public generally." The service would "not be controlled by any party, any class or any group," he continued. "It will be concerned with the public welfare and not with the advantage of some special interest."[619] By March 1921, the parties involved had settled on a name: the People's Legislative Service (PLS). The Service was the progressive labor's first attempt to centralize information and share talking points. It led to the creation of several closely

[618] "Union Lobby Organizes for Heckling Campaign," *Los Angeles Times* (December 18, 1920), 12.
[619] "Bureau of Information On Legislative Matters Created at Conference," *Labor* (December 25, 1920), 1.

related think tanks and united intellectuals, reformers, and labor leaders—all of whom had previously developed an interest in post-war reconstruction and industrial democracy. Between the end of 1920 and 1923, many labor papers and magazines, whether socialist in persuasion or progressive, increasingly found common ground on issues related to worker rights, political participation, and government ownership. They also increasingly served to boost the profile of labor-friendly politicians like Robert La Follette. These outlets formed the backbone of what would become the Conference for Progressive Political Action.

Introducing the PLS to his membership, William H. Johnston described the Service as "a clearing house of information" placed "under the control of an executive committee representative of the liberal opinion of the country." Johnston also announced Machinist and Railroad brotherhood participation in establishing two new lobbying groups closely associated with the PLS, the People's Reconstruction League and the All-American Cooperative Commission. The Reconstruction League encouraged PLS readers to form discussion groups and consider the advancement of critical legislation, particularly in regard to public ownership of transportation and natural resources. The Cooperative Commission, which also drew funds and participation from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, self-defined as a "Movement to Encourage and Coordinate Cooperative Effort of the Producers and Consumers of America; to Unify Action in Eliminating Waste, Speculation and Profiteering in the Necessities of Life."[620] To run these new organizations, Johnston, Stone, and Manly reached out to several

[620] "The People's Legislative Service," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (March 1921), 255-256; "All American Cooperative Commission," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (April 1921), 293; "People's Reconstruction League Organizes Branch in Boston," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (August 1921), 633.

stalwart reformers. With his work for the Plumb Plan League slowing down, Frederic C. Howe worked in some capacity for all three organizations. They chose Benjamin C. Marsh, manager of the Farmers National Council, to head the new Reconstruction League. Marsh had played an important role in the last election, informally tying the Nonpartisan League, the American Society of Equity, the Washington State Grange, and the Farmer's Unions of North Carolina and Nebraska into a singular organization.[621] Finally, the Cooperative Commission hired Albert C. Coyle, a young and energetic Stanford graduate who had become a minor celebrity after the Bolsheviks captured him outside of Arkangel in 1919. A non-combatant (he volunteered as an education secretary for the Y.M.C.A.), the Red Army released him shortly thereafter. Returning home, he made a few circuits offering social gospel sermons before finding himself in labor's orbit.[622] The choice in managers showed progressive labor's increasing willingness to rely on outside experts and politicians in formulating policy and drafting legislation.

These information bureaus regularly published pieces on topics related to economic inequality and corruption. One of the earliest Reconstruction League releases detailed the deflationary effect of consumptive sales taxes on consumer spending. The author (likely Marsh) instead made a case for a "rapidly progressive tax" on the "23,000 millionaires" who commanded "over 27 per cent of the national wealth." One of Coyle's widely circulated Cooperative pieces offered anecdotes of cattle stockmen in Oregon

[621] Benjamin C. Marsh, *Lobbyist for the People: a Record of Fifty Years* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1953), 69-73.
[622] The Social Teachings of Jesus." "Churches Plan Fitting Tribute on Mothers' Day," *Washington Herald* (May 7, 1921), 4; "Letters of Appreciation," *The Orlando Morning Sentinel* (June 20, 1918), 2; "YMCA Men Held By Reds About to be Freed," *Modesto Morning Herald* (November 16, 1919), 8; "2 'Y' Secretaries Held by Reds Are Released," *Oregon Daily Journal* (October 23, 1919), 4; "Chesbro Memorial M.E. Church," *Bakersfield Morning Echo* (August 22, 1915), 8; "YMCA Men Held Captives by Reds Freed, U.S. Hears," *Montgomery Times* (October 29, 1919), 7.

operating at a loss of $62.59 per head, a Texas melon farmer paying $256 in freight charges for products worth only $65, and producers dumping "50,000 bags of the best Colorado onions into the Gunnison river because transportation charges were more than the price offered." Coyle suggested government ownership of the rails as the solution. Basil Manly, in an influential PLS pamphlet titled "Are Wages too High?," criticized the notion that increased wages led to inflation and an overburdened cost of living. Comparing industrial wages to the rate of inflation, Manly concluded that the "increasing inequity" in earnings and consumer prices sat "at the root of the nation's frequent industrial depressions."[623] His argument was similar indeed to the one Frank Hodges would make some two years later.

Though the loose confederation uniting the PLS, the Reconstruction League, and the Cooperative Commission billed itself as non-partisan and educational, hardly anyone could question the loyalty of all these organizations to Robert La Follette. Manly and his PLS team-- which soon expanded to include the AFL's former legislative director, Arthur E. Holder, political scientist, W. Jett Lauck, who worked on Wilson's Commission on Industrial Relations, the staff director of the NWLB, and later as the UMW and UAW's consultant economist, and leading child labor reformer, Mabel C. Costigan-- promised to elevate La Follette to national prominence. Progressive labor's investment in La Follette during the 1920 election and its decision to back him after was a prudent decision. Within days of the D.C. summit, the Wisconsin senator convinced his colleagues on the

[623] "People's Reconstruction League," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (March 1921), 197-198; Albert F. Coyle, "Farmers Protest Exorbitant Rail Rates," *The Reconstructionist* (November 19, 1921), 1; Basil Manly, *Are Wages Too High*? (Washington, D.C.: The People's Legislative Service, 1922), 1, 19-20. George E. Hooker, "Real Wages Are Less Than Ten Years Ago," *New Majority* (April 22, 1922), 2; "Profits Above Human Lives," *Labor Age* (December 1922), 23.

Interstate Commerce Committee to "reconsider" Poindexter's strike bill. The parliamentary maneuver re-opened debate on the legislation, which had passed by unanimous consent in a mostly empty chamber. La Follette then presented the real possibility of a filibuster and effectively stalled the bill's progress.[624]

La Follette promoted the new union-backed initiative as part of his larger movement to "drive Special Privilege out of control of government and restore it to the people." Shortly after Manly and Johnston founded the PLS, La Follette told an audience that the Service offered a powerful tonic to the grip big business had on elected office nationwide. "To meet this intolerable situation," La Follette continued, "there has come into being a movement which to my mind offers today the best single hope of relief for the people-- The People's Legislative Service." The PLS would operate as the educational arm of the "courageous and insistent minority" in Congress that promised to identify and combat plutocratic control of the federal government.[625]

Even if PLS never openly supported any particular politician, La Follette's connection to the venture was clear. So close was La Follette and the PLS that Frank Walsh, having received a draft of Basil Manly's pamphlet for government ownership of the rails, asked if the plan would become "the People's Legislative Service program" or if

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[624] "Anti-Strike Bill Faces Long Debate in Senate," *New York Tribune* (December 21, 1920), 5; "Anti-Strike Bill Cause of Debate," *Atlanta Constitution* (December 21, 1920), 4; "Anti-Strike Bill Passed By Senate," *New York Tribune* (December 17, 1920), 1; "Anti-Strike Bill Up January 10," *New York Times* (January 9, 1921), 7; "Prepare for Clash on Anti-Strike Bill," *Atlanta Constitution* (January 15, 1921), 5; Basil Manly, *Are Wages Too High*? (Washington, D.C.: The People's Legislative Service, 1922), 1; "New Progressive Bloc Puts Ban on Partisan Politics," *Washington Evening Star* (December 2, 1922), 1. Mabel Costigan was a very active reformer based largely in the mountain west. Her and her husband, future senator Edward Costigan, were close with Ed Keating and likely found their way into the PLS through him and *Labor*. Robyn Muncy, *Relentless Reformer: Josephine Roche and Progressivism in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 26, 41, 100-101.

[625] "Declaration of Principles," n.d. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B180 Folder: People's Legislative Service, ca. Dec. 1920; RML, "How Wealth Dominates Legislation," *The Kansas Leader* (Salina) (June 2, 1921), 3; "How Wealth Dominates Legislation," *Capital Times* (May 28, 1921), 10.

LaFollette would "adopt it for his own." Certainly, behind the scenes, La Follette, Johnston, Keating, and Manly worked in tandem to circulate literature and keep one another informed of important developments. If Keating heard from Brotherhood lodges who needed educational materials, their offices worked together to fill the orders. When Manly hoped to draft new pamphlets on the importance of open primary laws, he sought La Follette's blessing.[626]

Despite mission statements to the contrary, the PLS and its affiliate organizations did not offer to shine a light on the government's unholy alliance with the special interests purely for transparency's sake. Rather, they were taking part in a larger battle that would culminate in the 1922 election-- a contest in which La Follette's own seat was in question. La Follette believed that a lack of legislative understanding, amongst both the public and elected officials, had allowed "invisible government" (a popular, albeit conspiratorial, term for monopolist influence over democratic process) to run roughshod over the public interest. "Tyranny and oppression are just as possible under democratic forms as under any other," he warned. "We are slow to realize that democracy is a life and involves continental struggle."[627] With an eye fixed on future legislative battles and next year's elections, the Wisconsin senator promised to make a desperate fight in the name of representative democracy.

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[626] Frank Walsh to Basil Manly, January 7, 1922. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 11. Folder January 2-8; Johnston to La Follette, February 4, 1922. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B94. Folder "Johnston, William H."

[627] Robert Ferrari, head of the Harlem Tenants Association, simply defined "invisible government" as the "economic and financial power behind the politician." Robert Ferrari, "Labor and the Law," *Upholsterer's Journal* (May 1922), 14. Robert M. La Follette, "How Wealth Dominates Legislation," *The Kansas Leader* (Salina) (June 2, 1921), 3; "How Wealth Dominates Legislation," *Capital Times* (May 28, 1921), 10.

Organizing the Labor Press

Consistent messaging was most assuredly crucial. In 1920, progressive labor unions were building new national networks, organizing on fresh political lines, and trying to shore up collapsing picket lines all at the same time. The railroad unions' first attempts at a centralized propaganda machine, the Plumb Plan League and *Labor* magazine, were hardly a year old by November. La Follette progressives, Plumb Planners, and the Brotherhoods had not had a *formal* summit to coordinate strategy until six weeks before election day. The labor and independent progressive press would be more prepared for 1922. The PLS helped provide content for a litany of papers. Of course, *La Follette's Magazine* and the Madison-based progressive daily, *The Capital Times*, hosted Manly's materials.[628] La Follette, Manly, and the railroad unions could, of course, depend on Keating's *Labor*, which continued to boast a nation-wide circulation into the hundreds of thousands.[629] But the nascent bloc hoped to saturate progressive and especially labor media and emphasize the importance of political mobilization legislative aims.

To this end, Warren Stone remodeled the *Locomotive Engineers Journal*, up until that point a dull and largely technical monthly, into a politically forward publication. Further demonstrating the closeness between labor, La Follette, and the PLS, Stone tapped Cooperative Commission head Albert Coyle to spearhead his initiative. Coyle had

[628] As an example Basil M. Manly, "Invisible Government Kills Norris Amendment," *La Follette's Magazine* (March, 1923), 38; Basil M. Manly, "Dangers of Fictitious Prosperity," *La Follette's Magazine* (June 1923), 89; "Here is the Real Story of Reason For the Present Huge Sugar Steal; Republicans Blamed," *Capital Times* (April 27, 1923), 21; "On Guard for the People," *Capital Times* (May 31, 1922), 7.
[629] In the spring of 1920, Keating claimed *Labor* had the largest circulation of any trade union paper in the world. In 1926, *Labor* had an estimated circulation of 450,000. ("Former Congressman Keating Instructs Altoona Audience on Plumb Plan of Ownership and Control of Railroads," *Altoona Tribune* (May 11, 1920), 10; Cara Cook, "'Labor' is Successful Publication Venture," *American Guardian* (Oklahoma City) (May 7, 1926), 3.

big dreams about the venture, writing to Frank Walsh in February 1922, that "We hope to enlarge it soon, making it the size of the Literary Digest, and make it a real leader in voicing the needs and aspirations of the producing classes."[630] He added three recurring sections to the paper: "Labor Around the World," which highlighted the successes of trade unions abroad, both on the shopfloor and in the state house; "Our Servants in Washington," featuring stories of corruption and "invisible government"; and finally "the Road to Political Power," which detailed labor's electoral organizing and encouraged lodge members to form committees, enter primaries, and vote *en masse*. In his autobiography, Len De Caux, a journalist who worked with Coyle in the mid-twenties and who later managed communications for the CIO until his expulsion for communist sympathies in 1947, described Coyle as leader in the Stone's "New-Dealish brain trust" of "creepingly socialistic eggheads." Coyle "had preached a wide-ranging new unionism," De Caux recalled. "A modern union, he held, was part of a labor movement, the American people, the world… Unions should lead in progressive political action... They should promote cooperatives, civil liberties, democratic rights. They should lead the fight against poverty, for social justice, against imperialism, for international peace."[631] Coyle's hiring marked a deliberate change of pace for the semi-aristocratic union of engineers.

Writing in Coyle's first edition, Stone offered his thoughts on the necessity of electoral activity: "There is no more important matter before the Brotherhood and organized labor throughout the country than the necessity for political action to safeguard

[630] Albert Coyle to Walsh, March 11, 1922. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 11. Folder: March 1-11; Coyle to Walsh, September 27, 1922. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 11. Folder: September 25-30.
[631] Len De Caux, *Labor Radical: From the Wobblies to the CIO* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 144-148.

our economic welfare. We neglect to register. We are too indifferent to go to the polls for the primaries. We fail to vote on election day. And then we howl because candidates are elected who are hostile to labor." The Grand Chief also admitted a painful truth: that without friendly government arbitration, the chance of winning a strike was slim to none. "We come to a great strike crisis, and we find that every arm of the government, from the President down, is antagonistic to labor's interests, and is ready to use the military and the courts to silence labor's claims," Stone wrote.[632] The collapse of the "Great Railroad Strike" the following summer proved him all too right.[633]

La Follette and his labor supporters knew, however, that their reach had to extend beyond the railroad shops and into other corners of trade unionism. Some of the most energetic proponents of an expanded labor press were the left and socialist-led unions--particularly miners and garment workers' unions. In the name of post-war "New Unionism," both the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers put a renewed emphasis on outreach and labor education.[634] Since the war, both unions had also made steep investments in worker-managed cooperative enterprises, further expanding their reach into the communities their members lived in. The ILGWU opened a night school, operated its own health center, and chartered a bank right on Fifth Avenue, only a few blocks from the Flatiron

[632] Warren S. Stone, "The Chief's Page," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (March 1922), 167.
[633] For an overview of the strike, see Colin J. Davis, *Power at Odds: The 1922 National Railroad Shopmen's Strike* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).
[634] J.M. Budish George Soule, *The New Unionism In the Clothing Industry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920); Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 72-97; Joshua B. Freeman, *Working Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 110-111; Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire* (Second Edition) (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 169-203; Steve Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 146-177.

Building. Garment trade unions also had interlocking connections with the hundreds of thousands of immigrant, working-class Jews who took part in benefit organizations like the United Hebrew Trades, the Workmen's Circle, the Yiddish-daily *Forward*. By 1922, *Justice* and *Advance*, the ILGW's and ACW's respective English-language publications, had a combined circulation of 200,000. Union leadership had also supported the Federated Press, a syndicated left-wing news service designed to make national news on American and international labor widely accessible. Dozens of unions across the nation featured Federated Press materials in their papers.[635]

Labor's political left, however, would need some convincing to join Johnston, Stone, and Manly's project. Several labor papers sympathetic to the political views of *Labor* and the *Locomotive Engineer*, including the *Illinois Miner*, *Oklahoma Leader*, *New Majority*, and *Upholsterer's Journal*, initially remained aloof of the La Follette 'bloc' because of its then refusal to engage with the national Farmer-Labor Party.[636] William Kohn, president of the Upholsterer's Union, had been a veteran of the fight to create a viable Labor Party in New York City during the 1920 election. After he convinced his union's executive board to approve funding its own journal during the winter of 1922, Kohn made clear his continued belief in an independent labor party. "The record of non-

[635] J. Charles Laue, "Why Labor Needs a Press," *Upholsterers Journal* (May 1922, 13). J. Charles Laue, "The Health Wage in America," *Upholsterers Journal* (March 1923), 211; Joint Committee for Independent Labor Political Action to Organized Labor of New York City. June 21, 1922, Morris Hillquit Papers. "Workers' Progress," *Upholsterers Journal* (May 1923), 2. Make Room for the Worker! *Justice* (January 11, 1924), 1; S. Yanofsky, "What About Our International Union Bank?" *Justice* (February 15, 1924), 5; Elizabeth Faue, "The Laboring of American Journalism: The Other 'Labor Beat,'" *Journalism and Communication Monographs* 22 no. 1 (2020), 81-86; Christopher Phelps, "Heywood Broun, Benjamin Stolberg, and the Politics of American Labor Journalism in the 1920s and 1930s," *Labor: Studies in Working Class History* 15 No. 1 (March 2018), 29-30.

[636] J.G. Brown, "Farmer-Labor Party Structure Described," *New Majority* (December 24, 1921, 7; "Farmer-Labor Party on Public Ownership," *New Majority* (November 1921), 7; "Minnesota Nonpartisan League Through With Old Parties," *New Majority* (January 21, 1922), 1.

partisan political strength of the organized workers in the Bryan, Wilson and Cox presidential campaigns has not inspired confidence," Kohn wrote in July 1922. The non-partisan approach to the previous election had also failed to prevent the federal government's slew of injunctions and anti-labor Supreme Court decisions, he noted. "While an effective 'non partisan' campaign without playing political favorites if sincerely and courageously carried out regardless of party, has its merits," Kohn continued, "it is too evident from Labor's experience abroad and our failures here, that this is not the way." Likewise, the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party (MFLP) debated whether or not to continue running its candidates in major party primaries or as independents, as it had in 1920, or fully embrace a third party ticket.[637] George Wilson, a former Nonpartisan Leaguer in Oklahoma with Socialist Party connections, openly questioned what strategies his state's labor federation would take in 1922: "What are we going to do at the next election? Just go vote for the other fellow's candidate? Or are we going to support our own organization and go into our own convention, slate our own ticket and then work and vote for our own candidate."[638] These unions and political leagues had thousands of readers and wide geographical reach. If the PLS managers could bring them on board it could expand its readership, its funding base, and its reserve of potential voters. But La Follette's backing out of the 1920 Farmer-Labor Party nomination, and the new party's dismal national performance, had left the movement largely rudderless and divided.

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[637] Jennifer Delton, *Making Minnesota Liberal*, 5; "Farmer-Labor Party Assails Stab At Worker," *Minnesota Daily Star* (May 16, 1921), 5. "Labor Party Is Scott Proposal," *Minnesota Daily Star* (February 25, 1922), 1.
"Official Primary Figures Forecast Farmer-Labor Party Success in General Election Next Fall," *Minnesota Daily Star* (July 3, 1922), 2. .
[638] "A New Year's Call," *Reconstructionist* (January 28, 1922), 1.

The Socialist Party's leadership remained deeply skeptical of both La Follette's coterie of congressional radicals and the various labor party initiatives. Publicly, SPA officials supposed that the increased public interest in economically progressive initiatives like the Plumb Plan would generate interest in their brand. No other party, they posited with some merit, had as long and consistent a view of worker rights and government ownership. The Farmer-Labor Party and various non-partisan insurgents offered only the "same old Rooseveltian and Wilsonian dope" of partial fixes and reforms. "Only when the capitalist system is destroyed and replaced by a sane, orderly system, based on production for use and not for profit, will the rule of the few over the many cease," one contributor to the *New York Call* remarked.[639] The Party also had the imprisoned Eugene Debs as its national standard bearer—garnering the sympathies of anti-war Americans still outraged over Woodrow Wilson and Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's wanton disregard for civil liberties. "Let me tell you that there never was a time in the history of America when a new party had such a good chance as we have today… Everybody knows that the two old parties are owned by capitalism," the former Milwaukee congressman and party founder, Victor Berger, told delegates at the 1920 convention.[640]

It was for these reasons that the SPA historically refused to question its own place on the ballot, even in competitive races where a rival pro-labor candidate might have won. In 1920, this policy proved especially disastrous. While the voters returned Meyer

[639] "Populism vs. Socialism," *New York Call* (August 7, 1920), 7; James Oneal, "The Strength of American Socialism," *New York Call* (August 7, 1921), Section 2, 4.
[640] Ernest Freeburg, *Democracy's Prisoner: Eugene V. Debs, The Great War, and the Right to Dissent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 203-214; *Eighth National Convention of the Socialist Party Held at Finnish Hall, 2056 Fifth Avenue, New York: Third Day*, May 11, 1920, 52. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. (201901_076_1185)

London to Congress to represent the Lower East Side, nationwide the SPA won no other race of importance. Moreover, the competition between the socialists, progressives, and Farmer-Laborites spoiled, at a minimum, three congressional runs. In Wisconsin's fifth district, Victor Berger, who had neither requested nor received help from the La Follette progressives, lost office by a fairly large margin.[641] Statewide, the Wisconsin Socialist Party's candidate for Senate, Frank J. Weber, prevented the progressive-backed James Thompson from unseating Irvine Lenroot. And on New York's Upper East Side, Socialist Marie MacDonald amassed more than enough of the vote to bar the FLP's Jeremiah O'Leary from a representative's office at the Capitol.[642]

As La Follette's insurgent camp eyed pathways to increase its power in Washington D.C., it also strategized ways to bring the electoral left into the fold. Despite doctrinal differences, there was much to unite the non-partisan radicals, the skeptical left-wing unions, and those who had joined a third party. After all, the 1920 Wisconsin progressive republican, Farmer-Labor, and Socialist Party platforms had all called for government ownership of transportation and natural resources. So, too, did all these radicals resent anti-strike injunctions, monopolistic control of industry, and Euro-American imperialism abroad.[643] Though despite the obvious and deleterious results of

[641] La Follette neither openly endorsed Berger nor his Republican opponent, William Stafford. It appears as though La Follette attempted to run a progressive candidate against Stafford in the primary but was unsuccessful. A writer for the *Capital Times*, a pro-La Follette daily, asked Milwaukee voters to carefully study Stafford's record. Stafford had voted against a declaration of war on Germany, endearing himself to anti-war voters, and had been out of office long enough to avoid the litmus test of a vote for or against the Esch-Cummins railroad bill-- but the progressive press called attention to his generally pro-big business record of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. "Progressives For Election Only," *Capital Times* (October 23, 1920), 8; "Nelson, Cooper Held Winners," *Wisconsin State Journal* (September 8, 1920), 1.
[642] *Wisconsin Blue Book* (Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau, 1921), 209; "Non-Partisan Policy," *New York Call* (October 1, 1920) editorial; Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 243.
[643] A.L. Trachtenberg, *A Political Guide for the Workers: Socialist Party Campaign Book* (Chicago: Socialist Party of America, 1920), 27-43; "Platform of the Farmer-Labor Party of the U.S.," *New Majority*

their competition for votes, embracing common ground and papering over years of rivalry remained an exceptionally difficult task.

Center and Left Unity: Founding *Labor Age*

Acting on La Follette and Manly's behalf, William Johnston spearheaded the initiative to bring the fractured left on board. He began by staking new ground in the expanding field of labor journalism. Johnston saw a special opportunity in a newly formed venture, *Labor Age*. The monthly magazine grew out of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS), a university-based lecture and debate club. While the ISS had a vibrant presence on college campuses during the first decade of the twentieth century, the patriotism and accompanying oppression of the war years had not been kind to the Society. Hoping to reconstitute the group's membership and expand its reach, the group's students pushed for a rebranding. In 1921, ISS leadership voted to change the Society's name to the League for Industrial Democracy. As LID students later wrote in their official history, "the students wanted a more inclusive name than 'socialist,' because they believed there were several alternative approaches to a cooperative commonwealth." Others hoped the name change would emphasize that the group did not have an *official* connection to the Socialist Party of America. Further the word "'Intercollegiate' tended to cut them off from the technician and worker," they determined.[644] ISS secretary, Harry W. Laidler, too, emphasized this more expansive vision as he approached interested union internationals looking for financial and organizational help.

(July 24, 1920), 5; "La Follette Progressive Republican Platform." La Follette Papers. Box B181 Folder: Wisconsin Campaign. Library of Congress.

[644] *Handbook of the Student League for Industrial Democracy* (New York: SLID, 1935), 5-6

Labor Age would become the leading intellectual publication for reformers interested in a more holistic form of trade unionism, Laidler told these would-be investors. The magazine would look toward European social democracy for inspiration, demand increased investments in labor education, establish research bureaus to advance labor's influence in the legal realm, and support cooperative enterprises. "*The Review*, as reorganized, will wholeheartedly support a program of social ownership and democratic control of industry. It will strive to unite in support of this program the largest possible groups in the socialist and labor movement," Laidler explained. All of these innovations were necessary to "meet the employer's greatest drive against organized labor in America."[645] Laidler received an enthusiastic response from the greater New York area's more progressive unions.

While the Stereotypers, Painters, and Teachers' Union all sent representatives to join the board of Laidler's proposed Labor Publication Society (the incorporated entity that would replace the ISS and publish *Labor Age*), the needle trade unions voiced the most enthusiastic response. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers and Amalgamated Textile Workers sent several members from their publicity department and research bureau. David J. Saposs, Heber Blankenhorn, and pacifist former minister and textile workers' organizer, A.J. Muste, attended. Amalgamated co-founder Joseph Schlossberg signed on as well. The ILGWU and closely affiliated unions like the Neckwear Workers, Cloakmakers, and Millinery workers agreed to support the project. Max D. Danish, the international's assistant secretary, and Fannia Cohn, the union's educational director,

[645] Harry W. Laidler, "The Future of the Review," *Socialist Review* (April-May 1921), 33-36; "'Labor Age' Appeals to Our Locals," *Justice* (April 21, 1922), 5; Louis Budenz to A.J. Muste, February 23, 1925. Brookwood Labor College Records. Walter Reuther Library. Box 36 Folder 18.

joined the board. Considering themselves part of the "advanced" trade union movement, leaders in the garment unions wholeheartedly backed the new venture and its mission to deal "pragamatically [sic] with the problems and progress of the Labor Movement." But the most prominent labor leader to attach himself to the new venture was William H. Johnston, whose union was the third largest in the United States.[646]

Johnston almost certainly saw an opportunity to support cooperation between his burgeoning radical base in the progressive railroad unions and the militant garment trades. Those attached to the *Labor Age* project likewise hoped to bridge divides between socialists and trade unionists grasping for a new direction informed by post-war reconstruction. "The purpose of *Labor Age* is to report and interpret what is happening on the labor battle front. And to push forward to a wider and wider group the necessity for adopting … constructive measures, both as labor's most effective weapon now, and as a means to its final goal-- the socialization of industry," wrote the editors in an early issue.[647] The Labor Publication Society offered a space for union officials, radical politicians, and sympathetic academics to put real time and attention into studying issues in an engaging format. Laidler and the earliest co-signers of the publication society promised ornate and colored covers, photos and illustrations, and featured original articles from movement leaders at home and abroad.

The first issue covered the fierce negotiations between the railroad unions and the federal wage labor board with articles by Otto S. Beyer, Jr., an engineer involved in the bargaining, and W. Jett Lauck, the Brotherhood's economic policy director. Bookending

[646] "Memorandum on Making Labor Age Further Effective as an Instrument of Informal Workers Education," n.d. Brookwood Labor College Records. Walter Reuther Library. Box 36 Folder 18; Harry W. Laidler, "The Future of the Review," *Socialist Review* (April-May 1921), 33-36.
[647] "Six Months of Labor Age," *Labor Age* (April 1922), 1.

these featurettes were articles on New York's Typographical Union Local Six's contract victory against a concerted open shop drive and a detailed exposé on the growing multi-state strike of packinghouse workers in the Midwest. They also featured an article by British theoretician G.D.H. Cole on the Labour Party's cooperative housing venture. In the next few issues, *Labor Age* featured articles on the Appalachian mine wars and the need for nationalization of the industry, workers' education, cooperative enterprises, the benefits of universal healthcare, and methods of unionizing creative workers like writers and actors.[648]

By the end of the magazine's first full year, a litany of notable Laborites and intellectuals offered their support to the project. The Publication Society hired journalist Louis F. Budenz, a former 48-er who began his career as a labor expert for the St. Louis Catholic diocese before working publicity for the ACLU, as its managing editor.[649] Abraham Baroff, secretary of the ILGWU, signed on as the Labor Publication Society's treasurer, and Leo Wolman, a professor of economics from the New School and the ACW's research director, joined the Board of Directors. Pauline Newman and Rose Schneiderman, both of the National Women's Trade Union League, accepted advisory roles. Drifting in and out of the project were individuals like Connecticut Farmer-Labor Party leader Toscan Bennet, Frank P. Walsh, and Morris Hillquit. Basil Manly took a role

[648] Heber Blankenhorn, "The Miner's War Begins," (February 1922), 1-3; Clinton S. Golden, "The Workers Educate Themselves," *Labor Age* (April 1922), 1-3; Louis F. Budenz, "The International Sets the Pace," *Labor Age* (May 1922), 14; Max D. Danish, "Conquering the Press," *Labor Age* (August 1922), 1-4. Theresa Wolfson, "The Union Health Center: Protecting the Worker's Health," *Labor Age* (September 1922), 5-8; Stuart Chase, "The Triumph of Nationalization," *Labor Age* (November 1922), 11-14. David Saposs, "Unionizing the 'Brain Worker'" *Labor Age* (December 1922), 1-3.
[649] Louis F. Budenz (ed.), *A List of Books for the Study of the Social Question Being an Introduction to Catholic Social Literature* (St. Louis: Central Bureau of the Roman Catholic Central Verein, 1915).

as a contributing editor, creating yet another connection between La Follette's People's Legislative Service and the radical labor bloc.[650]

Labor Age had become the central publication for intellectuals interested in American unions. At the end of 1922, John Brophy, the not-quite forty-year-old president of the United Mine Workers District 2 and unofficial leader of the mine worker's militant wing, joined the Board of Editors, a prime example of how reconstruction-minded intellectuals found positions in labor-funded organizations after the war. Labor unions increasingly required professional researchers, journalists, and writers to draft legislative plans, establish new papers, and reach a wider audience. Brophy, who would in the next decade become the CIO's first director, learned early the importance of a labor movement with sharp messaging and a strong political presence.[651]

The District 2 president had come to *Labor Age* through his stewardship of the UMW's Nationalization Research Committee. The Mine Workers had voted to form a committee to investigate nationalization at its Fall 1921 convention. John L. Lewis placed Brophy in charge a few days later. A strong believer in government ownership of the mines, he modeled his committee after the Plumb Plan League and hoped that a steady stream of well-constructed informational guides could convince the public to support the plan.[652] After a meeting on October 27, 1921, Brophy contacted the Bureau of Industrial Research and hired Arthur Gleason, a *Survey* magazine journalist and director of the Labor Publication Society, to "get hold of data on nationalization." Gleason had reported

[650] "Labor Publication Society, Inc.," *Labor Age* (December 1922), 1.
[651] Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 25-28.
[652] Like the Plumb Plan, Brophy insisted on "democratic management," and warned that miners and the public would find "state socialism" as distasteful as the current private ownership. John Brophy, "1922: Nationalization of Coal Mines– the Miners' Program," n.d. John Brophy Papers. Catholic University of America. Box 2 Folder 45.

on the British Labour Party during the war– becoming close friends with militant Scottish mine leader Robert Smillie. His book, *What the Workers Want*, remained one of the most thorough accounts of the BLP published by an American author.[653] Brophy found this experience most useful. "He had studied the British labor movement very closely, and had developed a great interest in the campaign for nationalization of the British coal mines," Brophy recalled. This made him "an ideal advisor." Indeed, one of the first tasks Brophy gave Gleason was to track down pamphlets on mine nationalization by a young up-and-coming British trade unionist named Frank Hodges.[654]

Through the Labor Publication Society and Bureau of Industrial Research, Gleason introduced the mine leader to a broader circle of progressives and radicals. These encounters helped Brophy not only pursue nationalization, but cement his reputation as a militant leader. *Labor Age* became a useful vehicle for his arguments in favor of expansive government ownership. Similarly, Gleason convinced Paul Kellogg to feature mine nationalization pieces in *Survey*. The research division of the Federal Council of Churches– a major proponent of reconstruction and post-war industrial democracy– followed suit. From there, radical papers of every political persuasion– from non-partisan, to Farmer-Labor, to socialist– kept Brophy's name and agenda in print.[655]

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[653] Robert Smillie to Arthur Gleason, October 10, 1919; November 18, 1919. Arthur Gleason Papers. Library of Congress. Microfilm Reel 2. Correspondence 1919; Robert Smillie to Arthur Gleason, June 17, 1920. Arthur Gleason Papers. Library of Congress. Microfilm Reel 2. Correspondence 1920; Arthur Gleason, *What the Workers Want: A Study of British Labor* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920).
[654] John Brophy, *A Miner's Life* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 163-166; "Memorandum Submitted to President Lewis at Indianapolis, Ind. October 5th, 1921, as Committee's Understanding of their Powers and Duties," October 5, 1921; "Memorandum from Blankenhorn," October 27, 1921. John Brophy Papers. Catholic University of America. Box 2 Folder 42.

Hodges and Gleason had discussed writing a book on nationalization at the end of 1919. Frank Hodges to Arthur Gleason, November 19, 1919. Arthur Gleason Papers. Library of Congress. Microfilm Reel 2. Correspondence 1919.
[655] Robert W. Bruere, "Coal Miners Dig for the Facts," *Survey* (March 15, 1923), 772; "Editorials," *Survey Graphic* (November 1, 1922), 169-170; Federal Council of Churches, Research Department Commission

Writing for the Locomotive Engineers, Albert Coyle called Brophy's "American Plan" for government ownership the "only constructive plan for the stabilization of the coal industry."[656] The committee's scheme for nationalization would also earn frequent discussion in several labor schools. Brophy developed a lasting interest in adult education– by 1923 he would join the Workers' Education Bureau and help establish Brookwood Labor College.[657]

When Brophy's Nationalization Research Committee and Gleason's Bureau of Industrial Research finished their final informational report *How to Run Coal*, they depended on the League for Industrial Democracy to help publicize the findings. These progressive forces continued to back Brophy through his entire career. After John L. Lewis– worried about Brophy's growing prestige and the effect the threat of nationalization would have on his relationship with mine operators– publicly attacked the Nationalization Research Committee, the LID and the Labor Publication Society rallied to defend the proposal.[658] Brophy also received help from the progressive bloc in

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on the Church and Social Service, "New Developments in the Coal Commission," January 6, 1923. Brophy Papers. Catholic University of America. Box 3 Folder 3; "Nation to Mine Coal, Proposal," *Minnesota Daily Star* (December 30, 1922), 3; John Brophy, "The Miners' American Plan," *Labor Age* (November 1922), 4; "U.S. Ownership Splits Miners," *Oklahoma Leader* (February 5, 1923), 5; "Brophy Quits in Coal Report Row," *New Majority* (February 17, 1923), 1; "Research Committee Would Settle Problems of Coal Industry," *Illinois Miner* (February 3, 1923), 5; "Miners Demand U.S. Probe Coal Secrets," *New York Call* (April 8, 1922), 1; "Brophy Resigns as Head of Coal Research Body," *New York Call* (February 9, 1923), 1; "Brophy to Offer Solution," *New York Call* (April 6, 1922), 2.

[656] "A Real American Plan for the Mines," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (February 1923), 115.

[657] "Union Educating Miners to Need of Nationalization," *New York Call* (May 12, 1921), 5; Norman Thomas to Arthur Gleason, January 6, 1923. Arthur Gleason Papers. Library of Congress. Reel 2. Folder January 1923; Baldwin to Spencer Miller, March 26, 1923. Arthur Gleason Papers. Library of Congress. Reel 2. Folder Feb.-Apr. 1923; John Brophy, *A Miner's Life* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 211-212.

[658] The LID's new co-director, pacifist minister Norman Thomas, helped arrange loans and grants from the American Fund for Public Service to help keep UMW District 2's finances afloat and to help expand the local's research and education programs. The fund, which propped up progressive initiatives, saw Brophy as a promising leader for the whole movement. Nationalization Research Committee, *How to Run Coal* (United Mine Workers, 1922), John Brophy Papers. Catholic University of America. Box 3 Folder 2; "More About Coal: An Unfortunate Controversy– and the LID's Part in It," *League for Industrial Democracy News Bulletin* (February-March 1923), 3 (In Brophy Papers Box 3 Folder 5); Norman Thomas

Washington D.C. At a hearing in front of the House Committee on Labor during the Summer of 1921, the District 2 leader called upon Congress to take over the mines. From then on, La Follette and his allies campaigned on government ownership of subterranean resources.[659]

The development and facilitation of Brophy's plan for nationalization embodies the type of network William Johnston and the La Follette progressives hoped to build after World War I. The War and the subsequent rise of the British Labour Party pushed liberals like Arthur Gleason and Paul Kellogg toward advocating for more radical reform. Trade unionists like Brophy, hoping to preserve labor rights and expand government ownership, were more likely to rely on progressive research groups like the Bureau of Industrial Research to compile data, prepare presentations, and form focus groups. Those on the left, hoping to facilitate the radicalization of trade unions and build inroads to non-socialist allies, formed broad organizations like the League for Industrial Democracy, which by this point had grown beyond a student organization and into a larger liberal interest group. Politicians dependent on energized labor and farm organizations were more than willing to engage with this nascent network.

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to John Brophy, January 2, 1923. John Brophy Papers. Catholic University of America. Box 3 Folder 3; Norman Thomas to Arthur Gleason, January 9, 1923. Arthur Gleason Papers. Library of Congress. Reel 2. Folder January 1923; C.J. Golden to John L. Lewis, January 27, 1923. John Brophy Papers. Catholic University of America. Box 3 Folder 3.

[659] John Brophy, *Statement to the House Committee on Labor, Washington, D.C., by John Brophy, President District No. 2, United Mine Workers of America and Chairman, Nationalization Research Committee, U.M.W. of A*., 1922. John Brophy Papers. Catholic University of America. Box 2 Folder 1; "Rail Men Organize State Labor Party," *New York Times* (July 31, 1923), 21; "Radicals Active in Senate Fights," *New York Times* (June 12, 1922), 13; "Insurgents' Bills to Flood New Congress," *New York Tribune* (March 16, 1923), 1; "Norris Bill Sets U.S. Up in Produce Trade," *New York Tribune* (December 24, 1922), A2; "Union Asks Nation to Buy Coal Mines for $4,500,000,000," *New York Times* (December 30, 1922), 1; "Miners Appeal for Coal Inquiry," *New York Times* (June 4, 1922), 31.

Conclusion

In short, the consolidation of the labor press after 1920 had important consequences on the trajectory of American trade unionism. Socialists, Farmer-Laborities, and progressives all saw value in wartime experiments in industrial democracy and government ownership. They all shared an interest in post-war reconstruction plans—especially the BLP's *Labour and the New Social Order*. But these ideologically misaligned groups could not coordinate effectively prior to the 1920 election. It took Harding's landslide victory to shake up the American broad left and encourage a serious attempt at cooperation. Ventures like the PLS, Labor Publication Society, and LID were the first arenas of success. Forming the Conference for Progressive Political Action was the second.

Chapter 6: "Is There For Honest Poverty:" Founding the Conference for Progressive Political Action.

Believing the time was right to formally bring the scattered forces of American radicalism together, Johnston called the first meeting of the Conference for Progressive Political Action for February 1922. Johnston had high hopes for the scheduled Chicago gathering. In one of the many mass invitations sent, he claimed the CPPA's goal was to join "the progressive forces of labor, farmers, and the minority political parties, together with the forward looking men and women of the old parties." Anyone who opposed the "agents of privilege" and the "social and political maladjustments" they wrought would have a home in the prospective political body. There had been no previous effort to build a "common understanding to bind the workers of all walks of life together," Johnston and his compatriots proclaimed. "For lack of this common understanding we have been divided and betrayed." True to its word, the conference's organizing committee invited delegates from a menagerie of liberal reform groups, the leaders of dozens of trade unions, and members of both the SPA and Farmer-Labor Party.[660] It was the first time such a diverse group of labor-aligned forces had met under a common banner. The meeting was rocky; the debate over forming a new party or continuing non-partisan political action nearly undid the organization before it even started. Perhaps, ironically, it was the delegates of the Socialist Party that fought hardest to preserve the CPPA. Seeing an opportunity to join hands with millions of non-socialist trade unionists, the SPA

[660] "Declaration of Principles," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (January 1922), 67; "Labor Plans Union of Liberal Forces; Conference Called," *Labor* (February 11, 1922), 1; "Workers Unite For Political Action," *Locomotive Engineer* (March 1922), 168; Ross, 253-254; Theodore Saloutos and John D. Hicks, *Twentieth Century Populism: Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West, 1900-1939* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1951), 351; Russel B. Nye, *Midwestern Progressive Politics: A Historical Study of Its Origins and Developments, 1870-1958* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), 301-303.

swallowed its hesitancy and backed the venture. The same motivations that led to the coming together of the labor press motivated radicals to participate in the CPPA.

Meeting in Chicago: The CPPA First Convenes

The Machinist president had taken his time and carefully laid the groundwork for the summit. Joining the Labor Publication Society was only one of the ways he connected La Follette's railroad union base in the PLS with the various progressive, farmer-labor, and socialist factions. Since the end of the war, Johnston had seemingly succeeded in earning the respect of the skeptical left. Abraham Barroff of the ILWGU credited Johnson with helping instill an air of "unusual earnestness" in a meeting of AFL-affiliated unions a few months prior. Johnston had evidently come to Barroff's defense after several conservative craft unions accused garment trades of being too lax in allowing communist membership. Similarly, after the executive board of the Socialist Party adopted a resolution allowing for limited "Co-operation with Radical and Liberal Organizations" in June 1921, Johnston requested that Morris Hillquit refrain from calling his own conference for "united action" in favor of a similar meeting hosted by the Railroad Unions. Johnston repeatedly assuaged the fears of both the socialists and the Farmer-Laborites, assuring them that his ultimate aim was also the creation of a new labor party modeled on British lines. His decision to include Timothy Healy, the president of the Stationary Firemen, on the conference's "committee on arrangements" was likely also an attempt to appease the conference's left wing.[661]

[661] Healy had been openly sympathetic to the New York branch of the Farmer-Labor Party, and in 1920 a coalition of progressive unions had sent him as the AFL's fraternal delegate to the British Trade Union Congress. Abraham Baroff, "Impressions From the Washington Conference," *Justice* (March 4, 1921), 4; "Labor and Farmers Start On United Political Drive," *New Majority* (March 4, 1922), 1; "Workers Unite

Many of the participants eagerly awaited the meeting. The conference struck Walsh "as being the most logical and rational move that had yet been made." Hillquit recalled accepting the invitation "with alacrity." Rare, indeed, was the opportunity for socialists to cooperate openly with some of the country's largest and most established trade unions. The staff at *Justice* described Johnston's call as "A significant event in the American labor movement" and a "milestone in the inevitable, though gradual attainment of political unity of organized labor in America."[662] Despite this general excitement over this new development, virtually all parties involved braced for potential disaster.

Knowing that the Railroad Brotherhoods and the organized farmers groups fully intended to campaign within the two-party system, Johnston made clear that the Chicago conference would only consider a non-partisan route. Johnston must have recognized that the few backers the People's Legislative Service had in elected office were either Democrats or Republicans who would not jeopardize their reelection, committee assignments, and political capital on a lark. Ed Keating took to *Labor* in the weeks leading up to first CPPA summit and oft-repeated, sometimes in bold print, that Johnston's agenda precluded "an attempt to form a new political party." Maintaining unity was a clear priority. Developing a controversial platform or debating divisive topics could easily make the Conference appear weak and indecisive. George Huddleston, an Alabama congressional representative, likely explained as much to Johnston during a

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For Political Action," *Locomotive Engineer* (March 1922), 168; Laurence Todd, "Trade Unionists Favor New Party," *New Majority* (July 31, 1920), 7; "Gompers Plan Indorsed by CFU," *New York Times* (Aug 14, 1920) 7; "Timothy Healy, Labor Veteran, Is Dead at 67," *New York Herald Tribune* (June 21, 1930), 11; Morris Hillquit, *Loose Leaves from a Busy Life* (New York: MacMillan 1934), 306-307, 308-309; Eric Thomas Chester, *True Mission: Socialists and the Labor Party Question in the U.S.* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 97-99.

[662] "The Political Unity Conference," *Justice* (February 17, 1922), 2; Frank Walsh to William Johnston, February 14, 1922. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 11 February 1-14; Morris Hillquit, *Loose Leaves from a Busy Life* (New York: MacMillan 1934), 306-307.

PLS meeting a week prior to the Chicago conference. "There was a general agreement among all those present that we must raise no new issues and leave the states free to write their own platforms," Basil Manly wrote to an inquiring Senator La Follette, perhaps covertly referring to civil rights or anti-lynching legislation.[663]

It remained unclear, however, whether the invited representatives of the third party left would stay in line. Perhaps recalling the disastrous Farmer-Labor Party convention of 1920, where Laborites and progressives split into rump warring factions in a matter of hours, Manly warned La Follette to keep his distance from the Windy City. "I think it might be wise for you to be conspicuously in Madison or some place other than Chicago while this conference is taking place," he suggested. "It is, of course, of the utmost importance that you should not be involved by any possibility in any unfortunate outcome of this conference."[664] La Follette agreed and did not attend.

The left, of course, grumbled about Johnston, Manly, and Keating's preemptive strike against a new political vehicle. When Hillquit arrived in Chicago a few days in advance of the meeting, he found the local branch of the SPA decidedly cool in its attitude toward Johnston's venture. "The local men seem to have but little faith in it," he wrote his wife, Vera Hillquit. "They think it will result in nothing more than another resolution 'to reward the friends and punish the enemies' of labor. I hope they are wrong." These dissenting socialists believed that the party's 1921 resolution, which authorized the National Executive Committee to explore cooperation only "upon a

[663] "Declaration of Principles," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (January 1922), 67; "Labor Plans Union of Liberal Forces; Conference Called," *Labor* February 11, 1922, 1; Bail Manly to Robert M. La Follette, February 14, 1922. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B94. Folder: Manly, Basil.
[664] Bail Manly to Robert M. La Follette, February 14, 1922. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B94. Folder: Manly, Basil.

platform not inconsistent with that of the party," precluded participation in any meeting that outrightly disavowed political action within a new party. Indeed, the SPA's national office, under the leadership of Otto Branstetter and Secretary Bertha Hale White, considered it "the height of folly to sacrifice either its independence, principles, program, or organization, without being sure of being succeeded by a bigger and better organization."[665]

The Farmer Labor Party, too, bristled at the thought of sacrificing any independence to the "vague radicalism" of the CPPA. And the Committee of 48, which had limped out of the 1920 election with the letterhead-only Liberal Party, even backed out of attending once it became clear that no new party would materialize. J.A.H. Hopkins, chairman of the 48ers, swore, even years later, that "Johnston told me before the CPPA was started that his entire object was to work into the new party on precisely the basis that we had already established."[666] This alleged reversal made it impossible to support the CPPA and maintain the Committee of 48's moral and political integrity.

As the conference began, the FLP's representative, Shingle Workers of America president Jay G. Brown, voiced his displeasure that the country's most powerful unions would not create a unified body for the toiling masses, calling it a "pitiful spectacle to observe 20,000,000 workers looking for someone to save them." Chicago Federation of Labor president John Fitzpatrick agreed, complaining of the Republicans and Democrats

[665] Morris Hillquit to Vera Hillquit, 19 February 1922. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel Two; "Conference for Progressive Political Action," *Socialist World* (February 1922), 1; "The Labor Party," *Socialist World* (February 1922), 2; "Report of the National Executive committee to the National Convention at Cleveland," April 29th, 1922, 1. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_077_0004; Conference for Progressive Political Action," *Socialist World* (February 1922), 1; "The Labor Party," *Socialist World* (February 1922), 2.

[666] J.A.H. Hopkins to Morris Hillquit, April 5, 1924. Morris Hillquit Papers. Reel three; James Oneal, "The Chicago Conference," *New York Call* (March 3, 1922), 8.

who "howl [their] heads off for labor" only to share in the corrupt "jackpot" of Northern Illinois machine politics. He could not in good conscience support these candidates.[667] Hillquit, too, experienced some frustration, writing at the end of the first day: "The conference had obviously been called with a purpose entirely different from what we of the Socialist Party had in mind, and with a cut and dry program. Johnston had completely veered around and there seemed to be a determination to ignore the socialists entirely and to avoid even the mention of independent working-class political action."[668] But these opening dramatics eased over time. By the convention's close, virtually every attendee was surprised that the relatively harmonious closed-session committees capably reached consensus and plotted future cooperation.

To soften inevitable disagreements, Manly, Johnston, and the People's Legislative Service had circulated weeks in advance a "declaration of certain fundamental principles to which all could adhere." The service had Glenn Plumb write the initial draft. Despite his plan for government ownership stalling in Congress, the attorney remained an influential figure among progressive labor activists. Manly shared Plumb's draft with Robert La Follette Jr., and after his approval, had the senator's son meet with Warren Stone and convince him to "stand pat for the general program."[669] Clearly composed to rock no boats, the finished document, titled "An Address to the American People," stuck firmly to the most basic principles that united all the delegates, regardless of ideological persuasion.

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[667] James Oneal, "The Chicago Conference," *New York Call* (March 3, 1922), 8.
[668] Morris Hillquit to Vera Hillquit, February 20, 1922. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel Two.
[669] Bail Manly to Robert M. La Follette, February 14, 1922. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B94. Folder: Manly, Basil.

As Keating stated, it was a proposal "built not upon measures but upon principles." The address was a near perfect hybrid of organized labor's post-war grievances and the La Follette-progressive penchant for American civic religion. It not only quoted directly from the Declaration of Independence, but followed its format. "We hold that the splendid structure of the visible American government is sound and well adapted to the genius of our people," the address read. "But... the control of this visible government has been usurped by the 'invisible government' of plutocracy and privilege and… has become destructive of those sacred rights to secure which it was established." Plumb and Manly's list of grievances included the lowering of wealth taxes on war profiteers, the return of speculation and "wasteful" subsidies on privately owned railroads, and Harding's use of the Federal Reserve to "deflate and crush farmers and independent business men and cause nation-wide unemployment." Addressing the drive for the "open shop" across the nation, the drafters accused the government of having "surrendered Americanism to Garyism" (a term for anti-union welfare capitalism named after US Steel president Elmer Gary). And, echoing La Follette's critique of American militarism abroad, they condemned "the campaign of ruthless imperialism" in Haiti.[670]

Naming injustices neither the railroad unions, progressives, nor socialists could ignore, the "Address to the American People" sailed through the convention without opposition. The delegates still, however, had to draft the CPPA's charter. The organizing committee composing this document had the unenviable task of defining what "independent political action" functionally meant. For the socialists and Farmer-

[670] "The Chicago Conference," *Labor* (March 4, 1922), 5; "Address to the American People," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (March 1922), 170; "Address to the American People," *Socialist World* (February 1922), 3-4; Brandon R. Byrd, *The Black Republic: African Americans and the Fate of Haiti* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 196-238.

Laborites, "independent" doubtlessly meant a new party. The progressive unions were unwed to any one strategy, favoring a multitude of approaches fitted to local circumstances.

Frederic C. Howe chaired the committee to draft the "Plan of Action." Howe attended the convention as a representative of the strictly non-partisan People's Legislative Service, but his wartime efforts defending civil liberties had earned him admiration amongst the socialist ranks as well. He was likely the best fit for the position. While it was Howe's job to keep the committee together, it was Morris Hillquit who, perhaps unexpectedly, took the reins and brokered a final report. As Hillquit recalled, "The discussion had been ambling along rather aimlessly for some time, when Edward F. Keating, putting his hand on my shoulder in a gesture of paternal benevolence, asked me the bland question: 'Brother Hillquit, are you Socialists here in the hope of forming an independent political labor party?'" The socialist leader welcomed the opportunity to clear the air. While the SPA delegates reserved the right to voice their views "without obstreperousness or obstruction," and sincerely hoped that their fellow delegates would join them in forming a new party, they had no desire to "capture" the meeting, he replied. "We shall be ready to cooperate with you in good faith to the extent that such cooperation is consistent with the fundamental principles and policies of our party," Hillquit claimed.[671]

After this tense exchange, the committee's work picked up steam. "For the first time since the opening of the conference I am beginning to be satisfied. It looked

[671] "Conference for Progressive Political Action," *Socialist World* (February 1922), 1; Morris Hillquit, *Loose Leaves from a Busy Life* (New York: MacMillan 1934), 310-311; James Oneal, "The Chicago Conference," *New York Call* (March 3, 1922), 8.

discouraging… all along," Hillquit scribbled to Vera after concluding his late night committee session. "I think I did my best work within the three hours of that committee session," he continued. "I managed to get the confidence and good will of my fellow members on it and wound up by dictating the whole statement and whole program, and have them adopted unanimously. We parted with mutual congratulations." The final "Plan of Action" committed the attendees to "unite for the purpose" of electing officials "pledged to the interest of the producing classes and the principles of genuine democracy in agriculture, industry and government," but left any specific organizing instructions deliberately vague.[672]

Accepting Johnston and Manly's recommendations, affiliated CPPA groups were to form councils at the state and municipal level. These bodies would determine their own plausible path to victory-- be it in a party primary or independent party. Johnston warmly welcomed the organizing committee's decision, pithily telling the conference, "Local conditions must be met by local conference decisions." Hillquit agreed, but openly hoped these regional conferences would countenance forming new parties. He remained confident that the upcoming elections would bear out his conclusion that working with Democrats and Republicans was a fool's errand. To this end, Hillquit proposed something of a challenge. "Our plan of action permits those who believe in class parties to function during the coming elections and it affords freedom to those who think they can do something in the old parties," the socialist leader said. "In December," he offered," we can compare notes and shape our course." James Oneal, a fellow SPA

[672] "Plan of Action," *Socialist World* (February 1922), 4-5; "Workers Unite for Political Action," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (March 1922), 168, 188; Morris Hillquit to Vera Hillquit, February 20, 1922. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel Two.

delegate and staff writer for the *New York Call*, agreed on path forward. "It was evident that the membership of the brotherhoods are not ready for an independent party of the workers and nothing would be gained by trying to force the proposal," Oneal concluded.[673]

The Chicago meeting emanated a new sense of unity and purpose amongst politically inclined labor organizations. James Maurer, SPA delegate, head of the Pennsylvania Federation of Labor, and recently elected president of the Labor Publication Society threw himself in wholeheartedly. "I am willing to go the limit with you on any reasonable, practical plan to bring the producing classes together," Maurer emphasized. These overtures were hardly confined to the conference's radical wing. E.J. Manion of the Railroad Telegraphers followed with a similar display: "I am willing on behalf of myself, and I feel that I can say that I represent the other men of organized labor, that we are perfectly willing to subordinate our hobbies… and work with you so that we can build the proper kind of a political machine." Albert Coyle heaped praise on the meeting in the *Locomotive Engineer*: "The outcome of the Conference for Progressive Political Action is gratifying beyond all expectations. The delegates… worked together with the earnestness of men and women who face grave evils and are determined to end them." The conference elected an executive board that may indeed have been as "representative" a group ever assembled on the labor left.[674] Members included not only Keating, Howe,

[673] James Oneal, "The Chicago Conference," *New York Call* (March 3, 1922), 8; "Johnston Says Political Unity Parley Was Step Toward Political Solidarity," *New York Call* (February 28, 1922), 3; Morris Hillquit to Vera Hillquit, February 20, 1922. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel Two; "Labor and Farmers Start On United Political Drive," *New Majority* (March 4, 1922), 1.

[674] "Victims of Brutal System Join Hands for Emancipation," *Labor* (February 25, 1922), 1; "The Chicago Conference," *Labor* (March 4, 1922), 5; Clint C. Houston, "22,000,000 Voters Will Demand Share in Our Government," *Labor* (March 4, 1922), 1; "Workers Unite for Political Action," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (March 1922), 168, 188.

Hillquit, Johnston, and Stone, but Mable Costigan of the National League of Women Voters, ACW president Sidney Hillman, Agnes Nestor of the Women's Trade Union League, and UMW secretary William Green.

Leftwing Skepticism of the CPPA

Some left-wing individuals and outlets remained skeptical of the CPPA. SPA national secretary Otto Branstetter concluded that "On a whole, the Conference was a disappointment, so far as the immediate results are concerned." H. Schoolman, the ILGWU's representative, reported that "With the exception of a few very nice and interesting speeches, there was really nothing done in that conference." William Z. Foster, speaking for the increasingly communist-aligned Trade Union Education League, congratulated the organizers for assembling such a diverse group of representatives, but agreed that the delegates "did not do much." The "gathering pointed out the political backwardness of the labor movement here, but it failed entirely to point out a definite path of development, or to put its finger upon any of the reasons for our backwardness." A true party of the workers, the budding communist theoretician argued, would adopt a revolutionary anti-capitalist platform and not languish in "pitiful conservativism."

A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen might have expressed left-wing hesitancy toward the CPPA best. "In the Chicago conference the workers and their representatives found themselves distressingly unwitting of their way," the pair editorialized. "Only here and there was a clear note sounded." Randolph and Owen remained disappointed at the lack of an independent labor party modeled "according to the British Labor Movement pattern" that would "embrace every shade [of] working class opinion from the whitest to

the redest[sic]; from the rightest to the leftest; the most conservative to the most radical." Still, the editors remarked that a meeting of so many different unions was "not the least significant thing to happen in these days of working class disunity." They further took no issue with a slow, careful, and reformist path to revolution: "Political, social and economic ultimates don't touch the consciousness of workers who are put to the task of winning a living from day to day… If we would get rid of reforms, we must first get rid of the class struggle." Many of the CPPA's founding members likely shared their assessment.[675]

Conclusion

William Johnston, addressing the departing delegates, asked the labor and political leaders to adopt "a faith that will remove mountains, a faith that will do and dare, a faith that will lead us into a better social order, when 'man to man will brothers be, for all a' that.'" His invocation of an anti-monarchical Robert Burns poem rounded off a convention dotted by high-minded ideals of a class rebellion against Harding's normalcy.[676] But behind the bravado was a realistic understanding of the consequences failure would bring. The groups had wrapped themselves in only the loosest bonds. Lingering distrust could easily lead to failure at the polls, and without a clear and ringing victory there would be little reason to continue cooperating. "Lack of understanding and confidence among the producers," Johnston argued in a post-conference interview for

[675] "The Labor Political Conference," *The Labor Herald* (April 1922), 26; "The Principles and Program of the Trade Union Educational League," *The Labor Herald* (March 1922), 4; "United Front in America," *The Communist* (April 1922), 5-7; H. Schoolman, "Miscellanies from Chicago," *Justice* (March 24, 1922), 7; "Conference for Progressive Political Action," *Socialist World* (February 1922), 1; "Chicago Political Labor Conference," *The Messenger* (March 1922), 369.
[676] Burns titled the 1795 poem "A Man's a Man for A' That," or "Is There for Honest Poverty."

Labor, had allowed "the forces of reaction" to strike at labor with impunity. "Shall we continue to divide our ranks and sulk because our own special political program is not accepted by the other industrial, social, and political reform forces," the Machinist asked his readers. If so, labor would come to occupy a "groveling dependency."[677] Given the Supreme Court's continued defense of the injunction and outright hostility to labor's right to strike and boycott, the federal Railroad Board's desire to slash wartime wages, and the Justice Department's vow to crack down on worker-induced disruptions, trade unions had few friends indeed. A strong showing in the 1922 elections could show that labor's vision had merit, and that anti-union policies had consequences at the polls.

[677] "Workers Unite for Political Action," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (March 1922), 168, 188; "Victims of Brutal System Join Hands for Emancipation," *Labor* (February 25, 1922), 1.

Chapter Seven: The Election of 1922

In 1922, American voters issued Warren G. Harding and his policies a stunning rebuke. While the Republicans maintained a narrow control of Congress, the party that had soundly defeated Wilsonian Democracy just two years prior had lost seven Senate seats and more than seventy representatives in the House.[678] The Democratic National Committee was quick to claim credit for the electoral outcome. Cordell Hull, the Democratic chairman, told reporters that "The nation-wide revolt against the Republican Party… represents a desire to return to Democratic policies under which the people had equitable taxation, a low tariff without tint of corruption, an economical expenditures of public money, with resultant prosperity."[679] But in the days following the election, political analysts began to notice abnormalities that undermined the interpretation of a simplistic partisan shift.

Many of the results defied expectations. The anti-Republican wave did not help Atlee Pomerene of Ohio and Gilbert Hitchcock in Nebraska, two multi-term Democratic senators, hold on to their seats. Yet, curiously, in both states Democratic gubernatorial candidates won their elections by comfortable margins. Elsewhere, longshot candidates won some highly improbable victories. Clarence C. Dill decisively defeated Republican

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[678] Bruce J. Schulman, "Farewell to the 'Smoke-Filled Room'," in *America at the Ballot Box*, eds. Gareth Davies and Julian Zelizer (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2015), 144-145; Lynn Dumenil, *Modern Temper* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995, 24-25; Theodore Saloutos and John D. Hicks, *Twentieth Century Populism: Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West, 1900-1939* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1951), 348-351; Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 106-107.

[679] "Democrats Claim Gain of Eight Seats in Senate," *New York Tribune* (November 9, 1922), 2; "Republicans Retain Control of Next House," *Baltimore Sun* (November 9, 1922), 1; "Apathy of Voters Clouds Election," *New York Times* (November 5, 1922), 33; "Copeland Won by 259,000," *New York Times* (November 9, 1922), 1.

incumbent Miles Poindexter in Washington, an effectively one-party state that had sent only one Democratic senator to the Capitol in the 32 years since its incorporation. On the Republican side, Henry J. Allen, who was two years prior the popular governor of Kansas and a rising star for the GOP, went down to a Democratic candidate who promised to put an ignoble end to his industrial court. In North Dakota, former Nonpartisan League governor Lynn Frazier not only rose to the top in the hotly contested Republican Senate primary, but narrowly bested his opponent in the general as well. The state's voters (with the enthusiastic support of the Republican national committee) had successfully removed Frazier from the state house only a year prior, making him the first recalled governor in American history.[680]

Nearly two thousand miles away from Bismark, North Dakota, a young former alderman and war veteran named Fiorello LaGuardia was one of the few Republicans to break through Tammany Hall's clean sweep of New York City's congressional districts doing so by openly advocating wealth redistribution to alleviate poverty. In Minnesota, the state Republican Party succeeded in stamping out its insurgent wing but paid dearly for it. After the 1920 election, the state government pushed through changes to the state's primary law to prevent losing primary candidates from running as independents in the general-- cutting non-partisan reformers from a key strategy. But the NPL adjusted to these new circumstances, electing former gubernatorial candidate Henrik Shipstead under the new banner of the Farmer-Labor Party. And then there was Robert La Follette, who, despite having been censured by his state's legislature and nearly removed from the

[680] "Governor Davis's Forlorn Hope," *New York Times* (November 15, 1922), 15; Michael Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy: The Nonpartisan League in North American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 245-246; William Tyler Page, *Statistics of the Congressional Election of November 7, 1922*.

Senate for alleged treason during the war, returned to Washington, D.C. with the largest margin of any candidate outside of the solid south.[681]

It was a complicated election. Prohibition complicated normal voting patterns, the defeated Senator Hitchcock insisted, and the war record of several incumbents remained under public scrutiny. Otto Cullman, chairman of the Committee of Manufacturers & Merchants on Federal Taxation agreed. "All traditions were broken; all customs thrown into the winds; all party lines smashed to smithereens," Cullman concluded.[682] As incoming senators like Iowa's Smith Wildman Brookhart, Minnesota's Henrik Shipstead, and Montana's Burton K. Wheeler joined La Follette's crusade for expansive government ownership and inviolable trade union rights, journalists and syndicated political writers gave a great deal of credit to the Conference for Progressive Political Action.

Before November, few had paid attention to CPPA figures like Warren E. Stone, who had promised "to turn heaven and earth" for candidates like La Follette and other progressives."[683] His actions in Ohio, his state of residence, lent credence to that fact. There, Democratic incumbent Atlee Pomerene did not benefit from strong party tailwinds and lost by 50,000 votes. This result came despite his ticket mate A. Victor Donahey

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[681] "Primary Law Changes Urged By Williamson," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* (January 28, 1921), 8; "Four Major Bills Adopted By House," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* (February 19, 1921), 1, 5; "Long Step is Taken for Election Reform," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* (January 26, 1921), 1, 11; William Tyler Page, *Statistics of the Congressional Election of November 7, 1922*; Michael Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy: The Nonpartisan League in North American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 243-250; Michael Kazin, *War Against War: The American Fight for Peace, 1914-1918* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 224-229; Howard Zinn, *La Guardia in Congress* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1958), 62-65; Ohio gubernatorial election results history, statewide and by county (database) https://www.cleveland.com/datacentral/2018/09/ohio_gubernatorial_election_re_2.html

[682] "Democrats Differ on Causes of Upset," *New York Times* (November 14, 1922), 4; Otto Cullman to 'Friend,' November 22, 1922. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 11. Folder November 21-30.

[683] Stone was "not concerned about politics just for the sake of politics," he told one crowd, but rather he saw "politics as a means of self-preservation. "Conductors to Fight At Polls," *Reconstructionist* (May 27, 1922), 3.

winning his election for governor by 20,000 on a near identical platform. In searching for the cause of this disparity, political analysts found Stone's split ticket endorsement of Donahey for governor and Republican Simeon Fess for Senator to be the most crucial. Pomerene's vote against women's suffrage had cost him support, they figured, but Donahey (who supported prohibition and also alienated reformist women's organizations) fared only marginally better amongst women voters. All pre-election straw polls showed Pomerene with an easier race than Donahey, though both had comfortable margins.

Only a few days before the election, the Locomotive Engineers threw the polls off kilter by asking organized railroad workers to vote for Fess. The Brotherhood had up until that point refused to make an endorsement, as labor candidates in both Democratic and Republican primaries had failed to advance. But between the primary and general, Pomerene had made several intemperate remarks against organized labor and Grand Chief Warren Stone saw an opportunity to pounce. "All men who have faith in their executives and who believe that they are honestly trying to represent organized labor and who work for their best interests should cast their ballot against Senator Pomerene," Stone wrote in an open letter on November 1. "This means much to you," he continued, "and when you have an avowed enemy who is out in an open fight against you, if you elect him it is only your fault, because we have done our duty in warning you." The letter may have saved Fess's campaign. "The drys and the women voters played an important part in defeating Pomerene," one election reporter wrote after the dust of the contest settled, "but the latter's friends here assert that except for the Stone letter the senator

would have been re-elected and they point significantly to the fact that Fess' 52,000 majority is substantially the voting strength of Ohio's railroad employes."[684]

In retrospect, many writers lamented how little they had paid attention to the CPPA. The Conference had come "into being quietly and calmly," Chicago-based journalist N.D. Cochran told his readers; "it was organized thoughtfully and thoroughly. Its tactics were so successful this year that it may control the balance of power in the next Congress." Though the CPPA might be considered a third party, he explained, its primary goal was to "either to make the old parties progressive or to smash them." Noted Washington correspondent Carl D. Ruth argued that "What happened in the late election is at last clear…The Democrats made encouraging gains and the Republicans retained at least nominal control of congress in both branches, but the great victory was won by Warren S. Stone, of Cleveland, and an obscure organization called 'The Conference for Progressive Political Action.'" He surmised that it was the CPPA's "skillful strategy," and the leadership's "unrelenting energy" that "upset all the advance 'dope,' discredited forecasts and polls, and elected to the United States Senate a group of men which may dominate all legislation in the new congress and form the nucleus for a new formidable third-party movement."

The CPPA's candidates swung Congress decidedly to the left. Decrying the apparent downfall of moderate liberalism, famed progressive newspaper editor William

[684] "Bloom Holds Lead Through Chatfield May Beat Him Out," *Akron Beacon Journal* (November 9, 1922), 25; "Knight Credited With Doing Share to Beat Thompson," *Akron Beacon Journal* (November 9, 1922), 25; "Warren S. Stone, Chief of Locomotive Engineers, Calls On Brotherhood and Friends of Labor to Vote for Fess," *The Times Recorder* (Zanesville, Ohio) (November 2, 1922), 1; James W. Faulkner, "Trend in Ohio Democratic, Straw Vote Discloses," *Cincinnati Enquirer* (November 5, 1922), 1, Sect. 2, 19; "Engineers, Told to Back Fess," *Cincinnati Enquirer* (November 2, 1922), 5; "Many Women Voters Visited Polls," *Marysville Journal-Tribune* (November 8, 1922), 1; Carl D. Ruth, "Biggest Victory of Election Won by Railroaders," *The Pittsburgh Press* (November 19, 1922), 7.

Allen White warned his readers, "We are back to Armageddon. The discontented farmer and the aspiring laborer have got together." And this time, he implied, there was no Teddy Roosevelt to hold back the tide and "battle for the Lord."[685] The Harding administration and its allies in finance and industry certainly saw the incoming Congress as a radical one. In a hardly veiled attack, RNC chairman John T. Adams held a press conference and told attendees that the president would "continue to support law and order and stand four-square against mob law and the vicious destructive theory of government by class passion and prejudices." Harding also remained unbowed by the "influences of internationalism, which would undermine and ultimately destroy those things which have made America a great and honored nation."[686] The day after the election, recognizing that the changes in seats would likely jeopardize his legislative agenda, Harding called an extra session of the current congress to meet on November 20.

Harding's primary motivation in calling the extra session was to pass his ambitious "ship subsidy" bill. The controversial legislation would have sold the Merchant Marine to private holding companies and opened up millions of dollars in federal subsidies to run the lines. While opponents of the bill critiqued it as another case of pawning state run enterprises to plutocrats looking to line their pockets with taxpayer money, the administration saw it as an opportunity to unload an unprofitable asset and practice "rigid public economy." Describing their feelings about the final days of Harding's supermajority in government, one anonymous Wall Street banker told a

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[685] Carl D. Ruth, "Biggest Victory of Election Won by Railroaders," *The Pittsburgh Press* (November 19, 1922), 7; N.D. Cochran, "Third Party is Already Here," *The Knoxville News* (November 17, 1922), 4. William Allen White, "As I See It," *New York Tribune* (November 12, 1922), vi 8. Teddy Roosevelt famously uttered his reference to "standing at Armageddon" at the end of his address to the 1912 Progressive Party convention.

[686] "Harding Calls Extra Session on November 20," *Baltimore Sun* (November 10, 1922), 1

financial correspondent that "Today big business is in the frame of mind of a small boy who is seated at a loaded Thanksgiving table but has been told by his mother that as soon as dinner was over she was going to give him a sound whipping."[687] By electing upwards of two dozen new senators, governors, and representatives, the CPPA had firmly established itself in the minds of politicians nationwide.

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This chapter details how the CPPA won several of its crucial races, and the effect those victories had within the Conference's ranks. Several important shifts occurred within the Conference for Progressive Political Action in the months leading to and following the 1922 election. The CPPA's executive board acquired the help of newspaper editors across ideological lines and flooded competitive races with materials on who to vote for and why. The board also put organizers in the field and helped arrange speaking tours. The midterm campaign was far more involved than the 1920 election and the CPPA more fully demonstrated the explosive possibility of worker-based politics and electioneering. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the third party advocates found themselves much further behind than those who advocated a more varied approach. The "friendly" competition between the diverging factions of the CPPA had ended decidedly in favor of the non-partisan group. Of all the states with intensive CPPA activity in 1922, the elections in Oklahoma, Washington, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and New York provide

[687] "Will Oppose Hostile Legislation," *Crab Orchard Herald* (November 24, 1922), 2; "La Follette Mobilizes Liberal Bloc," *New York Tribune* (November 19, 1922), 1; R.L. Barnum, "Wall Street is Blue Over Election Results," *Atlanta Constitution* (November 14, 1922), 17; "Calls Republicans Friends of Labor," *New York Times* (October 27, 1922), 7; "Lasker Seconds Subsidy Appeal," *New York Times* (June 26, 1922), 12; "Believe Ship Subsidy Measure Doomed to Die," *Atlanta Constitution* (February 23, 1923), 1;; "Chief Business at Extra Session is Ship Subsidy," *Atlanta Constitution* (November 13, 1922), 1; "Gigantic Scandal on Ship Subsidy May be Disclosed," *Atlanta Constitution* (November 3, 1922), 1; "Harding Will Call Special Session Nov. 20," *New York Tribune* (November 8, 1922), 6.

the most interesting case studies. Each example highlights the differing ways by which members succeeded, or failed, in electing candidates. By and large, the successful state chapters managed to engage trade unions and organized farmers, bridge ideological divides, and organize a cohesive presence both in the press and at the grassroots.

In Oklahoma, the state's once powerful Socialist Party effectively dissolved itself. Following Oscar Amerigner's lead, Oklahoma socialists gave its full attention to the Conference for Progressive Political Action. The state's labor papers wholeheartedly backed the gubernatorial candidacy of Democrat Jack Walton, who would go on to win the general in a landslide. In Oklahoma, third party radicals found success by following the CPPA and abandoning their old methods and supporting one of the two major parties. In Minnesota, the state CPPA arrived at the opposite conclusion. Effectively locked out of the Republican primary, the state labor federation and the Nonpartisan League founded the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party. The M-FLP proved that, given the right conditions, trade unionists and farmers could found a third party and win.

Unfortunately for socialists, Laborites, and other third party radicals, Minnesota proved the exception and not the rule. In Washington state, the national Farmer Labor Party's only real stronghold, the CPPA chose a non-partisan route. Clarence Dill, the Washington CPPA's choice for senator, won his election and buried the FLP. In New York, the SPA and the needle trades founded the American Labor Party with the hope of securing the CPPA's mantle. The railroad unions and state federation of labor, however, placed their hopes largely in Tammany Hall and the Democratic Party. Tammany may have been a machine, but Al Smith was a solid friend to organized labor. The governor, for his part, had not forgotten his narrow defeat in 1920. Smith pledged to prevent further

defections to the left and reaffirmed his pro-labor credentials in the election two years later. As they did in Washington, the Democrats routed the leftist third party.

Only in Wisconsin did the Socialist Party regain ground. In Milwaukee, the Party returned Victor Berger to Congress and sent several state senators and assembly representatives to Madison. These gains came at a cost, however. The Socialists curtailed some of their larger ambitions, running no candidate for US Senate and clearing the way for La Follette's reelection. Across the nation, the CPPA found its greatest success in states where labor and the left cooperated. Where division remained, the left repeatedly lost ground.

The takeaway from the 1922 election was clear: the Conference for Progressive Political Action was organized labor's most successful political venture. Improving outreach in the progressive press had paid dividends. And bringing in intellectuals and political experts like Keating, Manly, Coyle, Mable Costigan, and Howe helped finetune labor's electioneering. Though a large part of the CPPA's success came by absorbing the broad left and negating its ability to operate independently. As trade unionism became more political and more confident in its voice, third party radicals lost ground.

Oklahoma: The Power of the Non-Partisan Labor Press

The Sooner State was among the first to sign onto the project and form a Conference chapter-- holding a meeting just two days after the Chicago meeting. The CPPA's primary contact in that state was Oscar Ameringer, a former Socialist Party member and editor of the *Oklahoma Leader* (later *American Guardian*), the *New Farmer*, and the *Illinois Miner*. All of Ameringer's publications were among the leading left-wing

papers of the Southern plains and Midwest. Before becoming a center for the CPPA, Oklahoma had many active SPA chapters. During the 1910s, Debsian socialism had found fertile ground amongst the state's dirt farmers. Eugene Debs himself won nearly fifty thousand votes in 1912 and a slew of socialist state representatives won their races in 1914. But the war had absolutely shattered any remaining institutional power. Some supporters disagreed with the party's stance against the war. Others took anti-militarism to the other extreme and fomented what became known as the "Green Corn Rebellion." Coming to a head in 1917, Oklahoma tenant farmers attempted to march on Washington and end the war, committing small acts of sabotage as they traveled.[688]

The state-sanctioned persecution of radicals during World War I convinced Ameringer that only by legally obtaining state power could the socialists hope to grow their presence amongst American workers. Rebellion was futile. "The Socialist Party of America is either a political party or it is nothing at all, either a political party using the methods of politics, using the constitutional methods of fighting or it is nothing at all," Ameringer told the delegates of the 1920 Socialist Party convention.[689] By 1921, he had evidently concluded that the Oklahoma Socialist Party was beyond resuscitation. Ameringer believed that saving the Party's legacy meant delivering its remnants to a sustainable project. If "the progressives-- the farmer and labor forces of the state-- could unite on some four or five measures of interest to all, and then get whole-heartedly

[688] Ameringer decried the march as "worse than childish" and warned of violent government repression. Fulfilling his prophecies of destruction, the federal government crushed the rebellion and virtually gutted the state party. "Their hearts were in the right place. Their heads were not," Ameringer concluded, years later. Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1940), 354; James R. Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895-1943* (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press, 1978), 354-368.

[689] *Eighth National Convention of the Socialist Party Held at Finnish Hall, 2056 Fifth Avenue, New York: Third Day*, May 11, 1920, 92. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest: 201901_076_1185.

behind them," he pondered, "there was no reason why they should not be adopted by a majority of voters." This guiding question led him to call upon George Wilson, a former agricultural science professor turned organizer for the Nonpartisan League. The two contacted representatives of the Farmers' Union and the State Federation of Labor and held a meeting in the city of Shawnee, Oklahoma in September 1921. The invited groups formed a new organization: the Farmer-Labor Reconstruction League. "Never, in all the history of the labor movement, was such a spirit of solidarity manifested," an editorialist in Ameringer's *New Farmer* wrote of the meeting. Ameringer himself viewed the Reconstruction League as a phoenix rising from the smoldering "ruins of the Socialist Party."[690]

Despite officially forming prior to the CPPA, the Reconstruction League took the first opportunity to establish itself as an arm of the Conference. Not only did the FLRL formally agree to operate under the CPPA's umbrella, the leadership also dropped any potential third party plans in order to back Jack C. Walton, the "fighting" mayor of Oklahoma City and former union railway conductor, in the Democratic Primary. Ameringer instructed the state's socialist voters to "lay aside their party beliefs and prejudices, and register themselves as 'democrats' so that they can participate in the unity election on August 1st." By doing so, however, he invited the full and final wrath of the Socialist Party leadership.

By March 1922, SPA secretary Otto Branstetter severed all ties between the party and Ameringer's publishing ventures. The national office gave resources to Oklahoma

[690] "State Federation of Labor Meeting Gets Into Action," *New Farmer* (September 24, 1921), 1; "Oklahoma Reconstruction League," *New Farmer* (September 24, 1921), 4; W.A. Villines, "The Shawnee Convention," *The Reconstructionist* (February 25, 1922), 2; "League Offices Are Open Here; Campaign is On," *Reconstructionist* (February 25 1922), 3; Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken*, 373, 381.

City socialist E.H.H. Gates, who promised to reverse the tide. A month later, Gates introduced the *Bugle*, a monthly paper "devoted to Marxian Socialism." In his opening issues, he warned of the "Wooden Horses of Troy" carrying "labor faking Tories" that "Big Boss Oscar" and his "reactionary element" had brought in. Gates and his roughly twenty followers nominated a socialist ticket in the 1922 elections, but failed to attract even one per cent of the vote.[691]

Frederic Howe, however, held the Reconstruction League in high esteem. For the longtime reformer, the League was the perfect example of all labor groups joining under a practical banner of progress despite doctrinal differences. "The delegates, both men and women, represented democrats, republicans and socialists," Howe reported in a spring circular to CPPA affiliates. They adopted a platform with "real purpose" that "recognized the common economic interests of farmers and workers." He was hardly the only one to note the significance of the FLRL meeting. Ernest R. Chamberlain, a political publicist who had once worked for William Howard Taft, credited the group for uniting "farmers, city workers, railroad workers and miners" of all political stripes behind "a death struggle with organized interests and predatory wealth in Oklahoma."[692] More impressed were these observers still when Walton triumphed in a very competitive Democratic primary and won the general in a thirty-thousand vote landslide.

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[691] The Party would expel Gates two years later for mismanagement, ignoring NEC decrees, and allowing all but four members to fall out of good standing. "Where the Socialists Stand," *Oklahoma Leader* (March 7, 1922), 4; "Socialists of Oklahoma Beware!" *The Bugle* (April 1922), 1; "The Oklahoma Situation," *Socialist World* (May 1922), 8; Report of the National Executive Committee to the National Convention at Cleveland, April 29th, 1922. 4. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_077_0004; Bertha Hale White to NEC, October 6, 1924, Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel Three.

[692] "Howe Reports on Labor Politics Throughout the U.S.," *The Reconstructionist* (April 15, 1922), 1; "The Political Awakening of Various Forms of Labor," *Kansas Leader* (April 13, 1922), 1; Ernest Chamberlain, "Walton Named For Governor; Party Lines Are Swept Aside As League Picks Candidate," *The Reconstructionist* (February 25, 1922), 1; Finding Aid of the Ernest R. Chamberlain Papers, University of California Los Angeles. https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt3t1nc4xn/entire_text/.

The CPPA-model of concerted campaigning through the radical press paid substantial dividends in Oklahoma. Albert Coyle claimed that Walton's victory was "in large part" due to Ameringer's *Oklahoma Leader*, which had churned out thousands of copies for the FLRL.[693] Ameringer also had roles in other Reconstruction League publications. Toward the end of 1921, he had handed editorial control of his rural-themed paper, the *New Farmer* to a new board consisting of George Wilson, J.B. Tosh, a hog farmer and delegate to the 1908 Oklahoma constitutional convention, Earl Witt, an officer of the Brotherhood of Railway Conductors, and W.A. Villines, manager of the Farmers' Union Co-Operative Exchange.[694] After renaming the paper *The Reconstructionist*, the team retooled the organ to appeal to the Southwest Farmer-Labor Union's 270,000 members.

Minnesota: From Non-Partisan to Labor Party

The CPPA had similar success in Minnesota, but in that state Conference members, having mostly exhausted the non-partisan method of capturing competitive primaries, elected to build something new. The Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party was a third party CPPA backers could easily stomach. The state's progressive forces had not decided to found the FLP on a whim. To more-or-less permanently shut the door on

693 "Oklahoma," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (December 1922), 915.
694 The board had apparently also offered representation to the United Mine Workers, though the District president, John Wilkinson, refused association because of Ameringer's closeness to insurgent UMW leaders Alex Howatt and John Brophy. "Farmer-Labor to Sweep Oklahoma," *Reconstructionist* (February 18, 1922), 1; "Wilkinson Resigns as Miners' Leader for 'Better Post,'" *Muskogee Daily Phoenix* (November 7, 1922), 1; "Mine Workers Begin Session With Argument," *Tulsa Tribune* (May 15, 1922), 2; "Wilkinson in Court Attack Upon Leader," *Oklahoma Leader* (February 24, 1922), 1; "Contradictory Elements in Farmer-Labor Convention," *Harlow's Weekly* (March 3, 1922), 4; "About Politics and Politicians," *Harlow's Weekly* (June 2, 1922), 6; "A New Year's Call," *Reconstructionist* (January 28, 1922), 1; "50,000 Strong!" *Reconstructionist* (February 4, 1922), 1.

insurgent efforts, in 1922 the state GOP prohibited candidates from running independently upon a failed primary challenge. A new party, therefore, was the most sensible option going forward. Henrik Shipstead's independent campaign had done well two years prior, setting a precedent for a regular ballot line. And importantly, Minnesota socialists proved eager to leave the Socialist party and support the FLP.

Much like Oklahoma, Minnesota had a small but potent coterie of socialists based primarily in the twin cities. Not only had Thomas Van Lear won a mayoral election under the party's banner in Minneapolis during the war, but the city council had upwards of ten party members in its ranks. Andrew Olaf Devold represented the city's working-class wards in the state senate. The *Minneapolis Labor Review*, organ of the Minneapolis AFL, and *Minnesota Union Advocate*, newspaper for the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly, both had an openly leftist editorial line.[695]

But when the NPL decided to back the Farmer-Labor Party on a permanent basis, these socialists jumped on the FLP bandwagon.[696] Their reasons for doing so were hardly mysterious. First and foremost, for committed Socialist Party members, the FLP offered the chance to join a broader coalition– one absent of the growing isolation of the SPA and the stain of the two corrupt major parties. The NPL-wing of the party's leadership, recognizing that its base in the sparsely populated rural districts could carry state-wide elections alone, readily accepted former socialist support– provided these ex-members left their Marxist dogma behind.[697]

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[695] Bryan D. Palmer, *Revolutionary Teamsters: The Minneapolis Truckers' Strike of 1934* (Leiden: Brill Press, 2013), 31, 192-193

[696] Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 617-619.

[697] While Marxists of both Socialist and Communist varieties entered in and out of the FLP between 1922 and 1944, the party's farmer wing never felt comfortable with overt leftist economic dogma. The FLP's rural base was more ethnically and religion focused– disapproving of Catholics and "wets" and occasionally giving into overt antisemitism. The increased presence of Communist Party members during

Van Lear was a post-SPA success story himself. By 1922, he had secured a great deal of influence in Minnesota politics. His *Minnesota Daily Star* was the only daily paper with a statewide circulation that was consistently sympathetic to the Nonpartisan League. Van Lear also had an official position atop the Working People's Non-partisan Political League, the state labor federation's political arm. His work in bringing these two wings together on behalf of Henrik Shipstead's 1920 gubernatorial campaign earned him an invitation to the Chicago meeting of the CPPA. There, he enthusiastically embraced the Conference's call to cooperate with anyone willing to help. "I am perfectly willing to set aside my own ideas if some advance can be made by the people of America," he told the assemblage.[698]

To that end, Van Lear became a central figure in the nascent party, drafting policy recommendations, editing the FLP's de facto news outlet, and arranging targeted aid provided by the CPPA. He coordinated with R.D. Cramer, editor of the *Minneapolis Labor Review* and backed the *Union Advocate's* editor, William Mahoney, in his efforts to run labor candidates for local office in St. Paul.[699] Van Lear also mounted a campaign for Hennepin County treasurer. The NPL and WPNPL had considered Van Lear for either governor or senator, but he declined in favor of a "good, clean labor man, who… would not be so vulnerable" as a former anti-war socialist mayor.[700] Like Ameringer, Van Lear

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the FLP's Popular Front period of the thirties and forties strained the original FLP alliance beyond repair. Jennifer Delton, *Making Minnesota Liberal: Civil Rights and the Transformation of the Democratic Party* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xvii-xix, 11-13.

[698] "Workers Unite for Political Action," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (March 1922), 168, 188.

[699] "Progressive Voters to Elect Farmer-Labor Ticket," *Minnesota Union Advocate* (November 2, 1922), 1; "Farmer-Labor Candidates Pledged to Restore Government to People," *Minneapolis Labor Review* (November 3, 1922), 1; "Housewives to Hear Cramer," *Minnesota Daily Star* (February 16, 1923), 14; "Labor Fights as Chiefs are Waiting in Jail," *Minnesota Daily Star* (August 19, 1920), 1; "Mahoney. St. Paul Labor Head, Formally Enters for Mayoralty," *Minnesota Daily Star* (January 18, 1922), 3.

[700] "Farmers and City Labor in Joint Action," *Minnesota Daily Star* (April 1, 1922), 2.

promised to coordinate resources with farmers and laborers, regardless of any prior divisions. He would do his part to channel the broad anti-Harding insurgency into a singular ballot line.

With the socialists, Leaguers, and trade unionists all committed to the new party, the CPPA's executive board focused heavily on swinging the Senate seat. Compounding this interest was a desire to unseat Frank B. Kellogg, a one term Republican incumbent who had enraged organized labor by voting for Esch-Cummins.[701] After the FLP nominated Henrik Shipstead to make the run for senate, the CPPA pledged substantial resources to carry the dentist to the capitol. Organizers paid Benjamin C. Marsh, head of the People's Reconstruction League, to make a tour of rural Minnesota to whip up the farm vote. They also recruited E.G. Hall, Cigar Maker and Minnesota Federation of Labor president, to engage the urban electorate. To help Van Lear, Marsh, and Hall get out the vote, the Railroad Brotherhoods dispatched E.H. Kruse, the BLE "assistant grand chief engineer," to coordinate incoming resources and ensure Brotherhood cooperation. Kruse opened an office at the *Daily Star* headquarters and worked with Van Lear to prompt Brotherhood lodges to form "Shipstead for Senator Clubs." Kruse, Marsh, Hall, and Van Lear relied on women's auxiliaries to hold meetings and rallies, find volunteers, build mailing lists, and distribute materials.[702] Hall specifically addressed the Duluth-

[701] William Howard Taft, "Railroad Bill Good Measure," *Los Angeles Times* (March 19, 1920), 19; "Kellogg Grills Federal Control of Railroads," *Wall Street Journal* (December 8, 1919), 11.
[702] "Labor to Form Shipstead Club," *Minnesota Daily Star* (October 9, 1922), 1; "Political Meetings," *Minnesota Daily Star* (October 9, 1922), 1; "Rail Man Urges Farmer-Worker Union At Polls," *Minnesota Daily Star* (September 30, 1922), 2; "Shipstead Club Meets Tonight," *Minnesota Daily Star* (October 10, 1922), 1; "Johnson and Smith Speak Here and on Ranges in Week's Tour," *Labor World* (October 21, 1922), 5; "Progressives See County as Battle Ground," *Minnesota Daily Star* (October 11, 1922), 7; "Farmer Labor Rally at the New Armory Wednesday," *Bemidji Daily Pioneer* (October 31, 1922), 3; "Shipstead Club Meets Tuesday," *Minnesota Daily Star* (October 16, 1922), 5; Basil Manly to Robert M. La Follette, June 26, 1923. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil.

based Woman's Label league and asked them to "assist their husbands in the labor unions to make the labor movement stronger than it ever was before."[703]

The emphasis on union halls and lodges forming voting clubs almost certainly came out of the Machinist's Building in D.C. From there, at the primary office for the CPPA and PLS, Howe, Keating, Basil Manly and William Johnston kept close tabs on the Minnesota campaign. The Shipstead clubs closely resembled the Plumb Plan Leagues in style and substance. The push to enlist more women had been a leading initiative since 1920. Johnston had empowered the IAM's women's auxiliary, under the stewardship of May Peake, to direct election-related efforts. Keating more than once complained that the Brotherhoods undervalued women at their own peril. "I have been urging the boys to pay particular attention to the women," Keating confidentially reported in 1923. "They are disposed to neglect the woman vote-- a serious blunder."[704] The incorporation of women's auxiliaries in political campaigns was, not coincidentally, also a favorite tactic of the British Labour Party.[705]

By late October, CPPA organizers had facilitated the founding of clubs all over Minnesota and had added tens of thousands of names to a direct mailing list. Satisfied with the progress made, Manly and Keating prepared a two-fold final blitz in the two

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[703] "Womens' Union Holds Meeting With Assembly," *Labor World* (October 21, 1922), 5.
[704] Keating to La Follette, June 29, 1923. La Follette Papers. Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: 1923. Keating, Edward.
[705] As argued previously, the BLP counted on its women's auxiliaries to undertake campaign work. By the end of the 1920s, the "women's sections" had nearly 300,000 members. That said, much like trade union members in the United States, British Labourites were more than willing to enlist women in their cause, but much less willing to give them equal institutional power. The Party limited the number of resolutions the women's sections could bring to the annual conventions and refused to allow the sections to vote for their own candidates on the National Executive Council. Matthew Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate,* 105-109; Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 63-64; June Hannam, "'The Victory of Ideals Must Be Organized': Labour Party Women Organizers in the Inter-War Years," *Management and Organizational History* 5 No. 3-4 (2010), 331-348.

weeks before election day. First, the pair arranged for a special issue of *Labor* tailored specifically to Minnesota voters. The front page carried a full-length photo of Shipstead, calling him a "great progressive" and a "man of the people" who would protect farmers and wage earners from Kellogg's "betrayals and false espousals." To the left of his portrait, Keating featured paragraph-long endorsements from Johnston, Stone, and Timothy Healy. Stone referred to Kellogg as a "pleader of special privilege" and hypothesized that his reelection would result in "national calamity." Healy, demonstrating the lingering specter of the Esch-Cummins vote, derided Kellogg's role in taking "hundreds of millions out of the treasury for the benefit of the railroads" and supporting "every predatory combination that sought to profit at the cost of the people." The remaining three pages contained write-ups and biographies of FLP candidates and interrogated Kellogg's record of returning the railroads to private control, stalling a bill to open a non-profit government clearing house for agricultural exports, and voting against expelling Truman H. Newberry-- the Michigan Republican senator who had enraged progressives by funneling hundreds of thousands of dollars in dark money into his 1918 race against Henry Ford.[706]

Through the CPPA, the Brotherhoods financed the printing of 500,000 copies of the Minnesota *Labor* issue and asked their lodges, the *Star*, and the new Shipstead clubs

[706] "Shipstead Backed by Union Workers in Senate Contest," *Labor* (October 14, 1922), 1; "Great Progressive Should Have Votes of All Good People," *Labor* (October 14, 1922), 1; "Kellogg Attorney for Farmers' Enemies," *Labor* (October 14, 1922), 2; "Republicans Condemn Kellogg's Vote to Seat Newberry," *Labor* (October 14, 1922), 3.

After congressional investigations into Newberry's spending in 1918, the federal government ultimately charged and convicted the senator under the Corrupt Practices Act. The Supreme Court, however, overturned his conviction and limited congress's ability to regulate campaign finance. The Senate held a vote to expel Newberry, but the Republican majority supported him. Paula Baker, *Curbing Campaign Cash: Henry Ford, Truman Newberry, and the Politics of Progressive Reform* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 2012).

to take on distribution.[707] Delivering papers kept the Shipstead clubs busy until the end of October. In the days leading to the election, the Minnesota CPPA coalition embarked on the second stage of their plan: bringing La Follette and a squadron of guest speakers across the state border for a series of talks.

La Follette spoke in Mankato and Minneapolis before closing his tour on November 3 at the St. Paul auditorium. The venue held specific resonance for La Follette-- it was at that exact venue, five years prior, that a reporter had misquoted him as saying he had "no grievance" against Germany. Though the transcript had mostly vindicated La Follette, news of his "pro-Kaiser" speech resulted in official condemnation from the Wisconsin state government, threats of expulsion from the Senate, and Theodore Roosevelt calling him "a shadow hun," a "stain," and the most "sinister enemy of the United States." Even in 1922, Governor Preus and his allies claimed La Follette had "condoned the murder of Americans upon the high seas." But the roughly 15,000 individuals who attended the 1922 rally, and the nearly ten thousand who arrived hoping for overflow tickets, vindicated the Wisconsin senator, who spoke continuously for over two hours. "I have arrived at a time in life when I regard my participation in political campaigns as a favor to God and I have no time to waste upon Republicans who betray the people," La Follette exclaimed. The audience roared.[708]

The CPPA's focus on unity and organizing paid off royally in the North Star State. Shipstead came close to winning an outright majority in a three-way race, besting Kellogg by eighty-thousand votes. Three Farmer-Labor candidates won election to

[707] "Johnson and Smith Speak Here and on Ranges in Week's Tour," *Labor World* (October 21, 1922), 5.
[708] "Preus Claims Ignorance of Hall Refusal," *Minnesota Daily Star* (November 2, 1922), 1; "La Follette is Answered at Mass Meeting," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* (November 5, 1922), 1-2; William T. Evvjue, "La Follette Looms as Candidate for President," *Capital Times* (November 9, 1922), 1.

Congress. In the seventh district, Lutheran minister O.J. Kvale defeated Andrew Volstead, author of the prohibition enforcement act and another of labor's arch-foes. Analysts quickly pointed out that it was Volstead's proximity to Harding's economic policy, and not prohibition that brought the ten-term incumbent's downfall-- Kvale was also an ardent "dry."[709]

Albert Coyle called the Minnesota result "the most significant victory of the election." Budenz and *Labor Age* followed suit, dedicating an entire issue to dissecting the race to figure out what went right. In that issue, NPL secretary H.G. Teigan, credited the Shipsteadstead Clubs, Brotherhood staffers, and *Minnesota Daily Star*, all under the CPPA umbrella, for helping "swell the Farmer-Labor tide." He particularly thanked the Brotherhoods and the "considerable money" spent on literature. Even Gompers, while still deeply skeptical of third party efforts, privately praised and supported the Minnesota FLP.[710]

Without a doubt, the CPPA found some of its best results in the plains states. The lingering hardships amongst northern farmers, increasing prices on freight coupled with unreliable service, the wantonness in which industrialists sought to cut wages, the catastrophic use of the injunction in suppressing the massive railroad strike over the summer, and the trickling out of allegations surrounding federal oil leases as part of the "Teapot Dome" scandal had given insurgents across the country more than enough ammunition in their fight against party regulars. The Harding administration's first two

[709] "Volstead Is Defeated, Now 1000 Behind," *Capital Times* (November 8, 1922), 1; "Keller to Open Fight Monday on Daugherty," *Minnesota Daily Star* (December 1, 1922), 18. William Tyler Page, *Statistics of the Congressional Election of November 7, 1922*.
[710] H.G. Teigan, "Minnesota's Political 'Why,'" *Labor Age* (February 1923), 10-11; "Hats Off to Gopherdom!" *Labor Age* (February 1923), 1; Van Lear, "Minnesota-- Star of the North," *ibid*, 1-3.

years did just about fulfill every one of labor's warnings after the First World War. The president's "normalcy," it turned out, was not a substitute for a thoroughgoing reconstruction.

In Minnesota and Oklahoma, the organized left, farmers' groups, and organized labor coordinated their efforts and won impressive gains. In states where ideologically diverse factions could not bridge their divides, the CPPA suffered. In short, after the 1922 election, the leftwing of the CPPA had less to celebrate than its more ideologically fluid rival faction. If the midterm elections had been a competition between the third party and non-partisan wings of the Conference, the socialists and national Farmer-Labor Party had most assuredly finished last.

New York, Washington, and Wisconsin: The Left and the CPPA

Returning to New York after the Chicago conference, Morris Hillquit remained enthusiastic about the Conference's mission and played an active role on the organization's central council. One of his first actions was delivering to Howe and the rest of the CPPA's central office a complete list of Branch Secretaries of the Workmen's Circle, a Jewish fraternal benefit society closely associated with the Socialist Party and the garment trades unions. In the spring of 1922, the CPPA had been struggling to collect on fundraising commitments, despite proceeding, in Howe's estimation, "as though [it] would be adequately financed for a twelve-month's campaign." Hillquit provided Howe

with introductions to various Circle secretaries and supposed that they would support the appeal.[711]

Cooperation at the broad level, however, did not necessarily mean harmonious relations on the ground. In New York State, Socialist Party leaders made good on their promise to reject non-partisan action, placing their hopes in the newly minted American Labor Party.[712] In June 1922, delegates of the Socialist Party and New York-based Farmer-Labor Party agreed, in light of their mutual participation in the Conference for Progressive Political Action, to nominate and campaign for a single slate of candidates. Many involved saw the merger as necessary. After all, socialists, or near-leftists who might have otherwise pulled the lever for SPA candidates (like Teachers Union head, Abraham Lefkowitz, and legendary WTUL organizer, Rose Schneiderman) had drifted in the FLP camp after the war. The socialists, having founded their party nearly twenty years prior, had a stronger foundation and more money for campaigning. A lasting division between the two like-minded parties helped no one involved.

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[711] Morris Hillquit to Frederic C. Howe, April 6, 1922, Frederic C. Howe to Morris Hillquit, April 17, 1922, Morris Hillquit to Frederic C. Howe, April 21, 1922, Frederic C. Howe to Morris Hillquit, May 25, 1922. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel 2.

[712] Historians have written little on the American Labor Party of the 1920s. The Socialist Party largely abandoned the ballot line after 1924, preferring to return to its original party designation. Worth noting, however, are the connections between the ALP of the 1920s and the ALP of the 1930s. Both parties relied on the support of the garment and needle trades and their allies in the Socialist Party. It is reasonable to assume that several of the 1930s ALP founders recalled the earlier party when choosing a name.

The biggest difference between the two iterations of the American Labor Party was the Congress for Industrial Organizations. The CIO, emboldened by the New Deal's labor-friendly policies, provided the ALP with a larger and more stable membership as well as connections to the reformist wing of the New York Democratic Party. Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 124-125; Frank A. Warren, *An Alternative Vision: The Socialist Party in the 1930s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), 81-101; Joshua B. Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 56-57; Daniel Soyer, "Executed Bundists, Soviet Delegates and the Wartime Jewish Popular Front in New York," *American Communist History* 15 no. 3 (2016), 293-332; Steve Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 193-194, 363-364.

Perhaps the biggest incentive to the amalgamation, however, was the financial and organizational backing of the needle trades. Representatives of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, ILGWU, and Furriers Union very much helmed the endeavor. The unions provided a majority of the delegates to the ALP's opening convention and they had the most representatives on the party's new executive board. One enthusiastic needle trades delegate to the ALP's first official meeting in July 1922 was the young upstart vice president of ILGWU Local 10, David Dubinsky. The party had also adopted a progressive dues structure, meaning that the affiliated organizations with a larger membership (the trade unions) would contribute a higher fee per member than the smaller affiliates.[713]

The American Labor Party ultimately unveiled a new platform demanding steep reforms "to protect the people from the onslaughts of greedy plutocracy." The drafters made several of the same demands as labor-based movements across the country, including the public management of utilities, transportation, and mining. They also rallied around the forty-four hour workweek, comprehensive workplace and health insurance, and the absolute right of all workers to strike and picket without state-sanctioned repercussions. At the very local level, the ALP proposed laws to eliminate "part-time and over-size classes" and to mandate the presence of trained health professionals in all New York public schools. The platform drew praise not only from the left-wing unions that generated them, but from non-socialist reform circles as well. The National Catholic Welfare Council's "Department of Social Action" applauded the socialists for

[713] Unions of 500 or less would pay $1 per month while local unions of three thousand to five thousand $10.00 per month. Joint Committee for Independent Labor Political Action to Organized Labor of New York City, June 21, 1922. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel 2. Minutes, July 15, 1922, 1-24. American Labor Party Papers. Tamiment Library. New York University. Microfilm. Folder 1.

abandoning dogmatic Marxism in exchange for a "moderate public ownership program."[714] But the ALP did not break into the mainstream.

Most New York craft unions kept their distance. While the former head of the NY Farmer-Labor Party, Jerome de Hunt (who was also president of the New York Harbor Council of the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks), claimed the ALP marched with the Railroad Brotherhoods in the CPPA, this was hardly the case. The State Federation of Labor, and the Central Trades and Labor Council of Greater New York, both close to the state's Democratic Party, had not forgotten the SPA and FLP's role in Al Smith's narrow defeat in the 1920 gubernatorial election. Responding to the American Labor Party's call for a conference in July to "unite the forces of Organized Labor in this city," William Kehoe, a Teamster and Council secretary, demanded the new party cease its efforts. "We resent the action of any group attempting to call a conference in the name of labor on political action when the Central Trades and Labour Council is the bonafide representative body of the [AFL] in New York City," Kehoe wrote. New York's unions would follow the CPPA's appeal and the American Federation of Labor's nonpartisan directive. The latter directive, Kehoe pointed out, was one that even some of the ALP unions had voted to uphold at the last convention. After learning that the state's railroad unions would be joining with the Central Trades in avoiding the ALP, Hillquit fired off another letter to Howe, insisting that it would be "very unfortunate to allow the two groups to continue working at cross purposes."[715]

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[714] N.C.W.C. Dept. of Social Action, "Socialist Party Plans Merger in Labor Party," *Catholic Advance* (August 8, 1922), 15; Joint Committee for Independent Labor Political Action to Organized Labor of New York City, June 21, 1922. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel 2.

[715] William F. Kehoe to Edward F. Cassidy, June 28, 1922, Morris Hillquit to Frederic C. Howe, June 26, 1922. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel 2; Jerome T. DeHunt, "The Need of an American Labor Party," *Upholsterers Journal* (July 1923), 84-85. Delegates to the 1922 AFL convention referred the resolution on non-partisan action to the Executive Committee. The EC adopted the proposal and the

For his part, New York State Federation of Labor president James P. Holland determined that a non-partisan strategy would not immediately disqualify radical candidates. Organized workers were to rally around whichever candidate, "Republican, Democrat or Socialist," would be "fair" to labor's interests. Beyond these platitudes, it remained certain that Holland expected both the American Federation of Labor and the Railroad Brotherhoods to line up behind the Democratic Party-- especially for state-wide office. At the NYSFL annual convention, shortly after Holland issued his comment on labor's commitment to non-partisanship, he invited George R. Lunn to speak. Lunn, a former minister, had attained national recognition after joining the Socialist Party and winning office as mayor of Schenectady, New York.[716] But by the time of the August 1922 meeting, Lunn was a contender for either the Democratic nomination for Senate or Governor.

Lunn's trajectory from the turn-of-the-century through the post-war era highlights the complicated relationship between the New York State Democratic Party, organized labor, and socialism. Elected as Mayor in 1911, Lunn had earned labor's favor for his support of organizing drives at Schenectady's enormous General Electric facility and his rallies in support of striking workers across the region. By 1915, the mayor quickly ran afoul of the SPA-- which accused him of reformism, refusing to accept party decisions on

resolution passed the convention without objection. American Federation of Labor, *Report of the Proceedings of the Forty-Second Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor* (Washington, D.C., Law Reporter Company, 1922), 224-225, 478-479.

[716] "Copeland Won by 259,000," *New York Times* November 9, 1922, 1; "Urges Abolishing of State Police," *New York Times* (August 25, 1922), 3; *Official Proceedings Fifty-Ninth Annual Convention of the New York State Federation of Labor* (Utica: New York State Federation of Labor, 1922), 107.

staffing, and attempting to hand management of the local socialist paper to the reform minded Municipal Ownership League. He subsequently joined the Democratic Party.[717]

Lunn served as a congressman for one term before returning to office as mayor in 1919. His reputation as an uncompromising advocate for labor, his background as a religious leader, and his public repudiation of the Socialist Party contributed to his growing popularity in the NYSFL. The state Federation invited him to its annual convention nearly every year from 1920 through the middle of the decade. During these speeches he often praised labor for standing between "extreme radicals" on the left and "extreme conservatives" to the right. He sought to expand collective bargaining rights and keep the cost of energy, housing, and transport low for working people.[718]

Having loomed on the periphery of every state party convention since 1918, party officials and Tammany bosses chose Lunn as Al Smith's Lieutenant Governor in 1922. The decision not only appeased Lunn, who had unsuccessfully sought statewide office in both 1918 and 1920, but reinforced Smith's reputation as a pro-labor candidate. Smith had relied on labor since his time in the New York State Assembly. Indeed, he had a prominent role investigating the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire and in passing early child labor and worker's compensation insurance legislation. But near the end of his first term as

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[717] Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America: A Complete History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 161; David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1955), 13-14.
[718] *Official Proceedings Fifty-Eight Annual Convention of the New York State Federation of Labor* (Utica: New York State Federation of Labor, 1921), 47; *Official Proceedings Sixty-First Annual Convention of the New York State Federation of Labor* (Utica: New York State Federation of Labor, 1924), 9; "Lunn in Race for Senate," *Labor* (July 10, 1920), 4; "Anti-Hearst Men Agree on Smith As First Choice," *New York Times* (July 8, 1922), 1; "Hearst Routed and Hissed in Convention," *New York Tribune* (September 30, 1922), 1; "Dr. Lunn's Boom For Governorship Stirs Schenectady," *New York Tribune* (May 4, 1918), 18; "Lunn in Race for Senate," *Washington Post* (July 2, 1920), 9; "Mayor Lunn Announces Candidacy for Senate," *New York Tribune* (July 25, 1920), 3; "2,75 Beer Plank Win at Saratoga," *New York Times* (August 5, 1920), 1; "New York Democrats to Choose Candidates," *Baltimore Sun* (August 2, 1920), 2; "Split on Six-Hour Day," *New York Times* (September 12, 1930), 17; "Favor Lunn for Governor: State Letter Carriers' Association Wants the Congressman to Run," *New York Times* (July 5, 1918), 17.

governor, Smith found himself caught between a militant movement demanding more pay and less time on the clock and a financial sector hoping to stall inflation by curtailing expenses. The Republican-controlled legislature refused to countenance the governor's reconstruction plan to spur the construction of affordable housing, allowing the crisis of rising rent and apartment shortages to fester. The FLP and SPA benefited politically from the state government's inaction and siphoned off enough votes to defeat Smith.[719]

Refusing to be outflanked a second time, Smith celebrated Lunn's nomination and spent a good portion of his convention speech defending his labor record and holding Governor Nathan Miller to account for his opposition to the state's workers. The current governor had slashed budgetary appropriations for the labor department and laid off around a third of the state's already over-burdened workplace inspectors, Smith claimed. Recalling the governor's use of state troopers to violently suppress a four-month long streetcar strike in Albany, Smith compared the response to his time in office. While he would have offered conciliation, "Miller called the police."[720] The Smith campaign's renewed forceful tone helped him rack up a nearly 400,000 vote majority over his opponent and inaugurate a twenty-year stretch of Democratic control over that office.

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[719] The Governor's Reconstruction Commission had considered an ambitious program so lend state credit to emergency home building projects, but the legislature stalled the initiative. State of New York Executive Chamber, *Housing Conditions: Report of the Housing Committee of the Reconstruction Commission of the State of New York* (March 26, 1920) (Albany: J.B. Lyon and Co., 1920); Douglas B. Craig, *After Wilson: The Struggle for the Democratic Party* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 114-118; David Burner, *Politics of Provincialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 25-27; Robert Chiles, *The Revolution of '28: Al Smith, American Progressivism, and the Coming of the New Deal* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 33-70.

[720] "Smith Denounced Miller as Servant of 'Big Interests," *New York Times* (October 6, 1922), 1; "Order Sending Troops to Albany Is Ready for Use," *New York Times* (May 22, 1921), 1; "Labor Launches Fight to Abolish State Police," *New York Tribune* (August 25, 1922), 2; "Decide Not to Call Troops to Albany," *New York Times* (May 23, 1921), 12; "Miller Orders Out State Troopers to Guard Albany," *New York Times* (February 9, 1921), 1; "Hearst-Smith Will Give Lunn a Chance," *New York Tribune* (September 8, 1922), 9; "Smith is Given N.Y. Nomination," *Atlanta Constitution* (September 30, 1922), 1; "Talk Lunn for Governor," *New York Times* (February 16, 1922), 4; "Lunn Says It Means Unrest," *NYT* (July 19, 1923), 5; "Lunn Acts as Peacemaker," *New York Times* (May 18, 1922), 16.

Thousands of these votes seemingly came at the expense of the ALP. Tammany extended an extra hand to organized labor, and New Yorkers responded favorably.

A few months before the election, Hillquit told Howe that the ALP could "expect the election of fifteen to twenty members of the State Legislature and group of about half a dozen Representatives in Congress."[721] This claim was pure partisan bluster. The citizens of New York sent no American Labor Party candidates to any representative office. Some candidates did well-- ILGWU vice president (and future New York City councilman) Salvatore Ninfo received 12,000 votes in the 23rd congressional district (upper Bronx) and the socialist municipal judge, Jacob Panken, won around thirty percent of the vote in the East Village. And the new party did pull nearly 100,000 votes on the ALP ballot line across the city, but these votes were too diffuse to elect anyone. Gerrymandering was partly to blame. The state's redistricting, finished the year prior, had broken several of the solid blocs of socialistically-inclined neighborhoods. Meyer London, for instance, saw Albany planners radically alter his old district into one he stood virtually no chance of winning.[722] But redistricting aside, no mass groundswell of support had rushed to the ALP. Additionally embarrassing for the third party radicals, William Karlin, the party's congressional candidate in Harlem, had also very nearly spoiled Fiorello LaGuardia's CPPA-backed campaign. In his political years ahead, LaGuardia would work tirelessly to bring in socialist votes to prevent another failed bid.[723]

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[721] Morris Hillquit to Frederic C. Howe, June 26, 1922. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel 2.
[722] Historical congressional maps accessed on https://cdmaps.polisci.ucla.edu/
[723] Frank A. Warren, *An Alternative Vision: The Socialist Party in the 1930s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), 91.

Other left-led third party efforts associated with the CPPA met a similar fate. In Washington, where the Farmer-Labor Party was strongest, the organization had all but collapsed. The 1920 election had gone surprisingly well for Clemens J. France, the FLP's Senate candidate, who polled over a quarter of the vote. In the spring of 1922, Seattle's labor unions successfully united around the nonpartisan mayoral candidacy of Edwin J. Brown, a former socialist turned municipal reformer. Brown campaigned on a five-cent streetcar fare, labor rights, civil liberties, and anti-corruption.[724] He took his place in city hall only around three years after Mayor Ole Hanson had become a conservative icon for crushing the attempted "Bolshevik revolution" during the Seattle general strike.[725]

These victories convinced radicals in the Seattle Central Labor Council that public enthusiasm for a third party was a rising tide. The State Federation of Labor and Washington's organized farmers, however, saw the results as a highwater mark. While both the Seattle Laborites and the labor non-partisan forces maintained ties to the CPPA, the latter group had the full backing of the railroad brotherhoods, machinists, and Nonpartisan League. The non-partisan group believed that unseating Miles Poindexter, the two-term incumbent who had a year prior introduced legislation to ban strikes that could cause interstate disruptions, was too important to risk any third party adventurism.[726]

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[724] "The Road to Political Power," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (June, 1922), 423; "Seattle Mayor in Barber Union," *Spokane Chronicle* (June 14, 1922), 1; "The People Have Chosen," *Seattle Star* (May 3, 1922), 1; "5-Cent Fate in 90 Days," *Seattle Star* (June 5, 1922), 1; "'Doc' Brown Champion of Vice Addicts," *Seattle Star* (April 28, 1922), 1; "Dr. Brown Elected Mayor of Seattle," *News Tribune* (Tacoma) (May 3, 1922), 1.

[725] Hanson wrote a book on his experience as Mayor during the strike and toured the nation as something of a celebrity lecturer during the opening years of the decade. Ole Hanson, *Americanism Versus Bolshevism* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1920).

[726] Historian Shaun S. Nichols demonstrates that Washington Trade Unionists had actively lobbied state government officials since the turn of the twentieth century and had some influence in crafting labor legislation. With this view, the broader support the FLP won in 1920 was exceptional– influenced by the

The CPPA chose Clarence C. Dill as its candidate. A Spokane-based Democrat with a solid labor record, Dill had also voted against the war while in congress. After the CPPA carried him through the Democratic primary, statewide papers condemned him as the candidate of the "ultraradical elements" who supported the "soviet Plumb Plan." His anti-war record put him in league with other "Kaiser-worshipers" like Robert La Follette, these journalists asserted.[727]

By the spring, the Laborite-controlled Seattle Council nominated James A. Duncan, secretary of the organization, to run for Senate on the Farmer-Labor ticket. The council's decision came quickly on the heels of Washington State Federation president William Short demanding no central union take any action on political mobilization prior to the state's July convention. Almost certainly fearing that the State Federation would vote down third party action, Duncan and his chief lieutenants rammed through a resolution sponsoring an independent slate. Duncan claimed that the "rank and file" by "expression through the Farmer-Labor Party in November 1920, placed themselves so unmistakably on the record for independent political action." Even if Duncan had truly believed he represented the will of the Pacific Northwest's working class, the resolution may not have even passed the Seattle Central Labor Council democratically-- only a minority of unions had representatives present at the meeting, and the city's Building

influx of war-industry laborers and the economic chaos the armistice brought. That said, the turn to the CPPA was also a shift in direction, as Washington trade unionists turned from lobbying to active electioneering and candidate selection. Shaun S. Nichols, "Harmonious Insurrections: 'Labor Progressivism' and Working-Class Power in Washington State, 1886-1919," *Labor: Studies in Working Class History* 17 No. 2 (May 2020), 47-72.

[727] Charles B. Welch, "Poindexter vs. Dill," *Tacoma News Tribune* (November 3, 1922), 20; "Four Facts That Condemn C.C. Dill," *Spokesman Review* (November 7, 1922), 4.

Trades, Teamsters, Boilermakers, Electrical Workers, and Cooks unions had openly endorsed a non-partisan policy.[728]

While Duncan and his Puget Sound militants had long been a thorn in the side of the Washington Federation and the AFL, these union leaders were especially incredulous that the Farmer-Labor Party would risk electing a reactionary senator like Poindexter to satisfy an illusory claim to "the rank and file." The state CPPA was eager to cut Duncan out. Even the AFL's less-active Labor National Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee became directly involved in the feud. Gompers himself appealed to Duncan to change course. After insisting that Dill had given "100 per cent" to labor during his time in office, Gompers asked Duncan whether it was "not the course of wisdom to do anything and everything lawfully within our power to bring about the defeat of Mr. Poindexter." The aging union leader attached a great deal of importance to Dill's election. "It is not a question of one's personal interest or ambition, but it is larger, much larger," he continued, "That is whether as a trade unionist and an earnest worker in the cause of labor, justice freedom and democracy, whether one has the right to stand in the way of a possible rebuke to a public officer who has so thoroughly betrayed his plighted word."[729] In the end, Duncan would win only twelve percent of the vote.

By the fall, Duncan's candidacy struggled to even gain traction in greater-Seattle while the non-partisan labor groups had made great strides in union towns across the

[728] "Central Labor Council Notes," *Labor Journal* (Everett, WA) (April 28, 1922), 1; "Farmer-Laborites Give Seattle Central Labor Council the Rush Act and Obtain Endorsement for Their Program," *Labor Journal* (Everett, WA) (April 28, 1922), 1; "Try to Inject New Life in Farmer-Labor Party," *Spokane Chronicle* (May 30, 1922), 5.

[729] "Report of the A.F. of L. National Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee," 57. November 22, 1922. American Federation of Labor Papers. Executive Council Minutes of Meetings. November 18, 20-25, 1922. Proquest. 002035_008_0154. "Gompers to Duncan," *American Federationist* (December 1922), 897-899.

state, digging footholds in Seattle, Tacoma, Everett, Bellingham, and Spokane. With help from the national CPPA, organizers assessed candidates for five percent of their would-be annual salary as an elected official and matched the contribution with union funds. Most, including Dill, took the deal. The assessments would help recoup the cost of paid election workers. Filling these positions were staffers from the Brotherhoods, union auxiliaries, and other organizations of "progressive women." They printed sample ballots and highlighted how labor members, farmers, and their allies should vote across tickets. On election day they canvassed polling places making last minute appeals to voters.[730]

The efforts paid off-- Dill defeated Poindexter with a narrow four thousand votes. While the nation-wide trend toward the Democrats had doubtlessly helped Dill, the CPPA-backed organizers provided the decisive edge. While the Democratic candidate in 1920 had failed to carry a single county, Dill won Spokane, most of the industrialized Puget Sound, and large swaths of the agricultural and logging regions. Two years later, when the state's labor groups backed Robert La Follette for president, the Democratic candidate carried only ten per cent of the electorate.[731] Dill entered office indebted to labor, and similar to the ALP in New York, the third ticket labor party had nothing to show for their efforts but a lethargic turnout.

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[730] Not every endorsed candidate looked kindly on these assessments. As J.F. Howard, a Trainman and candidate for Constable in Spokane, described "They phoned me three times before the primaries to come to headquarters, as I had been indorsed. I did not go. Two members came over to the courthouse and demanded $48 from me, which I refused to pay… That is the reason that my name is not on the ticket. Now I want A.J. Fabin, the secretary, to understand that I have been a member of organized labor for 27 years and if organized labor has got so rotten that a brother has got to buy their support at the polls I say to — with them." "Republicans Give Aid to Democrats" *Oregon Daily Journal* (November 4, 1922), 2; "Try to Inject New Life in Farmer-Labor Party," *Spokane Chronicle* May 30, 1922, 5; "Polls Will Harbor Paid Labor Workers," *Spokane Daily Chronicle* (November 6, 1922), 6.

[731] For maps of the Washington election, see https://www.ourcampaigns.com/RaceDetail.html?RaceID=22760; https://www.ourcampaigns.com/RaceDetail.html?RaceID=22780.

Only in Wisconsin did third party leftists improve their lot, and they did so through active cooperation with the CPPA. Wisconsin was, of course, the Conference's epicenter. La Follette represented the beating heart of their prospective "labor bloc," and his reelection in 1922 was vital to the group's survival. The nearly 100,000 votes the Socialist Party commanded in Milwaukee had sunk La Follette's 1920 candidate for Senate, James Thompson, both in the primary and general election. And even if the incumbent La Follette had enough popularity to clinch a reelection, a socialist candidate could deny the CPPA the rhetorical power of a crushing election performance. Factional squabbling would also undermine the Conference's claim to unity amongst all progressive elements. The state SPA also stood to gain from a joint struggle. Milwaukee socialists hoped to preserve if not expand their share of the state legislature and return ousted congressman Victor Berger to his seat in the Fifth Congressional district. A La Follette-backed progressive challenge in any of those races could doom any of these prospects.[732]

Berger had been well-primed to support some level of political cooperation. From the beginning of his career, the Austrian immigrant had always appeared more interested in meeting the needs of trade unionists than holding them to a philosophical Marxist standard. In 1905, he had suggested that in the event Milwaukee socialists could not nominate a suitable candidate for an elected office, the Party could endorse the least reactionary person making the race. This view put him in the party's minority. For those

[732] For an excellent overview of Milwaukee socialism and progressivism, see Tula A. Connell, *Conservative Counterrevolution: Challenging Liberalism in 1950s Milwaukee* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 25-29

wayward comments, the Wisconsin SPA temporarily recalled Berger from his position on the party's National Executive Board.

Years later at the 1920 convention, Berger forcefully admonished his colleagues for prizing sectarianism above the interests of working-class voters. If the SPA lost ground in 1920, the Party's members had only themselves to blame. "We have been in this thing for forty years and now we must admit... that the great people of America do not know what we are after," he exclaimed "Whose fault is it? Our own fault. We are always speaking a language that the people do not understand." Whenever the Milwaukee party had captured a modicum of electoral success, he posited, it had done so by speaking and writing in "plain American" so that "every hod-carrier and machinist" could understand.[733] A standard bearer for reformist socialism, Berger prized pragmatism. If currying the favor of a rising progressive tide meant the party could preserve, and possibly even expand, its influence in Milwaukee, then it would be foolish to not clear the way for La Follette.

Berger still fought an uphill battle to keep the party out of the Senate race. When he introduced a resolution to make no nomination for Senate in 1922, a reporter for the *Capital Times* described the resultant ruckus as the "hottest fight" known in the state party's history. August W. Strehlow, a city alderman, denounced the "pro-La Follette" resolution. He warned that asking reliable Socialist Party voters to enter the Republican primary or split their tickets in the general would be "political suicide." Former state assembly member H.O. Kent agreed, reminding his fellow delegates that La Follette had

[733] W.M. Feigenbaum, "Wisconsin-- Fundamentals or Tactics?" *New York Call* (June 28, 1922), 7; National Socialist Party Convention, Third Day, May 11, 1920, 52-55. Socialist Party of America Papers. Series 1 Part D National Conventions 1902-1962. 1920 Convention. Proquest. 201901_076_1185.

refused to support their candidate, Frank Weber, in 1920 and ran Thompson as an independent instead. He questioned how far the Progressive Republicans would go to support the socialist side of the coalition. "I would not trade the poorest socialist for the best progressive," Kent claimed. Berger and his supporters, including Alderman John Doerfler, that the senior Wisconsin senator's principled stand against the war had been nearly identical to theirs, and he deserved the support.

Ultimately, Berger's resolution passed fifty-nine to forty. His faction had managed to swing some support by adding to the text an addendum condemning La Follette for his "continuous allegiance to this reactionary and corrupt Republican party" and bemoaning that so many "well meaning, progressive voters" continued to support major party candidates. But the pro-resolution socialists celebrated their success nonetheless, claiming they had satisfied the "spirit of the conference of all radical forces held in Chicago." They also insisted to their foes that the CPPA remained the best chance for a Labor Party in America.[734] The vote, of course, still sent shockwaves across the Socialist Party.

One contributor to the *New York Call* demanded the Party's executive board nullify the resolution and potentially expel the offending members. SPA theoretician and former New York State Assemblyman William M. Feigenbaum determined that the La Follette resolution was a debate over "tactics" and "not fundamentals." Though he, too, questioned whether the change in strategy was a proactive one. Feigenbaum agreed it was necessary to amass power "as a club to make the old parties make concessions to the

[734] "Socialists Attack Senator La Follette, But Name No Candidate for U.S. Senator," *Capital Times* (June 19, 1922), 12; "State Socialists Back La Follette on His War Record," *La Crosse Tribune* (June 18, 1922), 1; "Socialist Meeting Split on Candidates for U.S. Senator," *La Crosse Tribune* (June 17, 1922), 6.

workers now," but worried that if "the workers scatter their votes, first, to this 'good' candidate, the building up of the power of the workers will never come." Feigenbaum addressed his question specifically to Socialist Party voters who had voted for Woodrow Wilson in 1916 to keep the United States out of the war. "If Wilson had lost "Would war and conscription and espionage and the 'white terror' have come a minute sooner or later," he asked. In California, the Oakland chapter "vigorously opposed" endorsing any political party or independent candidate "who fail to recognize the class struggle, and who do not stand, in unmistakable terms, for the collective ownership, and democratic control of all public utilities."[735] Debates over split ticket endorsements had risen to the very top of the SPA.

At the Party's 1922 convention, Hillquit's proposed resolution allowing state chapters to "co-operate with the organizations of Labor and the working farmers… in political action" met a highly skeptical response. Defending continued participation in the CPPA, Hillquit condemned opponents as "blind" to their "opportunities." "You stand here talking about trivialities when you have an opportunity of taking a big part, perhaps the leading part, in the labor movement," he continued. Hillquit's staunchest defender was Alexander Kahn, a manager of the *Forward* and future founder of the *New Leader* and the New York Liberal Party. "We must find some way of working with the labor movement or go out of business," Kahn flatly stated. "Instead of looking scornfully at the labor fakirs, let's look at ourselves...We haven't yet struck the key that will unite the working classes. Perhaps you may not want to fuse with the labor movement, but your

[735] W.M. Feigenbaum, "Wisconsin-- Fundamentals or Tactics?" *New York Call* (June 28, 1922), 7; Joseph Bearak, "The Wisconsin Convention," June 28, 1922, 7; "Cal. Socialists Fight Fusion," *New York Call* (June 28, 1922), 7.

membership does."[736] The Executive Council approved the measure by a narrow twelve to ten.

The decision to throw in with the progressives in 1922 seemed to benefit the Wisconsin Socialists. While the New York Party saw a catastrophic decline in political influence, the Milwaukee local elected two new state senators and maintained ten seats in the assembly. After a four-year hiatus, Victor Berger retook his seat in congress. La Follette benefitted from the alliance as well. If the Socialist members of state government voted with progressives on key pieces of legislation, as they were expected to, then his bloc would have majorities in both chambers. And considering that John J. Blaine won reelection as governor, taking a complete slate of statewide officers with him, progressives could now control the entire state government. La Follette himself bested his Republican primary opponent, university president William Ganfield, by more than two hundred thousand votes. The "Committee of 44," a shadowy organization of Milwaukee industrialists, had worked hard to paint La Follette as a radical socialist and would be dictator. "Remember! Socialism in action will destroy all that made America great," one anti-La Follette advertisement read. "Vote to SAVE your home and SAVE YOUR FARM from the encroachments of Sovietism and Socialism." But these attacks did nothing to slow the senator's advance. In a final gambit, establishment Republicans and

[736] "Talking it Over," *Oklahoma Leader* (May 5, 1922), 1; "Monday Morning Session," *Socialist World* (May 1922), 12-13; Report of the National Executive Committee to the National Convention at Cleveland, April 29, 1922. 1-2. Socialist Party of America Papers. Series 1 Part D National Conventions 1902-1962. 1922 Convention. Proquest. 201901_077_0004. For more on Alexander Kahn, see "Kahn, Alexander." In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 719. Vol. 11. Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007.

Democrats ran as an independent Jessie Jack Hooper, a suffragist and early member of the League of Women Voters. La Follette defeated her by 300,000 votes.[737]

Wisconsin was perhaps the CPPA's most successful test case-- a prime example of what a united political effort between socialists, radical farmers, and labor could accomplish. Across the state, the constituent elements of the Conference for Progressive Political Action lined up behind the senator. Only five years earlier, both La Follette and Berger's political futures were very much in doubt. Now, loosely united, the two midwestern radicals stood vindicated atop a political force that had made its presence felt across the nation.

Conclusion

During the summer of 1922, as trade union organizers entered primaries in states across the country, Morris Hillquit wrote to Frederic Howe to explain why some socialists remained opposed to the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Howe, apparently, could not understand why SPA national secretary Otto Branstetter seemed so driven to assault Oscar Ameringer and the socialists who followed him into the Democratic Party. Hillquit confessed that he was also "somewhat distressed by the situation" but saw no ground for "interfering with Branstetter's position or activities." Further, Hillquit, too, had "not the slightest faith" in a non-partisan policy. "Assuming that the forces of the 'Re-Construction League' win out and capture the Democratic

[737] "Tittemore to Oppose 'Bob'? 44's to Decide," *Wisconsin State Journal* (January 8, 1922), 1; Blaine Hits at Corporations, 44 Committee," *Wisconsin State Journal* (April 15, 1922), 1; "To the Voters of Dane County," *Wisconsin State Journal* (September 1, 1922), 10; "Host of New Faces in 1923 Wisconsin State Legislature," Appleton *Post Crescent* (September 16, 1922), 1; "Wisconsin in Congress," *Capital Times* (June 13, 1922), 12; For more on Hooper, see "Hooper, Jessie Annette Jack," *Wisconsin Historical Society*. https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS1640

Party, what will they do with it in the next Presidential election," Hillquit asked. "It seems to me perfectly clear that such dilly-dallying with 'smart' practical politics will only delay the formation of a serious and powerful independent party of workers and farmers." The lifelong radical could not countenance the "destruction" of the Oklahoma Socialist Party for "a mere political phantom." Howe's response demonstrated a lack of understanding of, or sympathy with, the socialist's concerns. "Wherever the movement is a group movement, and wherever the Nonpartisan League and the socialists have done a lot of preliminary work, things are going amazingly well," Howe wrote.[738] He was ultimately correct in his conclusion.

The creation of the Conference for Progressive Political Action spurred two developments simultaneously. In the first, organized labor and farmers matured politically. Using primarily trade union funds, organizers in states like Minnesota, Wisconsin, Washington, New York, and Oklahoma mobilized impressive campaigns. They reversed labor's misfortunes from 1920, upsetting several popular incumbents, and determining the outcome of several crucial races. This development, however, brought the concurrent demise of former bastions of the organized left. With the exception of Wisconsin, the socialists and Laborites lost ground in virtually every one of CPPA's theaters.

In a twist of irony, the SPA, and to a lesser extent the FLP, had never been so prominent in American political life, yet simultaneously never so close to institutional irrelevance. Radicals in the two parties had been invited to participate in a new political venture alongside some of the nation's largest bodies of organized workers. The CPPA

[738] Morris Hillquit to Frederic C. Howe, April 6, 1922, Frederic C. Howe to Morris Hillquit, May 25, 1922. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel 2.

had offered Morris Hillquit, Rose Schneiderman, James Oneal and John Fitzpatrick positions of authority. Yet, as the CPPA rounded off its first year of operation, and delegates once again prepared to meet in convention, these individuals on the left looked wearily upon their emaciated ranks and wondered whether the sacrifices made justified the victories won-- whether Kahn's suggestion of "working with the labor movement" would undo the structures they had spent years building.

Chapter 8: "Flaming Eyes and Fast Beating Hearts"

Prior to the 1922 election, the CPPA was more a prototype than an established political organization. The unions, farmers, progressives, and third party radicals that met in February of that year remained only loosely united. Yet by sharing information, establishing new magazines and papers, and finetuning electioneering practices, several CPPA chapters found unexpectedly strong results at the polls. The election also forced a confrontation of ideologies– one that would largely be fought within the Conference for Progressive Political Action.

The following chapter provides a view into the intellectual debates and currents within the CPPA from late 1922 through 1923. The diverse groups that made up the Conference for Progressive Political Action came from a variety of backgrounds. Yet, no matter their specific affiliation, CPPA supporters universally believed that workers had a *responsibility* to capture governmental power and use it in favor of the producing class. Whatever their differences, these individuals generally looked to the British Labour Party and other European social democrats for examples and roadmaps.

The chapter begins with a look at the CPPA's December 1922 meeting in Cleveland at which members of the Chicago Federation of Labor and the national Farmer-Labor Party determined that the CPPA no longer served their interests. They left to form a new party, one that collapsed within a matter of months. Representatives of the Socialist Party and their allies in the needle trades came to the opposite conclusion. Despite their continued hope for a new party, they deepened their relationship to the Conference.

The presence of radicals ensured that the American Federation of Labor remained aloof from the Brotherhood's political venture. While both groups held an ostensibly non-partisan outlook, and often cooperated in electing friendly candidates, the two federations did not see eye to eye. The chapter will discuss AFL President Samuel Gompers's view of labor conservatism and why he steadfastly refused to join the CPPA.[739] Much of the disagreement also revolved around European social democracy. While a mutual admiration for like-minded parties abroad united labor progressives and socialists, the same impulse alienated the traditional and craft-oriented Samuel Gompers.

Socialists grasped onto Labor Party politics to redefine their place in American politics. Believing they could transition from a small political party to an educational force in the broader American labor movement, socialist leaders like Morris Hillquit praised the BLP's example profusely. Cooperation with the CPPA, however, was not always beneficial to the SPA. Admitting that party members could advance socialism outside of the SPA resulted in the flight of many prominent rank and filers. Similarly, leftwing socialists questioned the labor party turn and whether or not Hillquit and Berger had given too much away to non-Marxist radicals.

Heartily encouraging the Socialist Party to adopt a less dogmatic approach were the needle trades, specifically the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union. Like many industrial unions, the ILGWU depended on sympathetic politicians to level the playing field between wealthy business owners and a largely immigrant workforce

[739] Jon R. Huibregtse argues that "the failure of the brotherhoods and the AFL to come together seems to lie in the relationship between [Warren] Stone and Gompers, who were suspicious of each other. Neither man wanted to appear to be subordinate to the other." As argued previously, Gompers did worry about raids from Stone's non-AFL affiliated unions. But the root of the disagreement was ideological. Stone increasingly sought government ownership and mass political action as tools to embolden labor's place in America. Gompers vehemently disagreed. Jon R. Huibregtse, *American Railroad Labor and the Genesis of the New Deal* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2010), 41.

scattered across urban America. It was also an industry ripe for exploitation, necessitating legislation for safety and hygiene. Because of its high concentrations of women and foreign-born workers, the union also participated in movements for protective hours legislation and fought against immigration restriction. The needle trades had long been politically active.[740] For Garment Workers leaders like Max Danish and Benjamin Schlessinger, the British Labour Party was the perfect amalgam of industrial and political democracy– a model that could fulfill the SPA's mission to unite workers politically.

The chapter will conclude with an investigation of Frederic Howe and Cooperative economics. Socialist Party members may have seen European mass-parties of the left as inherently anti-capitalist, but Howe and his like-minded colleagues in the PLS and Brotherhoods saw them as promoting a fairer capitalism. Twentieth century capitalism had turned entirely predatory, Howe believed. Through Cooperation, producers could herald in an economic system that generated fair and equally-distributed profit for efficient production based on need.

From Morris Hillquit to Frederic Howe, the CPPA was far from a homogenous group. Yet it was one that, through its many ideological traditions, found a common ground that united a large swath of Americans behind a common political motive. Between the end of 1922 and the beginning of 1924, members of the CPPA debated labor's role in the nation's political economy, the relevance of European social democracy to American life, and whether industrial democracy and industrial capitalism could ever be reconciled. American politics changed in the 1920s. The collapse of

[740] Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire* (Second Edition) (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 31-168; Daniel Katz, *All Together Different* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 46-71; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 303-304

wartime industrial democracy and the relative success of labor parties abroad convinced many traditional trade unionists that socialists had a point. The working class needed protection not only on the shop floor, but in the halls of government. Similarly, socialists acknowledged a painful truth: the Debsian era of consistent Socialist Party growth was over. For them, European social democracy offered a way to survive as an institution—even if it meant sacrificing the party's independent electoral arm. In short, progressive trade unionists moved left and Socialist Party members moderated their views. The result was a contested American version of social democracy, represented by the Conference for Progressive Political Action.

"Time to quit pussyfooting": December 1922

The groups comprising the Conference for Progressive Political Action eagerly awaited their second conference, scheduled for December 11. Early December had been a whirlwind for the Wisconsin senator and his reliable entourage of labor leaders and reformers. On the first of the month, the People's Legislative Service had called a meeting on Capitol Hill to strategize how best to "advance the interests of the people" and to "drive Special Privilege out of control of Government." The PLS would "discuss practical means of translating progressive victory into legislation." Among the one hundred attendees were around thirty congressional representatives and a dozen senators. Kansas senator Arthur Capper, considered the head of the Senate's informal but powerful farm bloc, Burton K. Wheeler, and Fiorello La Guardia all attended. And while the PLS emphasized the attendance of voting members of congress, Basil Manly also invited notable allies like Florence Kelly, Samuel Gompers, Benjamin C. Marsh of the Farmer's

Council, League of Women Voters leader Elizabeth Hauser, NWTUL organizer Ethel Smith, and longtime Seamen's Union president, Andrew Furuseth.[741]

Those at the PLS summit demonstrated a palpable sense of excitement, a mood they carried with them to Cleveland a week and a half later. "No one who attended the conference of the People's Legislative Service could fail to be impressed with the fact that a great political transformation is taking place," J.A.H. Hopkins wrote.[742] Frank Walsh agreed. "They are really going to cut a big figure in legislation during the next two years," he wrote to his friend Joseph B. Shannon, boss of Kansas City's northside Democratic machine. He told the same to Ed Nockels of the Chicago Federation of Labor. For his part, La Follette, too, felt energized. "I… feel we have started a movement which if not neglected or aborted will be productive of beneficial results for the common people of the country," he confided to Walsh after their private meeting.[743]

The Conference for Progressive Political Action and the People's Legislative Service remained ostensibly separate organizations. Yet no one would deny that La Follette and his various educational outlets headquartered in the Machinist's Building were the center of both organizations.[744] The post-election Washington meeting had

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[741] "Conferees At Capitol Plan Death Blow to 'Privilege,'" *Washington Herald* (December 2, 1922), 1-2; "Discrimination By Mellon in Taxes, Progressive Says," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (December 2, 1922), 2; "New Progressive Bloc for Direct Primary," *Green Bay Press-Gazette* (December 2, 1922), 1; "Bloc is La Follette," *Kansas City Times* (December 2, 1922), 2; Robert M. La Follette and George Huddleston to Frank Walsh, November 25, 1922. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 11. Folder November 21-30.

[742] Frank A. Pattison, "The Progressive Conference at Washington," *Buffalo Labor Journal* (December 21, 1922), 3.

[743] Robert M. La Follette to Frank Walsh, December 18, 1922; Frank Walsh to Joseph B. Shannon, December 1 1922; Frank Walsh to Ed Nockels, December 1, 1922; Frank Walsh to George W. Norris, December 4, 1922; Basil Manly to Walsh, December 6, 1922. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 11. December 1-16, 1922.

[744] As Louis Budenz wrote in *Labor Age* following the convention, "As was predicted… the Cleveland gathering… was much influenced by what took place at Washington. It also drew up a program– bearing a close resemblance to the Washington declaration. "What Will He Do With It?" *Labor Age* (January 1923), 15.

proved to Manly that the PLS and La Follette forces had built a "very solid foundation for real achievement during the next few years." The delegates had easily solved what friction there was in committee. Manly's experience drifting between committees reinforced his strong belief that the CPPA, despite its more fractious ideological composition, would carry on into 1923. To hold the groups together, he proposed that both the PLS and CPPA focus on the big uniting issues that producers and consumers cared about and actively avoid any third rails. The labor-progressive-socialist coalition tended "to split only when it comes to making up a comprehensive platform and deciding upon the emphasis which should be placed upon each of their pet hobbies," he concluded.[745]

Unfortunately for Manly, a comprehensive platform was exactly what many on the CPPA's left coveted most. Representatives of the Farmer-Labor Party came to the Cleveland conference ready to do battle for a new party founded on radical principles. They had few other options. The voters had thoroughly spurned the FLP in the midterm elections. Not only had the party's central chapter in Chicago consistently failed to elect any candidate to city, state, or national office, but the CPPA had effectively buried the FLP in Washington. The New York chapter had merged into the American Labor Party. The once promising Connecticut Labor Party had garnered barely two percent of any statewide election. Mary T. Seymour, a state NAACP and trade union organizer who in 1920 had earned endorsements from Black papers as far as Chicago, ran ahead of her ticket for Secretary of State, but still failed to prove at all competitive. Josephine and Toscan Bennett, the wealthy Hartford-based suffrage and labor advocates who had

[745] Basil Manly to Frank Walsh, December 6, 1922. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 11. December 1-16, 1922. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 11. December 1-16, 1922.

founded the party, diverted their attention to worker education, joining the board of Brookwood Labor College.[746] In short, FLP delegates arrived in Cleveland with an unenviable lack of bargaining power. If the CPPA determined to stay the course on non-partisan organizing, it would finalize the FLP's drift toward a paper organization receiving little to no formal support from the Conference's other constituent members.

The Laborites made no secret of their plans to fight for a third party. Paul Hanna, a Federated Press reporter, had critiqued the December 1 La Follette meeting in the pages of *New Majority* for its supposed kowtowing to Democrats and Republicans. "Big guns were loaded with shrapnel for the old parties, but none was shot off," he wrote. La Follette and his congressional allies had demonstrated a clear "desire to stay well within the bounds of political expediency." They did not care to defy the "intrenched wealth and outworn political institutions" that kept the federal government running the usual paces. In a neighboring column, J.G. Brown agreed. Only new party candidates who owed total "allegiance to labor-- and to no one else" could break the cycle.[747]

New Majority editor Robert Buck issued a thinly veiled ultimatum: "it is time to act and act like men. It is time to quit pussyfooting. It is the day for development of the workers' own party… If the National Conference for Political Action is to be only a rival

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[746] By 1922, Seymour had also become the national director of the Anti-Lynching Crusaders of Connecticut. "Middletown Gives One Lone Democrat a Plurality Vote," *Hartford Courant* (November 8, 1922), 2; "Canvassers Board Finds Pallotti Has Largest Plurality," *Hartford Courant* (November 30, 1922), 17; "Plunkett Minor Party Nominee," *Hartford Courant* (September 19, 1922), 5; "Congratulates Norwich Anti-Lynchers," *Norwich Bulletin* (November 1, 1922), 1; "Canvassing Board Shows Connecticut Vote, 325,086," *Norwich Bulletin* (December 2, 1922), 5; "Conn. Laborites Got 6,201 Votes," *New York Call* (December 6, 1922), 9. *Workers Education in the United States: Report of Proceedings Second National Conference on Workers Education in the United States Held at the New School for Social Research New York City on April 22nd and 23rd, 1922* (New York: Workers Education Bureau of America, 1922), 84, 149, 151. Steve Thornton, "Josephine Bennett: Hartford's City Mother," *Connecticut History* (May 27, 2020), Published Digitally: https://connecticuthistory.org/hartfords-city-mother-josephine-bennett/

[747] J.G. Brown, "Farmer Labor Party News," *New Majority* (December 9, 1922), 2; Paul Hanna, "La Follette Group Withholds Its Fire," *The New Majority* (December 9, 1922), 2.

to the A.F. of L. nonpartisan political policy it will die out, as all dual organizations should."[748] Forcing a vote on the CPPA immediately forming a labor party had become one the FLP's few good options. On the off chance of success, FLP members would retain leadership positions in the national party and maintain a voice in its platform and direction. More likely, however, the vote for a third party would split the CPPA and make the FLP the de facto center for those demanding an independent and nationalized Labor Party.

A showdown was all but guaranteed. With the organized left united in a desire to eschew participation in Democratic and Republican Party politics, a bitter fight over the Conference's direction could undo the nascent alliance. If the FLP convinced the Socialist Party to join it in leaving, it would ensure progressive and left-wing rivalries in crucial states like Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Washington. Conversely, if the Brotherhoods decided the radicals had amassed too much control, and bolted to go it alone, the Conference would lose its primary source of funding.

As expected, the FLP delegation-- which included party stalwarts Brown, Nockels, Bennett, Buck, and Max Hayes-- introduced a resolution declaring for "independent political action by the agricultural and industrial workers through a party of their own." The Conference voted against the resolution 64 to 52. The FLP swore vengeance. The CPPA was nothing but a "reactionary" body under the thumb of Ed Keating and the Brotherhoods, or in the words of John Fitzpatrick a "scab organization."

[748] "Time for Action," *New Majority* (December 9, 1922), 4.

Brown, the only ranking Laborite on the CPPA's national committee, formally resigned in mid-February 1923.[749]

Aside from the FLP's public display of animosity, the rest of the Conference for Progressive Political Action emerged from the December meeting more united than before. Neither the pragmatic industrial unions nor the idealistically Marxist Socialist Party split the ranks. Barring the few FLP bolters, virtually every attendee left Cleveland impressed by the Conference's accomplishments. Thomas Van Lear concluded that the meeting had laid "Good ground for much encouragement and hope." Warren Stone agreed, congratulating delegates on the "achievement of bringing together a large group of delegates representing every known party and political reform in the country, and getting them to sink their individual opinions and small differences in order to unite on a common platform." Brotherhood representatives were hardly the only ones to summarize the session as an "event of transcending importance." William Kohn, the head of the Upholsterer's Union and a staunch ally of the American Labor Party, wrote that "The outstanding feature of the conference was the get together spirit of the delegates, irrespective of political shades or personal ambitions. The sole desire that seemed to prevail was to unite all the liberals and progressives on one common political ground." Abraham Baroff of the Garment Workers saw much progress as well. Conservative trade unionists who had previously "laughed and mocked" the ILGWU for its radicalism now agreed "that a new world must be built; they only disagree concerning the method and the

[749] *Report of the Proceedings of the Second Conference for Progressive Political Action Held at Cleveland, Ohio December 11, 12 1922* (CPPA Pamphlet), 19-20, 28-29; "Fitzpatrick Calls Cleveland Conference 'Scab Organization,'" *New York Call* (December 21, 1922), 3; "Jab Party Plan at Cleveland," *New Majority* (December 16, 1922), 1; "Will F.L.P. Cut No-Party Group?" *New Majority* (December 23, 1922), 1; "Old Partisan," *New Majority* (December 30, 1922), 4; "Brown Off C.P.P.A. National Committee," *New Majority* (February 24, 1923), 2.

way."[750] Most of those who crowded the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineer's convention hall-- both radical and conservative-- appeared well-pleased by the outcome.

Some divisions over the labor party resolutions, of course, lingered just below the surface. Sidney Hillman and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers delegates voted for a third party and called the final decision "heartbreaking." The ILGWU, in theory, too, remained committed to a labor party. Baroff, while concluding his thoughts on a positive note, included the caveat that he in no way expected "world-upsetting results from the Cleveland conference." He maintained the centrality of a "strong revolutionary labor movement" with its own distinct political vision to the needle trade's plan for the future.[751]

There was still much daylight between the rail unions and the radicals over this debate.[752] But for the time being, the CPPA maintained a *prevailing* spirit of unity. No other group immediately followed the Chicago laborites out of the convention. For what cohesiveness there was, the Socialist Party deserved a great deal of credit. Throughout the convention's two days, Morris Hillquit and James Oneal worked tirelessly to keep their members in line and to tamp down factionalist fervor. When Robert Buck

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[750] "The Progressive Conference at Cleveland," *Minnesota Daily Star* (December 15, 1922), 26; "The Chief's Page," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (January 1923), 10; "Cleveland Meeting of Conference for Progressive Political Action," *Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen's Magazine* (January 1923), 3-7; William Kohn, "The Conference for Progressive Political Action," *Upholsterers' Journal* (January, 1923), 175-176; Abraham Baroff, "The Political Conference in Cleveland," *Justice* (December 29, 1922), 4.

[751] "What Will He Do With It?" *Labor Age* (January 1923), 15; "Opinions of the Labor Press," *New York Call* (December 24, 1922), 10; Abraham Baroff, "The Political Conference in Cleveland," *Justice* (December 29, 1922), 4.

[752] The rumblings on the left hardly appeared in the reporting of railroad unions or in the pages of *Labor*. In a far cry from even the left's soft skepticism, *Machinist Monthly* editor Fred Hewitt claimed the CPPA "wasted little time listening to outbursts of rhetoric or lengthy arguments on every subject under the sun. It got down to business at once." The conference proceeded "without a discordant note being injected into its deliberations, and there is no doubt that the plan adopted furnishes a common ground on which all can work harmoniously together in a common cause." "Progressives Make Progress," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (January 1923), 53.

introduced his appeal for a new CPPA ballot line to the Committee on Program and Resolutions, Oneal, the SPA's representative on that council, voted against it. While he was not "opposed to such a party," Oneal had decided that "the organized masses" were not yet ready. After Laborite and left-Socialist critics confronted him for his vote in the coming weeks, Oneal justified his position several times over in the *New York Call*. "There is nothing to be gained by trying to push this movement into a course of action that it is not ready to take," he insisted. "If it is eventually to organize an independent party, the big organizations now committed to work within the capitalist parties must decide to organize it." The Socialist Party veteran maintained that he and his fellow delegates had understood from the CPPA's outset the "utter folly" of "withdrawing to some little corner" and leaving the "great organized mass behind."[753] They would take part in no rump Laborite caucus.

Hillquit shared this determination. As he did in the Chicago meeting ten months prior, the party leader had almost single-handedly prevented an acrimonious floor fight over the CPPA's platform. The resolutions committee had originally drafted a multi-page statement covering eleven planks in great detail. The portion dealing with the railroads took a paragraph explaining labor's opposition to Esch-Cummins, listed numerous pieces of pending legislation, and ultimately took up nearly half of the text. When delegates from the Farmer's Council and Nonpartisan League suggested the committee "boil down" the platform to be able to "print it on the back of a postal card," Keating complied.

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[753] "What Will He Do With It?" *Labor Age* (January 1923), 15; "Opinions of the Labor Press," *New York Call* (December 24, 1922), 10; James Oneal, "The Cleveland Conference," *New York Call* (December 18, 1922), 6; (December 21, 1922), 9; "Impetus Given to Labor Party, Oneal Asserts," *New York Call* (December 15, 1922), 9; *Report of the Proceedings of the Second Conference for Progressive Political Action Held at Cleveland, Ohio December 11, 12 1922* (CPPA Pamphlet), 26.

Producing what he called "the shortest platform ever produced in the history of American politics," Keating's new document clocked in at barely 225 words and contained only six planks.[754]

The truncated document maintained the spirit of the original, but for the sake of space cut mentions of anti-labor injunctions, workplace protections for children, and disarmament and demilitarization only implied. While most of the committee voted in favor of the more digestible pronouncement, and no delegate openly disagreed with the six included points, a large contingent of socialists, laborites, and left-wing labor leaders protested what had ended up on the cutting room floor. Hillquit threw himself in the middle of the brewing "storm of protest" to suggest that the Conference vote in favor of the platform with an amendment that the Resolutions Committee continue to sharpen the condensed document to explicitly include the worker-control of coal, the right to collectively bargain and strike, child labor, amnesty for political prisoners, and the threat of "financial imperialism."[755]

Hillquit's last-minute intervention earned him high praise from CPPA leadership. Invited to give extended remarks toward the end of the conference, the socialist congratulated the representatives for having "sat down together not to discuss our

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[754] "The repeal of the Esch-Cummins railroad law," the public control of coal mines and water power, direct elections and open primaries, a congressional override to judicial review, a finance corporation for agriculture, an income tax targeting the highest earners, minimum wage and industrial equality for women, and federally-backed maternal health programs. *Report of the Proceedings of the Second Conference for Progressive Political Action Held at Cleveland, Ohio December 11, 12 1922* (CPPA Pamphlet), 22.
[755] "Progressive Forces Unite," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (January 1923), 33, 35; "Cleveland Meeting of Conference for Progressive Political Action," *Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen's Magazine* (January 1923), 3-7; Clint C. Houston, "Producers Stick to Proven Method for Future Effort," *Labor* (December 23, 1922), 1, 3; "Progressives Frown on Third Party Talk," *Labor* (December 16, 1922), 1; "Real Political Force Born, Johnston Tells Producers," *Labor* (December 16, 1922), 2; *Report of the Proceedings of the Second Conference for Progressive Political Action Held at Cleveland, Ohio December 11, 12 1922* (CPPA Pamphlet), 22-23.

respective theories and try to show to each other the advantages of our respective panaceas," but for engaging in "actual, practical work." Despite not having "adopted the best, the most inspiring, resolutions or programs that were possible," the delegates nevertheless sat down and worked "for the general and mutual salvation." Toward the end of his speech, Hillquit outlined his reasons for cooperating with labor and farm leaders not disposed to his Marxist vision for a proletariat future: "We can go no faster than we are allowed to go; and so I say let us continue being helpful to each other; let us make progress step by step… let us increase our facilities for political power, and the right way will undoubtedly be found." The SPA would remain with the Conference for Progressive Political Action "without any ultimate personal or partisan [aim] of our own." All they wanted, he claimed, was "an opportunity to participate in the struggles which eventually will result in elevating the producing class to a point where full and complete social justice will be done."[756] The assembly met Hillquit's speech with a standing ovation.

The sight of some of the nation's most socially conservative, anti-Marxist trade unionists applauding the Lithuanian-born Jewish socialist left a lasting impression on the ILGWU delegation. The convention "listened with flaming eyes and fast-beating hearts to the Socialist," and looked "upon him with respect and hardly concealed admiration," Baroff wrote.[757] Albert Coyle seemed to confirm these remarks, calling Hillquit's "adroit" performance in Cleveland one of the "high points of the Conference." His ability

[756] *Report of the Proceedings of the Second Conference for Progressive Political Action Held at Cleveland, Ohio December 11, 12 1922* (CPPA Pamphlet), 18-19.
[757] As Lewis S. Gannett, reporter for the *Nation*, wrote, "Time and again Morris Hillquit's keen mind found the tactical solution in an hour of stress, and the railroadmen who had always hated and feared this Jewish Socialist gave him an ovation when he left." Lewis S. Gannett, "The Bricks of the New Party," *Nation* (December 27, 1922), 707; "Progressive Forces Unite," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (January 1923), 33, 35.

to strike compromise "thoroughly disproved the contention of Old Guard politicians that the progressive groups are children in politics," he continued. Even if lasting divisions remained, groups that had long looked at each other as rivals, class collaborators, or Bolsheviks continued to look forward and find a shared vision.

"A Church or a Pig-sty:" New Unionism and the American Federation of Labor

For a summit between outspoken socialists, dirt farmers, and traditionally conservative trade unionists, the Cleveland meeting was remarkably placid. Debate over a third party had caused a minor break, but the trickle of defecting FLP delegates remained inconsequential. Even Thomas Van Lear, a powerful figure in the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, saw the Buck, Fitzpatrick, and Brown defection as a foolhardy decision. "A third party is, no doubt, practically impossible in the majority of the states at this time," he explained. "Attempts to create artificially a third party in such states might prove abortive and might react disastrously on the progressive movement."[758] The unlikely alliance between the nation's fledgling industrial unions and the American left soldiered on into 1923 virtually intact.

There appeared to be little doubt to many analysts that the Conference for Progressive Political Action was something new in American politics. Between 1923 and early 1924, individuals both inside and outside the CPPA contextualized their movement-- where it came from and where it was heading. Journalist Lewis S. Gannett offered perhaps the most honest assessment of the December 1922 meeting of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. As a staff writer for the *Nation*, Gannett was one of very

[758] "The Progressive Conference at Cleveland," *Minnesota Daily Star* (December 15, 1922), 26.

few non-labor journalists to attend. The overall unity of the conference greatly impressed the journalist. These groups "had worked together in the last election and they intended to continue working together." The resolutions advocating for both labor protections and higher prices for farmers helped "strengthen the cement" between the two classes of producers, he insisted. Crucially, the New York-based writer suggested, the meeting had "helped lessen the old gap between the foreign-born workers of the East and the American-born workers of the West." But Gannett could not predict the future of the CPPA or suggest the path it would take in 1924. "It looks as if someone had dumped a wagonload of brick on the sidewalk," Gannett glibly offered, "but no one knows whether it will be built into a church or a pig-sty."[759]

He was not the only liberal intellectual to view the Conference as a novel iteration of domestic class politics. Economist and *New Republic* editor George Soule noted several distinctions between the CPPA and prior expressions of labor politics. "One was the formulation and the dissemination of concrete aims and principles," he wrote. "Another was a far more energetic action in creating local organizations and vitalizing them." Adding to his latter point, Soule argued that the broad cooperation between labor and non-labor groups in the party primary process-- so that the final election would not "be merely a choice of evils"-- represented a real maturation in mainstream trade union thought. Thomas Van Lear agreed. "This recognition of the fact that the SELECTION of candidates is more important than even their election is fundamental," the former socialist mayor suggested. "It … makes the progressive movement in effect an organized and distinctive political movement." In a study arising from his Master's thesis at

[759] Lewis S. Gannett, "The Bricks of the New Party," *Nation* (December 27, 1922), 707.

Columbia, labor educator and future NLRB member David Saposs similarly decided that the CPPA "differed" from preceding decades of AFL policy because "it was not inexorably committed to non-partisan political action and the refusal to co-operate with independent unions as well as labour and farmer political organizations."[760] All of the above reformers welcomed the change in direction and hoped for a permanent reorientation of labor's outlook.

That organized labor seriously lacked a strong and consistent influence in the capitol there was no doubt. Congress's failure to consider the Plumb Plan aside, the absence of a "labor bloc" ensured that organized labor had little ability to even influence relatively minor decisions. Federated Press writer and radical journalist Laurence Todd noted that when the federal government unceremoniously fired thousands of navy yard workers in February 1922– including 1,350 Machinist members in Washington, D.C.-- AFL and IAM lobbyists struggled mightily to find any representative willing to make a fight on their behalf. While a few "tried and gallant" representatives like La Follette, Meyer London, or San Francisco's John Nolan offered sympathy, hardly any other politician on any relevant committee agreed to intervene. The shipbuilders ultimately lost their jobs without recourse and without any meaningful opposition on the hill. Todd hoped that the newly founded Conference for Progressive Political Action would "materially hasten" the arrival of a governing coalition that would not so casually spurn labor's demands.[761]

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[760] "Unions and Politics," *Justice* (August 3, 1923), 6; Harry Lang, "The Movement for a Third Party and the Unions," *Justice* (March 7, 1924), 4; George Soule, "Signs of a New Party," *Minnesota Daily Star* (May 16, 1924), 10; "The Progressive Conference at Cleveland," *Minnesota Daily Star* (December 15, 1922), 26; David Saposs, *Left Wing Unionism: A Study of Radical Policies and Tactics* (New York: International Publishers, 1926), 43.

[761] "Arms Cut Causes 4,000 to Lose Navy Yard Jobs," *New York Tribune* (February 12, 1922), 1; "Propose Plan to Give Navy Yard Men Jobs," *Evening Vanguard* (Venice, California) (February 16, 1922), 3; "450

Related to his last point, Todd jabbed at Gompers, and all trade unionists who held "all politicians in deep suspicion." Because of the Federation leadership's outright hostility to political participation, labor had "never really undertaken any political program" and had allowed private interests to go unchallenged in their pursuit for influence in Washington. "As compared with the lobbying activities of organized commerce... or any of a dozen groups which protect their property holdings by active persuasion at the capitol," Todd wrote, "the work there of the spokesmen of the A.F.of L. has been insignificant."[762] David Saposs agreed. "It became evident to Federation leaders that politicians are wont to scorn lobbyists who are not backed by votes or other power," he surmised. [763] The AFL's refusal to sharpen its lobbying and electioneering tools had cost the whole movement dearly.

Todd and Saposs may have marginally discounted the AFL's early twentieth century political activity. As argued in chapters prior, the Federation had inherited a decade's long legacy of labor politics. And since the turn of the century, constituent unions of the American Federation of Labor had mobilized around state-run safety and compensation systems, the Clayton and Adamson Acts, and the eight-hour day. But the Federation's leadership had always placed fairly hard limits on the degree to which their members should step foot in government affairs. A union's mission was to control the shopfloor, and devoting material resources and personnel into political action jeopardized

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Navy Yard Men Lose Jobs as Work Stops on Warships," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (February 10, 1922), 14; "Denby Against Plan to Use Navy Yards to Provide Jobs," *Pittsburgh Daily Post* (February 27, 1922), 2; "Navy Yard Cut Deplored by Brightwood Citizens," *Washington Herald* (February 17, 1922), 9; Laurence Todd, "Where is the Labor Bloc?" *Labor Age* (March 1922), 8.

[762] Laurence Todd, "Where is the Labor Bloc?" *Labor Age* (March 1922), 8.

[763] Laurence Todd, "Where is the Labor Bloc?" *Labor Age* (March 1922), 8; David J. Saposs, "The American Federation of Labor," *American Labor Monthly* (December, 1923) 28.

that focus.[764] Lobbying congress and the White House for legislation or encouraging union members to vote for sympathetic politicians, of course, remained acceptable activities-- the AFL frequently sent lobbyists to the hill and the Non-Partisan Political Committee continued to compile voting data on acting politicians.

Yet, after World War I, when labor's deteriorating position in American industry clearly necessitated political action, Gompers refused to countenance any policy deemed too radical. Just as Gompers protested both the Plumb Plan and the railroad unions' earnestness in advancing it in 1919, he sought to distance himself and the Federation from the CPPA and its affiliated endeavors from the start. La Follette, Manly, and Johnston had invited Gompers and Federation secretary Frank Morrison to the Capitol to discuss participation in the People's Legislative Service on April 13, 1921. It took only a few minutes for the meeting to turn tempestuous. Johnston had not, Gompers charged, invited AFL executive members to the Service's foundational meeting. He supposed that the PLS had "indulged" in "criticism of the Federation" and its political policy.[765]

Gompers and Morrison determined the People's Legislative Service would produce material on government ownership and other policies that the Federation's elected leadership could not support. The PLS, therefore, could not help, intentionally or unintentionally, but be in conflict and rivalry with the A.F. of L." Gompers also accused Johnston directly of committing "treason to the American Federation of Labor." The PLS

[764] Julie Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Greene, "Not so Simple," *Labor* 10 no. 4 (2013), 105-110; Dorothy Sue Cobble, "Pure and Simple Radicalism: Putting the Progressive Era AFL in its Time," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History* 10 no. 4 (2013), 61-87.
[765] Given the closed-door nature of that meeting, it is difficult to assess what criticisms Gompers referred to. Monday June 6, 1921, 4-8. American Federation of Labor Papers. Minutes of the Executive Council Meetings, June 6-27, 1921. Proquest. 002035_007_0510.

claiming to be labor affiliated could present a divided front to the public, the president warned, leading to "weakness and disintegration."

Gompers questioned the composition of the Service and whether non-union staffers would claim to speak on organized labor's behalf. The movement "must and will continue to be a movement 'for, by and of' the working people and must not and can not be controlled by the 'intelligencia,'" he proclaimed. The latter point was especially prescient for the Federation. Matthew Woll, head of the Photo Engravers, warned that Oswald Garrison Villard and Herbert Croly, both liberal magazine editors, had been in the PLS orbit. The strong influence of non-labor activists with a penchant for social experimentation almost assured that the CPPA would tack too far left for the AFL. The point reinforced Gompers's suspicions that the PLS could claim labor's allegiance while advancing a left-leaning agenda it did not necessarily espouse.

Evidentially flabbergasted by the degree of opposition, La Follette clarified that his vision for the PLS was of a fact-based news agency to publicize the efforts of labor friendly politicians in Washington. "Publicity is not propaganda," a Brotherhood attendee offered. Johnston, patently unamused by Gompers and Morrison's obstinance, fired back. "When Senators call for help I am willing to give that help," he retorted, "All the wisdom of the labor movement is not in the Executive Council of the A.F. of L. and if the A.F. of L. is not represented as such, a great many of the nationals and internationals will be represented."[766] The two factions left the meeting deeply divided. The Executive Council declined to help the PLS. The Council refused participation in the CPPA some six

[766] Monday June 6, 1921, 4-8. American Federation of Labor Papers. Minutes of the Executive Council Meetings, June 6-27, 1921. Proquest. 002035_007_0510.

months later.[767] The groups would not formally cooperate until La Follette's 1924 presidential campaign.

Gompers and the Executive Council did encourage its members to participate in the 1922 election, but the contrast between their strategy and the CPPA's was stark. The Federation's Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee Fund expended less than five thousand dollars in the six months prior to the election. The Conference's main office, meanwhile, spent nearly fifteen thousand dollars on literature alone around election season– nine thousand more than the AFL's general publicity budget for the year. Crucially, the Federation did not dispatch any organizers to stoke political action until August, when most state parties had already completed nominations. The committee sent circulars in March and in April suggesting they become "more active than ever," but left the particulars entirely to its branch affiliates.[768] This loose strategy was a far cry from the CPPA, which appointed specific individuals to manage nominations on a state-by-state basis and provided these committees with prefabricated materials with precise legislative goals.

As was the case two years prior, the Brotherhood's insistence on government ownership of the rails became a point of demarcation between the two coalitions and their

[767] Friday, February 24, 1922, Morning Session, 35. American Federation of Labor Papers. Minutes of the Executive Council Meetings, February 21-25, 1922. Proquest. 002035_007_0861; Thursday, May 18, 1922, Morning Session, 87. American Federation of Labor Papers. Minutes of the Executive Council Meetings, May 10-13, 15-18, 1922. Proquest: 002035_007_0934.

[768] Adjusted for inflation, the AFL's political committee spent around $80,000– $184,000 if the entire AFL's publicity budget is included– and the CPPA around $240,000. Report of the A.F. of L. National Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee, November 22, 1922, 54-63; Fund for the American Federation of Labor Publicity Bureau, 96; Contributions to American Federation of Labor National Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee Fund, 99. American Federation of Labor Papers. Minutes of the Executive Council Meetings, November 18, 20-25, 1922. Proquest. 002035_008_0154; *Report of the Proceedings of the Second Conference for Progressive Political Action Held at Cleveland, Ohio December 11, 12 1922* (CPPA Pamphlet), 16.

election strategies. Surveying the Republican primary in Iowa, the Non-Partisan Committee approved of Smith W. Brookhart, the CPPA candidate, but also suggested AFL members support Burton E. Sweet, whom they considered to have a good record. The CPPA, meanwhile, viewed Sweet, who voted for the 1920 Transportation Act and loudly criticized Brookhart for supporting government ownership, as an "undesirable" candidate. Howe celebrated Sweet's loss in the primary.[769]

By the general election, AFL non-partisan committees supported many of the same candidates as the CPPA. The NPCC encouraged local bodies to join with farmers and other organizations of "liberty-loving people," which certainly did not prohibit this type of cooperation.[770] And in states like Kansas, where railroad union members occupied important positions in the state federation, in Oklahoma, where the AFL had joined Reconstruction League, in Minnesota, where Thomas Van Lear had a leadership position in the labor non-partisan group, and in Wisconsin, where the state Federation of Labor was effectively a Socialist Party lodge, trade unionists dismissed Gompers's distaste for the CPPA out of hand. Nevertheless, the AFL national leadership maintained its ambivalence to political participation-- recognizing its necessity, but never much going beyond its tried-and-true method of publishing a record of a politician's legislative

[769] "Sweet Puts Queries to Brookhart," *Quad-City Times* (October 18, 1923), 13; *Report of the Proceedings of the Second Conference for Progressive Political Action Held at Cleveland, Ohio December 11, 12 1922* (CPPA Pamphlet), 6; Report of the A.F. of L. National Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee, November 22, 1922, 54-63. American Federation of Labor Papers. Minutes of the Executive Council Meetings, November 18, 20-25, 1922. Proquest. 002035_008_0154.
[770] "A Bugle Call to Duty," *American Federationist* (November 1922), 809; Report of the A.F. of L. National Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee, November 22, 1922, 54. American Federation of Labor Papers. Minutes of the Executive Council Meetings, November 18, 20-25, 1922. Proquest. 002035_008_0154.

service and appealing to a loose patchwork of state and municipal federations to organize on their own behalf.

It is difficult to separate Gompers's opposition to the CPPA and his similar revulsion to European social democracy. By 1922, he still firmly believed that labor parties across the Atlantic had seriously erred by becoming too political. Instead of fighting for better wages and more jobs, he frequently asserted, social democrats had institutionalized demeaning "doles" for the unemployed. His counterparts across the Atlantic had put too much trust in intellectuals who supposedly *dictated* trade union policy. Gompers and his supporters also continued to stonewall any attempt to join International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), also known as the "Amsterdam international."[771] That the Conference for Progressive Political Action celebrated the successes of labor parties the world over could not have escaped the cigar maker's attention.

Indeed, several high ranking CPPA participants went abroad to observe the BLP and similar groups during this era. Progressives and radicals-- including Basil Manly, La Follette, Albert Coyle, Rose Schneiderman, Maude Swartz, Benjamin Schlesinger, and Morris Hillquit-- made long trips to investigate European conditions, establish potential diplomatic relations, and survey the political landscapes. This was also the era in which Americans began making their initial trips to the Soviet Union, which had by this point repressed organized opposition forces and defeated its opponents in the civil war.[772]

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[771] Samuel Gompers and Matthew Woll, "The European Brainstorm," *American Federationist* (October, 1920), 919; Samuel Gompers, "Gompers Defends Labor Against European Attacks," *New York Times* (August 5, 1923), XX3; William Atherton Du Puy, "Gompers Fails as Leader, Says European Laborite," *New York Times* (July 22, 1923), XX5.

[772] Michael David-Fox *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Some supporters of labor's growing participation in ventures off the shop floor began to use a distinct name to describe the phenomenon: "new unionism." While the term "new unionism" had been in circulation on both sides of the Atlantic since the late nineteenth century, it reappeared after World War I as a fairly direct result of the successes of the British Labour Party. In their 1920 needle trades-sponsored study on the subject, J.M. Budish and George Soule defined "new unions" as primarily industrial organizations that included both the skilled and unskilled, pushed for the democratic control of their industry, and advocated for general societal betterment, not just for increased wages. Their model for this type of union was primarily the "Triple Alliance" of the British National Transport Workers' Federation, National Union of Railwaymen, and the Miners' Federation, which routinely threatened to paralyze the nation if the government and industrialists did not meet their demands. The alliance was also the primary booster for the British Labour Party and advanced a radical legislative agenda.[773]

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[773] David Montgomery, in a 1974 article, described the American iteration of "new unionism" as a syndicalist form of worker control. Beginning with the Industrial Workers of the World in 1906, Montgomery suggests that many American industrial workers shared a desire to control production and toss over managerial control. Trade unionists and progressive writers during the early twentieth century, however, were likely to use the term "new unionism" to describe a model that British industrial unions pioneered. Specifically, they referred to the 1889 London dock strike, which led to the formation of the Dockers' Union, one of the first mass unions of "unskilled" workers in Europe or the United States. As Budish and Soule wrote in full:

> The classic example of new unionism in England, however, was the movement resulting from the dock strike of 1889… It was class-conscious, and vaguely revolutionary in aim… At the same time they welcomed state interference in the form of laws regulating everything except the hours of labor, and looked forward to the time when the workers, as voters, should be the predominant power in the state.

New unionism, then, did emphasize industrial democracy and greater control over the workplace. But it also involved government regulation and participation in liberal democracy. In a compelling revisionist piece on British new unionism, economist Derek Matthews argues that pioneers in early industrial unions were less avowedly "revolutionary" than they were "moderate" and practical. Piloting worker-led organizations required a multifaceted approach, one that included education, research, an active press, and political mobilization.

J.M. Budish and George Soule, *The New Unionism In the Clothing Industry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace

The American "new unionism" of the 1920s drew upon the experiences of European labor to suggest that collective bargaining had limits and that a "new economic order" required "combined political and economic action." To train "the workers for assuming control of production," Soule and Budish insisted, unions needed to rely on experts and formal research, create innovative cultural and educational programs, and found their own financial institutions to bankroll these projects. Whether or not many American rank and filers saw themselves as fulfilling this utopian mission, there is little doubt that many trade unions took on a more expansive role during the early 1920s. The railroad unions had, after all, sought broader alliances to obtain worker control-- seeking and gaining help from the United Mine Workers, Nonpartisan League, and the majority of AFL unions. To obtain easy credit for these political ventures and to fund various cooperative enterprises, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the Machinists, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and the International Ladies Garment Workers had each opened up their own banks by 1924. By mid-decade, dozens of internationals and trade federations had ignored Samuel Gompers's longstanding policy to steer clear of "intellectuals" and established relations with professional research centers and educational facilities. Workers' education owed a great debt to the influence of the British Labour Party.[774]

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and Howe, 1920), 3-13; David Montgomery, "The 'New Unionism' and the Transformation of Workers' Consciousness in America, 1909-22," *Journal of Social History* 7 no. 4 (Summer 1974), 509-529; Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 7, 11; Derek Matthews, "1889 And All That: New Views on the New Unionism," *International Review of Social History* 36 no. 1 (June 1991), 24-58.

[774] David Montgomery, "New Tendencies in Union Struggles and Strategies in Europe and the United States, 1916-1922," in *Work, Community, and Power: The Experience of Labor in Europe and America, 1900-1925*, eds. Cronin and Sirianni (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 97-98; J.M. Budish and George Soule, *The New Unionism In the Clothing Industry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 3-13; Leo Wolman, Labor Banking After Ten Years," *New Republic* (August 21, 1929), 10-11; Paul H. Douglas, "The Rise and Decline of Labor Banking," *New Republic* (February 19, 1930), 25.

There are many points of comparison between American and European labor politics during the first half of the twentieth century. After all, the Conference for Progressive Political Action's success in 1922 mirrored the rise of social democratic parties across the Atlantic and throughout the British Empire. Around the time the CPPA burst into national prominence, labor had gained, or was on the precipice of gaining, governing power in France, Germany, Denmark, Belgium, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, and some Canadian provinces. The British Labour Party, which rose first to the official opposition in 1922 and became the governing party at the end of 1923, particularly inspired those active in the CPPA.

While Great Britain and the United States shared a standard language and political tradition, progressive interest in the BLP came down to a shared world view. The Labour Party, after all, had accomplished what the Conference sought to do: provoke a sustained political realignment. In November 1922, a foreign correspondent to *Labor* hoped that the coming election would divide "the country into two classes-- those who believe the existing order of things should be changed and those who do not." Around the same time, another contributor to *Labor* congratulated the BLP on adopting a truly radical program and demanding "that Great Britain's resources shall no longer be squandered on imperialistic exploitations for the glory and profit of the capitalist class." In the weeks after both the American and British elections, editors for the *Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen's Magazine* hired J.A.H. Hopkins, chairman of the Committee of 48, to explain the outcomes to their readers. The British Labour Party corresponded to the "united force" of trade unionists, liberals, and progressives in the Conference, Hopkins wrote. The British Liberals were much like the standard Democrats: "progressivism

largely diluted with reaction." He appealed to the Firemen to study the British situation closely. "The results of the general election in Great Britain cannot fail to be of great interest to the American who is honestly interested in his own country," Hopkins wrote, "for we are facing world-wide problems to which human nature reacts in very much the same fashion whatever flag waves over its head."[775]

Warren Stone heaped praise on the BLP. Invited to open the 1922 convention of the International Ladies Garment Workers, Stone confessed that the "Labor party in England has gone 100 per cent ahead of us." Stone referred to Labour's policy of a "national minimum," or guaranteed employment or state maintenance at a living wage. The term appeared in the party's 1918 manifesto. In 1922, BLP leaders reasserted that "the task of government is to raise the standard of life and labour for those who work." In addition to guaranteed employment, British Labourites demanded the government provide "better housing, better schooling, better living, better health, more leisure, more freedom." For Stone, the ability of unions to secure higher wages could only do so much. "There is no use giving up a 10 per cent increase in wages if your cost of living goes up 20 per cent at the same time," he declared. Like the British, workers in America should fight for a "minimum standard of living, and let the wage be what it may to create that." The engineer and CPPA benefactor clearly took inspiration from abroad.[776]

Beyond the Brotherhoods, members of the CPPA were virtually unanimous in their awe of the BLP's growing might and its relevance for American labor. "With the

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[775] "British Workers Are Made Target of All Reactionaries," *Labor* (November 4, 1922), 2; J.A.H. Hopkins, "The British Election," *Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen's Magazine* (January 1923), 10.

[776] International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, "Monday morning Session May 1st, 1922, 10:00AM," in *Report and Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union*, 1.

great victory of British Labor, the liberal gains in our own country... perhaps no question is of greater interest than the political situation," Oscar Ameringer concluded. William Kohn of the Upholsterer's Union agreed that a realignment was surely underway. In both England and in the United States, "The workers will rally to the Labor Party and the capitalists and titled people will form an opposition Party." Rhodes Scholar and future Pulitzer-winning journalist Felix Morley composed a long essay in *Labor Age* building bridges between his understandings of British and American politics. If the collapse of Lloyd George's coalition government in 1922 "wiped opportunism… off the political map" and "showed the weakness of milk and water Liberalism," then the voters' affirmation of CPPA candidates showed the same. "The election there, as in America, has demonstrated the widespread dissatisfaction with old-school politicians, regardless of their party affiliation," Morley supposed.[777]

International observers, too, likened the electoral outcomes. "It is my sincere wish that the success of the British Labor Movement at the recent general elections in Great Britain… will imbue the workers on this North American continent with a determination to emulate their example and to even surpass that performance," Frank W. Nicks, a Canadian railroad worker and member of his union's legislative board in Manitoba, wrote to his fellow firemen across the border.[778] Even BLP leader, and now head of Parliament's official opposition, Ramsey MacDonald commented on the common threads binding the two continents together. MacDonald, however, insisted that for Americans to

[777] "New Parties for Old," *Illinois Miner* (December 16, 1922), 4; "They Are Wondering," *Upholsterer's Journal* (February 1924), 264; Felix Morley, "His Majesty's Official Opposition," *Labor Age* (January 1923), 27.
[778] Frank W. Nicks, "The Awakened Political Consciousness of the Workers," *Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen's Magazine* (May 1923), 203; "Toronto, Canada," *Machinists Monthly Journal* (May 1923), 242-243.

capture a "comparable" amount of power, they would need to break "away from the present policies of the American Federation of Labor." Trade unionists and like-minded intellectuals must "go out after political power by getting avowed labor candidates in the field" and "keep repeating the process until success comes."[779] This transnational commentary proved that the impulse toward "reconstruction" at the end of World War I had staying power. European social democrats and the constituent forces of the CPPA increasingly saw themselves as a part of the same movement-- sharing ideas and encouraging one another's growth.

"Rainbows of Respectability:" The Socialist Party and Social Democracy, 1923

Leaders of the Socialist Party, especially, sought to forge stronger links with the European labor movement. Their belief that the BLP provided an easily transferable roadmap for American workers likely influenced the party's conciliatory attitude toward the CPPA. In the fall of 1923, Morris Hillquit published a pamphlet titled "The Story of the British Labor Party" intended for distribution throughout the socialist press. Hillquit described the growth of the BLP with a heavy emphasis on its allegorical similarity to American politics. Prior to the First World War, he wrote, British workers believed "their trade unions were all-sufficient in their fight for better working conditions." They failed to understand that pro-labor politicians could enact laws for better wages, hours, and comprehensive insurance. "Capitalistic" legislators, on the other hand, could with the help of the military, courts, and police "destroy the usefulness and efficiency of the very

[779] United Press, "British Labor Leader Advises U.S. Workmen's Party," *Brooklyn Citizen* (December 15, 1922), 3; "Labor To Hold Power Must Have Party," *Arkansas City Daily* (December 15, 1922), 1; "Gompers Resents Advice to U.S. Labor by MacDonald," *New York Call* (December 16, 1922), 1.

trade unions upon whom they relied for their struggles." Laws were easier to maintain than shopfloor contracts.

Just as in the United States, when British workers initially became politically active, "They were handicapped by the superstitious belief in the 'two-party' system of politics." But since the advent of the Labour Party, workers in Britain had become politically independent and no longer knocked "at the back doors of legislative bodies to lobby and beg." For Hillquit, there was no reason American labor "should continue to be the football of the disgusting game of old-party politicians, ever enjoined and surprised, deceived and betrayed, impotent and humiliated." In the early 1920s, the CPPA was the most direct route to the kind of party he theorized.

Hillquit's essay succinctly captured the majority view of socialists during the early twenties and justified continued cooperation with the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Dwindling membership and coffers had defined the party since the war. Socialists stood little chance of reversing their party's immediate fortunes and restoring its status as an electoral force in its own right. But a new party, based on the British model and built upon organized labor, could put socialists in places of trust and authority– if only they proved their good will. Hillquit hoped the Socialist Party would become a "great educational force" in the CPPA, constantly pushing for the end of class struggle and for economic equality.[780]

[780] Morris Hillquit, "The Story of the British Labor Party," (Chicago: Socialist Party, 1923), 1-4. For a version of the pamphlet reissued in 1929, see https://archive.org/details/StoryOfTheBritishLaborParty/page/n3/mode/2up. The article also appeared in *Socialist World* (September 1923), 3; *Illinois Miner* (December 1, 1923), 3; *Quarry Workers' Journal* (December 1, 1923), 3.

Socialists in the Conference would be roughly analogous to the Independent Labour Party in the BLP. Electorally, the radical Independent Labour Party ran successfully in only a few heavily industrialized districts, most notably Glasgow and the so-called "Red Clydeside." Yet the socialist Fabians made up a substantial portion of the party leadership, accounting for the BLP's most esteemed writers and intellectuals like Harold Laski, Beatrice and Sidney Webb, G.D.H. Cole, and H.G. Wells, and political leaders including Ramsey MacDonald and Philip Snowden. By pledging its cooperation and service to British labor, and by abandoning its more doctrinaire impulses, the socialist movement there had climbed into prominence.[781]

Writing in *Labor Age* during the spring of 1923, Member of Parliament, Fabian, and secular humanist Harry Snell outlined the BLP take on socialism. The article was widespread, appearing as a reprint in several trade union, socialist, and liberal magazines. Snell praised the Labour Party above all for its "wise toleration" of differences in strategy and opinion. "It has never sought to impose upon its members a definite and exclusive philosophy of the State, or any special theory of social organization," he wrote. "Upon all such matters it has kept a genial neutrality." The politician and thinker argued that the majority of his party's members responded well "to the teaching of a socialist ideal," largely because there was nothing in the party program "which repels those who have reservations in their minds concerning the final form of social organization." In a subsequent article, Snell again pointed to the "lack of a central creed" as the party's best asset. Its messaging promoted attaining by "every constitutional means, a progressive and

[781] When the British Labour Party declared itself for the advancement of socialism in 1918, the Independent Labour Party gradually faded as its own institution. For more on the change, see Ian Bullock, *Under Siege: The Independent Labour Party in Interwar Britain* (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2017), 27-39.

equitable industrial democracy" and it did not confuse voters with static "economic dogmas or theories of the State." The Socialist Party of America clearly took notice.[782]

Hillquit had grown increasingly worried about socialist inertia after the war.[783] Between 1918 and 1922, the SPA continued to lose ground. Though Hillquit grew to admire the British Labour Party, and saw the shadow of the BLP in the Conference for Progressive Political Action, there remained in the SPA notable opposition to Hillquit, Berger, and the labor party turn. A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen maintained a highly skeptical view of the CPPA. The Black Socialists struggled to see the Brotherhoods as a trustworthy ally. A labor party would be a good thing, but an American movement along these lines and analogous to the British example was far in the distance. In the meantime, Owen and Randolph suggested, the SPA was "the only third party which deserves the consideration of the wide toiling masses of America." Any "lover of liberty and foe of labor exploitation" was welcome to join.[784]

William R. Snow, State Secretary of the Illinois Socialist Party, became perhaps the most vocal critic of Conference participation. In early 1923, he lambasted leaders like

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[782] H. Snell, "The Spiritual Side of British Labor," *The Textile Worker* (September, 1923), 369; "British Labor Party Philosophy," *American Labor Monthly* (August 1923), 86-89; "British Labor and Intellectuals," *Journal of Religion* (September 1923), 528-529; H. Snell, "The Spiritual Side of British Labor," *Illinois Miner* (July 7, 1923), 4; H. Snell (BLP), "British Labor and the 'Intellectuals," *Labor Age* (May 1923), 18-19; H. Snell, "The 'Spiritual Side' of British Labor," *Labor Age* (June 1923), 18.

[783] Hillquit took some time in deciding what cure the Party needed. In 1921, he provoked a bitter response from Belgian Labour Party head Emil Vandervelde for writing that socialist parties should consider "a definite inhibition" on "participation in Bourgeois governments" in his book *From Marx to Lenin*. Vandervelde, whose party had participated in coalition governments, asked Hillquit to reconsider. "I am by no means so dogmatic as you seem to think," the American socialist responded. He had "merely countenanced" such a prohibition and agreed that the "ultimate test" for any party remained "the adherence of the great masses of the workers." After all, the Belgian party, he conceded, had achieved a degree of political power the SPA had never even caught scent of.

Morris Hillquit, *From Marx to Lenin* (New York: The Hanford Press, 1921), 143; Morris Hillquit to Emile Vandervelde, 9 November 1921. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel 2.

[784] "Chicago Political Labor Conference," *The Messenger* (March 1922), 369; "The British Elections," "Third Party," *The Messenger* (December 1922), 537, 539.

Hillquit and Oneal for giving up the "fundamental principles" of Marxism to chase "rainbows of respectability." Snow believed that the SPA could, itself, become a "real Labor Party" in fifteen to twenty years, but only if it remained independent. Joining with "reform" organizations appeared to the Illinois secretary as a betrayal of Marxist philosophy. "No movement in the world's history has produced such an abundant literature in so short a time, covering every phase of economic, political and social life, as has the socialist movement… Shall we abandon all this for the sake of a few immediate election gains?" The path to socialism could take generations, Snow supposed, and he was willing to wait for the real thing.[785]

At the 1923 party convention, Snow and William Henry, a socialist from Indiana, harangued the executive committee for placing their hopes in a CPPA platform "so meaningless it might have been written by W.J. Bryan thirty years ago."[786] Nevertheless, the Committee voted to remain with the Conference 38 to 12. During that same conference, the party voted for a new resolution urging its members active in trade unions to always hold the progress of labor above the advancement of socialism. "It is the duty of the Socialist Party, its press, and its auxiliary institutions, to give whole-hearted support to the labor organizations in all their struggles for higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions, and in all their efforts to increase their membership." It was not "the right nor the interest of the Socialist to attempt to dictate to the unions concerning their internal affairs nor to interfere in the jurisdictional and other disputes which sometimes unfortunately divide the labor movement." In short, socialist trade unionists were expected to preach their creed solely by example. They were not to be

[785] W.R. Snow, "Why an Independent Labor Party," *Socialist World* (January 1923), 11.
[786] Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 275.

"schismatic" or "factious" or to seek to "capture" any unions.[787] While the SPA had for years rejected "dual-unionism," the resolution presented a marked shift to *following* the labor movement, not leading it toward a socialist future.

Snow and his allies had a point. By whittling down its dogma and encouraging extra-party participation, the party opened the door for its faithful to seek potentially less taxing routes to cooperative commonwealth. The SPA continued to hemorrhage members in 1923-- primarily to non-partisan bodies set up by the Conference for Progressive Political Action. In Buffalo, New York, Frank C. Perkins, the city's best-known Socialist, sole party member elected to municipal council, and acting Commissioner of Public Affairs, severed ties and won reelection as a labor-backed independent. Perkins ran on a standard union-approved tract of public ownership of utilities for "service and not profit" and guaranteed pensions for city employees. State party official Herbert Merrill told the executive committee that Perkins felt constrained by SPA oversight and grew especially weary of the expectation that he countenance party suggestions on patronage appointments. Merrill's suggestion, however, was to give Perkins a wide berth in hopes of his return. "Perkins, unlike Lunn, has remained loyal to Socialism," he reported, and the vast majority of Buffalonian socialists "undoubtedly voted for Perkins ... instead of [the] regular Party nominee." With a forgiving attitude and flexible approach, the party could eventually lure him back in.[788]

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[787] "Socialism and Unionism," *Socialist World* (June 1923), 1; "Minutes of the Convention," *Socialist World* (June 1923), 11; National Convention Socialist Party Minutes, May 19, 1923. Socialist Part of America Papers. National Convention Proceedings. Proquest. 201901_077_0052.

[788] "Police Dined by Erie Club," *Buffalo Times* (February 11, 1923), 54; "Meahl Budget $50,000 More than Last Year," *Buffalo Enquirer* (February 13, 1924), 14; "Primary Leaders Usually Defeated at Election Time," *Buffalo Morning Express* (October 21, 1923), 71; "Re-Elect Commissioner Perkins," *Buffalo Labor Journal* (October 25, 1923), 1; "Frank C. Perkins," *Buffalo Labor Journal* (February 1, 1923), 4; "Perkins Declares He will Seek Public Ownership," *Buffalo Courier* (October 5, 1925), 2; Herbert Merrill to Bertha Hale White, November 15, 1923. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_010_067.

Leon Durocher, the Party's secretary in Minneapolis, recommended a similar course of action in his district. Durocher had, since the year prior, pleaded with the coterie of Socialist aldermen, councilmen, and state representatives to recommit to the party and back out of the state Farmer-Labor Party. But after party secretary Otto Branstetter suggested expulsion, Durocher demurred. While he wanted to "see the Socialist Party grow, not to be traded off but to be an educational factor to be reckoned with," closing the door on the city's most notable radicals would not help the situation. "If you want expulsions it would be up to you to throw the whole mpls. movement out," Durocher stated flatly. If, however, the party remained friendly with the bolting politicians, the chances of their return and affiliation were substantially better. Socialists in the Twin Cities might prefer "a good loose membership to trade whenever in their judgment it would do the most good."

Most importantly for Durocher, he believed these offenders had hardly changed ideologically: "To say that these Comrades are violating the rules of the Party is true, but to say that they are all dishonest and insincere would be an injustice." Some of these men, like council members Albert Bastis and Irving G. Scott and state senator Andrew Olaf Devold "have a large following and are anxious for the ultimate aim of Socialism to be realized… To brand them as traitors, is to wreck the possibilities of effecting an efficient organization for several years at least." Durocher promised to continue making his appeals to lapsed members, providing them with materials allegedly showing evidence of NPL corruption and financial mismanagement. His hopes for a reversal in fortune never

materialized-- the vast majority of these former members remained with the FLP, some serving in city government into the 1940s.[789]

Even party stalwart James Maurer admitted that, at least for the time being, socialist values existed outside of the Socialist Party. Maurer offered no apology after the Pennsylvania State Federation of Labor, of which he was president, endorsed Republican gubernatorial candidate Gifford Pinchot (brother of Amos). While the Federation's executive council had voted several times in favor of a labor party, there was not one in sight and the SPA could not fill the role. "Until the common people can be persuaded to move in that direction as a whole," he claimed, "we have to proceed practically with the means now at hand, to do the best we can." Maurer remained active in the SPA, but his view on the party's role in American politics became more flexible.[790]

The SPA's pivot to the new model allowed for party members to forge new alliances. In cities like Buffalo, Minneapolis, and Reading– not to mention Milwaukee and Oklahoma City– the arrangement breathed a new vitality into local labor politics and proved largely successful from an electoral standpoint. Yet those same points of exchange threatened the Socialist Party's ballot line, membership, and finances. Expelling the offending members might have resuscitated the SPA as a dyed-in-the-wool Marxist party with a concrete set of beliefs. Such a maneuver could have quelled dissent on the left, but would have almost certainly put an end to the Socialist experiment with the Conference. Faced with the choice of retrenchment and a return to orthodoxy, or an

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[789] Otto Branstetter to Leon Durocher, August 25, 1923; Durocher to Branstetter, August 27, 1923; Durocher to Branstetter, September 28, 1923. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_010_0212**;** Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 617-619.

[790] James Maurer, "Great Record Made by Keystone State Labor federation." *Illinois Miner* (July 21, 1923), 4; "Pinchot Seeks Aid of Leaders He Repudiated in Primaries," *Pittsburgh Post* (October 27, 1922), 2.

amorphous social democracy with a fluid membership, the early twenties SPA leaders reliably chose the latter.

Indeed, SPA ties to European social democrats only deepened as the decade rolled on. During the summer of 1923, Morris and Vera Hillquit traveled alongside Victor and Meta Berger to the founding conference of the Labor and Socialist International in Hamburg as voting delegates. The meeting put the American socialists into direct contact with European social democrats and seemingly justified their continued compromise with the CPPA.[791]

The 1923 Hamburg conference represented the party's confidence in its new direction– reinforcing the SPA's belief that uncertain times necessitated new approaches to statecraft. It also established the party as a crucial link between European labor progressivism and the CPPA. Hillquit confessed that some portions of the meeting were "a little disappointing"-- particularly in its rigid program and lack of open debate. Still, he

[791] Both Ramsay MacDonald and Arthur Henderson had attempted to corral the Socialist Party of America, and all "Parliamentary Parties," into some kind of international affiliation since winter 1921. But the war had caused years of travel disruptions and a split in the party over affiliation in the Soviet (Third) International resulted in the SPA remaining decidedly cool to the endeavor. Ramsay MacDonald to Otto Bransetter, July 1, 1921. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_009_0599**.**

The so-called Second International had broken apart with the onset of World War I. In 1919, the SPA membership voted to join the Third (or Moscow) International, but later withdrew after the Soviet Union demanded ideological fealty to its rigid form of Marxist-Leninism and pushed all affiliate members to plan violent revolutions at home. The American Socialists did develop something of a relationship with the International Working Union of Socialist Parties, also known as the Vienna Union or "Second and a Half International"-- occasionally sending foreign correspondent Joseph Gollomb to cover meetings for the SPA press. The Vienna Union steered a middle course between the hardline Bolshevism of the Third International and reformism of the former Second, its members included the Austrian Socialist Party, the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (which had splintered off the SPA for its participation in the war), and the French SFIO. The SPA did formally join the International Working Union in the spring of 1922, but by that point the body had already begun to dissolve into the Labor and Socialist International. Letter from Otto Branstetter to the National Secretary of the Swiss Socialist Party, May 13, 1920. *SPA Papers* General Correspondence (reel 9); Joseph Gollomb, "The Split in the Socialist Movement," *Nation* (December 29, 1920), 774-775; Gollomb, "The Socialist Movement Reunites," *Nation* (April 26, 1922), 489-490; Gollomb, "Toward Socialist Unity," *New York Call* (February 2, 1922), 7; Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York: Viking Press, 1957), 331-332; David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1955), 133-134.

found it a useful experience and took several lessons home. Hillquit forgave the lack of dynamism on the floor, telling his colleagues that "the desire of the delegates for unity overshadowed every other consideration." He had replied in similar fashion to American journalist, Louis P. Lochner. "It was not the object of this congress to take a stand on any theoretical problem, or to try to bridge over any existing differences in policy or tactics," Hillquit told the foreign correspondent." The important thing at this time was to create an instrument for effective action."[792] His answer closely mirrored his approach to minimizing conflict within the CPPA.

There were indeed many good reasons for LSI attendees to create the visage of an orderly house. The French occupation of the Ruhr had destabilized the German economy and brought central Europe closer to war, providing increased urgency for labor and socialist cooperation across borders. The Conservative government in Britain threatened yet another diplomatic rupture with the Soviet Union, potentially reversing Russia's slow crawl to stability. Mussolini's seizure of power in 1922, and his swift crushing of trade unions and opposition parties brought more storm clouds to the horizon. "The counter-revolution of Italian Fascism… has destroyed in Italy all elements of democracy," former Austrian foreign secretary Otto Bauer told the assembly, and Mussolini's installation had generated "enormous encouragement to reactionary tendencies in all countries." The American delegation may have agreed with Bauer's point. U.S. Steel founder Elbert H. Gary, leader in the drive for the "Open Shop," had traveled to Rome as Mussolini's guest of honor only two months prior. In April, soon-to-be Vice President Charles G. Dawes

[792] "From Hillquit's Report:" n.d. [May 1923]. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_009_1166; Louis P. Lochner, "Red Flag Cause No Riot in Hamburg, Says Lochner," *Capital Times* (June 21, 1923), 6.

founded the ominously-named "Minute Men of the Constitution"-- a paramilitary group chartered to "uphold the rights of citizens to work or cease work without interference" and to "uphold loyalty to the government above that to any civil or industrial organization." Several left-leaning observers were quick to point out similarities to Italy's "Blackshirts."[793]

But even if Hillquit and the delegation had hoped for a more "deliberative" meeting, they took full advantage in building connections between European leaders, the Socialist Party, and the CPPA. Hillquit urged the SPA's secretariat to invite a number of social democrats to travel the United States and address labor audiences. "As a speaker in America," he wrote, Arthur Henderson "would appeal very much to trade unions." He asked the executive to arrange support from the CPPA and from "more or less progressively inclined" labor unions. He also recommended R.C. Wallhead, a Welsh M.P., whom Hillquit called the "best propagandist in England," and Ramsay MacDonald himself. "Try to have three representatives of English movement at intervals of two months," Hillquit suggested in his report. For the federations of foreign workers, he recommended the SPD's Arthur Crispien and Menshevik-in-exile Raphael Abramovitch.[794] Despite a steady stream of European social democrats arriving in the United States for Socialist and labor events, none of Hillquit's suggested speakers made the journey until Ramsay Macdonald's visit in 1927.

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[793] "Minute Men of Constitution Formed," *Fredonia Daily Citizen* (Fredonia, Kansas) (April 26, 1923), 1; "Dawes Called a Fascist," *New Leader* (August 23, 1924), 1; "Dawes Launches Drive for Fascism," *New Leader* (August 30, 1924), 1; Louis F. Budenz, "Is This The 'Lincoln Period'?" *Justice* (June 20, 1924), 7; "The American Revolution of 1923," *Labor Age* (June 1923), 17-18.; "From Hillquit's Report:" n.d. [May 1923]. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_009_1166; Otto Bauer, "International Action Against International Reaction," 6. Labour Party Papers: Labour and Socialist International. Box 12. Folder 9. Manchester: *People's History Museum*.

[794] "From Hillquit's Report:" n.d. [May 1923]. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_009_1166.

Upon his return, the American press flocked to Hillquit, whom they saw as a bridge between the CPPA and the European labor movement. Engaging with a throng of reporters awaiting him at the port of New York, the socialist and Conference leader maintained that mass economic reconstruction remained the only way to avoid another war, insisted that labor had finally arrived as a major power in European politics, and predicted that American workers would soon follow suit. "There is a race on between war and the forces of social reconstruction," Hillquit responded to *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter M.B. Werner. Labor parties throughout Europe were winning elections across Europe, but struggling to alleviate poverty and keep the peace. American labor had a role to play in pushing the United States to use its "moral and… material power to… take the lead in the reconstruction" of the war-ravaged parts of the world. "If we were willing to spend as much money in the reconstruction of Europe as we did in the war of destruction," he quipped, then Europe "could be rebuilt." Werner probed Hillquit on what effect a new labor party would have on the existing SPA. "The Labor party in England is a 'holding company' for all the various groups of organized labor, including the Socialist party, and that is what is being planned in this country," Hillquit replied. "Such an organization would make labor more powerful in national politics and in international affairs and would enable it to take its part with the organized labor of Europe to prevent war."

Reporters for the *New York Times*, too, quizzed Hillquit on LSI's interest in American politics. He responded: "The British Labor Party leaders are interested in the possibility of establishing a party in the United States modeled after their own experiences, and they expressed their willingness to co-operate in such a movement, even

to the extent of visiting this country to assist." And even though Hillquit insisted that he spoke on the BLP purely as an individual, the *Times* reporters noted his connections to the CPPA and the labor forces that had rushed onto the scene the year prior and seemingly shifted the nation's political landscape. "The astounding growth of the British Labor Party… has inspired in some members of the Conference for Progressive Political Action the hope that a similar movement will succeed in this country." Several additional papers across the country reported on Hillquit's trip and his comments on the British Labour Party.[795]

Werner referred to the New York socialist as "one of a few American publicists who can visit Europe and bring back significant impressions of the State of political economic mind." His comment spoke to the SPA's new position as the left flank of a broader coalition making headway in American politics. Hillquit seemingly welcomed his position as a conduit between movements. Given that SPA secretary Otto Branstetter confessed to Hillquit in March 1923 that "The Party is in a very bad condition" and that there was "nothing upon which to base our hope that we could revive and re-build the organization this year," this constituent position in the CPPA offered about as much prestige as they could have hoped for.[796] Even if socialism's star had declined since the First World War, it was now at least an *aspect* of a growing movement of American reformers slouching toward European radicalism.

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[795] M.B. Werner, "Urges Holding Company for All American Labor," *San Francisco Chronicle* (July 13, 1923), 8; "Republicans Rallying Forces to Ward Off Third Labor Party," *New York Times* (July 1, 1923), XX14; "Socialists Meet," *South Bend Tribune* (June 27, 1923), 1; Louis P. Lochner, "Red Flag Cause No Riot in Hamburg, Says Lochner," *Capital Times* (June 21, 1923), 6; "Will Meet Debs," *Dayton Daily News* (June 27, 1923), 1; "Socialists to Hold Meeting in Windy City," *Davenport Democrat and Leader* (June 28, 1923), 5; "England Now Hope of Socialist Cause," *Washington Evening Star* (July 2, 1923), 16.
[796] M.B. Werner, "Urges Holding Company for All American Labor," *San Francisco Chronicle* (July 13, 1923), 8; Otto Branstetter to Morris Hillquit, March 24, 1923. Morris Hillquit Papers. Reel Three. Microfilm.

The Needle Trades, Socialism, and the British Labour Party

The ILGWU helped push the Socialist Party toward this broader labor party approach. At the beginning of the new decade the needle trades funded and otherwise supported several initiatives to advance a non-sectarian radicalism. The influence of the British Labour Party was a clear motivator for those projects. *Labor Age*, a magazine which emerged from a needle trades-backed effort to provide the Intercollegiate Socialist Society with more mainstream appeal, became a clearing house for Labour Party news. When the *New York Call*, the only east coast socialist daily, approached irreversible financial collapse in 1922 (and again in 1923), the Garment Workers and Amalgamated agreed to purchase a majority share of a new joint stock company so long as the SPA agreed to bring on new managers like ACW publicity director Heber Blankenhorn, ILGWU president Morris Sigman, *Forward* manager B.C. Vladeck, and Sidney Hillman, and to broaden the new journal's scope to be more relevant to the labor movement, not just the party. Or as the new board claimed, to promote "the living interests of the fighting labor movement of New York." The *Call's* successor, *the New Leader*, carried the same name as the Independent Labour Party's paper and its first issue not only featured well-wishes from Ramsay MacDonald and British mine leader Robert Smillie, but included two full-length articles on the BLP on its front page.[797]

[797] The *Call's* editors, Charles W. Ervin and S. John Block had appealed several times for gifts and loans from the American Fund for Public Service– a leftwing trust that came to the rescue of many ailing progressive causes during the 1920s. By early 1923, the Fund's chair, Roger Nash Baldwin, made abundantly clear that they would no longer give money to the paper so long as it remained an SPA publication. "We would not be interested in any proposition the Call could make to us except on the basis of a thorough reorganization of its personnel and a plan for expansion of much more definite character than any you have now, he wrote, "We regret to say that we have no confidence in the ability of the present management of the Call to meet the difficulties in the creation of the kind of radical daily which alone can succeed in our judgement."

In 1922, ILGWU president Benjamin Schlesinger finally won the election as an AFL fraternal delegate to the British Trade Union Congress, a position he had coveted since at least 1920. His speech before that organization's annual meeting, and his reports back to American audiences afterwards, explain the garment workers' fascination with the Labour Party. Schlesinger lauded the TUC for organizing six million workers, encouraging an "all-pervading" cooperative movement, and for electing a "solid bloc of 75 members in the House of Commons chosen by and accountable to the workers alone." And while he did call the AFL the "most outstanding hope of the American workers" and "the foremost defender of the rights and liberties of the whole American people," Schlesinger provided a long list of potential improvements. He blamed "racial prejudices and antagonisms," the "lavish outlay of money" in elections, and the power of American courts to dismantle pro-labor legislation. Because of these barriers, the union leader surmised, "the workers of America are inclined to attribute less importance to political remedies than their comrades in Europe." The status quo, however, was shifting. "Other encouraging symptoms that are just beginning to develop within the American labor movement are the manifest tendency towards more active participation in political action," he told the crowd of British trade unionists. "While our workers have by far not yet reached the political unity, cohesion and power of your Labor Party, some beginnings have been made towards working-class politics." The Socialist, he added, freed from the

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Charles W. Ervin to Roger Baldwin, July 31, 1922; Roger Baldwin to B.C. Vladeck, August 29, 1922; Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors, September 19, 1922; John Block to Roger Baldwin, February 7, 1923; Roger Baldwin to John Block, February 28, 1923. American Fund for Public Service Papers. New York Public Library. Microfilm. Reel 11. Folder: New York Call. "The Problem of a Labor Daily," *American Labor Monthly* (September 1923), 4-5; "Call Labor Conference Making Fast Headway," *Justice* (February 10, 1922), 3; "New York Call Goes to Labor Union Control," *Illinois Miner* (August 18, 1923), 4; Morris Hillquit, "The Labor Government of Great Britain," *New Leader* (January 19, 1924), 1; "Greetings from Across the Sea," *New Leader* (January 19, 1924), 1.

obstruction of left-wing impossibilism after the splits of 1919 and 1920, "heartily encouraged" this trend and supported "unreserved co-operation with organized labor on all battle fronts." Concluding, Schlesinger affirmed that the American labor movement was "determined to catch up with the conquering procession of the European movement." Once American labor found its way to a labor party, progress would "be fast, its conquest uninterrupted, and its victory decisive." He pledged American support for reconstruction and participation in a "new force, the constructive force of labor, which alone makes for human life, social justice and international peace."[798]

Writing in *Labor Age* a few months after his return and shortly before the United Kingdom's general election, Schlesinger expanded on his lingering attachment to the BLP. "The English movement is a virile force, a colossal power," he wrote, "In my opinion, it is strong because it uses **every weapon** in its fight against capital. English Labor conducts its fight on the political, as well as on the economic field." Further, while the party may have been "out for the abolition of the profit system," it charted a rational, moderate, and understandable course to do so. The Labour Party "bases its action on sweeping demands; but it is cautious and 'constructive' in carrying out its program," he explained.[799] In short, the British Labour Party was the political vehicle the ILGWU hoped the Socialist Party could be-- accountable to trade unions, class-minded, and electorally relevant. The needle trades had always been political, long recognizing the benefits of government intervention for worker-safety, hours, and child labor. But for all the faith New York City's radical immigrant Jews had in the SPA advancing their needs,

[798] "President Schlesinger's Address at the British Trade Union Congress," *Justice* (September 22, 1922), 4.
[799] Benjamin Schlesinger, "Personal Glimpses of British Labor," *Labor Age* (November 1922), 18-21.

they wanted more influence.[800] ILGWU leaders sought the kind of power that the Labour Party could exert a national level.

But the Conference for Political Action offered leaders in the needle trades a real opportunity to put the Labour Party's methods into practice. For this reason, there is little wonder for the Garment Workers' and Amalgamated's continued support for the Conference and their pecuniary and organizational investment in the American Labor Party. The ALP, too, served as a center for British Labour propaganda, organizing lectures for visiting party members and operating as a clearance house for literature by and about BLP officials.[801]

Schlesinger was still, at least at heart, a committed socialist, as were many members of the ILGWU. It made some degree of sense that the garment workers would look approvingly on to the avowedly radical British Labour Party. For other unions, however, the turn to interest in the BLP was not nearly as natural. Something had changed in American trade unionism.

Indeed, Schlesinger had gone from a long-shot candidate for fraternal delegate in 1920 to an uncontested one only two years later. Of course, inter-union politics played a

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[800] Several ILGWU leaders, including David Dubinsky, retained Socialist Party membership into the 1930s. By then, however, even these holdouts drifted into extensions of the New Deal order like the American Labor Party or Liberal Party. As I note in the following chapter, dissatisfaction with the Socialist Party led many in the needle trades to Communism and the far-left. Daniel Soyer, "Executed Bundists, Soviet Delegates and the Wartime Jewish Popular Front in New York," *American Communist History* 15 no. 3 (2016), 293-332; Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 217-250; Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 140.

[801] The ALP arranged for Josiah Wedgewood, a Labour MP, to speak in New York and frequently asked Sidney Webb and other BLP writers for materials and advice. Executive Committee Minutes, October 23, 1922; Executive Committee Minutes, September 25, 1922; Executive Committee Minutes, October 2, 1922; Executive Committee Minutes, July 2, 1923; Executive Committee Minutes, November 27, 1922; Executive Committee Minutes, March 10, 1924. American Labor Party Papers. Folder 4. New York, Tamiment Library. Microfilm.

factor in the decision-- the ILGWU had grown into one the AFL's largest internationals and its delegates had supported Gompers's reelection over John L. Lewis's bid for president the year prior.[802] But Gompers would have still needed to keep the Federation's conservative wing in line and expend political capital on the nation's most radical, Jewish, and immigrant-based union. Schlesinger's election provided the labor left with a major propaganda victory. "One hears on all sides that President Schlesinger is the best fitted bearer of this redoubtable and militant spirit of our labor movement," an ILGWU reporter wrote before the convention began. "His election would mean more than a mere honor," *Justice* editor Max Danish determined. "Schlesinger as delegate of the [AFL] implies that he, with his ideas and point of view concerning the labor movement, would represent the American Federation of Labor." While Danish reaffirmed that Schlesingler's election did not imply that socialism had "captured" the American Federation of Labor, he nevertheless marked it as recognition that the ILGWU was an important factor amongst the nation's trade unionism. "This event means nothing less than that *our* labor movement has become a full-fledged citizen in the general labor movement of America."[803] Gompers and the executive board had, through representation, acknowledged that left-wing unionism did indeed have a home in the AFL.

Danish was undeniably correct that Marxist socialism had not swept over the American labor movement in any observable way. Nevertheless, the CPPA's continued

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[802] "President Schlesinger on the Denver Convention." *Justice* (July 8, 1921), 4-5; *Report of the Proceedings of the Forty-First Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor* (Washington, D.C.: The Law Reporter Printing Company, 1921), 455; *Proceedings of the Forty-Second Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor* (Washington, D.C., Law Reporter Company, 1922), 417.
[803] "The First Days of the A.F. of L. Convention," *Justice* (June 16, 1922), 6; Charles J. Laue, "A Week at Cincinnati," *Justice* (June 23, 1922), 3; Charles J. Laue, "A Week at Cincinnati," *Justice* (June 23, 1922), 3; "The A.F. of L. Convention and Our International," *Justice* (June 23, 1922), 6. Italics in last quote added.

survival as a new political phenomenon proved that *something* had shifted in the intellectual milieu of American trade unionism. The Brotherhoods continued to emphatically deny any adherence to socialism, but its representatives showed little interest in halting their sweeping praise for international social democracy, chants for political action, and calls for expansive government ownership. There was little difference in sentiment, for instance, between an avowed radical like Upholsterer's president William Kohn saying that a union using its economic power and not its political power was like trying to "ward off blows of his two fisted enemy by using one arm," and B.M. Jewell, the head of the AFL's railroad employees department, who said "The time is not far away when a union which tries to use only the strike weapon in the fight will lose." Locomotive engineer's president Warren S. Stone may have remained the epitome of the so-called "labor aristocracy," yet he remained a steadfast convert of government ownership, taking to *Labor Age* to write "There is no more reason why the steel roads of the country should be operated for private profit than there is for the dirt roads to be turned over to corporate exploitation." In that same issue, the UMW's John Brophy demanded democratic ownership of coal mines and Machinist vice president and future United Steel Workers founder, Clinton S. Golden, told readers that "The way to save ourselves and American civilization is to kill the profit system." Even Ed Keating, the former Democratic congressman and strong socialist skeptic, gladly featured an article by Queensland premier Ted Theodore. The Australian Labor Party leader did not conceal his ultimate aims of state: "Labor's ultimate policy is the replacement of the capitalist

institutions which are used for exploitation of human labor by cooperative or socialized organizations."[804]

Frederic C. Howe and the Railroader's New Unionism

Frederic C. Howe's intellectual journey during the early 1920s provides meaningful insight as to how exactly decidedly non-Marxist trade unionists developed an interest in more radical solutions to economic inequality. The longtime progressive was one of the Brotherhood's leading theorists and the CPPA's managing secretary. He had decades of experience in turn-of-the-century reform movements; a prolific writer, he maintained a principled stand against the deportation of suspected radicals earned him the praise of those interested in civil liberties. His interest in the Plumb Plan brought him firmly into labor's orbit.[805] Howe's work in advancing government ownership in 1920 led him to study similar schemes abroad. His investigations resulted in two books, *Denmark: A Cooperative Commonwealth*, and *Revolution and Democracy*, both published in 1921.

The two books were effectively treatises on the promise of cooperative enterprise in establishing a just economy and a vibrant republic. Though hardly new-- theories of cooperative enterprises had circulated since the mid-nineteenth century-- the war's effect of spurring corporate consolidation undoubtedly brought the concept to the fore of Howe's political consciousness.[806] Big business's successful assault on organized labor

[804] "Independent Politics," *Upholsterer's Journal* (February 1924), 264; "The American Revolution of 1923," *Labor Age* (June 1923), 17-18; Warren S. Stone, "The Railroads for the People!" *Labor Age* (November 1923), 6-8; John Brophy, "The Miners' American Plan," *Labor Age* (November 1922), 4-5; Clinton Golden, "Against the Profit System!" *Labor Age* (November 1922), 1-3; Edward Granville Theodore, "One Country Where the Workers Govern," *Labor* (September 29, 1923), 4.
[805] For more on Howe's extraordinary career see, Kenneth E. Miller, *From Progressive to New Dealer: Frederic C. Howe and American Liberalism* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2010).
[806] John Curl, *For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History Cooperation, Cooperative Movements, and Communalism in America* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012) (2nd edition), 3-11; Gerald W. Sazama,

and government ownership after the armistice convinced the progressive that no milquetoast reform could tame monopoly capital and its pursuit of profit through human misery. "The war enthroned the profit-taking, privileged, imperialistic groups," Howe wrote in *Revolution and Democracy*. "They found they possessed a power they had never fully realized, and they used it as they had never dared to use it before. They were astonished at the profits to be made through the state." In short, opportunities for profiteering had firmly convinced industrialists to maintain a tight grip on American politics and promote policy that acted against the greater good. For Howe, one example was the Treaty of Versailles. He blamed the Wilson administration's failure to secure "peace without victory" on the influence of American financial interests, which supposedly relished the opportunity to finance war indemnities. Further, industry's cry for raising tariffs would, in Howe's estimation, hamstring demand for European manufacturing and guarantee that no nation would ever fully pay its war debt to the United States. In a statement reminiscent of Lenin, Howe wrote that "the treaty of peace was the last word of capitalism; of a capitalism that had become a system of world imperialism."[807] The vast networks of reparations and debt, financed largely by American

"Lessons from the History of Affordable Housing Cooperatives in the United States," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 59 no. 4 (October 2000), 573-608; Jason T. Bartlett, "Uncovering the Hidden History of African-American Cooperatives," *Journal of Cultural Economy* 9 No. 6 (2016), 626-629; Histories of Cooperation are more robust in non-American fields, see Paul D. Earl, *the Rise and Fall of United Grain Growers: Cooperatives, Market Regulation, and Free Enterprise* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2019), 9-42; Mo Moulton, "Not to Nationalise, but to Rationalise? Cooperatives, Leadership and the State in the Irish Dairy Industry, 1890-1932," *Irish Economic and Social History* 44 no. 1 (2017), 85-101. For a description on Danish influence on American reform, see Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 344-357.

[807] Howe's concerns were valid. Increased industrialization during the 1920s did push the United States and Europe to extract more natural resources from the global south– deepening the already effusive exploitation of Latin American, Asian, and African nations. Further, the American banks became primary creditors to several European nations. Bankers and economists at the time saw the foundations of reparation payments troubling and advised lowering tariffs in order to spur European exports. Such a policy, however, was deeply unpopular to American industrialists. The result of these risky endeavors was a long global recession by the decade's end. Greg Grandin, *Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten*

banks, coupled American complicity keeping European industry down, would ensure the war-torn continent remained poor and politically unstable-- evidently proving to Howe that these "profiteers" prized bottom lines even over preventing another war.

More directly relevant to Howe's personal experience, he saw the railroads' return to private ownership as another example of monopoly capitalism's control over the state. "Private transportation is unsocial. It cannot be otherwise," he mused. "We cannot run the railroads for profit, and at the same time run them for service, for there is more money to be made from the unsocial, than there is from social operations." Profit in transportation did not inherently relate in efficiency. Companies mapped routes and planned timetables in a way that benefited shareholders, not necessarily producers and consumers. Similarly, if a company carved out a monopoly on a certain route, it had little incentive to keep freighting rates low. Howe made a similar case for coal. Just as the entire consumer economy rested on the price of transport, heating and industrial production depended on fuel. Yet, guided purely by earnings, mine managers remained "unwilling to produce to capacity" to lower costs.[808]

In *Revolution and Democracy*, Howe weaved a tapestry elaborating corporate capitalism's deleterious effects on the post-war society. A thirst for profit, he argued, left no aspect of American life unscathed. Beyond the more obvious economic effects, he saw

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Jungle City (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2009); Alan McPherson, *A Short History of U.S. Interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 95-114; Kiran Klaus Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 24-40; Brian D. Varian, "The Growth of Manufacturing Protection in 1920s Britain," *Scottish Journal of Political Economy 66 No. 5* (November 2019), 703-711; Warren I. Cohen, "American and the World in the 1920s," in *Calvin Coolidge and the Coolidge Era: Essays on the History of the 1920s*, ed. John Earl Haynes (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997), 233-242; Michael A. Bernstein, "The American Economy of the Interwar Era," in *Calvin Coolidge and the Coolidge Era: Essays on the History of the 1920s*. ed. John Earl Haynes (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997), 191-205.

[808] Frederic C. Howe, *Revolution and Democracy* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, inc., 1921), x-xviii, 5, 8, 21, 64, 80-83, 98, 118-119, 189-192.

the post-war consolidation of wealth and privilege as an assault on free speech and intellectual integrity. The consolidation of local newspapers into national conglomerates "censored" independent journalism. The Carnegie Endowment for the Advancement of Teaching was, in his view, a "standing menace to intellectual integrity." And the preponderance of "bankers and financiers" on university boards of trustees created a shortage of "progressive thinkers on political economy" in higher education.

If Howe outlined his concerns over the post-war political economy in *Revolution and Democracy*, he offered a direct solution in *Denmark: A Cooperative Commonwealth*. He viewed the small Nordic nation as the United States' polar political opposite. Small dependent farmers seemed to be increasing their acreage, not falling to massive landholding conglomerates. Farmers and laborers alternated controlled much of the government, unions remained strong, and a public trust controlled the railroads. In England, France, Germany, and the United States, "The political state is in a bad way. It commands little confidence. It does not function well. It is an imperialistic thing. It is an agency of classes and groups. It does not represent or aim to represent the great mass of people." Denmark, on the other hand, provided the "most valuable political exhibit in the modern world"-- it showed "that the state can control the distribution of wealth and increase its production as well. It can destroy monopoly and privileges of all kinds. It can put an end to poverty." At the center of the noble Danish experiment was a dense network of cooperative enterprises.

By the late nineteenth century, butter had become one of Denmark's chief exports. And by the twentieth century, the majority of dairy farmers supplied their milk to cooperatives for processing. These enterprises encouraged small farmers to pool

resources to buy necessary equipment, share production expenses, and distribute earnings based on investment. Farmers with only small plots of land could now compete with large estates. Further, transparency in production cost helped bring down the overall price in butter and encourage increased exports.[809] For Howe, however, these dairy cooperatives did much more for the Danes than prop up the dairy industry and spread agricultural wealth more horizontally, even though he praised these effects. The cooperative ideal, he told his American readers, spread across industries-- cooperative slaughterhouses and egg-collecting societies helping bring down the cost of domestic groceries, and cooperative banks liberalized access to credit. Though perhaps most importantly for Howe, cooperative enterprises empowered producers to enter political life to improve their lot.

To increase cooperative production capabilities, organized farmers took to the state to break apart large estates into smaller tracts of land. Largely through the *Venstre* party, farmers "put an end to the artificiality of a political state governed by lawyers, landowners, or a privileged class, and an economic state separate and detached from the political state." Between the 1870s and the turn of the century, the Danish parliament passed a series of laws, drafted by cooperative-backed farmers parties, to provide grants and easy loans for farmers to buy their own tracts. "Landlordism was a political problem," Howe wrote. "It could be ended only by political action. And the peasants abolished the landlord as a claimant on labor, just as they abolished the middleman."

[809] Markus Lampe and Paul Sharp, *A Land of Milk and Butter: How Elites Created the Modern Danish Dairy Industry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 1-23; Jardar Sørvoll and Bo Bengtsson, "Mechanisms of Solidarity in Collaborative Housing– The Case of Co-operative Housing in Denmark, 1980-2017," *Housing, Theory and Society* 37 No. 1 (2020), 65-81; Ingrid Henricksen, "Avoiding a Lock-In, Cooperative Creameries in Denmark, 1882-1903," *European Review of Economic History* 3 no. 1 (April 1999), 57-78; Deborah Fink, "'Not to Intrude': A Danish Perspective on Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century Dairying," *Agricultural History* (2009), 446-476.

Howe also paid particular attention to farmer's role in supporting unionization and urban reform. By weakening the overall power of the landed aristocracy, by lowering the cost of foodstuffs through cooperatives, by fighting to expand suffrage to women, and by opening access to public education, Howe argued, farmers empowered urban Denmark's budding trade union movement.[810] Howe noted to his American audience that reform-minded *Venstre* (represented in "Radical *Venstre*") members had worked alongside the trade union-backed Social Democrats to manage public transportation and utilities and to enact comprehensive health and unemployment insurance.

Howe's thoughts on Denmark also informed his general relationship with the CPPA and the Brotherhoods. One of Howe's central arguments in defending the Plumb Plan in 1920 was that cooperative management was not the same as state control. Direct government operation of an industry could, Howe argued, result in similar abuses as capitalist management and a "deadening effect" on worker morale. Cooperative ownership of key economies ensured the proper "psychological" motivation to "impel" workers to voluntarily continue operation and seek out efficiencies. The Danish example proved also, Howe insisted, that cooperatives were not a total substitute for government intervention. To ensure that the wealthy and the profiteers contributed to the nation's well being, it remained the state's responsibility to collect taxes and a public education system, electricity, and health, workplace, unemployment, and pension insurance.[811]

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[810] The mechanization of the dairy industry, which the cooperatives helped progress, reduced the need for farmhands and other semi-skilled labor. Younger farm workers, particularly women, moved to cities for educational and/or work opportunities, strengthening organized labor and the Social Democratic Party. Deborah Fink, "'Not to Intrude,'" 446-476.

[811] Frederic C. Howe, *Denmark: A Cooperative Commonwealth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), iv, vi, vii-viii, 139-146, 163-166.

Even if other prominent CPPA members did not reference Howe's work directly, they clearly agreed with his conclusions. Railroad union money financed the All-American Cooperative Commission, whose board appointed Howe to run the subcommittee on cooperative banking and finance. L.E. Sheppard of the Railroad Conductors and William Johnson served as vice presidents of the commission, and Warren Stone its treasurer. Stone had also hired Albert Coyle, the commission's operating secretary, to edit the *Locomotive Engineer*. Coyle shared Howe's enthusiasm for cooperation's role in stoking industrial democracy abroad-- filling his magazine with news on the Danish experiment and similar efforts across Europe.[812]

In the summer of 1923, Coyle led an expedition of engineers through Europe to learn more about labor politics and cooperation. In Great Britain, officials from the Labour Party guided them through union-managed shops, factories, and houses. The guides also included a visit to Rochdale, the birthplace of modern cooperation. "It was an amazing revelation to many members of our party to see at first hand the rapid growth of a new economic order within the decaying shell of the old-- an order based on service instead of profits," Coyle recollected. Speaking in London with Fabian and guild socialist, G.D.H. Cole, Coyle and his group discussed industrial democracy. Both labor-

[812] John Peter Warbasse, "Cooperation, the People's Business," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (January 1921), 22; "A copy of this Model Banking Law" may be secured by sending a request for same to Dr. Frederic Howe." P.J. Conlon, "Direct Trade in Farm Produce," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (March 1921), 249; "All American Cooperative Commission," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (April 1921), 293. C.C. Connolly United Farmers, L.E. Sheppard of conductors, Johnston, Warren Stone treasurer, Benjamin C. Marsh, Howe Committee on Banking and Credit. "First Convention Ohio District Co-Operative League," *Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen's Magazine* (July 15, 1921), 21; "Convention of All-American Co-Operative Congress, Cleveland, Ohio, February 10-12, 1921," *Machinist Monthly Journal* (March 1921), 239; "And it Still Grows," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (December, 1923), 988; "Cooperatives Will Save Europe, Says U.S. Government Inspector," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (October 1923), 811; Danish Cooperation Wins Uphill Fight," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (September 1923), 734; "Cooperation Doubles Output in Denmark," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (June 1923), 473; G.D.H. Cole, "Building Houses Without Private Profit," *Labor Age* (January 1922), 17 .

affiliated intellectuals agreed that cooperative banking was a necessary step toward this type of power. Only after workers mobilized "their earnings under their own control" could they run their "respective industries on the guild basis," somewhat "along the line of the Plumb Plan," Coyle added parenthetically.[813] Banking was indeed another bridge between the unions of the CPPA and Europe.

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers had chartered its bank (the first American bank owned entirely by a trade union) in November 1920. The bank had been Warren Stone's biggest project as a union leader; indeed, Basil Manly complained to La Follette in August, 1920, that the chartering process had distracted the engineer's from their political obligations.[814] For Stone, however, banking was the key to his union's future. In practical terms, cooperative banking would operate much like the Plumb Plan, capping dividends to shareholders and instead funneling revenue back to depositors in the form of high interest on their investments and low interest on their loans. By focusing on small affordable lending instead of large-scale financing, the union bank would help its members with opening savings accounts and procuring mortgages for homes. Summing up his philosophy, Stone told reporters that his bank "would rather make forty loans of $1,000 each than one loan of $40,000." A union bank could better spread the wealth. "While thousands of workers cannot borrow enough money to build a home or secure a temporary emergency loan," Albert Coyle similarly complained, "the stock speculators borrow billions of dollars at 3 to 4 per cent to gamble on margins or futures to underwrite

[813] Albert F. Coyle, "Reflections from Abroad," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (September 1923), 707-709.
[814] Manly to Robert M. La Follette Jr., August 4, 1920. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B86 1920 Manly, Basil M.

promotion schemes."[815] Account-holding engineers would also have a transparent look into the bank's investments and a voice in its leadership. In exchange for offering these services, the union itself would have the opportunity to gain returns on surplus union funds and build a war chest for strikes and political campaigns.

Labor banking had its ideological roots in transnational reconstruction. Big business had a general monopoly on large scale credit, and it would be wishful thinking to believe that organized labor could operate through a financial institution and not have its funds invested in businesses and political causes driven to undermine them. "We are tired of having our own money deposited in trust with the bankers, used to cut our own throats," Stone allegedly told Albert Coyle. Credit, used and distributed by labor, would not only help its members, but bring about industrial democracy. Directly linking his work with the Brotherhoods to his studies abroad, Howe wrote: "Many vistas of a new society will be opened up when labor mobilizes its credit resources for cooperative purposes. That is demonstrated by the progress made by the peasant farmers in Denmark and the cooperatives in Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Czecho-Slovakia and Germany." Calling credit the "tool of tools," he hypothesized that labor banks would fund labor temples, cooperative housing, and independent newspapers-- all initiatives most private financiers would consciously avoid. Coyle enthusiastically agreed with this assessment. Cooperative banking had helped countless farmers and workers in "Europe and Asia," Coyle argued: "It has solved the credit problem for the peasant, freed the city worker from the loan shark, enabled poor men of all classes to own their own homes and to finance a host of other cooperative enterprises in order to reduce their living costs and

[815] "Labor Invades A Citadel of Capital," *Current Opinion* (April 1, 1923), 483; Albert F. Coyle, "One of Labor's Greatest Hopes," *Labor Age* (May 1926), 3-5.

hence enjoy a better standard of living." He highlighted the Cooperative Wholesale Society Bank, the bank of the British cooperative society and a close ally to the Labour Party as a particularly strong example. "Just as political democracy is impossible without industrial democracy, so industrial democracy can never exist until financial democracy is achieved by cooperative banking," Coyle summarized.[816]

Support for cooperatives and for banking helped bridge the divide between the Brotherhoods and the garment trades. J.M. Budish and George Soule considered labor banking to be a crucial part of their "new unionism" as practiced by the Amalgamated.[817] Even if these initiatives could not "seriously compete with capitalist credit," they would have a "considerable influence in the struggle to make the working majority, rather than the privileged few, the center of our culture." After the ACW founded its first bank in 1920, Sidney Hillman became a vocal proponent of pooling labor's credit independently. "We must realize that the democratic form of government is bound to penetrate our industrial life as well," he told a meeting of New York's Academy of Political Science during a speech on his union's banking initiative. Before the war, labor exercised "its power in a negative manner," focused purely on protecting "the members of the organizations from abuse by the employer." The Amalgamated Bank was a stop on the path to labor exhibiting "a constructive and positive force." Hillman ultimately hired Leroy Peterson, who helped the Engineers open their bank, and made a similar effort to help his members secure small loans at low interest. He also provided a unique service:

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[816] Frederic C. Howe, "Organized Labor Takes Up Banking," *Labor Age* (June 1922), 5-8; Albert F. Coyle, "One of Labor's Greatest Hopes," *Labor Age* (May 1926), 3-5.

[817] "The money thus made available will not be used, as it now is in ordinary banking institutions, for the encouragement of private business enterprise, but for building loans to the unions themselves, for loans to cooperatives, and for the financing of other projects, such as newspapers, in which labor has a special interest." (International Union Bank, Fifth Ave and 21st Street. January 11, 1924; S. Yanofsky, "What About Our International Union Bank?" *Justice* (February 15, 1924), 5.

organizing the distribution of remittances to Soviet Russia, which still had no formal trade relations with the United States. For a union with a large contingent of Eastern Europeans, the bank allowed the rank and file to send money to relatives still in Russia. Inspired by the Amalgamated's success, the ILGWU chartered the International Union Bank in 1924. The two banks underwrote countless union initiatives over the succeeding decades. Several of the cooperative apartment buildings they built in New York City still stand.[818]

Even the Socialist Party took a more vocal stance on cooperative financial services and enterprises during the 1920s. Though the SPA maintained that cooperatives were not an end unto themselves, and would not distract from the party's ultimate goal of a classless society, worker-run enterprises could help pave the way. Between 1923 and 1924, the SPA revised its declaration of principles to demand "publicly owned and managed warehouses, markets and credits" to help farmers "escape from the twin curses of tenantry and mortgaged serfdom." For city workers, cooperatives were "absolutely necessary, not only for the immediate defense and betterment of the material and social condition of the producing classes, but also to equip them with the knowledge… they must have in order to administer efficiently the industries of which they are to win control."[819] Workers, the party leadership maintained, would need to be ready to operate

[818] J.M. Budish and George Soule, *The New Unionism In the Clothing Industry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 250-251; Sidney Hillman, "Labor Banking Movement in the United States," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science in the City of New York*, Vol. 11, No. 3, "Popular Ownership of Property: Its Newer Forms and Social Consequences" (Apr., 1925), 109-118; Leroy Peterson, "The Labor Bank Movement," *Bankers' Magazine* (March 1923), 106; "Labor as Banker," *The Independent* (February 3, 1923), 82; Leroy Peterson, "A National Bank Owned by a Labor Union," *Bankers Magazine* (July 1922), 51-53; "The Labor Banking Phenomenon," *Current Opinion* (March 1, 1923), 355; Leo Wolman, Labor Banking After Ten Years," *New Republic* (August 21, 1929), 10-11; Leo Wolman, "The Promise of Labor Banking," *New Republic* (December 19, 1923), 89-90; Paul H. Douglas, "The Rise and Decline of Labor Banking," *New Republic* (February 19, 1930), 25.
[819] Declaration of Principles, 1. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_077_0066

the means of production. Of course, local party leaders hardly included this theoretical component when building cooperatives.

For Daniel Hoan, mayor of Milwaukee, cooperation offered his administration a chance to spur private home ownership. Between 1920 and 1922, Hoan invested half a million dollars of combined municipal and private funds into a joint stock company tasked with building at least one hundred houses. The city built the neighborhood– called Garden Homes– on a twenty-eight acre plot north of downtown and within a block of street car transit. Hoan worked with the investors, wholesale suppliers, and building unions to construct units at around $4,000 dollars-- $1,000 to $1,500 under market.[820] Residents who came under a certain economic threshold, but could afford a ten percent down payment, would be put on a twenty year plan to ownership, during which they could sell their shares back for equal value in the event of sickness or joblessness and a new tenant would take over. It was the first municipally backed housing initiative in the United States and it helped working families afford their own home on a 40x100 foot lot. The Garden Homes project never expanded into additional neighborhoods, but the initiative helped cement the Milwaukee Socialist Party's reputation for advancing affordable homes in a city chronically short of them.[821]

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[820] Average cost of a home in Racine in 1930 was more than $7,000 ($113,000 adjusted for inflation). The Garden Homes cost around $65,000 adjusted for inflation. Michael Brocker and Christopher Hanes, "The 1920s American Real Estate Boom and the Downturn of the Great Depression: Evidence from City Cross-Sections," *Housing and Mortgage Markets in Historical Perspective*, eds. Eugene N. White, Kenneth Snowden, and Price Fishback (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 161-201. Daniel W. Hoan, "Milwaukee," *Labor Age* (June 1922), 12.

[821] Milwaukee's last Socialist mayor, Frank Zeidler, fought tooth and nail for additional public housing units throughout the late 1940s and 1950s. The voters rewarded Zeidler for his efforts and reelected him for three terms. John McCarthy, "Dreaming of a Decentralized Metropolis: City Planning in Socialist Milwaukee," *Michigan Historical Review* 32 no. 1 (Spring 2006), 33-57; Todd J. Fulda, "Daniel Hoan and the Golden Age of Socialist Government in Milwaukee," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 75 no. 1 (January 2016), 246-260; Tula A. Connell, *Conservative Counterrevolution: Challenging Liberalism in 1950s Milwaukee* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 73-95. For a contemporary look at the Garden Homes neighborhood, see https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-garden-homes-community.htm.

Conclusion: You Can Say Socialism All You Want

Cooperation brought socialists and labor progressives together while orienting both toward European social democracy. Socialist Party leaders saw social democracy as a means to bring about government ownership of the means of production. Progressive trade unionists and reformers saw the same groups as conscientious practitioners of a more humane capitalism based on commonwealth. But there remained enough common ground to keep the two branches united. The CPPA was many things at once. But in its plurality, it produced common ground.

Before the 1922 election, Frederic C. Howe drafted a pamphlet titled *Producers of Wealth Unite* as official CPPA election propaganda. In that document Howe called upon farmers and workers to "organize, register, agitate, educate," and "vote," as they had done in Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, and Britain. After screening the draft, Morris Hillquit hastily wrote Howe to "compliment" him, adding that "The systematic education carried on by literature of that character will undoubtedly show results."[822] This same connection between factions led the avowedly socialist head of the League for Industrial Democracy, Harry W. Laidler, to write articles on public extolling the virtues of publicly owned hydroelectric power not only for *Labor Age,* but for the *Locomotive Engineer* as well.[823]

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[822] *Producers of Wealth Unite* quoted from, "Producers of Wealth Unite," *Railway Carmen's Journal* (November 1922), 742 and "A Socialist Political Move," *Implement Record– Tractors and Farm Equipment* (June 1922), 31. Kenneth E. Miller, *From Progressive to New Dealer: Frederic C. Howe and American Liberalism* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2010), 327n46; Morris Hillquit to Fred C. Howe, April 21, 1922. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel 2

[823] Harry W. Laidler, "Labor Moves Toward Control in Europe," *Labor Age* (October 1922), 11; Harry W. Laidler, "The Trend Toward Public Ownership," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (September 1923), 723.

In September 1923, Senator Magnus Johnson, the Swedish-born Minnesotan dirt farmer who had won a special election for the FLP two months prior, addressed the American Labor Party at its annual convention in New York. He was in the city as the principal speaker for a "Progressive Labor Forum at Carnegie Hall and agreed to travel to the Lower East Side and meet with the ALP. He did so, one reporter noted, at the behest of his "steering committee," a group "composed chiefly of editors of the Yiddish radical press.[824] In years prior, he asserted in a thick Nordic accent, Midwestern farmers would not "have not taken very kindly" to someone like Morris Hillquit– who preceded him at the lectern– speaking with their elected representatives. Johnson confessed that he did "not blame them at all" for their past attitude. "The public press [had] been hammering into them lies and misrepresentations," he claimed. Something had changed since the war and the subsequent formation of the CPPA, Johnson suggested. Not long ago, "I did not dare to mention the word Socialism, and they would not dare to listen to me," he exclaimed, "but to-day you can say it all you want in Minnesota." The crowd cheered.[825]

Johnson's speech highlighted the extent to which the CPPA had united the disparate creeds of the broad American left during the early 1920s. A Swedish-born Minnesota dirt farmer, elected to the US Senate by a coalition of agricultural and industrial workers, traveled to address a convention of New York City's most radical unions. Despite their at times conflicting views of the world, they all agreed on certain

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[824] "Farm-Senator Hits Financiers in N.Y. Address," *Baltimore Sun* (September 30, 1923), 1; "Two Johnsons," *Los Angeles Times* (October 7, 1923), 18; "Magnus Johnson Plans Invasion of New York," *Butte Miner* (August 10, 1923), 2; "Magnus Johnson to Speak in New York," *Wisconsin State Journal* (August 10, 1923), 1; "Magnus in New York," *Hartford Courant* (October 2, 1923), 14.

The meeting took place at the Headgear Workers' Lyceum, alternatively called Beethoven hall. Located on 210 East 5th Street, the building today is home to some of the City's most expensive loft spaces.

[825] Magnus Johnson, "Address to the American Labor Party Convention, on September 30, 1923," 1. American Labor Party Papers. Folder 3. New York: Tamiment Library. Microfilm.

fundamentals: that concentrated wealth had poisoned the well of both capitalist enterprise and democratic governance, not only in the United States, but across the world. With storm clouds once again rising in Europe, especially over the Ruhr valley, unity in purpose was more important than ever. The CPPA alliance of the early twenties somewhat resembled the Popular Front of the following decade. There was, however, one very crucial distinction: the Communist Party of the United States was explicitly, and by design, not allowed to participate.

Chapter 9: Living in a "House of Make-Believe:" The "United Front," Left Anticommunism, and the CPPA

The socialists and labor reformers of the Conference for Progressive Political Action often disagreed over strategy and outlook. The two wings of the CPPA could nevertheless maintain a strained relationship. While a mutual admiration for European social democratic parties helped unite the disparate forces, it was the shared opposition to Soviet-styled Marxism that proved decisive in keeping the Conference united. During the 1920s, the Socialist Party of America, the American Labor Party, and the garment trade unions rejected partnerships with the Communist Party. This leftwing anticommunism helped these groups relate to, and cooperate with, the more traditional trade unionists that had always rejected revolutionary politics.

At the end of 1921, after its plans for imminent revolution across the industrialized world stalled, the Communist International called on its global network of affiliates to abandon plans for imminent revolution and build a "united front from below" against capitalism.[826] Communists were to build alliances with socialists and standard trade unionists and seek influence within their organizations. With positions of power in more established political circles secured, the communists would be better prepared for a revolution sometime in the future. But Soviet plans for a pro-communist United Front

[826] Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Red Thread: The Passaic Textile Strike* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2021), 82-85; Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism, 1919-1929* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 50, 116, 118; Bryan D. Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 166-201; Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986) (originally published 1960), 32-38.

also met a quick end. Social democrats and their affiliate unions the world over soundly rejected these overtures.

Prior to the war, left and right trade unionists held differing views regarding the revolution. Conservatives in the AFL had rejected Bolshevism since November 1917 and supported the Wilson administration in denying recognition and aid to the Soviets. A substantial number of socialist-led unions, however, had initially celebrated the new regime. In particular, the largely Jewish needle trades approved of Russian workers casting off the shackles of the Czar's destructive and often hateful regime.[827] The non-communist left dismissing the United Front in 1922 helped paper over this initial divide. Even the stridently red-baiting Samuel Gompers and Matthew Woll acknowledged and respected the anticommunism of the socialist-aligned needle trades. This realignment helped collapse barriers between trade unionists who had little else in common. Whether a San Francisco carpenter, a Midwestern miner, or a Yiddish-speaking garment worker, all but a very small number of trade unionists closed the door on the United Front. This shared antipathy became a source of unity in American labor's ranks. Anticommunism was, from the 1920s onward, a core tenet of American trade union politics.[828]

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[827] Many conservative trade unionists in the AFL and Brotherhoods had For overviews of the AFL's 1920s anticommunism, see Jennifer Luff, "Labor Anticommunism in the United States of America and the United Kingdom, 1920-1949," *Journal of Contemporary History* 53 no. 1 (2018), 109-133; Jennifer Luff, *Commonsense Anticommunism: Labor and Civil Liberties Between the Two Wars* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 121-141. For overviews of the needle trades and communism, see Daniel Soyer, "Executed Bundists, Soviet Delegates and the Wartime Jewish Popular Front in New York," *American Communist History* 15 no. 3 (2016), 293-332; Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 217-250; Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 19-98; Steve Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 141-143.

[828] Left anticommunism remains a somewhat understudied phenomenon. Most historians attribute anticommunism as a conservative ideology. Its practitioners were reactionaries looking to stall progress. This was not always the case. As historian Daniel Soyer summarizes the debate:

This chapter first returns to the December 1922 meeting of the Conference for Progressive Political Action, at which both socialists and railroad union heads agreed that communists had no place in the CPPA. It then looks back to earlier that year, when trade unionists and social democrats in Europe first encountered the United Front. Left anticommunism was a global phenomenon, one that helped give shape to social democracy. Many American and European trade unionists had similar reactions to the united front. Across the Atlantic, attempts to reunite the split socialist movement met swift ends. Social democrats raged at the Soviet Union's invasions of neighboring sovereign states, condemned its harsh repression of dissidents, and decried its continued undermining of electoral politics and trade unions abroad. The American non-communist left arrived at these same conclusions and made nearly identical arguments against cooperation with the revolutionary left.

A shared affinity for incremental change kept the bickering factions of the CPPA together. The chapter concludes in the summer of 1923, when this rejection of the United Front resulted in the collapse of the Chicago Federation's Farmer-Labor Party and the

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> The historiography of communism and anti-Communism assigns most of the blame for the stalling of progressive reform during the Cold War on the unwillingness of liberals and Socialists to ally with Communists, to remain silent in the face of Stalinist crimes, or to defend Communists from attack. Only a few historians have begun to shed light on the reasons *why* radicals and liberals might reasonably oppose not only Soviet tyranny but also the influence of the Communist Party in American progressive movements.

This chapter adds to the uncovering of progressive, or left, anticommunism, and its legacies.

Daniel Soyer, "Executed Bundists, Soviet Delegates and the Wartime Jewish Popular Front in New York," *American Communist History* 15 no. 3 (2016), 296-297. For a selection of overviews, see Eric Arnesen, "Civil Rights and the Cold War at Home: Postwar Activism, Anticommunism, and the Decline of the Left," *American Communist History* 11 No. 1 (2012), 5-44; Jennifer Delton, "Rethinking Post-World War II Anticommunism." *Journal of the Historical Society* 10 No. 1 (March 2010), 1-41; Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History*, 91 No. 4 (March 2005), 1233-1263; Alex Lichtenstein, "Consensus? What Consensus?," *American Communist History* 11 No. 1 (2012), 49-53.

formation of New York State's official chapter of the CPPA. In both cases, the Conference maintained unity by defining itself as distinctly non-revolutionary.

"Not in Harmony:" The CPPA Meets the United Front.

Of the dozens of trade unions, political parties, religious organizations, and reform groups that attended the December 1922 Cleveland meeting of the Conference for Progressive Political Action, the credentials committee spurned only the Workers' (Communist) Party delegation. Charles E. Ruthenberg, an early convert to Bolshevism, had appeared at the meeting to appeal for communist admission. Ed Keating, editor of *Labor*, gave him a short shrift. The Workers' Party was "un-American," he declared, and it did not "stand for the constitution and the flag." Keating further accused the communists of being Pinkerton spies, tasked with undermining legitimate labor efforts. Robley D. Cramer, editor of the *Minneapolis Labor Review*, protested. As one of the few principled non-communist allies of the Workers' Party, he insisted that the Reds had "not been a disrupting force" in the Twin Cities and had in fact "worked in concert with the political ambitions of labor in the last campaign." In a parliamentary maneuver, Socialist delegate Morris Hillquit cut off any further debate by referring Ruthenberg's request to a credential's committee he knew would never grant them entry. Only a few moments later, Charles P. Howard, future Typographical Union president and CIO cofounder, delivered the verdict: the communists were "not in harmony with the declarations and aims of this Conference."[829] No one beyond Cramer objected. The CPPA went on to develop its first platform; Reuthenberg and his party returned to their offices.

[829] *Report of the Proceedings of the Second Conference for Progressive Political Action Held at Cleveland, Ohio December 11, 12 1922* (CPPA Pamphlet), 10-11.

Communist news organs, of course, howled at the delegates' exclusion and took the opportunity to highlight the Workers' Party platform. William F. Dunne accused the CPPA of devoting its energy solely to prevent "the establishment of a labor party… and to head off any movement that showed signs of understanding the basic reasons underlying the open shop campaign, the use of federal authority, judicial, military and legislative against the workers and their organization." It was because the Workers' Party "showed a clear understanding of these matters" that the CPPA barred their entry, he supposed. In *The Worker*, the party's primary paper, Israel Amter called the non-communist delegates "fakers" and described them as "yellow, oily, [and] smirking." Though Amter did not attend the meeting, he insisted that the union leaders in attendance greeted William Johnston's opening speech with "not a ripple of applause– only a feeling of nausea and weariness." Hungarian revolutionary turned American communist theorist, John Pepper (Joseph Pogany), who also did not personally attend the meeting, condemned it as "a two days' orgy of Roberts' Rules." William Johnston had "played with the rules with the unscrupulousness of an experienced card-sharper. Keating… served Czar Johnston as hangman, and Hillquit was the third in the game." Only a communist-led mass movement, they all agreed, could lead the working class away from its cowardly current leadership.[830]

For communists the world over, the mid-twenties was the era of the "United Front." By 1922, Lenin and the Communist International's (Comintern) dream of immediate global revolution had all but collapsed. Germany's fragile new republic did

[830] Israel Amter, "Sidelights on the Cleveland Conference," *The Worker* (January 6, 1923), 1, 5; William F. Dunne, "The Cleveland 'Con' Conference," *Labor Herald* (January 1923), 24; John Pepper, *For a Labor Party: Recent Revolutionary Changes in American Politics* (Third Edition) (Chicago: Workers' Party of America, 1923), 58.

not totter into the hands of the proletariat. Italy appeared to be heading toward reaction, not revolution. The British and American parties remained lamentably isolated from mainstream consideration. The Hungarian socialist republic fell to counterrevolutionaries after only a few months. Poland's revolutionary government, too, failed to take root. And though the Bolsheviks had emerged victorious from the Russian civil war, they controlled remnants of the nation's former imperial peripheries largely by force of arms. In short, the Soviet government learned it could no longer expect like-minded governments to offer support, nor could it count on its communist affiliates in other countries to rally the working class any time soon.[831] In search of a solution, Lenin and Comintern head Grigory Zinoviev ordered Red International affiliates to form "united fronts from below" with non-communist worker-led organizations.

The change in tone had a dual purpose. On the one hand, by ceasing its calls for armed revolution, the Russian government hoped to win more stable diplomatic relations with the rest of the world. The Soviets, having just fought a civil war, desperately needed trade. On the other hand, if communist party members the world over secured leadership positions in trade unions and political parties, they would lay the groundwork for a future seizure of state power.[832] In the United States, Workers' Party leaders enthusiastically interpreted the United Front as an order to form a Farmer-Labor Party. American

[831] Soviet operations had failed to reattach the Baltic states, Finland, and Poland to the Russian core. Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, however, all lost their bids at independence during the early 1920s. While there were Bolshevik parties and Soviet sympathizers in all of these countries the Red Army ultimately subdued each nation by force. Ethnic and religious division, Turkish invasions from Anatolia, and sympathy toward the old Imperial Russian regime had weakened each nascent state, allowing the Bolsheviks to crack opposition in fairly quick fashion. Ukraine and the caucuses remained part of the Soviet Union until its dissolution. Laura Engelstein, *Russia in Flames: War, Revolution, Civil War, 1914-1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 277-311, 328-360, 445-468.

[832] For more on Soviet foreign policy during the early twenties, see Jonathan Haslam, *Spectre of War: International Communism and the Origins of World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 28-60.

communists saw the CPPA as their best opportunity to complete their mission. The CPPA saw the United Front as a reason to exclude them. The policy was transparently a short term maneuver to curry favor and capture non-communist institutions.[833]

In justifying the shift to a United Front, Lenin pointed to a section in his 1920 *"Left Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder* instructing British communists to negotiate with the Labour Party. The British far left should offer their electoral help in defeating "Lloyd George and Churchill" and establish "*obligatory* participation in Parliament." This was not to help the BLP, Lenin insisted. "If the [Arthur] Hendersons and [Phillip] Snowdens accept the bloc on these conditions, then we are the gainer for it is immaterial how many seats in Parliament we get…," he wrote. "We are the gainers, for we shall carry our propaganda into the masses." If the Labour Party rejected the alliance, communists would "gain even more. For we have at once thus shown to the masses that the Hendersons prefer their own nearness to the capitalists to the unification of all the workers." In a blithe analogy, the Soviet premier and theorist maintained he was "prepared to support Henderson by my vote in just the same way as a rope supports the man who has hanged himself."[834] For years to come, these ruminations undergirded communist understanding of the United Front.

American communists undoubtedly understood their attempts at a Farmer-Labor Party in these terms.[835] In the spring of 1922, party leaders instructed trade union members to enter "unity negotiations" and put non-communist leaders "on record before

[833] Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986) (originally published 1960), 32-38.
[834] Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, 29-51; Lenin, *"Left Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder* (Detroit: Marxian Educational Society, 1921), 84-87.
[835] Bryan D. Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left*, *1890-1928*, 177-188.

their own membership, so that their betrayal of the interests of the workers will be plain to everyone." In a series of articles in *The Worker* titled "Problems of Our Party," John Pepper addressed concerns of communists viewing their new roles in United Front organizations falling out of lockstep in the drive for a "Worker's Republic" and "Soviet America." Whether working for a trade union or a new Labor Party, a communist's first duty was to the Party, Pepper wrote. Discipline should remain iron-clad: "A Communist should not abandon his party, even if he thinks that the Party is in the wrong." The Workers' Party remained the "centralized" revolutionary cell it had always been, regardless of any change in strategy. Dictatorship of the Proletariat and "the role of force in history," as conceived by Lenin, remained core tenants of Party ideology.[836]

Social democrats and politically motivated trade unionists in Europe and North America paid no heed to the United Front. No one's memory, it seemed, was so short as to forget the bitterly divisive post-war period in which communists and socialists battled over the control of political parties, fraternal organizations, and labor unions. Neither did they miss the hardly concealed motive for a future return to intra-class conflict.

"We All Want to Fight:" Berlin, 1922.

A few months prior to the CPPA Cleveland meeting, European social democrats set the tone for liberal and labor opposition to the United Front. If cooperation between the two left-leaning ideologies was at all possible, it would have happened in Europe.

[836] "The United Front," *The Communist* (April-May, 1922), 3; John Pepper, "Problems of Our Party: IV Be American!" *The Worker* (May 26, 1923), 5; C.E. Ruthenberg, "Party United Front Policy is Approved," *Worker* (May 26, 1923), 5; John Pepper, "Problems of Our Party: III My Party, Right or Wrong, My Party," *Worker* May 19, 1923, 5; John Pepper, "Problems of Our Party II: A Discussion with Upton Sinclair on the United Front," *Worker* (May 12, 1923), 1, 4.

Both manner of radicals there controlled legislative seats and often narrowly held, or were narrowly locked out of, government power. This was undoubtedly true in Germany, where rivalry on the left perpetually resulted in the right and center gaining control.[837] But an April 1922 convention at the Reichstag in Berlin-- bringing together delegates of the Second, Second and a Half (Vienna Union), and Third International for unity talks-- proved how illusory and united action really was.

Serving as a moderator for the feuding factions, Austrian social democrat and head of the Vienna Union, Friedrich Adler, hoped to establish a joint council between the three internationals. Perhaps at a future date, he decided, the council could reunite the European left under a single banner. All the delegates held concerns over the rise of fascism in Italy, the deteriorating peace in the Ruhr, and the general fiscal precarity that had plagued countless nations since the war. For these reasons, he stressed the necessity of dropping doctrinal disputes. "However different our perspective of to-morrow may be," Adler pleaded, "we can still say that although we who meet here as comrades are divided as to whether the fight is to be for to-day or to-morrow, yet we have this in common, *that we all want to fight.*"[838] His cry was, however, in vain.

The meeting was as important diplomatically as it was ideologically. Several of the delegates held, or would soon hold, real governmental power. On one side of the Reichstag were Second International delegates like Ramsay MacDonald, Emile Vandervelde, future Danish prime minister Thorvald Stauning, future Belgian prime

[837] Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 81-128; Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
[838] *The Second and Third Internationals and the Vienna Union: Official Report of the Conference Between the Executives, held at the Reichstag, Berlin, on the 2nd April, 1922, and following days* (London: The Labour Publishing Company, 1922), 7-12.

minister Camille Huysmans, British Transport and General Workers Union president and future foreign secretary Ernest Bevin, and Gustav Moeller, a foundational figure of the Swedish welfare state. In the middle were independent socialists like Adler, German USPD (Independent Socialist Democratic Party) leader Arthur Crispien, SFIO leader and Karl Marx's grandson, Jean Longuet, and Russian Social Revolutionary in exile, Julius Martov. Leading the communist-aligned parties was Soviet Foreign Commissar, Karl Radek. Sen Katayama, founder of the Japanese Communist Party, and famed German revolutionary, Klara Zetkin, joined Radek's party. Katayama was the only credentialed delegate from outside Europe and Zetkin was the only credentialed woman.[839]

The wounds between many of these theorists and political leaders ran deep. First to the lectern was Zetkin. The fifty-year veteran of German socialist politics had been a member of the ill-fated Spartacist League– a Bolshevik inspired plot to overthrow the newly minted Weimar Republic in late 1918. The SPD government chose to suppress the uprising and the partially demobilized military units the government relied upon executed many of her comrades. Both Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg perished in the conflict.[840] Still, Zetkin insisted that she believed in the Comintern's push for a United Front. "The Communist International demands of the working masses that they unite for the struggle against the present offensive of capital," she told the assemblage, "and that they carry on that struggle in the most energetic manner without consideration as to their

[839] *The Second and Third Internationals and the Vienna Union: Official Report of the Conference Between the Executives, held at the Reichstag, Berlin, on the 2nd April, 1922, and following days* (London: The Labour Publishing Company, 1922), 6-7.
[840] Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 30-31.

differences of opinion upon the way leading to the final victory and the means of assuring this way." In her estimation, however, the SPD stood in the way of progress.

There could have been cooperation long ago, Zetkin thundered, but for the repeated betrayals of the social democrats who enticed the working class into a "temporary community of interests with the imperialist states." Likely conjuring memories of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, she insisted that revolution would have quickly captured the nation after the armistice "But the indecision of the masses of the working class, the democratic illusions which were spread among them and had been methodically fed by the reformist parties, and the open and concealed coalition of the latter with the bourgeoisie prevented the majority of the working class from following the glorious example of the Russian October Revolution."[841] Zetkin had started off Adler's unity conference by stirring a hornet's nest.

The delegates of the "reformist" internationals responded with equal hostility. Emile Vandervelde agreed that the European people lived "under the standard of reaction." He worried, too, that "the capitalists" would once again become "seized by the madness which leads them into the abyss." Or, perhaps even worse, "become reasonable" and form vast consortiums like the Americans, whom he believed had a system "the most powerful, the most brutal, the most cynical." Yet Vandervelde very much included the Soviet Union as an agent of reaction. He accused the Third International of perpetuating "Bolshevist Imperialism." As Vandervelde and several speakers who followed him pointed out, the Russian Communist Party had, in recent years, expanded its grasp

[841] *The Second and Third Internationals and the Vienna Union: Official Report of the Conference Between the Executives, held at the Reichstag, Berlin, on the 2nd April, 1922, and following days* (London: The Labour Publishing Company, 1922), 13-18.

through the military conquest of Ukraine, Armenia, and Georgia.[842] Further, the Bolsheviks had unleashed the Cheka, their secret police, not only at accused Czarists and anti-revolutionaries, but trade unionists and rival socialists as well. "Do you think this Conference can meet without a demand from us that those who are in prison to-day shall join us-- those who are threatened with capital punishment; those who, after serving as convicts under the Tsarist regime, are now in the same position under the regime of the Third International," Vandervelde asked. Karl Radek replied, likely to the approval of Zetkin, that the Second International should keep its "Hands off" Russian tribunals until it had "washed them clean of the blood of Rosa Luxembourg and Liebknecht."[843] Radek likewise defended the invasions of neighboring countries as an equally necessary means of rooting out counter-revolutionaries.

Compelled to join the fray, Ramsay MacDonald characterized Radek's defense of Soviet armed incursions in neighboring countries as "not only militarist, but similar to that applied by the Allied capitalist governments today in Ireland, Egypt, and... Russia itself." Attempting to trap the communist delegates, he explained that "Rosa Luxembourg tried to liberate Germany from what she considered to be a tyranny," just as the Mensheviks on trial in Moscow had done.[844] Both Vandervelde and MacDonald claimed any promises of a "United Front" with the Soviets were out of the question so long as the

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[842] Laura Engelstein, *Russia in Flames: War, Revolution, Civil War, 1914-1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 340-344.

[843] *The Second and Third Internationals and the Vienna Union: Official Report of the Conference Between the Executives, held at the Reichstag, Berlin, on the 2nd April, 1922, and following days* (London: The Labour Publishing Company, 1922), 19-28, 30-31.

[844] He needed only to point in that very room to Julius Martov, a Menshevik intellectual who rallied his supporters to the Bolshevik's aid during the Russian civil war only to flee to Germany as the Cheka delivered his former comrades to grizzly ends. Martov had hoped for a new Soviet government that included a wider swath of socialist opinion, not one solely controlled by the Bolsheviks. Israel Getzler, "Iulii Martov, the Leader who Lost His Party in 1917: A Second Look at Martov on the 70th Anniversary of His Death," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 72 No. 3 (July 1994), 424-439.

Soviet Union committed to a policy of "*noyautage*" (infiltration). The Soviets needed to stop "capturing" established unions and political parties to prepare "the masses" for revolution. To illustrate the duplicity of a United Front, MacDonald quoted from one of Radek's letters to the Comintern: "We ask the Communist sections all over Europe to take part in the creation of the United Front, not for the purpose of making it effective, but for the purpose of strengthening the Communists through direct propaganda inside the organizations taking part in the movement."[845] The Third International offered no defense.

After adjourning late in the evening, the delegates returned the next morning and agreed on a short statement affirming their mutual defense of the "proletariat against the capitalist offensive," and called on all governments to resume political and economic relations with Russia. Considering every party present held these beliefs prior to the April meeting, none of the internationals could exactly call the platform progress.[846] The Comintern agreed to allow representatives of the Second International to conduct a fact-finding mission in occupied Georgia and to provide legal counsel for Mensheviks awaiting trial-- though, as MacDonald and Vandervelde expected, the Soviets later stonewalled this initiative. In June, when Vandervelde and a team of German socialist lawyers appeared in Moscow to meet with their clients, they found themselves denied access to relevant materials and constantly tailed by government handlers. "The officials, whose duty it is to guard us, are constantly with us and only inside our premises are we

[845] *The Second and Third Internationals and the Vienna Union: Official Report of the Conference Between the Executives, held at the Reichstag, Berlin, on the 2nd April, 1922, and following days* (London: The Labour Publishing Company, 1922), 39-47.
[846] *The Second and Third Internationals and the Vienna Union: Official Report of the Conference Between the Executives, held at the Reichstag, Berlin, on the 2nd April, 1922, and following days* (London: The Labour Publishing Company, 1922), 83-87.

free from their attentions," the team telegrammed the Commissar of Justice. "During the day these officials 'guard' us in such a manner that we cannot help feeling that this is done not merely for the sake of our safety, but also for other purposes." When attempting to meet with Russian co-counsel, the guards informed them that the crowd amassed near the building was "very hostile" and they could not guarantee their safety.[847]

Covering the Berlin meeting for *The Nation*, left-wing journalist Joseph Gollomb noted similarities in growing left-wing and labor unity on both sides of the Atlantic. After detailing the points on which all three internationals agreed, Gollomb wrote that there had "been something like an effort in this direction at the conference in Chicago in February." Though he did not mention the CPPA by name, his meaning was clear. He believed that out of this summit was "a vague drift toward some such grouping as the British Labor Party." Whether or not this alliance would ever include the Third International remained up for debate. It was too early to tell, Gollomb concluded, whether this growing unity on the left would result in any fundamental "changes in socialist doctrine." The communist line was prone to breakneck changes and the rightwing socialists of Europe and North America seemed unwilling to ever countenance a formal alliance.[848]

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[847] Emil Vandervelde, T. Liebknecht, Kurt Rosenfeld to People's Commissar of Justice. June 3 1922. Moscow. Labour Party Papers: International Department, Russian Files. Manchester, UK: Labour History Archive and Study Centre. Folder: Trial of Members of Social Revolutionary Party in Moscow. Doc ID: LP/ID/RUS/SRP/86. "Translation of Telegram from Berlin May 20, 1922. Labour Party Papers: International Department, Russian Files. Manchester, UK: Labour History Archive and Study Centre. Folder: Trial of Members of Social Revolutionary Party in Moscow. Doc ID: LP/ID/RUS/SRP/81.

[848] Joseph Gollomb, "The Socialist Movement Reunites," *The Nation* (April 26, 1922), 489; Joseph Gollomb, "Toward Socialist Unity," *New York Call* (February 2, 1922), 7.

A False Unity of Front: The Socialist Party and Revolution

For members of the Socialist Party of America, the break between social democrats and communists in Berlin matched their newfound faith in the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Since 1919, the SPA had been locked in a bitter feud with its Moscow-aligned counterparts. That year, Morris Hillquit and the party's executive council had expelled thousands of Bolshevik sympathizers from the SPA. Hillquit and his allies maintained that violent revolution, as dictated by the Soviet government, was incompatible with the party's charter and its foundational belief in societal change through political action, education, and labor militancy. For the party to be strong, it needed to remain ideologically consistent. "Better a hundred times to have two numerically small Socialist organization," he wrote in 1919, "than to have one big party torn by dissensions and squabbles, an impotent colossus on feet of clay."[849] Communist opponents insisted that they represented most of the party and were its rightful inheritors. As it did in Europe, internecine fighting between these former comrades during the postwar era resulted in deep and lasting fissures on the left.

During the 1920 convention, for instance, party publisher J. Louis Engdahl hoped to include in the party's declaration of principles the line: "in the final struggle of the workers for political supremacy in order to facilitate the overthrow of the capitalist system, all power during the transitional period must be in the hands of the workers." Engdahl accused Hillquit and the executive council of vote chasing and watering down the party's theoretical underpinnings to the point that the "platform might be endorsed by

[849] Morris Hillquit, "The Socialist Task and Outlook," *New York Call* (May 21, 1919).

some non-Socialist organization like the Non-Partisan League."[850] Victor Berger, however, shouted down Engdahl and his left-wing supporters for attempting to tether the SPA to Bolshevik notions of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Berger and his supporters defended their emphasis on voter recruitment as the only way to build power. Wishing and hoping for an immediate revolution would not bring one about. Further, the use of Soviet rhetoric and calls to dictatorship were more likely to alienate potential supporters. "The trouble with us is that we have been living in the House of Make-Believe," he told Engdahl. "You always talk about the proletariat of America. You haven't got it. The steel trust has got it. Outside of Milwaukee and the East Side of New York they have it… I do not believe in any dictatorship… If I cannot convince a group or a station or a nation that my principles are right then I have no right to get them carried through." J.G. Soltis, a delegate from Minnesota, and San Francisco socialist Cameron King backed Berger's assessment. "I know it from my own experience as a propagandist in the north and middle west that we have been speaking to the workers in terms of Marxian phraseology which was absolutely out of the purview of the American working class," Soltis lamented. King asked his colleagues to consider where the Socialist Party had its stronger locals, in reformist Milwaukee, or where the radicals maintained control. "Look at the actual election returns and I say… that the policies pursued by Milwaukee and Wisconsin have proven themselves to be the correct policies because they have been successful," King chided his colleagues.[851]

[850] Socialist Party Convention, Third Day, 36-48. May 11, 1920. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_076_1185.
[851] Socialist Party Convention, Third Day, 52-83. May 11, 1920. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_076_1185.

These debates lasted well into the new decade and were never settled. Defections of left-leaning members into the Communist Party continued to drain the SPA. The majority of Socialist left-wingers may have been expelled or bolted in 1919, but a critical minority, including well-known radicals like Engdahl, Young People's Socialist League president William F. Kruse, and Rand School instructor Alex Trachtenberg remained. This group continued to push for SPA entry into the Third International until gradually merging into the Workers' Party in late 1921 and early 1922.[852] Pacifist professor and social scientist Scott Nearing left for the communist ranks in 1923. On his way out, Nearing published an article in the *New York Call's* Sunday magazine in which he insisted that the Socialists had become "administrators" and not revolutionaries. It was now the Workers' Party, not the SPA, that had become "heir to the present radical political situation in the United States." He praised Foster's TUEL for hastening the end of traditional trade unionism and bringing about real revolutionary change. Finally, Albert Weisbord, a Harvard educated lawyer and Kruse's successor to head the YPSL, deserted his post for the Communists in 1924.[853]

European and American leftwing anticommunism ran a similar course. This shared opposition to Bolshevism brought social democrats on both sides of the Atlantic together. In 1922, members of the Socialist Party of America voted to join the Vienna Union, which called for socialist unity, but nevertheless held the Soviets to account. After eight years without any affiliation, the executive voted to join 11 to 9.[854] The majority

[852] Socialist Party Convention, Day Session, 87-101. May 14, 1920. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_076_1185; Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York: Viking Press, 1957), 330-343.
[853] Scott Nearing, "What Can the Radical Do?" *New York Call Magazine* (February 4, 1923), 5; Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Red Thread: The Passaic Textile Strike* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2021), 36-39.
[854] "Minutes of the Convention," *Socialist World* (May 1922), 10-11.

likewise applauded when the Second International and Vienna Union fused into the Labor and Socialist International, paving the way for Hillquit's visit to the 1923 Hamburg conference.

By 1923, the SPA's anticommunism was resolute. While in the year before, the resolution's committee still ostensibly favored "the unification of the International movement," that sentiment had all but disappeared.[855] Very much in league with the Second International representatives in Berlin, the 1923 SPA resolutions committee struck down communist overtures for a United Front. After the war, "the Communist International pursued a deliberate policy of division," the socialists wrote. "It ordered splits in every country. It sowed hatreds and dissension among the working class. It destroyed all possibility of solidarity of the workers in each nation." The committee then referenced the 1922 Reichstag meeting– citing parts of Ramsay MacDonald's speech. In observing the actions of European communists and the United Front, the SPA members decided there was no reason to believe "that the proposal of the Workers' Party is not of the same character." The communist overtures were "couched in language similar to the pleas which the Communist International made prior to the meeting of the Berlin conference," they determined. Sympathy for the British Labour Party and newly founded LSI ran deep in the SPA.[856]

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[855] "Consideration of the Agenda." April 29, 1922 Afternoon Session. National Convention of the Socialist Party, Cleveland, Ohio, April 29, 1922; "Report of the National Executive Committee to the National Convention at Cleveland," 1. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_077_0004.

[856] MacDonald read aloud an article originating from the Third International instructing its members to form a United Front "not for the purpose of making it effective, but for the purpose of strengthening the Communists through direct propaganda." The Socialists quoted the same passage. (*The Second and Third Internationals and the Vienna Union: Official Report of the Conference Between the Executives, held at the Reichstag, Berlin, on the 2nd April, 1922, and following days* (London: The Labour Publishing Company, 1922), 40; "Resolution of the Proposal of the Workers' Party, May 1923," in Proceedings of the 1923 Convention. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_077_0052.

The Party's 1923 resolution to condemn "political persecution" and urge "the Soviet Government to abandon it as injurious to itself and to the workers of all countries," too, demonstrated an ideological connection with the Berlin meeting.[857] In their memorandum to the meeting of the three internationals, members of the Russian Social Revolutionary Party in exile– including noted intellectuals like Ilya Rubanovitch and Viktor Chernov, elected leader of the short-lived Constituent Assembly– sympathized with the with Second International and Vienna Union delegates. It was "difficult for an honest socialist to sit at the same table with the apologists of the Cheka executioners," they wrote. Bolshevik appeals for a United Front were "sacrilegious," in their minds. "There is only one means of testing the readiness of the Bolsheviks to adopt a real and not a false unity of front. That is to demand that they should make an actual beginning with it in Russia." Their words rang loudly across the Atlantic. Socialist concern for imprisoned dissenters became a mainstay in their formation of left anti-communism.

In the coming years, the exiled Menshiviks and Social Revolutionaries formed the Committee for Political Prisoners in Russia– an organization with roots in London and New York.[858] Though its membership was nebulous, the Committee likely included individuals like Chernov, Rubanovitch, and Raphael Abramovich, who became a leader in the LSI and eventually moved to New York and became a contributor to the

[857] "Socialist Prisoners in Russia," *Socialist World* (June 1923), 4.
[858] *Bolshevik Terror Against Socialists: Documents and Facts Collected by Authority of the Socialist Labor International* (New York: Committee for Political Prisoners in Russia, 1925). Found in Labour Party Papers: International Department, Russian Files. Manchester, UK: Labour History Archive and Study Centre. Folder: Trial of Members of Social Revolutionary Party in Moscow. ID: LP/ID/RUS/SRP/120. Available online through Warwick University, National Union of Railwaymen Papers (https://mrc-catalogue.warwick.ac.uk/records/NUR/L/5/8/28).

Forward.[859] During the twenties, Abramovich wrote articles on Soviet "terror machinery" for both SPA and British Labour Party publications.

The Committee for Political Prisoners' 1925 report maintained what the exiled leaders had said prior to the Berlin meeting. "It will not be possible for the international proletariat to heal the deep division between the communist parties until the destruction of the anti-socialist Dictatorship in Russia, which supports and feeds the feuds, both morally and spiritually," the Committee stated. This view found a receptive audience with readers of the SPA's *New Leader.* Writing in that publication, ACLU president Roger Nash Baldwin insisted that "those of us who stand for the principle of free speech for Communists in the United States… are obligated… to speak out against imprisonment by communists in Russia of persons guilty only of views against their program."[860] For American socialists the Berlin meeting and its aftermath helped crystalize a thoroughly international and leftwing opposition to Soviet communism.

A "Dreary and Futile Factionalism:" The Needle Trades, American Labor Party, and the United Front.

Anticommunism played a critical role in the needle trade unions as well– the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, in particular. Two years earlier, the ILGWU had downplayed the presence of communists in their ranks. Officials acknowledged there were "a handful of fanatics who believe that by destroying the

[859] Raphael R. Abramovich, *The Soviet Revolution, 1917-1939* (New York: International Universities Press, 1962), vii-ix

[860] Roger Nash Baldwin, "The Bolshevik Grab on Free Speech," *New Leader* (March 21, 1925), 2; R. Abramowitch, "Bolshevism Up a Blind Alley," *New Leader* (March 7, 1925), 5; *Bolshevik Terror Against Socialists: Documents and Facts Collected by Authority of the Socialist Labor International* (New York: Committee for Political Prisoners in Russia, 1925), 60.

unions they will bring nearer social revolution," but cautioned those who would "magnify their influence."[861] The needle trades had always been home to radical elements, and the large numbers of Eastern European workers with family still in Russia virtually guaranteed sympathy for the Soviet experiment.[862] At no point during the 1920s did unions like the ILGWU, ACW, or the Upholsterers ever drop their demand for US recognition of the USSR. This aligned them closely with European social democrats.

Yet as news of Bolshevik repression spread and American communists grew bolder in their attempts for power within these unions, leaders grew increasingly hostile. After Abraham Cahan returned from a late 1921 tour of Europe, he described ongoing warfare between left-wing and centrist trade unionists– especially in Berlin– and excoriated communist ILGWU who pushed for revolution. "For an American to speak of the Third International is a sign of absolute idiocy… The Third International has done 1,000 times more damage to the Socialist movement than good," Cahan wrote in *Justice*. A few months later, *Justice* editor Max Danish featured a series of articles on the Soviet Union. Ben August, a journalist with ties to the *Forward*, told readers that "the truth about the condition of the workers in Russia has not been told yet." His time living in the USSR had brought great disappointment. "The Communist Party is the dictator over the Russian proletariat," August wrote.[863] Russia's peasants tilled the land only by force and trade unions lost their autonomy.

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[861] "The Washington Labor Conference," *Justice* (March 4, 1921), 4.
[862] Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 8-9; *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 19-45; Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire* (Second Edition) (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 169-203; Jennifer Guglielmo, *Living The Revolution: Italian Women's Resistance and Radicalism in New York City, 1880-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 44-78.
[863] "Famous Labor Editor on Europe, the Third International and Russia," *Justice* (September 16, 1922), 5; Ben August, "In the Land of the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat," *Justice* (November 11, 1921), 7; Ben

By Spring 1922, the ILGWU had fully embraced social democratic anti-communism. Danish featured another series on Soviet policy, this time by Jan Oudegeest, a Dutch railroader, International Labor Organization founder, and elected head of the International Federation of Trade Unions. Foreshadowing the Second International's response to United Front overtures, Oudegeest did not believe IFTU should anticipate much competition from Moscow's Red International of Labor Unions: "It is pretty clear that at last the eyes of the workers have been opened to the dangers of this tyranny of the Russian dictators, who seem to imagine that the whole world consists only of serfs who can simply be driven along by a generous use of the knout." Communism, he opined, had become a failure at home and abroad. "We regret very much to see that the Russian Revolution… is being directed into wrong channels by these tyrants as a result of which it runs the risk of becoming a complete failure," Oudegeest concluded.[864]

Having their biennial convention a month after the Berlin meeting, the ILGWU adopted many similar positions as to the United Front and political prisoners. The week prior to the convention, Benjamin Schlesinger and Max Danish lambasted the union's left for its "adventurism," its "Phrasemonging," and its "wild and unintelligent destructive talk." Factional infighting occasionally devolved into outright violence and intimidation on the shopfloor. Communists in the Garment Workers had, over the last year, begun a campaign to build strength in various locals and wrest leadership positions from the moderate and socialist-led factions. Communists accused ILGWU officers of dictatorial practices and class collaborationism. Non-communist officers, in turn, maintained that

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August, "In the Land of the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat II," *Justice* (November 18, 1921), 7; Ben August, "In the Land of the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat III," *Justice* (November 25, 1921), 7.

[864] Jan Oudegeest, "The Wreckers," *Justice* (March 10, 1922), 4; Jan Oudegeest, "The Wreckers II," *Justice* (March 17, 1922), 4.

these radicals peddled deceit and falsehoods through the locals to erode trust. They feared frequent calls for revolution and class warfare would hamstring the International in its delicate negotiations with employers and the state. In Los Angeles, for instance, communists had nearly destroyed the International's tenuous foothold on the West Coast. Jacob Lanch, Local 52's leftwing leader, had called a general strike of cloakmakers in November 1921 without consulting anyone in the union's leadership. A few weeks later, with its pickets in disarray and its financial resources exhausted, Local 52 abandoned its plans and appealed to Schlesinger for aid.[865]

A guest of the convention, C.E. Ruthenberg spoke "as one who accepts the leadership of the communist Internationale" to "offer that program to the workers of the world which will bring about a united front." The speakers who followed him shouted down his request. Abraham Cahan produced perhaps the most venom. Ruthenberg may have been "sincere," he told those assembled in the Locomotive Engineers' ornate Cleveland meeting hall, but the United Front was a charade– a cloak for "trouble makers" and "charlatans." Cahan had little qualm denouncing what he saw as an underhanded and

[865] The General Executive Board issued Local 52 a formal reprimand, calling its actions "hasty, ill-conceived, and contrary to the better judgment of the General Office." Lanch protested, arguing that he had at least managed to resecure terms according to old contracts in most of the union shops. "The point the General Executive Board makes is this," Schlesinger responded, "that as much as we are ready to assist our local unions… we don't want them to go out and send us strikes C.O.D [cash on delivery]… and say 'We have called a strike and you pay for it.' If we are to stand the expense, naturally we should have something to say as to whether the strike should be called or not." The exchange foreshadowed the New York Joint Board's disastrous 1926 strike, when ILGWU left called a strike against the international's wishes and nearly bankrupt the union. For an overview of Local 52, see "ILGWU. Los Angeles Joint Board Records. Los Angeles Organizational History." Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives. Cornell University. https://rmc.library.cornell.edu/EAD/htmldocs/KCL05780-046.html; "Women Workers Back on Job After Strike," *Los Angeles Evening Express* (December 28, 1921), 12; "Strike of Garment Workers Called Off," *Los Angeles Times* (February 16, 1922), 5. J. Launch, "Local No. 52 Wins Victory for Organized Labor," *Justice* (March 3, 1922), 4; "The Convention of Our International," *Justice* (April 28, 1922), 6; "Eleventh Day– Friday Evening Session. May 12, 1922– 7:30 PM. *Report and Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union*, 170; *Report of the General Executive Board to the Sixteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union* (May 1922), 46-47.

disingenuous push for a United Front. If the left was serious in its desire for unity, it would not so aggressively seek to control locals and apply the Workers' Party agenda from the top down. Left wingers would instead focus on fighting unfair conditions, not their own leadership. Who was their rebellion directed against, he questioned. "Against Capital? Nonsense! We all want the worker to revolt against it. But it is rebellion against your union, rebellion against the organization, because they are looking for jobs which they cannot get. Mischief makers down with them, down with them!" A delegation of the communist-controlled Local 22 introduced a resolution endorsing "the decision of the Three Internationals at Berlin to call a world congress of labor for the purpose of forming a united front"-- something the Berlin meeting technically did not do. The resolution never made it past committee for a floor vote.[866]

A vote on political prisoners did, however, make it to the floor. "In the name of the hope and inspiration that we have felt in the achievements of the Revolution," read Israel Feinberg, General Manager of the New York Joint Board, "we call upon the Russian Soviet Government [to] immediately to restore the freedom of the press and of association." He and his fellow drafters also demanded liberation for "all men and women held solely for their opinions and for political activities." Jacob Lanch and Rose Kaplan, a Communist Party member from Local 9, claimed that resolution would "aid the capitalistic world in crushing Russia." Lanch further questioned why, if repression was so egregious, "Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman," two well-known anarchists

[866] "Eleventh Day– Friday Evening Session. May 12, 1922– 7:30 PM. *Report and Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union*, 187; "Cahan, Branstetter, Roewer and Algernon Lee Address Delegates," *Justice* (May 12, 1922), 5; Third Day— Wednesday Afternoon May 3, 1922– 2:30PM. *Report and Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union*, 38.

deported from the United States during the war, "who were in Russia two years, were not put in jail?" Goldman and Berkman, entirely disenchanted by Soviet repression, and fearing persecution themselves, had fled Russia six months prior. Unconvinced by these objections and counterexamples, the conference adopted the measure three to one.[867]

Concerns over communist disruption easily dovetailed with the needle trade's emerging social democratic political bent. When the ILGWU, the ACW, the Furriers' Union (not yet under communist control), and the Upholsters first sought to construct the American Labor Party as their political arm in July 1922, the Workers' Party and its United Front became an immediate order of business. As soon as Algernon Lee, head of the Rand School for Social Science and elected chairman of the first meeting, called the session to order, delegates of the Millinery Workers and ILGWU Local 1 moved to extend invitations to communist organizations. The assembly of unionists rejected the proposal 202 to 25. Like the Garment Workers' convention, the ALP, too, demanded "full civil and political rights" for left-wing Russian dissidents. Offering support to Vandervelde and his commission's efforts in Russia, the new political party agreed to "join with their European organizations and individuals in an earnest appeal that the Soviet government shall not impose the death penalty on the persons now on trial in Moscow."[868] The resolutions reaffirmed the American Labor Party's antipathy toward communist dictatorship and authoritarianism more generally.

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[867] "Eleventh Day– Friday Evening Session. May 12, 1922– 7:30 PM. *Report and Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union*, 179-180; For an interview with Rose Kaplan (b. 1896) see Virtual Oral/Aural History Archive, California State University Long Beach. <https://csulb-dspace.calstate.edu/handle/10211.3/215623?show=full> date accessed, February 1, 2022.
[868] Convention Proceedings (First), July 15, 1922, 15-16. American Labor Party Papers. New York University: Tamiment Library. Folder 1.

The ALP shared its worldview with European social democrats. The Garment Workers' and ALP conventions occurred roughly the same time as Schlesinger's trip to the British Trade Union Congress as the AFL's fraternal delegate. Responding to communist criticism of his leadership prior to his departure, Schlesinger once again made clear that he remained "opposed to the terrorist methods of Soviet government." He also, however, reaffirmed his support for diplomatic recognition. Schlesinger was pleased to learn that the vast majority of the British Labour Party's leadership not only agreed with his position, but had seemingly won over trade unionists and a large segment of the voting public to the cause. The communist's role in Western European labor politics, he insisted upon his return, was "all but played out." The Third International may have caused splits in some labor federations– most notably in France and Germany– but it was no closer to revolution.[869] "Destroyers and annihilators cannot build," the labor leader added.[870]

Yet even if he heard nothing but "scorn" for the Bolsheviks in the Labour Party's halls, the political fight for Soviet recognition and open trade remained on the agenda. Explaining this dichotomy to several American labor journalists, Schlesinger suggested that "they are all of the opinion that the best way to get rid of the clique of usurpers and

[869] The German Communist Party (KPD) had some pull with industrial workers in the Ruhr, but its greatest source of strength was unemployed workers. Trade unions remained primarily affiliated with the SPD and to a lesser extent the Catholic Center Party (Zentrum). Bert Hoppe, "Iron Revolutionaries and Salon Socialists: Bolsheviks and German Communists in the 1920s and 1930s," in *Fascination and Enmity: Russia and Germany as Entangled Histories*, eds. Michael David Fox, Peter Holquist, and Alexander M. Martin (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 59-82; Larry Peterson, "Labor and the End of Weimar: The Case of the KPD in the November 1928 Lockout in the Rhenish-Westphalian Iron and Steel Industry," *Central European History* 15 No. 1 (March 1982), 57-95; Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 132-187.

[870] "A Statement from President Schlesinger," *Justice* (July 7, 1922), 1; S.Y., "What Schlesinger Saw and Heard in Europe," *Justice* (October 6, 1922), 7; Benjamin Schlesinger, "Personal Glimpses of British Labor," *Labor Age* (November 1922), 18-21.

grafters which rules and terrorizes Russia today is to recognize it and open up Russia to the whole world."[871] This observed social democratic anti-communism reflected Schlesinger and the ILGWU's moderate leadership. Workers would reward them for eschewing utopian impossibilism and fighting for good contracts and favorable political conditions, they believed. The growth of the British Labour Party seemingly proved that unionized workers wanted "radical" policies, but disapproved of the revolutionary calls of the Moscow-aligned far left.

The SPA and the needle trades also quickly learned that anti-communism helped assimilate them into broader American progressivism. The AFL Executive Council's decision to back Schlesinger's candidacy for TUC fraternal delegate stemmed from the ILGWU's professed anti-communism. Gompers, Woll, and Tobin did not nominate Schlesigner because they had suddenly found faith in "New Unionism." While Gompers consistently warned against political action and derided even unemployment insurance as a degrading "state dole," the garment workers used the courts to seek injunctions against their employers, routinely used state arbitrators to manage disputes, and pushed for comprehensive government-backed insurance schemes.[872]

Schlesinger's fraternal credentials came with caveats. In a telling vote one month prior to Schlesinger's nomination, the Executive Committee unanimously agreed that "fraternal delegates from the American Federation of Labor to any labor body or to any body, be required to conform with the express policies of the American Federation of

[871] S.Y., "What Schlesigner Saw and Heard in Europe," *Justice* (October 6, 1922), 7.
[872] Samuel Gomers, "Gompers Defends Labor Against European Attacks," *New York Times* (August 5, 1923), xx3.

Labor."[873] The rule was a new one and it perhaps reflected a growing insecurity in the Federation with the size and strength of its more militant wing. After Schlesinger's return from London, Gompers distanced himself from the ILGWU president's laudatory address to the British Labour Party. While Gompers printed Schlesinger's speech to the TUC in the *American Federationist*, he added a hefty editor's note critiquing the ILGWU president. He disagreed entirely that the AFL needed to "catch up" with European labor. Schlessinger's speech was "Marred by a few sentences which carry a mistaken impression," Gompers asserted, and Schlesinger had been "a bit over courteous to his hosts."[874]

What did impress Gompers and his allies was the Garment Workers' continued role as the leading bulwark against communist infiltration into the American labor movement. The AFL president's office could swallow a fair amount of ideological heterodoxy from the needle trades so long as they battled the Bolsheviks. At the 1922 AFL convention, Matthew Woll recounted a story of a Soviet representative appearing at the ILGWU headquarters in 1921. It was one Schlesinger himself told often. The representative allegedly demanded the garment workers join the Red International of Trade Unions, or the communists would create a "dual body" in opposition. Woll praised Schlesinger for telling the "commissar" to "get out as fast as he could."[875] Gompers and

[873] Morning Session, May 10, 1922, 3. American Federation of Labor Papers. Minutes of the Executive Council Meetings, May 10-13, 15-18, 1922. Proquest. 002035_007_0934.
[874] "American Labor Unshaken," *American Federationist* (August 1922), 576; "Commenting on an Editor's note," *Justice* (November 10, 1922), 6.
[875] Whether or not the exchange happened exactly as Schlesinger remembered, he recounted it often. The communists within the ILGWU did also threaten secession or takeover, though they did not officially split until creating the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union in 1929. Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 38; Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986) (originally published 1960), 232-233; 1922 Proceedings, 464; "Communists Drive Schlesinger Out," *New York Times* (May 1, 1922), 3; "A.F. Of

Federation conservatives also applauded Schlesinger's opposition to yet another resolution demanding AFL support for US diplomatic recognition of the USSR. The garment workers' delegation supported such recognition and trade rights, but would not support the resolution because it excluded their clause demanding freedom for political prisoners and guaranteed freedom of speech.[876]

"The Unity of Disgust:" Summer 1923 in Chicago and Albany

This left-leaning opposition to Leninism also served as a palliative cure for squabbles within the Conference for Progressive Political Action. In mid-1923, the CPPA faced the first real external challenge to its credibility amongst progressive labor. John Fitzpatrick and the Chicago Federation of Labor, having bolted the CPPA the December prior, called a convention in July to formally establish a national Farmer-Labor Party. Just as they did prior to the 1920 election, Fitzpatrick and his allies promised "political unity of the working class groups" in a genuine new party. Dashing these initial hopes, however, the Socialist Party, the ILGWU, and the American Labor Party, all refused to send attendees.[877]

Delegates to the SPA's 1923 annual conference, shortly before drafting their official statement against the United Front, passed a resolution to broadly explain its absence from the Chicago meeting. At present, a subcommittee wrote, forming a new

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L. Moves to Stop Red' Union Activities," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (July 11, 1922), 9; "Found Tenderness in Comrade Lenin," *New York Time* (November 7, 1920), 18.

[876] American Federation of Labor, *Report of the Proceedings of the Forty-Second Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor* (Washington, D.C., Law Reporter Company, 1922), 460.

[877] "F.L.P. Meeting Gets Widespread Support," *New Majority* (May 26, 1923), 3; "Farmer-Labor Party to Call National Convention July 3," *New Majority* (March 31, 1923), 1; "F.L.P. In Move to Unite Forces," (March 17, 1923), 1; "Many Delegates Coming July 3," *New Majority* (June 30, 1923), 1-2; "Farmer-Labor Party Convention is Opened," *New Majority* July 7, 1923, 1; F.L.P. Disowns the New Party," *New Majority* (July 14, 1923), 1-2; "The F.L.P Convention," *New Majority* (July 21, 1923), 4.

party could give the "delusive appearance of political unity of the whole working class without reality." Despite "evidences of widespread discontent with the parties of capitalism within the ranks of organized labor," it concluded, "comparatively few of the great unions are yet ready to take the decisive step of launching a working-class party on a national scale." Expanding on this notion a month later, Norman Thomas explained that the "unity of disgust may elect a few officials. It cannot build a new party."[878]

The ALP sent Fitzpatrick its regrets as well. The coalition of radical New York trade unionists and political organizers had briefly considered joining the Chicago Federation's venture in April, but quickly decided it would be a "mistake" to "abandon the conference for progressive political action." The party's executive board resolved to keep "an expectant attitude" regarding the CPPA and its ultimate transition to the type of labor party it desired. "The A.L.P. shares the hopes of the Farmer-Labor party but we desire to avoid illusions," the party's board clarified. "We do not wish to encourage hopes before conditions justify such encouragement."[879] Jerome DeHunt, a Railway Clerk and founding member of the ALP, insisted in the pages of the *Upholsterer's Journal* that he and his colleagues remained "a component part of the National Conference for progressive Political Action … marching forward shoulder to shoulder with the sixteen Railroad Brotherhoods, the United Mine Workers, the Needles Trades and all of the forward looking industrial and farmer organizations of the country." Clarifying the ALP's "expectant attitude," DeHunt claimed that just as "British workers

[878] "Reply to the Farmer-Labor Party," *Socialist World* (June 1923), 9; Emil Herman, "Political Situation in the Northwest," *Socialist World* (October 1923), 4-5; Norman Thomas, "The Foundations of a Third Party," *Socialist World* (August 1923), 2; National Executive Committee Report, 1923 Convention, May 19, 1923. Socialist Party of America Papers. Proquest. 201901_077_0052.
[879] "The American Labor Party and the Chicago Conference," Minutes of the General Council American Labor Party, June 21, 1923. Folder 5. American Labor Party.

were aroused to the necessity of participating in politics in a party of their own" twenty years ago, Americans would soon follow suit.[880]

Shortly after DeHunt's article appeared, Morris Hillquit published a similarly minded pamphlet. "The political strength of British labor is derived from the solid support of large masses of the population," he wrote, perhaps justifying his party's position as a numerical and ideological minority in the CPPA. But without the masses, socialism had no just road forward. The unjust alternative was the Soviet model, where "government rests on a small group of idealists above the large masses of the common people."[881] Hillquit's allusion to the Soviets was telling. While the Socialists and their trade union allies publicly pinned their aloofness from Chicago on a vague desire to win "the masses," they also knew well that the Communist Party would have members in attendance. Still convinced that Moscow's plea for a United Front was nothing but a cynical ploy to bore into and capture legitimate trade union functions, the CPPA's left wing did not defect.

Chicago Federation leaders, recognizing that most labor bodies to their right would have little interest in abandoning the CPPA, tacked in a more radical direction and invited representatives from William Z. Foster's Trade Union Education League. Foster had been one of Fitzpatrick's most talented organizers during the wartime unionization campaigns in the stockyards and steel mills, and the two maintained contact into the early twenties. The TUEL had an official policy much like Fitzpatrick's. Foster encouraged progressives to pursue leadership positions in their unions and determined that "the pussy-footing and side-stepping tactics of the Johnston-Keating-O'Neal group" had

[880] Jerome T. DeHunt, "The Need of an American Labor Party," *Upholsterer's Journal* (July 1923), 84-85.
[881] Morris Hillquit, "Moscow and London," *Socialist World* (July 1923), 6-7.

"disgusted every red-blooded worker." But there was little question that TUEL had also fully swallowed the Communist Party's call for a United Front. His paper, *The Labor Herald*, carried advertisements for the Workers' Party and uncritically praised the Soviet Union.[882]

Inviting TUEL may have helped secure the attendance of *some* progressive trade unionists. Some TUEL-affiliated Machinists and Mineworkers (one of Foster's projects during this period was supporting UMW candidates opposed to John L. Lewis) sent delegates and Hillman's ACW attended and kept a watchful eye.[883] But Fitzpatrick believed his close relationship with Foster would shield him from communist intrigue. He was wrong.[884] Communist front organizations flooded to Chicago and quickly took control of the floor. In the words of liberal intellectual Robert Morss Lovett, who attended the Farmer-Labor convention on behalf of the *New Republic*, "But as once before when the sons of God assembled, Satan came with them."[885]

The communist takeover of the FLP occurred in three steps. First, the party took advantage of the convention's liberal accreditation process to secure as many votes as possible. Nominally independent groups like the Lithuanian Workers' Literature Society, the African Blood Brotherhood, the United Federation of Rhode Island, the Workmen's

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[882] William Z. Foster, "The Needle, Shoe and Leather, Textile, and Eastern District Conferences," *Labor Herald* (June 1923), 1; Earl R. Browder, "The League's Labor Party Referendum," *Labor Herald* (June 1923), 12; "Build the Labor Party," *Labor Herald* (July 1923), 9; Robert Dunn, "What I Did Not See in Russia, *Labor Herald* (August 1923), 14. Foster's biographer, James R. Barrett, claims that Foster joined the Communist Party in late-1921, but kept his affiliation secret until the spring of 1923. Through that period, TUEL's independence from the Soviet party line gradually faded. James R. Barrett, *William Z. Foster and the Tragedy of American Radicalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 108-110.
[883] James P. Cannon, "A Talk With Alex Howat," *Labor Herald* (June 1923), 10; Freeman Thompson, "Unemployment and the Coal Miners," *Labor Herald* (July 1923), 13; William Z. Foster, "The Progressive Miners' Conference," *Labor Herald* (July 1923), 1.
[884] Bryan D. Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 166-201.
[885] Robert Morss Lovett, "The Farmer-Labor Fiasco at Chicago," *New Republic* (July 18, 1923), 198.

Gymnastic Association, and the United Workingmen Singers all padded the Workers' Party and TUEL's official representation. On the first day of the convention, the communist delegates implemented a change in the FLP's constitutional structure and expanded the seats on the executive committee. Finally, the communists elected their supporters to a majority of seats on the committee and appointed themselves to all key convention positions. The strategy was ruthless and calculated. "The Workers' party was in full control," Lovett recalled. "Over its own delegates its discipline was perfect. Always in the same seats, responsible to the same captains, the rank and file went through their evolutions without a break." James Oneal agreed: "As an organized, compact and disciplined group subject to the orders of a few shrewd leaders on the floor, the Communists outgeneraled the undisciplined groups of farmers and wage-workers."[886] Of the twenty-nine executive committee members, only two had any ties to the previous Farmer-Labor Party.

By the time Fitzpatrick, the CFL, and the FLP caucuses raised any concerns about the Communist Party's maneuvering, it was too late to reverse the damage. Leading the FLP's cause, J.G. Brown, Robert Buck, and Toscan Bennett told their fellow non-communist attendees that it would be "suicide" to "bring into such affiliation any organization which advocates other than lawful means to bring about political changes or is affiliated with or which accepts the leadership of… political organizations whose propaganda and doctrines advocate the overthrow of the government of the United States

[886] Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism, 1919-1929* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 112-129; James Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 272-289; Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986) (originally published 1960), 52-74; Robert Morss Lovett, "The Farmer-Labor Fiasco at Chicago," *New Republic* (July 18, 1923), 198.

by other than legal and constitutional methods such as the Third International." Lacking any real voting power, however, the Laborites failed to reclaim control.[887] In the Communist Party's retelling, the CFL was a "weak dam" holding back the tide of the working class. Marxist intellectual William Edward Zeuch called Fitzpatrick and Buck "men of wealth and leisure who dabble in working-class movements." Having lost the confidence of "dirt farmers and industrial workers," the pair "attempted to stampede and destroy the unity of the conference by dragging the Red Herring of Communism across the thrall that led to federation," Zeuch claimed.[888]

In a last-ditch appeal, Fitzpatrick himself took the stage and reiterated that "the minute the Workers' Party is identified with this thing… You will put the cudgel, the gun and the ammunition in the hands of our enemies to blow us off the face of the earth." C.E. Ruthenberg coolly replied that "twenty-six out of the twenty-nine" members of the Organization committee disagreed. Fitzpatrick and his allies were shouting into a void.[889] Unable to wrest any control from the Workers' Party, the Chicago Federation and most of the original Farmer-Labor Party leadership bolted their own convention. Joining Fitzpatrick was John Brophy, who took his delegation of Pennsylvania coal miners with him. Only the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (the leadership of which had maintained an armistice with the TUEL) continued to feign interest in the new party, though that

[887] "F.L.P. Disowns New Party," *New Majority* (July 14, 1923), 1-3; "Constitution of New Dual Workers' Party," *New Majority* (July 14, 1923), 3; "The F.L.P. Convention," July 21, 1923, 4; "Detroit Central Cans New Party," *New Majority* (August 4, 1923), 1; "Farmer-Labor Party Convention is Opened," *New Majority* (July 7, 1923), 1; "Many Delegates Coming July 3," *New Majority* (June 30, 1923), 1.
[888] William Edward Zeuch (W.E.), "Replies for Federated Farmer-Labor Party," *Capital Times* (July 12, 1923), 14.
[889] Earl Browder, "Browder Answers Attack by Lefkowitz in New York Call on the Federated Farmer-Labor Party," *The Worker* (August 25, 1923), 6; J. Louis Engdahl, "Great Gathering Starts Early to Show Desire for 'Federated Labor Party," *The Worker* (July 14, 1923), 1; "J. Louis Engdahl, "Federated Farmer-Labor Party is Launched Amid Tremendous Enthusiasm at Chicago Conference," *The Worker* (July 14, 1923), 1-2.

union, too, abandoned the project by early 1924.[890] The Cook County Labor Party disowned the new party– which the communists renamed the Federated Farmer-Labor Party (F-FLP).[891] The communists took advantage of that kindness.

The Chicago conference was an unmitigated disaster for Fitzpatrick and his followers. The fiasco highlighted exactly what the Socialists and CPPA had supposed about communist dedication to the so-called United Front. Abe Lefkowitz, an FLP founder and AFT leader, jumped fully into the Conference. While he remained unhappy with the Brotherhood's non-partisan policy, Lefkowitz cautioned fellow radicals against the "foolish Communistic policy of capturing unions for independent political action." Unionists would only demand a new party after a long campaign of education, he decided. Max Danish and the editorial team at *Justice* came to a similar conclusion. The communists had simply adopted a new name. At most, the convention victory would "supply them with sufficient tumult, enough verbosity, and a chance to 'impress' their Moscow overlords that something big is being 'put over' here," Danish wrote. "That's the right grist for their mill, the kind of a noise they love and cherish." The only silver lining to come out of the Chicago affair, Danish concluded, was that "John Fitzpatrick and the other leaders of the Chicago Federation of Labor who for some time have shown signs of intoxication with Fosterian phraseology have sobered up."[892] By 1924, Fitzpatrick and Buck would support the CPPA's campaign to elect La Follette president.

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[890] Steve Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 178-197.
[891] "F.L.P. Disowns New Party," *New Majority* (July 14, 1923), 1-3
[892] Abraham Lefkowitz, "Whither Are We Drifting," *Upholsterers Journal* (August 1923), 115; "The Communists Get Another Party," *Justice* (July 13, 1923), 7; Minutes of Executive Committee of the American Labor Party, August 20, 1923. American Labor Party Papers. New York: Tamiment Library. Folder 4: Minutes of the Executive Committee of the American Labor Party. New York: July 24, 1922-November 6, 1924.

Fitzpatrick's failure propelled the Socialists and the garment trades to commit more fully to the British Labour Party model and work in collaboration with unions. In New York, they soon found a compelling test of their resolve. Only a few weeks after the Chicago meeting, the New York Railroad Brotherhoods planned to meet in Albany and formally initiate a state branch of the CPPA. Prior to the summer of 1923, the Brotherhoods there had followed the Conference's outline for independent political action but had stopped short of organizing a formal state chapter. The railroad unions feared that the CPPA's left wing would capture any hypothetical state body and force an endorsement for the American Labor Party. Since 1922, the Brotherhoods had effectively linked themselves to the Smith wing of the Democratic party, though they did also support progressive Republicans like Fiorello LaGuardia. To ensure harmony, Thomas E. Ryan, chairman of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Fireman, invited only the state's railroad unions to the New York Conference for Progressive Political Action's inaugural meeting.[893] Learning of Ryan's plan in early July, the ALP leadership immediately pushed for credentials. Ryan initially denied entry to the Labor Party and their allies in the needle trade unions.

Both Merrill and Hillquit worried that the Workers' Party's performance in Chicago had somehow tarnished the SPA as well. "There is something funny somewhere, and perhaps our railway brothers are fearful lest we imitate the performance of the Communists at the Farmer-Labor convention," Merrill suggested. Hillquit had the same

[893] The SPA's first historian, David Shannon, correctly notes that the Albany conference was the "low point" of the Socialist relationship with the CPPA, but incorrectly writes that Hillquit and his party were "surprised to find the railroad labor leaders debating whether or not the Socialists… should be admitted." The SPA's delegates understood well before the meeting that their presence was unwanted. Both sides carefully orchestrated their floor votes and actions in Albany. David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1955), 170-171.

idea. Catching William Johnston (still the organization head of the CPPA) up on the tensions brewing in Albany, Hillquit swore that his delegation would not crash the proceedings. "A duplication of the sorry spectacle of the Chicago Farmer-Labor Party Conference would be disastrous to our movement," he wrote. Appealing to the Brotherhoods' anti-communism was a natural strategy. The Socialist Party would respect the coalition first and foremost. Socialists desired to be useful organizers, not over-zealous revolutionaries. "Let me assure you that we have not the slightest desire of forcing our views upon representatives of your Brotherhood by a majority vote or otherwise," Hillquit told Ryan. "We are wise enough to realize that political convictions cannot be 'captured.'" Seemingly convinced by the Socialist attorney's argument, Johnston intervened and pressed the railroaders to open the conference.[894]

Whether or not it was Merrill and Hillquit's appeals, pressure from the top of the CPPA, or the threat that aggrieved leftists and their trade union allies would simply come to Albany regardless of accreditation, Ryan did eventually invite them to the July 29th convention. The SPA, ILGWU, ACW, Furriers, Capmakers, *Forward* Association, and a smattering of small and predominantly Jewish trade unions sent representatives to Albany.[895] Harmony did not prevail for long. The non-partisan labor bloc seemed eager to give the *appearance* of cooperation and due diligence, but it did not give an inch on its platform. By day's end, these delegates hoped, the Socialists would either drop their

[894] Herbert Merrill to Morris Hillquit, July 11, 1923; Morris Hillquit to William H. Johnston, July 6, 1923; Morris Hillquit to Thomas E. Ryan, July 16, 1923. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel 3.
[895] Some of these smaller unions included socialist-led locals of printers, painters, and carpenters, United Neckwear Workers, Mineral Workers, Laundry Workers, Umbrella Handle Workers, and the Hebrew Butchers. Minutes of Meeting Held By the General Council of the American Labor Party, August 22, 1923. Minutes of the General Council of the American Labor Party, New York, August 14, 1922-July 30, 1924. American Labor Party Papers. New York: Tamiment Library. Folder 5: Minutes of the General Council of the American Labor Party, New York: August 14, 1922-July 30, 1924.

opposition to non-partisan action or would attempt a push for parliamentary control of the proceedings. If the Socialists did make the latter maneuver, Ryan and the Brotherhoods could claim to have irreconcilable differences of opinion and demand an immediate split.[896]

At first, the ALP's leadership welcomed the opportunity to meet the brotherhoods and reach an "amicable understanding" as to organizational structure and common goals. Hillquit, having earned a position of the NY-CPPA's Committee on Finance and Organization, drafted a plan of representational apportionment that mirrored the Conference's national charter. It would not give the Socialists a majority. Despite Hillquit's plan winning the unanimous approval of his fellow committee members, a faction in the general assembly loudly condemned the report. Leading the dissent of these so-called "Tammanynites" (as both Lefkowitz and Oneal referred to them) was William E. Fitzsimmons– counsel for the New York Brotherhood's legislative committee.[897] Fitzsimmons, according to Lefkowitz, "got up and made a speech in which he accused Hillquit of bringing in a plan and by lawyer's guile imposed it upon the other

[896] In his replies throughout the summer, Ryan oscillated between claiming that he lacked the necessary addresses for the invitations, that the invitations had already been mailed, or that no invitations were coming. In mid-July, Johnston assured Hillquit and Merrill that the lack of conference accreditation had been an oversight and that Ryan was in the process of correcting the mistake. Finally, about a week before the Albany meeting, Hillquit insisted that his delegation would arrive on the 28th– invitations or not. Ryan set a meeting with Hillquit for that evening (though it is unclear if it occurred). William H. Johnston to Morris Hillquit, July 7, 1923; Thomas E. Ryan to Morris Hillquit, July 7, 1923; Thomas Ryan to Morris Hillquit, July 17, 1923. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel 3.

[897] While Lefkowitz only refers to Fitzsimmons by his last name, his identity is almost certain. Aside from his work on behalf of the legislative committee, Fitzsimmons represented Thomas Ryan and the Locomotive Firemen directly. Also, Lefkowitz refers to this dissenting group as "not delegates but connected with the railroad brotherhoods," further indicating that "Fitzsimmons" had an indirect role in the union. Fitzsimmons was also a Democratic operative, playing a role in nominating candidates in the Albany region through the 1930s. ("Russell, Murray Chosen at Parley Held at Albany," *Kingston Daily Freeman* (September 30, 1939), 1; "Railroad's Only Opposition to Senator Lacey's Police Bill," *Buffalo Labor Journal* (April 24, 1924), 1; "30-Hour Week Is a Necessity, Green Asserts," *Binghamton Press* (August 20, 1935), 1-2; "Fight Over Repeal of Full Crew Law," *New York Herald* (March 3, 1922), 4; "New York Legislature Passes Bill Providing for Vestibuled Locomotive Cabs," *Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen's Magazine* (April 15, 1918), 22).

committeemen against their will."[898] Refusing to elucidate further on his speculative charge, Fitzsimmons pushed the assembly to immediately vote on a policy of non-partisan political action before considering any other business.

After two hours of debate, Hillquit requested a short break for both factions to confer amongst themselves. During this crucial window, the ALP-aligned groups decided to withdraw from the vote and allow the Brotherhoods to determine the NY-CPPA's initial political tact alone. Hillquit told the assemblage that his group wanted to support a greater movement of workers, not confine them into a narrow set of Marxist expectations. "Socialism will be the soul, but the workers… will be the body of this new movement," Hillquit elaborated. According to Hillquit, Oneal, and Lefkowitz, the ALP faction "demonstrated splendid discipline which was admirable. There was not a break in the ranks." No one on their side lashed out. Forcing no division, Ryan gaveled the convention to a sudden and unexpected close.[899]

The Socialists and needle trades representatives decided "to continue working with them in the hope of bringing about the harmonious working together of labor." The ALP's only official rebuke of the convention came in a published letter to William H. Johnston. "In the gate of a past-midnight discussion a delegate moved that the meeting be adjourned to reconvene the next day with representatives from the railway workers' Union only," the ALP's committee wrote disapprovingly. Yet they made clear that they were "quite ready to overlook the irregularities committed in Albany" and renew their

[898] Report of the Executive Committee in Minutes of the New York General Council of the American Labor Party, January 24, 1924; Minutes of Meeting Held by the General Council of the American Labor Party, August 22, 1923. American Labor Party Papers. New York: Tamiment Library. Folder 5: Minutes of the General Council of the American Labor Party, New York: August 14, 1922-July 30, 1924.
[899] "New York Labor Conference Splits," *Oklahoma Leader* (August 10, 1923), 1; Report of Executive Committee on Albany Conference, September 30, 1923. American Labor Party Papers. New York: Tamiment Library. Folder 3: Minutes of the Third Regular Convention of the American Labor Party.

"efforts to bring about complete harmony and political unity among all laboring and progressive elements of the state." There was undoubtedly some spin to how the left-wingers presented the convention's outcome.[900]

Certainly, the ALP left Albany appearing somewhat dejected and unrewarded for its persistence. Pro-Tammany labor leaders continued to paint Socialist-aligned groups as obstructionists and radical ideologues. Editors of the *Buffalo Labor Journal* determined that the Socialist Party, "feeling its own ineffectiveness, attempted to gain control of the conference." As a result, the Brotherhoods "virtually agreed that no Socialist delegates would be admitted in the future." Albert Coyle, who continued to promote an eventual labor party in the *Locomotive Engineers Journal*, too, chided the Socialists for potentially playing "into the hands of the reactionary Republican party." Running an independent ballot line would not "warrant jeopardizing the possible gains to be had in a Democratic victory."[901] So long as the SPA and ALP refused to endorse major party candidates, no compromise would please conservative labor leaders.

No group made more political hay out of the Albany conference than the Communist Party. J. Louis Engdahl critiqued the Socialists for several weeks on the front page of *The Worker*. For Engdahl, the Albany "debacle" proved that the SPA was far more interested in mollifying craft trade unionists than building a genuine labor party. John Pepper, still the Party's leading United Front theoretician, wrote a lengthy piece on the convention. By steering workers into greater cooperation with the AFL and by hamstringing the United Front, Hillquit and his followers had actively stalled "the

[900] Minutes of Executive Committee, August 3, 1923. Folder 4: Minutes of the Executive Committee of the American Labor Party, New York, July 24, 1922-November 6, 1924.
[901] "The East Following the West," *Buffalo Labor Journal* (August 2, 1923), 1. "New York Rail Unions Hold Political Conference," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (September 1923), 729.

revolutionary development" of the American proletariat. They had "fought against amalgamation, betrayed the Labor Party idea in Cleveland, slandered Soviet Russia, and barred the Communists from every labor conference whenever possible."

Earl Browder and William Z. Foster agreed. "So it came about that in Albany the Hillquit delegates were thrown out on their necks," they taunted. "Were the actions of the trade union leaders not so contemptible and so sadly illustrative of the general backward condition of our labor movement, the whole affair would be ridiculous." Layered in all these condemnations was the implication that Moscow's interpretation of the United Front remained the only plausible path to revolutionary worker control. By repeatedly spurning the Communist's advances and banking on unreformed trade unions, the SPA found itself dashed upon the rocks. "Though the brew may be bitter, they ought to like it, for they concocted it themselves," Browder taunted.[902]

The American Labor Party did receive some praise for its restraint in Albany and its continued willingness to cooperate with the CPPA. Likely recognizing from his own experience in guiding Oklahoma socialism down a Democrat-aligned non-partisan avenue, Oscar Ameringer supposed the New York party was tired of remaining aloof from the greater mass of organized workers. "The meeting was signalized by an announced abandonment of the socialists of their traditional policy of isolation," Ameringer told his readers. "Morris Hillquit of New York City, who headed the socialist delegation, told the conference that socialism had reached the limit of its strength in

[902] J. Louis Engdahl, "N.Y. Labor Goes to Albany," *The Worker* (August 4, 1923), 1, 4; J. Louis Engdahl, "Socialist Party Efforts to Profit by Trailing Reactionary Labor Ends in Big Debacle at Albany," *Worker* (August 11, 1923), 1; James P. Cannon, "The Albany 'Conversion,'" *Worker* (August 11, 1923), 2; John Pepper, "Hillquit's Tammany Hall Is Beaten by the Real Tammany Hall," *Worker* (August 11, 1923), 2; "The Albany Fiasco," *The Labor Herald* (September 1923), 29.

America." The similarly minded Thomas Van Lear concurred with the Oklahoman. He praised the ALP delegation for refraining "from interfering with the desire of the brotherhoods to organize a conference for progressive political action instead of a third party."[903] Perhaps both former socialists recognized the struggle of navigating between third party socialism and non-partisan labor action and decided to help it along by minimizing differences and praising the left-wing for its compromise.

At the ALP's September convention, the delegates agreed that the party "fought a worthy cause with clean hands, with dignity, forbearance and determination." Lefkowitz especially praised his comrades for keeping the CPPA from breaking apart. Regardless of immediate outcome, the party's executive board agreed their actions would "leave the way open to a better understanding in the future." Once again, the needle trades greatly contributed to the ALP's optimism. "Whatever the outcome of the conference for progressive political action which gathered in Albany, N.Y.... one thing is clear, the conviction is ripening in the more enlightened circles in the labor world that the time when most everybody believed that trade unions should have nothing to do with politics… is gone for good," a contributor to *Justice* wrote. "It may still be true that the economic struggle is yet the principle fighting arm of the labor unions," they continued, "but it would seem that most of the progressive workers are also agreed that the workers must not content themselves with the economic struggle alone, but must also use the weapon of political activity."[904] If Albany delivered a setback to American class-based mass politics, it was but a small one.

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[903] "New York Labor Conference Splits," *Oklahoma Leader* (August 10, 1923), 1; "Little Stories of Democracy," *Minnesota Daily Star* (August 3, 1923), 14.
[904] Report of the Executive Committee in Minutes of the New York General Council of the American Labor Party, January 24, 1924. American Labor Party Papers. New York: Tamiment Library. Folder 5:

Beyond the ALP's rather toothless statement to Johnston, Hillquit only drafted one other written complaint regarding the Albany meeting. In October, Hillquit had received the official transcript of the meeting's proceedings. Likely paraphrasing the quote describing socialism as the "soul" of the new movement, but not the body, the transcriber recorded Hillquit as admitting the SPA had reached its peak "so far as votes are concerned." The party leader accused the Brotherhoods of "grossly misrepresenting" him. "The Socialist Party never cared for votes as votes or for office as office," he told Thomas Ryan, "It has no interests of its own. Its sole aim in politics is to educate the workers to the necessity of organizing their own political power." He and his delegation had come to Albany to "offer their whole-hearted co-operation in any honest effort of the workers of this state to cut loose from the corrupting influence of the interest-ridden old parties."[905] Hillquit proved eager to compromise with his fellow CPPA members if it kept the peace, but he was unwilling to present his party as a declining relic of the past.

Conclusion: "The Communist Noose"

As the result of intra party and intra union disputes, Soviet crackdowns on dissidents, and the introduction of the so-called united front, leftwing anticommunism hardened during the 1920s. This trend affected social democrats in both Europe and the United States. On the eastern end of the Atlantic, trade unionists and labor party officials harshly condemned the Soviet regime and sharply contrasted their belief in liberal

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Minutes of the General Council of the American Labor Party, New York: August 14, 1922-July 30, 1924; Report of Executive Committee on Albany Conference, September 30, 1923. American Labor Party Papers. New York: Tamiment Library. Folder 3: Minutes of the Third Regular Convention of the American Labor Party.

[905] Morris Hillquit to Thomas Ryan, October 1, 1923. Morris Hillquit Papers. Microfilm. Reel 3.

democracy with Bolshevik autocracy and imperialism. In the United States, a similar distaste for the present form of the Russian government convinced socialists and radical trade unionists to give the united front a wide berth. They kept the Workers' Party out of the CPPA, refused to join the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, and highlighted their belief in compromise and democratic procedure in Albany. The ILGWU and similar unions, facing communist insurgencies, developed an anticommunism that kept pace with their more conservative fellow unionists.

When the American Labor Party held its first real post-Albany meeting on August 22, the board immediately preceded its report with a message of encouragement from the British Labour Party's "national agent."[906] The BLP bolstered their would-be American counterparts to continue their fight for space in the CPPA and their efforts to erect a stone wall between themselves and the Communist Party.

In mid-August, hoping to exploit the drama in Albany, the Federated Farmer-Labor Party offered a formal invitation for the ALP to join them. The party's leadership rejected outright the communist's request. Once again, the ALP insisted that "the great body of organized workers" would "have nothing to do with a movement that has carried disruption into the labor movement." Drawing on the previous year's Berlin conference

[906] The minutes read: "The letter from the national agent of the British Labor Party telling us that they have four million members should stimulate us on with renewed vigor in the building of a Party in America." Minutes of Meeting Held by the General Council of the American Labor Party, August 22, 1923. New York: Tamiment Library. Folder 5. Minutes of the General Council of the American Labor Party, New York: August 14, 1922-July 30, 1924.

It is unclear who served as National Agent at the time, though the position primarily involved tracking membership. The agent typically reported to the BLP National Executive Council once a year. (Andrew Thorpe, "'The Only Effective Bulwark Against Reaction and Revolution:' Labour and the Frustration of the Extreme Left," in *The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-War Britain*, ed. Andrew Thorpe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1989), 20; Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 51.

and its experiences with the United Front since then, it further asserted "that experience in Europe and in this country has demonstrated that to 'unite all the forces of labor' it is necessary to exclude Communist organizations." They would not willingly "crawl into the Communist noose."[907]

The debate between United Fronters and socialists was a clash that drew in several prominent political and labor leaders on both sides of the Atlantic. Warnings of Soviet duplicity in Europe further propelled American socialists, left-leaning trade unionists, and labor party radicals to seriously reconsider immediate plans for independent political action. They also learned to compromise with non-partisan progressives when necessary and to avoid cooperation with communists at all costs. As a result, the left and right wings of the CPPA remained largely intact. In the following year, the divergent ideological factions with the Conference would move closer together, rather than further apart. Despite its rocky start, the New York CPPA would become one of the most active branches in advancing La Follette's presidential candidacy and would be one of the very few affiliates to elect a third-party congressional representative. The needle trades moved closer to mainstream American trade unionism and largely funded these eastern electoral initiatives. In the long term, the garment workers and their close Socialist Party allies continued their transition from third-party socialism toward a more amorphous independent radicalism– one that continued to bar communist participation.[908]

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[907] "Statement of the American Labor Party Regarding the so-called Federated Farmer-Labor Party– endorsed by General Council Meeting held August 22, 1923, at 3 West 16th Street, at 8P.M." New York: Tamiment Library. Folder 5. Minutes of the General Council of the American Labor Party, New York: August 14, 1922-July 30, 1924.

[908] Daniel Soyer, "The Soviet Union, Jewish Concerns, and the New York Electoral Left, 1939-1944," in *Jews and Leftist Politics: Judaism, Israel, Antisemitism, and Gender*, ed. Jack Jacobs (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Soyer, "Executed Bundists, Soviet Delegates and the Wartime Jewish Popular Front in New York," *American Communist History* 15:3 (2016): 293-332.

Chapter 10: Between the Millstones: The CPPA and Labor's Atlantic: Robert La Follette's Trip To Europe

Introduction: "Volcanic" Conditions

Robert La Follette's trip to Europe in the summer of 1923 is a fitting snapshot of reconstruction.[909] The highly orchestrated visit allowed La Follette to appease the left wing of his coalition by meeting with British Labour Party officials. For the Railroad Brotherhoods, Plumb planners, and progressive farmers, he would visit cooperatives and demonstrate his resolute faith in that system. The senator would also present himself to a larger body of American voters as a careful diplomat who would continue to sidestep unsavory European entanglements. By the time of La Follette's arrival, the French occupation of the Ruhr was entering its most tense period. Many observers on both sides of the Atlantic, La Follette included, believed another European war could erupt at any moment.[910] Finally, by visiting the Soviet Union, La Follette could firmly establish his anti-communism while simultaneously advocating for American recognition of the sitting Russian government. The balancing act over Soviet foreign policy could similarly keep his coalition together.

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[909] For previous overviews of the trip, see Daniel Scroop, "In Search of a Populist Atlantic: The Transatlantic Travels of William Jennings Bryan and Robert M. La Follette Jr.," in *Transatlantic Social Politics 1800-Present*, eds. Daniel Scroop and Andrew Heath (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 105-128; Fola La Follette, *Robert M. La Follette, June 14, 1855-June 18, 1925 Volume II* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), 1074-1087; Nancy C. Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2000), 282-286; Richard Drake, *The Education of an Anti-Imperialist: Robert La Follette and U.S. Expansion* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 383-305.

[910] Reparations negotiations between France, Germany, and Great Britain had all but entirely broken down. Chancellor Wilhelm Cuno's centrist government had collapsed and its plan to outlast the occupation with "passive resistance" spurred runaway inflation. Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 102-103; Conan Fischer, *The Ruhr Crisis 1923-1924* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); J. Ronald Shearer, "Shelter from the Storm: Politics, Production and the Housing Crisis in the Ruhr Coal Fields, 1918-24," *Journal of Contemporary History* 34 no. 1 (January 1999), 19-47.

By August 1923, La Follette was near the height of his national fame. His progressive bloc in congress had already begun to show its worth as a balance of power. After many months grasping for a route forward, Warren G. Harding finally ended all attempts to pass his ship subsidy bill and privatize the merchant marine. Around the same time, progressive senators led the charge in investigating the Teapot Dome scandal as news of the unscrupulous oil leases emerged. Critically, hoping to stem the bleeding of loyal Republican seats west of the Ohio river, the austerity-minded administration reversed its previous resistance to the Agricultural Credit Act and agreed to offer cheap loans for farmers. The legislation provided funding for the National Agricultural Credit Corporation to set up twelve regional banks and provide farmers with short-term low-interest loans.[911]

La Follette's bloc also made its mark on Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon's proposed budget reform. Having already undone the wartime excess profits tax in the Revenue Act of 1921, Mellon hoped to further cut the income tax for the nation's highest earners by roughly an additional fifty per cent. Joining most of the chamber's Democrats in opposition, the progressives ultimately succeeded in passing a new act to only modestly decrease rates for top income brackets and instead pass the savings onto low to middle income earners.[912] Editorialists for the *Wall Street Journal* accused the bloc of

[911] "Believe Ship Subsidy Measure Doomed to Die," *Atlanta Constitution* (February 23, 1923), 1; David A. Horowitz, *Beyond Left and Right: Insurgency and the Establishment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 51-53; Theodore Saoutos and John D. Hicks, *Twentieth Century Populism: Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West, 1900-1939* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1951), 337-341.

[912] Prior to 1921, those with an income of under $4,000 ($58,695.15) paid a four per cent tax with no marginal surtax rate. Those making above that limit paid eight per cent with a rising surtax. Those making more than $1,000,000 ($14,673,789.47) a year paid a combined rate of 73 per cent. Mellon's first bill dropped the highest bracket from one million dollars to $200,000 ($2,934,757.89) and lowered the combined rate to 58 per cent. The rate for those making under $100,000 ($1,467,378.95) hardly changed. In 1923, Mellon hoped to reduce the surtax for the highest earners to a sliding range from 25 to 33 per cent. When finally passed, the Revenue Act of 1924 levied a two per cent tax on those making under $4,000

wanting to "punish the rich man for the crime of being rich" and of ushering in an "orgy of punitive taxation."[913] In the House, Wisconsin representative John M. Nelson led the bloc in denying Frederick H. Gillett renomination as Speaker until he gave progressives prominent committee assignments and extended the period to add amendments to pending bills. Finally, La Follette prevented Senator Albert Cummins (author of the Transportation Act of 1920) from retaking his position as chair of the Committee on Interstate Commerce, despite Republicans holding a majority in both houses of Congress. By the end of the year, the progressives handed the position to South Carolina's Ellison Durant Smith, a Democrat with a history of supporting railroad reform.[914]

During this same period in Wisconsin, La Follette acolyte Governor John J. Blaine worked with a progressive-Republican and socialist majority in the legislature to take on a series of progressive wish list items. Not every piece of progressive legislation made it through both chambers and the governor's office. Divisions between urban and agricultural laborers stalled passage of the eight-hour workday. Proposed tax increases on large estates likewise met resistance from dairy farmers. And the assembly-passed bill to abolish the Wisconsin National Guard rankled some more conservative members of the coalition. Compromise bills, however, were plentiful. In just a little over a year, the state

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($66,381.43), and a four per cent tax on those making under $8,000. No one making under $10,000 paid any surtax ($165,953.57). The highest bracket of $500,000 paid a 46 per cent combined rate. *An Act to reduce and equalize taxation, to provide revenue, and for other purposes*. Public Law 67-98, *US Statutes at Large* 42 (1921), 227-321; *An Act to reduce and equalize taxation, to provide revenue, and for other purposes*. Public Law 68-176, *US Statutes at Large* 43 (1924), 253-355.

"Revenue Act of 1921," 67th Congress, Session One, Ch. 136. HR 8245 November 23, 1921. 233-237; 68th Congress, Session One Ch. 234 HR 6315. Revenue Act of 1924, June 2, 1924, 264-267.

[913] "What Should Be Self-Evident," *Wall Street Journal* (April 14, 1923), 1.

[914] "House Progressives Give an Ultimatum," *New York Times* (November 22, 1923), 21; Albert W. Fox, "Conflict in House is Settled," *Washington Post* (December 5, 1923), 1; "Insurgents in Saddle; Break Senate Tie Up," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (January 10, 1924), 1; John W. Owens, "Ellison DuRant Smith, Friend of the Poor Man," *Baltimore Sun* (December 18, 1923), 10.

government limited the use of injunctions in local labor disputes, gave legal protection for striking workers to peacefully picket, increased workers' compensation scales, provided for a nine-hour day and fifty-hour work week for women, and placed domestic workers employed by hotels under state Industrial Commission regulations. And while the National Guard survived elimination, the force saw its appropriation shrink from $1,200,000 to $550,000. Further, University of Wisconsin students no longer had compulsory military training and the state zeroed out funding for new armories.[915]

But La Follette's greatest political triumph occurred after the 1923 special election in Minnesota. The previous April, Senator Knute Nelson died in office. Governor J.A.O. Preus called a special election and announced his candidacy.[916] In an instant, the CPPA went back to work. Philip La Follette and several members of Wisconsin's House delegation crossed the border to stump for Magnus Johnson, the victor of the Farmer-Labor Party's primary. Henrik Shipstead, Lynn Frazier, and Burton K. Wheeler joined them on the trail. While Johnson and the more agriculturally-minded politicians stormed Minnesota's countryside, the labor wing of the Conference rushed organizers in to help Thomas Van Lear turn out industrial workers in the twin cities. Keating and Manly planned another special edition of *Labor* and printed upwards of a million copies of a new La Follette speech for distribution. Warren Stone dispatched E.H.

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[915] W. Elliot Brownlee, Jr., "Income Taxation and the Political Economy of Wisconsin, 1890-1930," *Wisconsin Magazine* 59 No. 4 (Summer 1976), 299-324; "With the Wisconsin Legislature," *Bloomington Record* (June 6, 1923), 11; "Killian Bill Up for Final Vote, Tuesday," *Eau Claire Leader* (April 24, 1923), 7; "Peaceful Picketing Off the Premises is Lawful in Wisconsin," *The Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh) (April 23, 1923), 1; Louis F. Budenz, "Badgerdom," *Labor Age* (October 1923), 1-3; Thomas M. Duncan and Herman O. Kent, "The Progressives At Home," *Labor Age* (October 1923), 3-5.

[916] Theodore Saoutos and John D. Hicks, *Twentieth Century Populism: Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West, 1900-1939* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1951), 353-354; Thomas H. Moodie, "Senate Race in Final Phase," *Minnesota Daily Star* (July 9, 1923), 1; Thomas H. Moodie, "Preus Seeks to Be Self-Crowned King of Minnesota, G.O.P. View," *Minnesota Daily Star* (July 13, 1923), 6.

Kruse, the locomotive engineer who managed the Brotherhood's efforts in the Gopher state half a year prior, to once again go in "hammer and tongs" for the election– the Minnesota FLP quickly seated him as a campaign chairman. On election eve, the Brotherhoods organized a door-to-door campaign to drive up turnout. Kruse's office in Van Lear's *Minnesota Daily Star* building in Minneapolis was "the busiest place in Minnesota" according to a reporter from the *New York Times*.[917]

Johnson campaign materials instructed voters to view the upcoming election as a "contest between government by private monopoly, represented by Preus, and government by the people." The Preus campaign similarly understood the stakes. Preus hoped to distance himself from the increasingly unpopular Harding administration. The governor turned down any direct aid from the White House and told the state's farmers that he supported a higher protective tariff on American farm goods, a policy that Harding had thus far refused to countenance. Still, the Republican National Committee rallied supporters nationwide for donations. Party leadership presented the election in the usual stark terms. "It does not take any gift of intelligence to see how readily the Republicans may meet disaster if this present movement spreads," said New Hampshire Senator George H. Moses, whom the GOP dispatched to Minnesota to back Preus with a $500,000 war chest.[918] "If Johnson is elected, there will be another vacancy in the Senate very soon," Moses allegedly confided to a supporter. "The first time he gets up to speak Senator Lodge will drop dead." The RNC was desperate to "prevent capture of the State

[917] Edward Keating to Robert M. La Follette, June 29, 1923. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Keating, Edward ; Basil Manly to Robert M. La Follette, June 26, 1923. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box: B95. Folder: Manly, Basil; "Communists Join to Help Johnson," *New York Times* (July 15, 1923), 6; "La Follette Says Minnesota Voices Will of the People," *Labor* (July 28, 1923), 2; "Progressives to Put Up Big Fight for New Senator," *Labor* (May 25, 1923), 1.
[918] $8,000,000 adjusted for inflation

by the Farmer-Labor group and to check the growth in this country of a movement similar to the British Labor Party," a journalist for the *New York Times* reported.[919]

The fierce competition in the Gopher State certainly drew the attention of the American press corps. The election was, of course, a referendum on Harding's "normalcy." But the Johnson campaign would also decide whether the 1922 rebound of post-war reconstruction had been a cresting wave or a starting gun. "Governor Preus… represents for the moment the stand against radical advances in the Great Northwest," wrote political commentator Ulric Bell, while Magnus Johnson was "'anti' to the soles of his brogans and the last echoes of his terrifying fog-horn voice."[920] Bell pointed to Senator Moses's sudden trip to Minnesota as proof of the GOP's defensive posture in the state.

Indeed, the longer Moses spoke with voters in Minnesota, the more he worried about the Republican Party's chances. "I think this radical movement is going to spread," he admitted reluctantly after the election. "The middle West has been too highly infected with it for it to be checked." So long as wheat prices remained low and industrial goods costly, the radicals would have the upper hand, he figured. The long-time Republican expressed disbelief at just how unpopular his party was amongst farmers and workers. In one telling exchange, Moses perhaps inadvertently explained why. Meeting with grain farmers outside of the twin cities, Moses sympathized with the toiler's plight, but insisted there was little the federal government could do to reverse the current conditions of

[919] "Magnus Johnson Sweeps Minnesota," *Labor* (July 31, 1923), 1; Donald Ramsey, "National Politicians Are Dazed by Tremendous Landslide of Farmer Johnson in Minnesota," *Labor* (July 28, 1923), 1; George Briggs, "Control of U.S. Senate by Radicals or Conservatives Depends on Minnesota Race," *La Crosse Tribune* (July 8, 1923), 1; "Lodge will Drop Dead' When Johnson Speaks," *Boston Globe* (July 18, 1923), 7; "Republicans Rallying Forces to Ward Off Third Labor Party," *New York Times* (July 1, 1923), XX14.
[920] Ulric Bell, "Swede Against Norseman," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville) (July 15, 1923), 7.

supply and demand. Further, he chastised the farmers for going into "partnership with union labor" who raised consumer prices by "insisting on $8 or $9 a day and working only eight hours." The farmers, in his retelling, shrugged and questioned why congress had not enacted "laws to correct these conditions." Moses scoffed, wryly telling his fellow Republicans that "The bottom line of this new movement, apparently, is that everything and anything can be done by law."[921]

Johnson, with his brogans, thick Swedish accent, and barn clothes, bested the well-mannered and professional Preus by nearly 100,000 votes. The sitting governor failed to accrue even forty per cent of the electorate. The labor-dense wards of the three largest cities voted in heavy numbers and added to Johnson's overwhelming rural support. And while Henry Cabot Lodge did not, as Moses predicted, "drop dead" after hearing the results, the President soon did. Refusing to comment on the loss, press correspondents on Harding's train to Alaska noted "the President and cabinet members accompanying him were not prepared for the defeat of the Republican candidate in such an amazing fashion as that administered by Johnson."[922] Ten days later, Harding fell ill. Five days after that, he died.

Bob Looks Abroad: Planning the Trip

La Follette's victory prompted Basil Manly to insist on a European tour. The day after reading the official results, Manly congratulated the senator for stoking the

[921] "Moses Fears the Farmer," *Kansas City Times* (July 21, 1923), 7.
[922] James R. Nourse, "G.O.P. Defeat Shock to President; Old Party Stronghold Wrecked," *San Francisco Examiner* (July 18, 1923), 2; "Johnson Swamps Preus," *Minnesota Daily Star* (July 17, 1923), 1; "Johnson Wins Easy Victory in Minnesota Race," *Baltimore Sun* (July 17, 1923), 1; "Johnson Elected, Preus Concedes, In Contest At Polls," *Washington Post* (July 17, 1923), 1; Ralph M. Easley, "Crops, and Not Moscow or Communism, Elected Johnson," *New York Times* (July 20, 1923), 12.

"volcanic condition of the Northwest." He determined that "There is no question that today" that the senator occupied "a position of greater potential power than any other individual in the United States." A European trip could generate even more interest. Manly suggested they make London their first stop. There they could see the BLP in action. In the British capital, he suggested they meet with H.N. Brailsford, the noted pacifist writer and editor of the Independent Labour Party's *New Leader*, and E.D. Morel, the Labour Party candidate who unseated Winston Churchill and also a known pacifist.[923] On this point, Manly concluded, "the prime object of our trip is to have an opportunity of meeting and talking with the most influential progressive leaders in the various countries we visit, rather than to use up strength and energy in sight-seeing, museums, etc." If Republican Party officials indeed did have suspicions that La Follette's movement represented "something similar" to the Labour Party, his European visit and choice of meetings would confirm them.[924]

Manly's initial idea for the trip grew out of a conversation with Burton K. Wheeler a month prior. Visiting the PLS headquarters in DC just before returning to Montana, Wheeler "urged very strongly the importance" of La Follette making the trip. La Follette, "as the leader to whom many of the real progressives in both parties will turn for guidance on the European situation," the Montanan commented, "should have the

[923] Morel had recently made waves with his widely circulated pamphlet, *Horrors on the Rhine*, which made wildly speculative and racist assertions of atrocities committed by French African troops in occupied Germany. Morel had been a leading voice against slavery in Africa and a vocal opponent of atrocities across the colonial world. The presence of a large number of African soldiers in Europe, however, horrified him beyond measure. Holding Black people inferior to white, and believing commonly-held tropes about uncontrollable Black sexuality, Morel spoke and wrote frequently of the occupation until his death in 1924. Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London: Verso, 2019), 284-290.

[924] Basil Manly to Robert M. La Follette, July 18, 1923. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box: B95. Folder: Manly, Basil; "Republicans Rallying Forces to Ward Off Third Labor Party," *New York Times* (July 1, 1923), XX14.

advantage of first-hand knowledge." Manly thoroughly agreed with the assessment, praising Wheeler's "common sense way of looking at all questions." Wheeler himself and just returned from a vacation and investigative trip with his wife Lulu. They had traveled through northern Italy, Germany, Austria, the Soviet Union, and a few Scandinavian countries to sightsee and study "the cooperative marketing methods of those nations."[925] Gaining La Follette's approval to sail for Europe after the Minnesota campaign, Manly got to planning.

Wheeler and La Follette were hardly the only two American political figures to sail across the Atlantic in the summer of 1923. Nearly five years after the armistice, the various subsequent shooting wars had finally stopped in Europe. Normal shipping and passenger routes thus resumed and a strong exchange rate for the dollar favored American travelers. With the Soviet Union's economy stabilizing under Lenin's New Economic Policy, the Bolshevik government welcomed foreign dignitaries as part of a charm offensive to win badly needed import and export markets. Finally, the illegal French occupation of the Ruhr resulted in a series of emergency conferences to avert an escalation of conflict and perhaps another war. In short, there were many reasons Americans went abroad at this time.[926] As previously noted, Morris Hillquit and Victor Berger visited Hamburg as delegates to the Labour and Socialist International. Also on the reformer's side, Victoria McAlmon, a leader in the Twin Cities wing of the Farmer-

[925] Basil Manly to Robert M. La Follette, June 14, 1923. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box: B95. Folder: Manly, Basil; "Soviets Invite Wheeler Visit," *Billings Gazette* (March 18, 1923), 3; Burton K. Wheeler and Paul F. Healy, *Yankee From the West* (New York: Doubleday and Co., inc., 1962), 198-202.

[926] A. James McAdams, *Vanguard of the Revolution: The Global Idea of the Communist Party* (Princeton: Oxford University Press, 2017), 152-163; Laura Engelstein, *Russia in Flames War, Revolution, Civil War, 1914-1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 618-621; Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Labor Party, spent several months in London with H.G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb.[927] Margaret Bondfield found her lodging at Mansfield House, a settlement in the West Ham slums.[928] Agnes Nestor, Maud Swartz, Rose Schneiderman, and Pauline Newman had also traveled to Europe that summer on behalf of the National Women's Trade Union League. In Vienna, the League took part in the final meeting of the International Federation of Working Women.[929]

Like Wheeler, Iowa Senator Smith W. Brookhart also made a tour of Europe to study cooperatives. Before his election, the Iowan insurgent told prospective voters that implementing the Rochdale system on a global scale would "mean more for the welfare of the human race, more the advancement of civilization, than any step taken by any generation since the money-changers were cast out of the temple of Jerusalem." His tour abroad seemingly proved that point. Like Frederic C. Howe, he believed the Danes "certainly set a pace for the civilized world" and claimed that if midwestern pig farmers opened their own cooperative packing plants the "Chicago trusts would quickly be strangled to death." Speaking in Minneapolis in the wake of Magnus Johnson's victory, he told the crowd he was convinced that cooperative marketing could "settle the unrest of the world."[930]

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[927] Alma Whitaker, "Woman Seeker of Work," *Los Angeles Times* (August 6, 1934), 6; "Youth Out of Economic Plan," *Oakland Tribune* (January 4, 1934), 4B

[928] "West Ham: Philanthropic institutions," in *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 6*, ed. W R Powell (London: Victoria County History, 1973), 141-144. *British History Online*, accessed May 5, 2022, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol6/pp141-144.

[929] "International Federation of Working Women," *Life and Labor* (November 1923), 1.

[930] "Senator Brookhart Beards the 'Nonpartisan League of Wall Street," *Labor* (Feb 3, 1922), 4; "Brookharts Says Europe is Being Saved by Co-Ops," *Illinois Miner* (August 11, 1923), 5; "Farmer Labor Unity Urged by Brookhart," *Illinois Miner* (August 4, 1923), 1; "Senator Brookhart Visits European Cooperators," *The Locomotive Engineers Journal* (July 1923), 563.

Prior to La Follette's departure, Hiram Johnson was likely the most notable American politician to cross the Atlantic. The former governor of California turned senator, and Teddy Roosevelt's running mate in 1912, clearly harbored presidential ambitions. He ran in the Republican primary in 1920 and had all but announced his race for 1924. Johnson had distinguished himself in 1919 as a leading irreconcilable against the American participation in the League of Nations. His 1923 trip to Europe was clearly designed to defend that position. "Another bloody war is in the making," he told his supporters in a post-trip gala at New York's Waldorf-Astoria. He vowed to "keep out of the turmoil, the strife and the controversies and the schemes and machinations of Europe." Johnson kept certain details of his four and a half months in Europe deliberately vague. He had clearly spent time in England, France, and Germany– but he claimed to make no effort in meeting heads of state, career diplomats, or other manner of intellectuals. The senator's aim was to learn of the League, World Court, and transnational politics by consorting with average people. "I was an 'Innocent Abroad,'" Johnson claimed. Indeed, his description was almost sociological– detailing the experiences of a stranger in a strange land. "I was content with my nationality, but tremendously curious to learn of others from among them," he explained, "Without racial prejudice, with whole hearted religious tolerance; with, if I may be permitted, a love of human beings, just ordinary people."[931] Many of the Europeans he met, Johnson asserted, insisted that America remain entirely out of European affairs. Those who did not agree,

[931] "Senator Johnson Denounces World Court, Saying Europe Wants America's Money," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (July 26, 1923), 4; "Johnson Pleads to Keep American Free From Court," *Brooklyn Daily Times* (July 26, 1923), 3; Leo McClatchy, "Johnson Home, Plans Tour to Present Views," *Sacramento Bee* (July 23, 1923), 1.

urged the United States to lend its money, resources, and manpower– a state of affairs that Johnson, as president, would never condone.

La Follette, like his colleague from the West Coast, certainly coveted the oval office. Yet, his own journey through Europe could not have been more different. Manly was hardly the only one urging La Follette to set high profile meetings with progressive thought leaders abroad. Only days after the Minnesota victory, when "Fighting Bob" officially announced his trip, Elizabeth Glendower Evans began notifying her contacts in the British Labour Party.

Evans was a reformer for many causes– her work on behalf of suffrage, social welfare, and pacifism brought her into close orbit with Robert and Belle Case La Follette. She was also effectively a family member in Louis Brandeis's household (the Supreme Court Justice's children called her "Auntie Bee") and worked side by side with Felix Frankfurter on civil liberties work– particularly in her efforts to secure freedom for imprisoned anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. Before the war, Evans had spent significant time in England, becoming an early American convert to the BLP's platform.[932] After noting that the "Brandeis-Frankfurter-Evans household rejoiced at the Minnesota news," Evans rejoiced over the La Follette's visit. She enclosed letters of introduction to Ramsay MacDonald and Katharine Glasier– a founder of the Independent Labour Party and former editor of the *Labour Leader*. Frankfurter suggested the La Follette party similarly make contact with Harold Laski, then an early-career political scientist who had briefly lectured at Harvard before taking a post at the London School of

[932] Brad Snyder, *The House of Truth: A Washington Political Salon and the Foundations of American Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 409-414.

Economics. Laski will "will put you wise to everything," Frankfurter added.[933] While Laski was incidentally in Belgium throughout the summer of 1923, he nevertheless wrote La Follette a long letter, lauding the senator as "one of the few Americans for whom real veneration is possible."[934]

Lincoln Steffens also contacted the La Follettes regarding their trip. The muckraker had first met the Wisconsin progressives near the turn of the century when Steffens had traveled to Madison with the intention of writing an expose on La Follette's gubernatorial administration. Steffens soon became an admirer and frequent correspondent. Having spent increasingly long stretches of time in Europe since working as a war correspondent, Steffens offered to meet the party and introduce them to whatever contacts he could find. In London, he insisted La Follette meet with George Lansbury, editor and future Labour Party leader, and the staff for his paper, the *Daily Herald*. From there, any of the employees would take La Follette's retinue "to the House of Commons to see the left members and the backers of the Labor Party." Steffens had few introductions to make elsewhere. In Germany, his "old left crowd" had "broken up, gone right or underground." His contact list for Italy, Steffens insisted, was even more lamentable given the new fascist government's repression. "My friends are not only out of it, they are out of sight," he wrote.[935] Still, Steffens offered to accompany the travelers to the Soviet Union, where he was likely to be of more help.

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[933] Elizabeth G. Evans to Belle Case La Follette, July 17, 1923. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box D15. Folder: Evans, Elizabeth Glendower.
[934] Harold Laski to Robert M. La Follette, August 12 1923. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Laski, Harold.
[935] Lincoln Steffens, *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931), 454-463; Lincoln Steffens to Robert M. La Follette, August 15, 1923. (Steffens sent two separate letters to La Follette on this day). La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B97. Folder: Steffens, Lincoln.

La Follette in London: The Labour Party and Cooperative Economics

Upon arriving in London, La Follette's curated trip proceeded at a feverish clip. As Manly and others suggested, the senator met with several Labour Party leaders to discuss domestic economic policy and devolution of peace in Europe. Unfortunately, La Follette's arrival coincided with a parliamentary recess– meaning that MacDonald, Arthur Henderson, and other party leaders had left the capital for constituent visits at home or diplomatic work abroad. "I wanted so much to see you and get your valuable views and advice upon some matters of mutual interest," the future prime minister wrote in his telegram, "but I hear you are meeting some of my friends, I must trust to them." These absences aside, the La Follettes and Manly met with the staff of both the *Daily Herald* and *New Leader*, future Nobel Peace Prize recipient Norman Angell, economist John Maynard Keynes, conscientious objector and Member of Parliament Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, settlement house reformer J.J. Mallon (who had just returned from his own trip to the US), future wartime Leader of the Opposition Hastings Lee-Smith, pacifist and frequent contributor to *La Follette's Magazine* Anna, Lady Barlow, and Sidney Webb. La Follette was careful not to over-promise support for any BLP foreign policy– especially if it meant working in proximity to the League of Nations. When Lees-Smith asked the senator if "American liberals would join with Labor Party if it came into power in solving world problems." La Follette Jr. scribbled that "Dad said no but has suggested that we would be willing to cooperate on specific problems." The dignitaries found the meeting productive. [936]

[936] La Follette Jr. described the meeting as a "Very delightful time." Telegram, Ramsay MacDonald to Robert M. La Follette, August 23, 1923; James Ramsay MacDonald to Robert M. La Follette, 11 August

A day later, the group held a long discussion on the political situation in America with the BLP's general secretary, James Middleton. The senator, La Follette Jr. recorded in his notepad, "suggested [the] advisability of having some means of regular correspondence between group here and at home." Both parties "heartily received" the notion and Manly quickly worked out the particulars. "Before leaving the United States it had seemed desirable to make the best possible arrangements for a continuous interchange of information between the progressives of the United States and progressive individuals or organizations of England and other European countries," Manly recalled. The People's Legislative Service, "which they agreed was the only organization in the United States through which such an interchange on broad lines could be effected," would receive copies of BLP pamphlets, speeches, and studies. In exchange, Manly would share PLS materials and progressive speeches from the *Congressional Record*. Mirroring La Follette's caution, Manly's press release insisted the exchange "Did not imply any relationship or identity of interest between the two groups or any commitment of any kind."[937] The BLP, PLS, and Conference for Progressive Political Action were similar in mind and spirit, but not beholden to one another.

Rounding out Manly's desire to link American reconstruction to British social democracy, La Follette's party took a train north to the Cooperative Wholesale Society (CWS) in Manchester. In principle, the CWS operated like other cooperative enterprises.

1923. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. B95. Folder: MacDonald, James Ramsay; Robert M. La Follette Jr. Notes, 10-14 August 1923. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B199 Folder: 1923 Europe Trip; Basil Manly, "The Story of the Trip," 1-7; Basil Manly Travel Notes, August 9-14. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil.

[937] Basil Manly, "The Story of the Trip," 2-6; Basil Manly Travel Notes, August 9-14. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95; Robert La Follette, Jr., Notes, August 12, 1923. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B199 Folder: 1923 Europe Trip.

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, wholesalers across the UK joined into a federation to better source goods, arrange shipping, and set prices. Each member received a vote in business planning. Its transparent dividend ledger and horizontal investment structure encouraged thrift, low prices, and high-volume sales. Yet by the First World War, the CWS had expanded to include several of its own foodstuff and clothing manufacturers, insurance plans, legal offices, and banks. The scope of the society, and its large national footprint floored the Americans. Reflecting on all that he saw at the end of his trip, La Follette "found the co-operative movement a power for good not only in its immediate purposes of saving money for its members and educating them in fundamental democracy, but in acting as a barrier against the development of the types of monopolies and combinations that have become so great a menace to representative government in the United States." Manly filled his travel notes with many pages of accounting details, sales figures, and descriptions of store fronts and warehouses. He found the cooperatively run Crumpsall Biscuit Works to be a "very good plant, splendid working conditions."[938] He praised several of the CWS plants for voluntarily recognizing unions and including collective bargaining in their charters.

Manly privately recognized the CWS's difficulties, noting that abiding by union contracts ballooned labor costs and that its barebones profit model meant little cash reserves when financial panic set in. Private grocery chains with generous loans from big banks had the ability to operate for sustained periods at a loss if it meant burying the competition. It was only through a "definite system of amortization"-- a steady and

[938] Robert M. La Follette, "What I Saw in Europe," *La Follette's Magazine* (February 1924), 26; Basil Manly, Notes, August 15-18. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil; Basil Manly, "The Story of the Trip," 7-9. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil.

consistent payment of paying off both loan principal and interest– that saved the CWS in the tumultuous post-war era, Manly wrote. Further, despite "the splendid achievements and enormous social value of the British cooperative movement," Manly warned against viewing the CWS as a "ready-made panacea to cure all our American industrial evils." The Co-operative Wholesale Society had 75 years of experience. Americans, he guessed, would have to find their own way of competing against "the monopolistic power and unfair practices of our large scale mail order houses, chain stores and manufacturing corporations."[939] Manly supported cooperative wholesaling in principle, but questioned its chances for survival in the increasingly corporate United States.

A Week in Berlin: Humanitarianism vs. Fears of Foreign Entanglements

If La Follette's time in Britain served to deepen his progressive bona fides and please his labor supporters, his next stop in Germany operated as a chance to show his diplomatic credentials. His meetings in London and Manchester had reinforced his initial thoughts on the Ruhr matter. Most of the Labour Party officials had little faith in Germany's survival as a unified nation. If France continued to occupy the Ruhr– Germany's chief coal region– the federation would "disintegrate," Norman Angell claimed. John M. Keynes agreed. Trends were moving "toward a dissolution into separate states," he told La Follette. How the nation would fall apart was up for debate. France might annex the western regions, some thought, while Bavaria and the old

[939] Basil Manly, "The Story of the Trip," 7-9. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil; Anthony Webster, "Building the Wholesale: The Development of the English CWS and British co-operative Business, 1863-90," *Business History* 54 No. 6 (October 2012), 883-904.

Prussian states could fall back into monarchism, and the industrial east could easily turn communist.[940]

Hyperinflation was near its peak by the time La Follette arrived. It had been months since the French severed the nation from the materials needed to fire furnaces, heat homes, and craft steel. Germany's policy of "passive resistance" meant that transport unions had choked freight service to a crawl. Out of gold reserves and creditors, the treasury printed money to stay ahead, but the resulting destabilization wrecked commercial banking. Facing these compounding crises, Farmers refused to sell their crops at a loss. This resulted in food shortages.[941]

Taking off on her own for a time, Belle Case La Follette provided *La Follette Magazine* readers with a first-hand look at the effects of economic malady. Reflecting her experience as a reformer for maternal and pediatric health– long deemed an appropriate "domain" for women in American reform— Case La Follette and Mary Manly "naturally… were especially interested in the feeding of children."[942] In Berlin, she remarked, school children received a daily allotment of condensed milk and bread, but that in other parts of the country ninety per cent of children went underfed. She also found an "alarming increase in Tuberculosis." Mary Manly blamed the French specifically for the crisis, decrying the "little children literally dying of starvation in order that the soldiers of the occupying army might have milk." Perhaps on their urging, La

[940] Robert M. La Follette Jr., Notes, 10 August 1923; August 11, 1923. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B199 Folder: 1923 Europe Trip.
[941] Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 102-103; Conan Fischer, *The Ruhr Crisis 1923-1924* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); J. Ronald Shearer, "Shelter from the Storm: Politics, Production and the Housing Crisis in the Ruhr Coal Fields, 1918-24," *Journal of Contemporary History* 34 no. 1 (January 1999), 19-47.
[942] Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Follette and Basil Manly visited a children's cafeteria. Manly seemed surprised that a quarter of the children there came from "middle class" houses– a teacher there told him that many more could use free meals but were "concealed by proud parents." With little faith for improvement, Manly wrote in his post-trip report: "Rome put the Carthaginians to sword and ploughed up their lands with salt; but this quick death and speedy annihilation was merciful compared with the long agony and slow deep decay that lies ahead of the German people."[943]

The senator packed his late-August week in the German capital with a string of back-to-back meetings with political, business, and labor leaders. The US Ambassador to Germany, Alanson B. Houghton, warned that food shortages, supply chain disruptions, and inflation would "wreck" central Europe "unless French policy is modified." France would be "forced" to cooperate if the US, Great Britain, and Germany agreed to a common solution. Former German state treasurer Heinrich Albert agreed, warning that if no solution came soon, a communist Germany would emerge from the Republic's wreckage. Hans Luther, agricultural minister and future chancellor, told the senator that "Food is the great problem if communist revolution is to be avoided." Unsurprisingly, many of the business leaders– who in Germany tended to support the anti-democratic right wing– described communism as a growing menace prepared to make hay out of the crisis.[944]

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[943] Belle Case La Follette, "With Senator La Follette in Germany," *La Follette's Magazine* (November 1923), 164; Mary B. Manly, "From Rome to Cologne With La Follette," *La Follette's Magazine* (January 1924), 11; Basil Manly, Notes August 23, 1923; Basil Manly, "The Story of the Trip," 11-15. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil.

[944] Basil Manly, Notes August 21, 1923; August 22, 1923; August 23, Berlin; August 24, August 25. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil. The party met with representatives of Deutsche Bank, *Allgemeine Elektricitäts-Gesellschaft* (General Electric Company), and steel giant Krupp Works.

Yet those on the left, too, feared an emboldened communist party. Josiah Wedgewood, the BLP's vice chairman who was also in Germany, warned that without coal the nation's still running factories would soon shut down. "When unemployment comes, communism will rise," he suggested. Those on the German non-communist left also critiqued communist revolutionaries, but did so often in the same breath as they condemned the anti-democratic right. Left anticommunism remained a potent force in German social democracy. Theodor Leipart, head of the SPD-aligned *Allgemeiner Deutscher Gerwerkschaft Bund*, or General German Trade Union Federation (ADG), related that his federation had "supported [the] government since [the] Revolution because of [the] necessity of making common cause against outside oppression."[945] While Manly's notes do not further elaborate what "outside oppression," Leipart referred to, he implied their enemies were not only the French, but anti-republican forces on the left and right as well.

Indeed, the Ruhr valley, with the highest concentration of young and underemployed miners and factory workers in Germany, was fertile ground for communist organizers. Since the occupation, the German Communist Party (KPD) made large inroads amongst both the unemployed and unorganized. With the onset of hyperinflation, KPD-led demonstrations for jobs, benefits, rent, and food drew thousands of people and became daily occurrences throughout 1923. Manly described the trade union representatives present from the Ruhr as "socialists of the evolutionary German type," but who nevertheless could become "violently and desperately revolutionary under the threat of starvation and freezing." ADG-aligned coal and steel unions increasingly

[945] Basil Manly, Notes August 22, 1923; Notes August 27. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil.

faced insurgent communist leadership and rival trade unions that targeted the "unskilled" workers more prone to job loss and pay cuts.[946]

Of course, the far-right emerged during the Ruhr chaos as well. The occupation became a focal point for monarchists, fascists, and general anti-republicans who viewed the treaty of Versailles as a socialist-led capitulation of German honor. Traveling through Nuremberg in late August, Women's Trade Union League leader Agnes Nestor witnessed an SPD and German Democratic Party (DDP)-led demonstration. She described the more than two-hour parade of primarily youths shouting "Long live the Republic" as "wonderful sight." Upon hearing word of incoming nationalists in the notoriously conservative former capital of the Holy Roman Empire, however, police shepherded the tourists off the street. Nestor's hotel workers refused to serve guests on balconies and heavy curtains covered the main floor windows.[947] A week later, Hitler's National Socialists held the first of its many infamous Nuremberg Rallies.

In the same vein, Left-liberal journalist and editor Georg Bernhard personally warned La Follette of the many of the conservatives negotiating an end to the Ruhr crisis and their potentially dubious intentions. Hugo Stinnes, who owned many of the Ruhr's coal mines, steel mills, utility companies, and who was supposedly the richest man in the country, was in some way leading the fight to regain the valley. He utilized his industrial connections to open backdoor channels with the French. The previous spring, Stinnes traveled to Rome to meet with Elbert Gary of US Steel– Gary promised to loan Stinnes

[946] Basil Manly, Notes August 27; Basil Manly, "The Story of the Trip," 11-18. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil. Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 132-159.

[947] Agnes Nestor to Friends, August 22, 1923. Agnes Nestor to Friends, August 22, 1923. National Women's Trade Union League Papers. Microfilm. Reel 14, International congress of Working Women 1923-27. For images from the rally, see https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1003680.

money to keep up the fight. Yet Bernhard persuaded La Follette to have "great doubt as to Stinnes's integrity and good faith." Stinnes had a history, Bernhard explained, of scuttling prior diplomatic negotiations if they were unfavorable to his bottom line.[948] Behrhard had personally accused the industrialist of provoking the assassination of liberal foreign minister Walter Rathenau two years prior.

Stinnes had also taken advantage of the state's fiscal deterioration to demand a rollback of SPD-sponsored labor rights. By 1924, the government acceded and repealed the eight-hour day and drastically cut back state-sponsored employment and welfare. Further, the newspapers he owned kept up a steady drumbeat of hard-right monarchist separatism, calls for war, and antisemitism. His editorial line tended to praise Erich Ludendorff, the stodgy aristocratic general who became a symbol for middle and upper-class anti-republicans. One article engaging in "stab-in-the-back" post-war fervor accused "leaders of the Scheidemann type" (Social Democrats) of continuing the "spineless submission of previous cabinets" and extinguishing "patriotism and loyalty" under the "wet blanket" of continued reparations. The author called upon Germans to scan "the horizon for new forces that we can rally for the final conflict that is to decide whether we are to survive or perish." In the same paper, Admiral Von Tirpitz– the Prussian head of the former Imperial Navy– instructed readers to keep watch for the "poisonous elements" in the German body politic at to let their "hatred" of the French "flame up in fire on every mountain-top of our father land." Stinnes may have sought an end to the occupation,

[948] Basil Manly, Notes August 21, 1923, Evening. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil; "Gary Proffers Germany Help, Rome Reports," *Baltimore Sun* (March 27, 1923), 1.

Bernhard conceded, but his faith in the well-being and continued survival of the Weimar Republic was ancillary to his greater goals.[949]

It was in this context that Leipart and the Ruhr trade union leaders insisted their members would never work under coercion, no matter the source. Just as Ruhr workers enthusiastically embraced the call for a general strike during the Kapp Putsch– to the point of forming militias and refusing to disband them after the crisis ended– they would not give up unttil the French withdrew. "We would not work under German bayonets and we will not work under those of the French," a Ruhr worker told the senator's party. SPD-aligned unions were doing their best to keep up passive resistance and fend off calls for both nationalist restoration and Bolshevik revolution, but only a diplomatic end to the present crisis could avert further catastrophe.[950]

The Soviet Union: Meeting Communism at Home

La Follette took his time weighing the complexities of the German situation. His experiences in Berlin undoubtedly sat at the forefront in his mind while in the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks long had designs on Germany, which continued to have the largest mass party of communists outside of Russia. His visit would allow him the opportunity to see whether there was merit to Marxist-Leninist notions of democracy and

[949] Von Tirpitz, "Germany's Present Position," *Living Age* (April 14, 1923), 317; Herman Coblenz, "In the Thick of the Fight," *Living Age* (December 8, 1923), 319; Georg Bernhard, "Hugo Stinnes, Exploiter of a Nation," *New York Times* (November 25, 1923), XX1.
[950] Robert La Follette, "What I saw In Europe," *La Follette's Magazine* (January 1924), 4. At certain points, the chronology of La Follette and Manly's trip notes becomes confused. While it is certain that the party left from Berlin to Petrograd at the end of August (perhaps making brief stops along the way) and that he visited the Ruhr valley personally at the end of September (making stops in Vienna and Rome before hand), it is hard to determine when conversations with different Germans occurred. While he might have spoken to trade union officials from the Ruhr around his meeting with Leipart, he also could have heard it a few weeks later.

to gauge the extent to which the politburo directed revolutionary cells abroad. Several of his progressive colleagues had been to the Workers' Republic in the last year and returned with strong feelings. Frank Walsh had toured the country the year prior on behalf of Sidney Hillman and the Friends of Soviet Russia– a primarily communist-led booster organization. Walsh was to write a report on whether the new country was safe for American investments. His answer was a resounding yes. "I had the most interesting and educative three months of my whole life. The experiment going on in Russia is one of the most stupendous ever attempted by any government in the world," he wrote privately to a Denver reporter. Shortly after returning in September 1922, Walsh worked to secure potential market connections for Russian flax, licorice, and fur. He also promised help Senator William Borah with an investigation into American funds going to Russian counterrevolutionaries. La Follette and the PLS had apparently taken a "lively interest" in his reports. Walsh's overall positive takeaways mirrored those of Smith W. Brookhart, who praised the peasant cooperatives he visited and claimed that the local council elections he witnessed were "run exactly like the old stand-pat Republican caucuses."[951]

Both agreed that the old Russian monarchy had no hope of resuscitation, but whether a freer form of liberalism would emerge was anyone's guess. "Whether all this is leading to an ordinary democratic government– something better or worse," Walsh wrote in a feature for the Hearst press, "one must indeed be a weary pessimist who would not indulge the hope and belief that Russia, with… a population of a hundred and fifty

[951] Frank P. Walsh to Harry H. Tammen, September 19, 1922. Frank P. Walsh to Alexander Eiduck, September 28, 1922. Frank P. Walsh to Joseph B. Shannon, December 1 1922. Frank Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 11. Folders: September 1-23, September 25-30, December 1-16; Smith W. Brookhart, "Russia as I saw It," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (October 1923), 791.

millions of industrious, patient and long-suffering people, will not soon emerge, with the rest of God's children, into a well-ordered and happy state." Brookhart took an even more pragmatic approach: the only three options for Russia were "The present government, czarism or chaos," and the "soviet government is many times better than the czarism which we recognized for 140 years." Steeped in Euro-centrism, he accused the government of making diplomatic exceptions for the "unspeakable Turk with his long history of Christian murders," but not the Soviet regime.

In this regard, both visitors matched Burton K. Wheeler's tone. Wheeler undeniably sympathized with the Russian people. "If Jesus Christ were in the world today," he testified in a Helena Methodist church, "He would not be preaching for profiteers; He would be over there working with the Russian peasants, whether believing in their form of government or not." He claimed to find no one looking to return to Czarist rule. Yet he was quick to note the failure of communism to usher in immediate millennium or provide liberal democracy. Under the NEP, food and clothing "could be had readily," yet "compared with America it can safely said that a man would be better off in jail in America than at liberty in Russia," the Montanan declared. "The American working man who would voluntarily go to Russia to live is either not informed or else he is an idiot," Wheeler added for good measure. Like Brookhart he chided the state department for "encouraging trade" with the "unspeakable Turk" and the "heathen Chinese," but not to help the Russian farmer and industrial worker.[952]

[952] Frank P. Walsh, "Prosperity Near in Russia, Says F.P. Walsh," *Washington Times* (November 5, 1922), 15; Smith W. Brookhart, "Russia as I saw It," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (October 1923), 791; "Better Off Jailed in U.S. Than Free in Russia: Wheeler," *Billings Weekly Gazette* (June 19, 1923), 12; "World Century Behind U.S. In March of Civilization," *Anaconda Standard* (July 5, 1923), 8; "Pleads Not for Russ Government But for People," *Helena Daily Independent* (July 23, 1923), 2.

The La Follettes and Manlys arrived in Petrograd (St. Petersburg) on September 5. Lincoln Steffens and American sculptor Jo Davidson joined them there.[953] They spent a few days touring the imperial capital before departing to Moscow for the "all-Russian exposition"-- where they could observe farming cooperatives and the state of the Soviet agricultural economy. Belle Case La Follette was seemingly impressed by the lively port city. "The Soviet government appears to me to be working with religious zeal and faith to establish what it believes to be a social and economic order that is scientific and just," she wrote for *La Follette's Magazine*. The textile factories she visited impressed her most. After several years of civil war, Soviet administrators claimed to have finally succeeded in returning to somewhat consistent production standards.[954] And even though output fell far short of that of the pre-revolutionary era, when western European firms managed the facilities, employees told the visitors they had shorter working hours, equal pay for equal work, more sanitary conditions, and better benefits under the Soviets– though one group of knitters insisted their hourly wages should be higher.[955]

Case La Follette focused most on the factory's maternal policies. Each of the women workers claimed to be eligible for extended paid leave after giving birth, and each textile facility had onsite day care.[956] "It is a cardinal principle of the Soviets to care for

[953] Davidson would ultimately create the sculpture of Robert La Follette that now adorns the Capitol statuary hall.
[954] Joshua B. Freeman, *Behemoth: A History of the Factory and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2018), 169-225.
[955] As Basil Manly recorded, "There was a rather amusing colloquy between the President of the "Trust" and a group of the women workers who came to him to ask him when he was going to raise their wages." Basil Manly, "The Story of the Trip," 21. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil.
[956] Manly described it in his immediate post-trip notes as: "They are brought to the home in the morning by their [mothers] who work in the factory, all their clothes are changed, they are bathed and cared for all day and given milk and good nourishing meals." Basil Manly, "The Story of the Trip," 21-23. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil.

the children," Case La Follette told her readers, "They begin to look after them before they are born. The law provides that women factory workers shall be released from work and shall be paid their wages for two months before and two months after the birth of their children." As a suffragist who belonged to the National Woman's Party and supported calls for an equal rights amendment, but also an ally to working women who demanded protective industrial legislation, Case La Follette spoke strongly for this model of employment. "Everything that Alice Paul and the National Women's Party are asking for in the United States is achieved in Russia under the Soviet government," Case La Follette declared. "So also are all the reforms that Florence Kelley and the Consumers' League have been working for these long years." Equal pay and rights under the law, coupled with strong protections for working mothers, could allow for a more robust equality in industry.[957]

For their part, Manly and La Follette also praised this example of Petrograd's communist industrialism. Of course, with the Supreme Court having vacated both child labor and women's minimum wage laws, the United States in this era set a remarkably low bar in this era. "There were evidences everywhere that the Soviet government is giving a very remarkable amount of thought and attention to the problems of its children," Manly wrote. The senator agreed, finding "the organization and conduct of these factories the best justification" that he found "anywhere of the Soviet claim that government was being run in the interest of the masses of the people."[958] The industrial

[957] Belle Case La Follette, "With Senator La Follette in Russia," *La Follette's Magazine* (December 1923), 184; Nancy C. Unger, *Belle Case La Follette: Progressive Era Reformer* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 145.
[958] Robert M. La Follette, "What I saw In Europe," *La Follette's Magazine* (January 1924), 4; Basil Manly, "The Story of the Trip," 21-23. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil.

schools, libraries, and theaters and their supposedly "democratic" operation, appealed to La Follette the most.

The La Follette party may have praised the factories they saw and commented favorably on the "spirit of hope" they encountered amongst the Russian people, but they criticized the Soviet regime as well. The visiting Americans questioned how common the quality of the model factories they visited was and the degree to which their experiences were carefully curated. Visiting the city's port district, Basil Manly noted the impossibility of gauging "how much business is actually being transacted"-- indicating some sort of discrepancy between official figures and the warehouses presented. The senator apparently took multiple opportunities to grab his translator and slip away from his guided tour of the woolen mill to ask workers questions directly. Manly's trip notes included multiple qualifiers (e.g. "if this is true") to what they learned from Soviet handlers. And while Party members were eager to show elaborate blueprints for "workers' villages" and insist that the state-of-the-art children's care facilities and other amenities would become standard across the nation, there was no real way to investigate the claims or substantiate how close they were to fruition.[959]

Manly and La Follette's trip notes only record one sit-down meeting with a Soviet government official. Gregory Weinstein had been editor of New York's *Novy Mir*, a Russia-language socialist newspaper, and a contact for the Russian Soviet Bureau in the United States. After the State Department deported him as an enemy agent in 1921, Weinstein took work as a diplomat in the USSR's foreign office. During the two-hour

[959] Basil Manly, Notes, August 28, 1923. Basil Manly, "The Story of the Trip," 21-23. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil. For more on the curated nature of many Soviet trips during the 1920s and 1930s, see David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment.*

meeting, the senator addressed his biggest concern with communist foreign policy: the ceaseless calls for world revolution. Apparently, Weinstein's insistence that the Comintern's "propaganda for world revolution was not now active" did not satisfy La Follette. "I asked if he did not think their government would stand much better with the other governments of the world if they would discontinue their propaganda for the overthrow of other governments and attend to the business of considering their own government," La Follette recalled. He added, as an elected American official, that he believed "it wrong to try to force our form of government upon others." The two seemingly did not convince one another, though La Follette called him "an earnest intelligent man" who promised to help arrange his party's tour through Petrograd and Moscow.[960]

For whatever good he saw in the Soviet Union, the senator still believed that the avowedly socialist nation was an outright dictatorship. He had asked Weinstein directly if the Soviets "permitted a free expression of opposition to its policies… either through opposition newspapers or other ways." The former American editor of a radical publication answered in the negative. "Democracy, as we understand it, does not exist in Russia," La Follette later wrote. "There is no freedom of speech, no free press and no freedom of assemblage. If I were a citizen of Russia I should resist this Communistic dictatorship as vigorously as I have endeavored to resist the encroachment upon our democratic institutions in America." Belle Case La Follette agreed. "Russia is not a democracy," she baldly stated. "The power once in the hands of the Czar is wielded by

[960] Robert M. La Follette, 1923, La Follette, R.M. Notes Made during European Trip Re: Russia. Tuesday September 4, 1923. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B199 Folder: 1923 Europe Trip; Basil Manly, "The Story of the Trip," 20. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil.

the party in power." She did note, however, that while "The Czar's tyranny was exercised to preserve the privileged few," the Soviets plan, in theory, was to "give the masses their place in the sun."[961]

Both La Follette and Case La Follette supported Soviet recognition and trade. The senator determined that, for good or ill, the Soviet Union was "destined to play a large, if not a dominant, part in the international development of the next ten years." He also claimed to see "evidences that Premier Lenin is beloved by the Russian people and is regarded as one of the greatest statesmen Russia has ever produced." If the Bolshevik regime was not going anywhere, then it behooved the United States to cultivate a closer relationship. "Russia has the richest undeveloped resources in the world and her trade, in which we can have a large share with mutual profit, increases every day," he supposed. And as Brookhart and Wheeler both argued, the United States had long recognized objectionable governments so long as they maintained public order. It was only "because the Russian dictatorship is one from the left that our state department has been so concerned about the anti-democratic features of the Russian government," La Follette figured. Further, proper trade relations could potentially convince the Soviets to expand the New Economic Policy and perhaps eventually result in increased political liberty.

The Manlys and La Follettes kept poor notes after Petrograd. The senator described the exposition in Moscow as "a huge state fair" and marveled at the "enormous resources and possibility of this gigantic country." From Moscow, the party made brief

[961] Robert M. La Follette, 1923, La Follette, R.M. Notes Made during European Trip Re: Russia. Tuesday September 4, 1923. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B199 Folder: 1923 Europe Trip; Robert M. La Follette, "What I saw In Europe," *La Follette's Magazine* (January 1924), 4; Belle Case La Follette, "With Senator La Follette in Russia," *La Follette's Magazine* (December 1923), 184.

stops in Poland before stopping in Vienna. In the Austrian capital, La Follette raged against Alfred Rudolph Zimmerman, a Dutch banker recently appointed by the League of Nations secretariat to "reconstruct" the nation's economy. Meeting with the city's Socialist Party representatives, he quickly gained the opinion that the League sought to undermine Austrian social democracy by imposing austerity and high interest rates on Vienna's working-class core. "Socialists are all that is holding back a coup d'etat by the monarchists," he scribbled down.

La Follette had little to say about Rome. He met with Benito Mussolini and questioned him about political persecution under his rule. La Follette apparently left the meeting unimpressed if not openly hostile. "What an actor," he supposedly whispered to his family. From there, the party visited Munich, stopped to observe conditions in the Ruhr firsthand, traveled north to Denmark to look at cooperatives, and finally took something of a rest in Paris. The senator's health had deteriorated somewhat in France, forcing him to cancel his return to London, where he had hoped to meet with more members of the Labour Party.[962] His ship returned to the United States on November 2, 1923.

[962] Robert M. La Follette, "What I saw In Europe," *La Follette's Magazine* (January 1924), 4; "Vienna" [n.d. 1923 p. 1]. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B199 Folder: 1923 Europe Trip; Fola La Follette, *Robert M. La Follette, June 14, 1855-June 18, 1925 Volume II* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), 1083-1087. The Austrian financial crisis of the 1920s was, of course, more nuanced. Austria had a largely urban population and little farm land of its own, necessitating imports from the rest of Europe. The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire sent shockwaves through the nation's established economy. League of Nations supervisors did stabilize the Austrian economy, but did so largely through deflationary measures and steep cuts to government programs. Austrian conservatives blamed the social democrats, based almost entirely in Vienna, for perpetuating the financial crisis through reckless welfare programs and benefitted electorally from the austerity measures. For more, see Patricia Clavin, "The Austrian Hunger Crisis and the Genesis of International Organization After the First World War," *International Affairs* 90 no. 2 (2014), 265-278; Nathan Marcus, *Austrian Reconstruction and the Collapse of Global Finance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

Conclusion: La Follette's Return

Disembarking the *SS George Washington* in Portland, Maine, La Follette immediately met a throng of reporters eager for a quote on the progressive leader's three months abroad. "What I have seen in Europe makes me more determined than ever to devote whatever powers I possess to bringing our government back to the people and to spend the balance of my life in combating with renewed energy the forces that are tending to undermine and destroy in the United States the American tradition of government by the people," he told those awaiting him.[963] His first statement back on home soil reflected the pageantry of his trip. La Follette's tour not only kept him in the national spotlight but cast his image as a worldly politician with now established diplomatic connections abroad. Throughout November, newspapers were ripe with speculation of the senator's presidential aspirations.[964]

La Follette's tour prompted serious reflection on how his four-decade old belief in American progressivism fit into the new post-war world, one that now included a communist government that spanned two continents and an amorphous fascism that appeared on the rise. Liberal republican democracy was the senator's ideal– a system of government he believed could readily cure most societal ills. Yet democracy was either on the rocks or non-existent in Germany, Austria, Italy, and Russia. This state of affairs seemingly refocused La Follette and helped him articulate the American movement he hoped to lead and the global movement he hoped to join.

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[963] John Gunn, "Wisconsin Solon Puts Emphasis on American Issues," *Labor* (November 10, 1923), 1; "La Follette Back, Urges German Aid," *New York Times* (November 3, 1923), 4.
[964] "He Returns Unspoiled," *New York Times* (November 5, 1923), 16; Raymond Clapper, "Tuesday Polling Will Lift Veil on Party Plans," *Atlanta Constitution* (November 5, 1923), 1; Robert Barry, "La Follette to Shun Campaign," *Los Angeles Times* (November 23, 1923), II22; "Third Ticket Aim of Farmer-Labor," *Baltimore Sun* (November 18, 1923), 12; "La Follette Urged to Head Third Party," *Washington Post* (November 18, 1923), 1.

"Democracy is now being crucified in Europe," La Follette wrote in his notebook as he first sought to compile his thoughts near the end of his trip. "In Russia it has been crushed by the Communist oligarchy," he continued. "In Italy it has been destroyed by Mussolini and his Fascist groups. In Austria it has been put in pawn to the Allied money lenders. In Germany the democracy established with enlightened constitution is being ground between the upper and nether millstones of Communism and Monarchism." In the first of a series of articles regarding his trip, La Follette claimed to have "found governments of Europe, dominated by diplomats, propagandists and warmakers, spending more for armaments and military preparedness than before the Great War began; creating conditions, pursuing policies more dangerous in precedent, more threatening in consequences, than those that existed in 1914." The treaties that Wilson hoped would "end all wars" had been "violated like scraps of paper." He felt justified in his firm stance against ratification. Without any semblance of "peace without victory," Europe cascaded into a cataclysmic storm of economic depression and societal unrest.[965] Amidst the chaos, Europeans increasingly turned to political extremists promising a return to tradition, revolution, war, or some combination of the three.

La Follette reaffirmed his stance that the United States should not participate in the League of Nations nor any international body that could feasibly serve as the tool of imperialist or otherwise unfree governments teetering on the precipice of another war. In this regard, La Follette resembled Hiram Johnson, the other irreconcilable senator with presidential aspirations who had gone abroad that year. Johnson's public opposition to

[965] RML Sr. "RML [n.d.] 1923 page 4." La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B199 Folder: 1923 Europe Trip; Robert M. La Follette, "What I Saw In Europe," (December 1923), 180.

the League stemmed from something of an uncritical nationalism– he believed interchange with Europe would corrupt the American spirit. "In my humble fashion, without limitations of politics or candidates, I dedicate myself to maintaining America just as America has ever been," Johnson told an audience after his trip. "We can have no higher resolve than to dedicate ourselves to the patriotic duty… of maintaining the distinctive American policy and keeping our country free from every entanglement which could destroy that policy," he continued.[966] This type of nationalism was a firm part of Johnson's political repertoire. A progressive of the Bull Moose type, and not dissimilar to William Allen White and former Kansas governor Henry J. Allen, Johnson believed in government oversight of the economy and regulation of key industries for public welfare. Yet, on the same token, he distrusted the masses– disapproving of labor unions, in particular– and was a staunch proponent of race-based immigration restriction. Throughout his career, the Californian was known to make overtly antisemitic comments and ponder openly about on the "conquest" of America by radical non-protestant immigrants.[967]

La Follette was not entirely immune from giving in to the pervasive antisemitism of the day– he made at least one private remark blaming Jewish bankers for dragging the United States into World War I.[968] Much like Johnson, La Follette gave thanks upon his

[966] "Senator Johnson Denounces World Court, Saying Europe Wants America's Money," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (July 26, 1923), 4; "Johnson Pleads to Keep America Free From Court," *Brooklyn Daily Times* (July 26, 1923), 3.
[967] David A. Horowitz, *Beyond Left and Right: Insurgency and the Establishment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 80-81, 184.
[968] In a private letter dated 1919, La Follette complained of "Morgan and the group of Jew bankers'' whom he blamed for promoting the League of Nations in order to "finance" further settlements. Historian David A. Horowitz, who delved deeply through La Follette's correspondence during the war era, described the outburst as uniquely "out of character" for the Wisconsin senator. Other biographers have found little evidence that La Follette harbored sustained antisemitic beliefs. They likewise claim he was more tolerant than many of his progressive peers, especially Hiram Johnson. David A. Horowitz, *Beyond Left and Right:*

return for the "three thousand miles of Atlantic Ocean" dividing the two continents and warned of the "powerful forces" seeking to "dragoon" the United States into an armed affair. Unlike Johnson, however, La Follette was more willing to acknowledge the shared struggle Americans and Europeans had in ending the threat of war. On both sides of the Atlantic, he insisted, industrialists, monopolists, and plutocrats of all stripes threatened the peace.[969] By operating an economy of deliberate scarcity for the sake of profit, by breaking unions to keep wages low and by constantly seeking to exploit new lands and peoples for natural resources, capitalists posed a threat to democracy's continued survival. Americans, he would insist, could reverse this trend not by walling off from the rest of the world, but by joining with European social democrats and left-liberals against the transnational power of organized greed and corruption.

In a series of essays penned between his return to the United States and his nomination for president in the Summer of 1924, La Follette outlined exactly what he meant and what he learned from his visits. "The forces which have undermined or destroyed the democracies of Europe are the same that are now at work sapping the foundations of our republic," he explained. French president Raymond Poincaré, La Follette pointed out, had been legal counsel to the Comité de Forges– the nation's powerful organized steel lobby and chief beneficiary to an influx of German coal– prior to his political career.[970] Taking seriously what he learned from Georg Bernhard, he

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Insurgency and the Establishment (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 36; Richard Drake, *The Education of an Anti-Imperialist: Robert La Follette and U.S. Expansion* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 314; Nancy C. Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2000), 89.

[969] Robert M. La Follette, "What I Saw In Europe," *La Follette's Magazine* (December 1923), 180.

[970] Poincaré denied any connection between the Comité de Forges and his decision to occupy the Ruhr. Though he did refer to the occupation as a "productive guarantee" on the coal exports the French government claimed the Germans were deliberately withholding (a somewhat dubious claim)—exports that the French industrial economy depended on– Poincaré's designs on the Ruhr were multifaceted. Perhaps

insisted that Hugo Stinnes appeared "to be in the saddle" of the German government. Just as Elbert Gary worked to undermine worker protective legislation for the sake of profit, supported "reactionary" republicans and democrats, and cozied up to Mussolini's fascist government, Stinnes and other industrialists would use the Ruhr crisis to flood Germany with far-right propaganda pushing anti-republicanism and another war. Like the Republicans in Congress after the First World War, Stinnes and his allies had used the unrest of 1923 to elect more conservative members of the Reichstag and repeal the labor protections like the legal eight-hour day.[971]

Yet, despite the terrible conditions he witnessed in Europe, La Follette saw many signs of hope. "In contrast to these outward and visible signs of war-in-the-making by the so-called ruling classes," he argued, "I found the people of every country I visited hating war and longing for peace." These people made the basis of the social democratic "Middle Ground," the only faction La Follette believed stood between the greedy warmongering elite and the fascists and communists who stood waiting in the wings to

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most importantly, many French voters still held Germany in contempt for the war. An occupation of the Ruhr was a means of extracting "owed" reparations from the Germans while also cutting them off from the raw materials needed for remilitarization. Finally, the French government still owed massive war debts to the United States and depended on Germany indemnities to pay them on time.

Still, many observers on the left eagerly pointed out Poincaré's ties to the Comité de Forges as a motive for the invasion. Sisley Huddleston, *Poincaré: A Biographical Portrait* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1924), 88; Paul Guinn, "On Throwing Ballast in Foreign Policy: Poincare, the Entente and the Ruhr Occupation," *European History Quarterly* 18 (1988), 427-437; Grégoire Mallard, "'The Gift' Revisited: Marcel Mauss on War, Debt, and the Politics of Reparations," *Sociological Theory* 29 No. 4 (December 2011), 225-247; Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 102-103.

[971] Manly wrote of this, too, perhaps inspiring La Follette's article: "The great industrialists and their reactionary allies were taking advantage of the situation in an attempt to smash the eight-hour day and other industrial advantages that had been achieved by half a century of struggle." The conservative coalition that came to power in Germany after the Ruhr crisis did indeed reverse the nation-wide eight-hour day in the name of restoring productive industry. Basil Manly, "The Story of the Trip," 11. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box: B95. Folder: Manly, Basil; Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 140-143.

bring their order into the chaos. Of the two most lasting lessons the "Fighting Bob" learned abroad was the vital importance of democratic procedure at all levels of society– not only the state. "What I have seen in Europe has confirmed my convictions that the safety and happiness of every people lies in self-government and the development of free institutions," he wrote, "and that no dictator, no matter how benevolent his professions, can be trusted or tolerated."[972] These "institutions" were very likely the trade union federations (the Trade Union Congress in Britain and ADG in Germany) he visited, all of whom had firmly pledged themselves to defending both liberal and economic democracy, and the Cooperative Wholesale Society in Manchester, which had similarly promised to expand choice to consumers and producers. Perhaps the striking Ruhr workers refusing to submit to bayonets be they German or French stuck with La Follette specifically. Those German wage earners had helped grind the Kapp Putsch to a halt in 1919 and were now keeping up passive resistance in the face of a French occupation, monarchist upsurge, and brewing communist revolt.

Finally, La Follette returned from Europe demanding a stark reassessment of American values. To take its place in the borderless fight against special interests, La Follette believed the United States needed to get its own house in order. "The greatest contribution that America can make to Europe and the world," La Follette wrote, "is to restore and perfect her democratic institutions and traditions, so they will stand as a beacon lighting the way to all the peoples." American voters would demonstrate the ability to achieve a more just society "by the ballot, by voluntary program and reform." While his panacea might have rung of isolationism, it was far more critical than what

[972] Robert M. La Follette, "What I Saw In Europe," *La Follette's Magazine* (December 1923), 180

Hiram Johnson had publicly proposed. La Follette never issued a call for a total retrenchment of American involvement overseas. Rather, he listened to Harold Laski who suggested the United States "not associate herself with Europe until the French were out of the Ruhr and a reasonable settlement of reparations made." Bernhard also claimed the fiasco could not be "improved by British or American help" and that France and Germany had to come to their own terms on reparations. For his part, La Follette pondered the use of sanctions on France in the form of "a special tax" on delinquent allied war debts to bring the French to the table.[973]

To lead by example, however, the United States government also needed to end its own illegal endeavors abroad. He had discovered in his conversations in Europe that the trend of American foreign policy "within recent years toward imperialism and the support of financial exploitation of weaker countries, had greatly decreased the respect with which the American conduct of foreign affairs had previously been regarded." The common people of the world, whom La Follette claimed hated war and imperialism, would not trust American intentions to uphold democracy if it consistently led armed interventions abroad. La Follette highlighted the 1914 invasion of Vera Cruz, the continued control of the Panama Canal, the relentless pursuit of "open door" policies in China, and the occupation of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Beyond the necessity of ending its imperial practices for image alone, colonialism empowered monopolists and speculators. So long as wealthy industrialists could count on the militaries of their

[973] Robert M. La Follette, "RML [n.d.] 1923 p. 5." La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B199 Folder: 1923 Europe Trip; Harold Laski to Robert M. La Follette, August 12, 1923. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Laski, Harold; Basil Manly, Notes August 21, 1923, Evening. La Follette Family Papers. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B95. Folder: Manly, Basil; Robert M. La Follette, Robert M. La Follette, "What I Saw in Europe," *La Follette's Magazine* (February 1924), 26.

respective nations to support them in the pursuit of profit, democracy remained imperiled. "Nothing so surely leads to foreign complications and to war as our present policy of placing the diplomatic resources of our government behind the claims of concession-hunting capitalists," he warned. Foreign policy could not heal so long as industrialists pursued a relentless race for profit.[974]

After his trip from Europe, Robert La Follette acknowledged his shared battle with European social democrats and left-liberals against the transnational power of organized greed and corruption. While the Wisconsin senator had lambasted the corrosive effects of maladjusted capital on sovereignty, democracy, and peace his entire career, his experiences in post-war Europe reshaped the scope of his vision. If La Follette had any doubt that organized workers and farmers presented the most potent available force to protect democracy from demagogues both left and right, it had all but disappeared by the fall of 1923. The labor parties of Europe, backed by "free institutions" of the working class, had a *chance* to hold back the tide of reaction and bring about "self-government" free from plutocracy. The people, the aging progressive maintained, would bring about a just social order. His time in Europe proved that his faith in bottom-up politics was not misplaced. The Conference for Progressive Political Action, the Peoples' Legislative Service, and all of the other institutions that cropped during the post-war reconstruction boom, were part of a larger movement to sweep out entrenched conservative governments the world over.

Organized labor remained very much at the helm of the Conference for Progressive Political Action and La Follette increasingly relied on its help and presented

[974] Robert M. La Follette, "What I Saw In Europe," *La Follette's Magazine* (March 1924), 41.

himself as labor's candidate. And while he may never have called himself a social democrat, between the end of the 1923 and his death in 1925, he considered himself something of the American extension of that movement. As he campaigned across the United States in the fall of 1924, he repeatedly pointed out the victories of the British Labour Party, Australian Labor Party, and French *Cartel de Gauches* as signs that democracy was once again "spreading the world." Those victories, La Follette claimed, insured "cooperation between those governments and this government just as soon as we sweep aside the old reactionary parties in this country and establish a government of the people, by the people and for the people."[975] Guided by reconstruction and inspired by the promise of European social democracy, La Follette hoped his presidential run would bring about a similar victory.

[975] "Speech of Hon Robert M. La Follette, Peoria, Illinois. October 22, 1924." La Follette Family Papers. Washington: D.C.: Library of Congress. Box B228 Folder: 1924 Campaign, Peoria, Ill.

Part IV: The Election of 1924

Chapter 11: Robert La Follette, the Conference for Progressive Political Action, and the 1924 Election

Robert La Follette's 1924 campaign for the presidency was the culmination of nearly six years of progressive-labor activism. At the end of 1918, organized labor realized it needed political support to maintain the high wages it commanded during the war. The Republican candidate Warren Harding's landslide victory in 1920 proved to these labor leaders and activists that unions and organized farmers needed a more intensive and coherent strategy at the polls. Labor could not, in fact, build an electoral machine overnight. Concurrently, the Socialist Party of America and Farmer-Labor Party learned that an upswing in worker militancy nationwide did not translate into a flood of support for independent leftwing candidates. But by founding the Conference for Progressive Action, coordinating a nationwide press strategy, espousing a staunch anticommunism, and concentrating limited resources into competitive races, labor progressives believed they had found a workable formula. Now, two years after the CPPA initially burst onto the stage of American politics, the organization's leaders planned to nominate a candidate for the nation's highest office.

Scholars of American politics and the left have long studied La Follette's run. These historians have alternatively described the campaign as the last breath of the turn-of-the-century Progressive movement, the clarion call of the New Deal come too soon, or the turning point moment in which a genuine American labor party failed to

materialize.[976] In recent years, scholars of the election have turned their focus on the role of big business, farmers' lobbies, and the KKK, viewing the contest as a genesis point for the rise of mass media and interest-group politics.[977] Curiously, few studies centralize labor's role or emphasize the role of either labor or the Conference for Progressive Political Action. While the 1924 campaign can serve as an epilogue of Progressivism or a prologue to New Deal liberalism, it was an important moment in its own right. It was a moment in which trade unions, inspired by the success of the British Labour Party and

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[976] William Leuchtenburg and Kenneth Campbell MacKay are strong examples of the latter-Progressive/proto-New Deal interpretation of La Follette's campaign. As Leuchtenburg wrote, "The Progressives, although they had a new interest in bread and butter issues, based their 1924 campaign on the old cry of the evil of monopoly. In the post war years… an attack on the trusts seemed as outdated as the tandem bicycle and 'trust-buster' was a term as much lost in the mists of the past as 'free-soiler.'" The mid-twenties, he concluded, "marked a time of transition within progressivism from the old-style evangelical reformers like La Follette and Bryan, to a new style urban progressivism, which would call itself liberalism." As MacKay concurred, much of the campaign "echoed the Populist pleas of the late nineteenth century. More of it anticipated the reforms of the New Deal." William E. Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 132-136; Kenneth Campbell MacKay, *The Progressive Movement of 1924* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972) (Second Edition, 1966), 9-21; For leftwing interpretations, see Eric Thomas Chester, *True Mission: Socialists and the Labor Party Question in the U.S.* (London, Pluto Press, 2004), 113-145; James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 290-323; Jack Ross, *Socialist Party of America: A Complete History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 247-280; Lynn Dumenil, *Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 25, 34.

[977] Historian Brian J. Schulman writes:

> On the face of it, the election of 1924 seems like a bundle of curiosities, a collection of unrelated developments. Yet the innovations of Coolidge's campaign, the debate over the nature and purposes of a third party that bedeviled La Follette, and controversy over the Klan that split the Democrats all pointed toward a newly modern model of presidential politics– one in which interest groups and the mass media would complete with and even supplant party organizations as the principal vehicles of political mobilization and communication.

Schulman's interpretation is incisive. Yet he does include organized labor as one of these new interest groups, nor does he mention the centrality of organized labor to the La Follette campaign. While he notes that some commentators at the time "linked" La Follette's run to the British Labour Party, Schulman misleadingly argues that the CPPA failed "to run candidates for offices below the national ticket," adding that "they established no functioning state or local organizations, raised few funds, and failed to rally sympathetic interest groups to their standard." As this chapter will argue, the CPPA did many of these things, even if it did not create machinery strong enough to challenge the Republican and Democratic parties.

Bruce J. Schulman, "Farewell to the 'Smoke-Filled Room': Parties, Interests, Public Relations, and the Election of 1924," *America at the Ballot Box: Elections and Political History*, eds. Gareth Davies and Julian E. Zelizer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 149-152.

the sustained militancy of its members, proved that they could indeed sway millions of voters.

On election day, a large portion of organized American workers mobilized for a fight. While they finished far from victory, they captured nearly a fifth of the vote and forced politicians in both parties to take notice. It was no coincidence that by 1926 Congress decided to advance new legislation protecting the right of railroad workers to unionize. Replacing the much-hated Transportation Act of 1920, the Railway Labor Act of 1926 improved federal mediation. Instead of the Railway Labor Board, which disproportionately favored the carriers, the new bill mandated non-binding neutral mediation, offered numerous chances for appeal, and allowed Federal district courts to enforce compliance. Labor's political action in the twenties also brought about new laws outlawing "yellow dog" contracts and frivolous injunctions. These bills began snaking their way through the legislative process around 1928 (less than ten years after the Senate seriously considered legislation to outlaw strikes) and resulted in the Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932.[978] Both Fiorello LaGuardia and George Norris enjoyed lavish support from the CPPA in the twenties.

Organized labor was the bone, muscle, and sinew of the La Follette campaign. Operating through the Conference for Progressive Political Action, the transport unions, garment trades, and a variety of other industrial unions joined with sympathetic Socialists, progressives, and reformers to organize on behalf of the Wisconsin senator. These groups fundraised for La Follette, established state chapters, distributed campaign

[978] Jon R. Huibregste, *American Railroad Labor and the Genesis of the New Deal, 1919-1935* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2010), 65-91; William E. Forbath, *Law and the Shaping of the American Labor Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 128-166.

materials, and ran down ballot candidates. Crucially, the CPPA dictated the tone and tenor of La Follette's genuinely radical platform. La Follette's "covenant with the people" was the only platform in 1924 (excepting the Communist Party's) that called unequivocally for public control over transportation, electricity, oil, and coal, a congressional override of judicial review, a prohibition on injunctions in labor disputes, and insoluble right to organize and bargain collectively. Additional resolutions demanded sovereignty for the Philippines, Haiti, and Virgin Islands.[979]

The CPPA also created leadership positions for women reformers at a time in which both major parties seemed to ignore them. The Republicans might have passed the suffrage amendment in Congress, but they failed repeatedly to advance other key priorities like standardized public education, defend minimum wage laws, and enshrine a constitutional amendment against child labor. By the end of the decade, GOP indifference put even the landmark maternal health provisions of the Sheppard-Towner Act at risk. The Democratic women's caucus drafted a platform to address these concerns, but the National Committee ignored it. Child labor laws remained unpopular in the Solid South. The CPPA, conversely, named an equal number of men and women to its steering committee and promised to defend workplace protections for women and children if in power.[980]

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[979] *The Facts: La Follette-Wheeler Campaign Text-Book* (Chicago: La Follette-Wheeler Campaign Headquarters, 1924), 51-54, 124; Stenographic Report of the Conference for Progressive Political Action, July 5th, 1924, 284. Library of Congress. Conference for Progressive Political Action Records, 1924-1928.
[980] Lynn Dumenil, *Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 108-109; Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 124-157; Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume 1, 1884-1933* (New York: Viking, 1992), 349-350; Kirsten Marie Delegard, *Battling Miss Bolsheviki: The Origins of Female Conservatism in the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 113-144.

This chapter centers the Conference for Progressive Political Action in La Follette's campaign. It describes how the election set in motion several long standing trends. The election established organized labor as a real factor in American politics. Even the limited success the CPPA had that November forced politicians across the United States to take labor's demands more seriously. As a result, trade unions developed far greater political sway in the decades to follow. 1924 also highlighted many of the pitfalls and challenges organized labor would face in years to come. The election shone a light on organized labor's deep reluctance to address racial equality. Despite repeated overtures from Black progressives in groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the CPPA strenuously toed the line on white supremacy. The Conference's refusal to cross the color line again presaged the decades long battle to win labor over to the cause of civil rights.

This chapter begins with the CPPA's third conference in February 1924, at which two developments set the pace for labor's independent campaign for the presidency the following November: the Teapot Dome scandal and the British Labour Party forming its first government. The ongoing Senate investigation into the illicit leasing of federal lands for private oil production, led by La Follette, Burton K. Wheeler, and other CPPA-backed insurgents, had uncovered a large network of corruption that implicated both Democrats and Republicans. As a result, CPPA participants grew even more distrustful of major party candidates. The coinciding BLP victory further strengthened their resolve to flex labor's electoral muscle.

The chapter then explores the Conference's ongoing effort to distance itself from American communism. Throughout the spring of 1924, CPPA leadership feared that the

communists, operating under the name Federated Farmer-Labor Party, would attempt to nominate La Follette on their own third-party ticket and poison the well before the election began. Driven by their ideological anti-communism, Socialists, trade unionists, and insurgent politicians worked to outflank the revolutionary Marxists. The conflict came to a head at the St. Paul convention of the Farmer-Labor Party on June 17th. There La Follette made his staunch opposition to Marxism and the Communist Party, once again, captured a meeting but gained no new adherents.

The third portion of the chapter will discuss how a shared faith in the British Labour Party, anti-communism, and the inherently democratic virtue of voluntary organizations like trade unions and cooperatives unified the Conference's wings and resulted in the compromises necessary to run a presidential campaign. This section will pay particular attention to the role of women in the CPPA. Since the end of the war, working-class and reform-minded women had been pushing for meaningful roles in the emerging labor political movement. In the 1922 and 1923 elections, the Conference's leadership did indeed try to better integrate women's auxiliaries and similar groups into its voting strategy. In the following year, they opened up meaningful committee assignments, and hired prominent women to speak across the nation during the campaign. This breakthrough resulted largely from the prominent roles trade union women occupied in the workers' education movement of the early twenties. Women may not have been fully welcome on the shopfloor, but unions accepted them as administrators and educators. With workers' education lifting their profiles in the broader reform movement,

leaders like Maud Swartz, Rose Schneiderman, and Fannia Cohn became important figures in trade unionism and the New Deal during the 1930s.[981]

While the CPPA may have progressed in its treatment of women, it did little to address racial equality. This chapter will conclude with the Conference's failure to meaningfully challenge discrimination within its ranks. Beginning during the war, many reformers in organizations like the NAACP sought to improve the historically acrimonious relationship between trade unions and Black workers. Black trade unionists fought, largely without success, to take part in labor-backed political campaigns during the 1920 election. Between the two presidential elections, many of these same individuals continued to explore potential political alliances with organized labor. Some of them-- William Pickens, Walter White, and James Weldon Johnson, for example-- found inspiration in the British Labour Part, an organization they believed had managed to win the hearts and minds of working-class Britons while criticizing imperial policy and colonization.[982]

But a mutual appreciation for the Labour Party did not translate into an easy alliance between the Black liberal left and the Conference. In 1922, the CPPA endorsed several Klan-backed candidates. Not even La Follette proved to be a vocal advocate for anti-lynching legislation. In 1924, the NAACP offered the CPPA its outright political support if it did what neither major party had done in its platform that year: condemn the Klan and demand civil equality. The overtly racist Railroad Brotherhoods forced

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[981] For an overview, see Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) (second edition), 117-252; Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform*, 124-157; Brigid O'Farrell, *She Was One of Us: Eleanor Roosevelt and the American Worker* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 1-29.

[982] For an overview of this trend, see Mark R. Schneider, *We Return Fighting: The Civil Rights Movement in the Jazz Age* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 250-255.

Conference organizers to decline. Only the garment trade unions, Socialist Party, and Farmer-Labor Party delegations championed racial equality within the CPPA. This final section will explain how a growing interest in organized labor and the British Labour Party led Black reformers to pursue an alliance with the CPPA. It will then illuminate the ways in which the standard trade unions that backed Robert La Follette chose deliberately to sidestep racial equality. Only the Conference's leftwing warmly received overtures from their would-be Black allies, creating a network of activism extending through the Great Depression and into the classic Civil Rights era.[983]

After FDR took office, he looked to many Conference veterans to push his far-reaching agenda at the grassroots. Maude Swartz and Rose Schneiderman helped plan his initial industrial policy; David Sapposs helped direct the National Labor Relations Board; Frederic C. Howe helped him win over old Progressives; and Robert La Follette Jr. helped him win over the Republican Midwest. All of these individuals had prominent positions in earlier labor's electoral alliance. David Dubinsky, John Brophy, Sidney Hillman, and Typographical Union president Charles P. Howard all similarly went on to form the CIO.[984] In multiple ways, progressive labor leaders in the twenties helped define American liberalism and contour its future.

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[983] For or an overview of New Deal era labor and the classic civil rights movement, see Steven A. Reich, "Organized Labor and the Civil Rights Movement: Lessons from a Troubled Past," *New Labor Forum* 18, No. 3 (2009): 61-71; William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2013), ix-xxi; Eric Arnesen, "Reconsidering the 'Long Civil Rights Movement,'" *Historically Speaking* 10 no. 2 (April 2009), 31-34; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91 no. 4 (March 2005), 1233-1263.

[984] Frank A. Warren, *An Alternative Vision: the Socialist Party in the 1930s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), 70; Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 119-123; Kenneth E. Miller, *From Progressive to New Dealer: Frederic C. Howe and American Liberalism* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2010), 377-405; John Brophy, *A Miner's Life* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1964), 247-287; Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 23-41; Steven Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 324-348.

"It is we, open the door!":[985] Worker Power, the British Labour Party, and the CPPA, January-May, 1924

The Conference for Progressive Political Action's decision to run a labor-backed presidential candidate in 1924 was intimately tied to the success of European social democracy. In December 1923, the British Labour Party shocked the world by gaining an additional fifty seats in parliament. Though the Conservatives remained the largest party, the BLP successfully convinced the Liberals to join in coalition and form a government. This surprise victory sent pleasant shockwaves through ranks of progressive American labor.[986] An avowedly radical party rooted in Britain's trade unions, which had entered the decade with just over fifty MPs, now held the reigns of the world's largest empire.

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[985] This excerpt is from an essay featured in *Justice* after the British election, it is a fitting example of the excitement ILGWU members felt about the BLP victory.

> Solidly entrenched is Privilege and the Monopoly of Money is invincibly armored in its fortress against every attack…
>
> But, hush… is not some one knocking at the door? No, it may have been only an illusion,-- who, indeed, would dare to come so near? But the knock is heard louder and louder. Who may that be?... Is it really than brainless plebs that they have so often used as cannon fodder? But that would be quite impossible!...
>
> **It is we, open the door!...**
>
> Sounds like the old voice of Poverty, of Want, of the Underdog, but how strangely changed in tone!
>
> "Who are you? What do you want? Who sent for you?...
>
> We are the poor, the disowned, the robbed, whom until now you have treated like so much dust under your feet…
>
> We want to make an end to your great arbitrary power which has been a curse upon us and upon the rest of the world!...
>
> Make room for the aroused, thinking, determined and conscious-of-their purpose workers!"

"Make Room for the Worker!" *Justice* (January 11, 1924), 1.

[986] Though the Tories still held the most seats in parliament, the BLP controlled enough seats to build a coalition with the Liberals and form their first government. Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 55-78.

Trade unionists in the CPPA increasingly saw themselves close relatives of European social democrats and firmly believed the trend of labor parties coming to power would extend across the Atlantic. This faith in political realignment manifested itself strongly at the CPPA's St. Louis conference.

In the weeks preceding the meeting, the socialist press prominently featured the British election. The New York *New Leader* (issued first in January 1924 as a joint project of the Socialist Party and garment trades unions) celebrated the BLP's victory with numerous articles and interviews. The banner headline of the *New Leader's* second issue read "Labor Party Rules Great Britain."[987] Louis Budenz and the staff at *Labor Age*, too, took heart of the British election. Commenting on rumors that the Labour Party's victory would instigate an "Extensive flight of capital" out of the United Kingdom, Budenz warned wealthy Britons to avoid America. Plutocrats fleeing taxation in Europe, he argued, would find another "menace" in the United States– "the rising Farmer-Labor Movement." While the CPPA had not yet "developed the horns or cloven hoofs of the Monster across the waters" it was nevertheless a "young and virile thing" with "endless possibilities." Workers on both sides of the ocean would soon punish profiteers and greedy industrialists.[988]

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[987] Morris Hillquit, "The Labor Government of Great Britain," *New Leader* (January 19, 1924), 1; "Greetings from Across the Sea," *New Leader* (January 19, 1924), 1; "Labor Party Rules Great Britain," *New Leader* (January 26, 1924), 1; "Nicolai Lenin, Head of Soviet State Dead at Moscow," *New Leader* (January 26, 1924), 1.

[988] "The Farmer-Labor Menace," *Labor Age* (January 1924), 1. The *Wall Street Journal* featured several articles by British and American economists reassuring investors that the BLP was likely to lose power before passing a new "capital levy." "Vanderlip on British Labor Ascendency," *Wall Street Journal* (January 21, 1924), 7; Herbert N. Casson, "British Two-Party System Crumbles," *Wall Street Journal* (December 22, 1923), 7; Herbert N. Casson, "England Turning to Home Affairs," *Wall Street Journal* (December 31, 1923), 11; "Dreams of a Socialist Childhood," *Wall Street Journal* (December 15, 1923), 1; Herbert N. Casson, "Raps Capital Levy Threat," *Wall Street Journal* (December 10, 1923), 8.

For the needle workers in New York, the election supported their theory that a broad labor party, not a specifically socialist one, would bring the change they desired. "Labor conquers all things," Upholsterers Union president William Kohn wrote. "The sweeping and clean cut victory of the British Labor Party in the recent general elections proves conclusively that labor can accomplish anything it sets out to when it is united." Calling the victory "by far the most hopeful sign of times," Kohn once again prodded his readers to abandon non-partisan tactics and form a labor party of their own. *Justice* editor Max Danish agreed that "amidst the welter of misery, hunger and hate that is all but submerging Europe today," the BLP's rise to power was the "only hopeful sign of a new sane life and a new deal for the men and women who toil on the old continent." The outcome heralded what ILGWU officials had foretold: that "workers are on their way to final victory, that the days of the capitalist order of things are, metaphorically speaking, numbered, and that a new day is actually dawning." Both Danish and Kohn saw hope on the horizon– a faith that trade unionism's post-war fortunes were beginning to improve.[989]

The British elections inspired not only the CPPA's socialists and leftwing unions, but the Railroad Brotherhoods as well. A few weeks after the BLP took power, Ed Keating hired Heber Blankenhorn to cover UK politics for *Labor*. Keating's choice tightened the bond between standard trade unions and more radical intellectuals, relationship that grew out of the post-war era. Blankenhorn helped manage the Bureau of Industrial Research, the outfit that prepared *How to Run Coal* for UMW District 2

[989] "Labor Omnia Vincit," *Upholsterers' Journal* (January 1924), 235; "They Are Wondering," *Upholsterers' Journal* (February, 1924), 264; Max D. Danish, "The British Elections," *Justice* (December 14, 1923), 2; "English Workers on the March," *Justice* (December 14, 1924), 6.

president John Brophy. He had also briefly worked for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and was influential with *Labor Age* and workers' education, more broadly. Accordingly, Blankenhorn struck a progressive tone in his BLP coverage. Referring to Ramsay MacDonald's labour government as the "biggest labor movement news of today," he instructed his readers to pay close attention to the developments in London. While Blankenhorn conceded that American unions could not simply "put on the British pattern" and waltz into power, he still argued that "democratic labor" on both sides of the ocean would likely "go through the same methods and may profit by watching the other fellow's successful acts."[990] Blankenhorn's transatlantic commentary for *Labor* continued through 1925.

Albert Coyle followed a similar tack in the *Locomotive Engineers Journal* and penned many articles commending the Labour Party. Both the Liberals and Tories, he wrote, offered nothing to voters but a "defense of the broken-down, discredited capitalistic system of industry and government." Noting that the British election coincided with Lenin's death, Coyle could not resist issuing a warning to "those reactionary statesmen who believe that labor has no liberties, and that its right to organize and act politically and economically should be limited and suppressed." Both Lenin and MacDonald wanted a labor government, Coyle chided. "Both of them got it– one by bullets, the other by ballots." Those who feared labor's ascendency in the United States should carefully study the opposing alternatives. Coyle was hardly the only one to draw the comparison. "We have before us two revolutions: the Bolshevist revolution of Russia

[990] "'Labor' to Have Special Correspondent in London," *Labor* (February 9, 1924), 1; Heber Blankenhorn, "How the Workers Govern Great Britain," *Labor* (February 16, 1924), 4; John Brophy, *A Miner's Life* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 167-168.

and the Labor-Socialist of England," wrote a contributor to *Justice*. "The Bolshevist revolution has cost hundreds of thousands of lives, and in the bloody orgy that accompanied it whatever civilization there was in Russia was destroyed." The British revolution, in contrast, was bloodless and "beyond cavil the greatest revolution in the memory of man."[991]

When the Conference for Progressive Political Action met in St. Louis in mid-February 1924, the British Labour Party continued to cast a large shadow. The BLP's meteoric rise contrasted sharply with the current state of American politics. While British workers brought about a once-in-a-century political realignment, Senate investigators in the United States continued to uncover salacious details regarding the illicit leasing of navy petroleum deposits in Wyoming and California. At the center of the Teapot Dome scandal, as it soon became known, was Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall. Fall had without competitive bidding secured drilling rights for Edward Doheny, president of Pan-American Petroleum, and Harry F. Sinclair, president of Mammoth Oil, allegedly with President Harding's permission. For arranging the deal, Doheny and Sinclair gave Fall a several hundred-thousand-dollar bribe masked as a political donation.

The scandal affected labor's perception of both the Democratic and Republican parties equally. While it was a Republican administration accepting the "donations," Doheny was a Democrat whom the party briefly considered for the vice presidential nomination in 1920. Most importantly, former treasury secretary William Gibbs McAdoo, Woodrow Wilson's son-in-law and one of the leading Democratic candidates

[991] "British Labor's Political Victory," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (January 1924), 8; British Labor Party Rides to Power," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (January 1924), 34; "British Labor Prepares to Rule," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (February 1924), 110; "Two Revolutions," *Justice* (February 1, 1924), 1.

for the presidency in 1924, became embroiled in the affair. Though he took no part in Teapot Dome, Senate investigators turned up evidence proving that in 1919 McAdoo had accepted a $100,000 retainer from Doheny in exchange for lobbying work. Doheny owned millions of dollars in oil rights in Mexico. He wanted McAdoo to convince the Wilson administration to withhold recognition and deny diplomatic relations with the Mexican government unless it guaranteed American oil rights. Additionally damning for McAdoo was a clause in his contract for an additional $900,000 if Doheny retained his claim.[992] The deal reeked of backroom negotiation and "invisible government."

McAdoo had been the Railroad Brotherhood's ideal presidential candidate. During the war, Wilson tasked him with overseeing federal control of the rails. McAdoo took the opportunity to raise wages, shorten hours, and protect collective bargaining rights. His ambition to succeed Wilson as president was apparent to every close observer of American politics and the Brotherhoods implicitly offered their support for his eventual run. By February 1924, however, McAdoo's coronation was very much in doubt. Though the former treasury secretary retained the Brotherhood's backing, his close association to the very unpopular Wilson administration and his open courting of the Ku Klux Klan made him an increasingly divisive figure amongst organized labor. His dealings with Doheny were the proverbial nail in the coffin. Despite never printing a bad

[992] William E. Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 93; Margaret Leslie Davis, *Dark Side of Fortune: Triumph and Scandal in the Life of Oil Tycoon Edward L. Doheny* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 126, 162. By 1920, Mexico produced 24 percent of the world's oil. Of that amount, 80 percent went to the United States. Mexico's 1917 constitution gave the federal government the right to nationalize subterranean resources. Because of that clause, the US refused to recognize any of the successive Mexican presidencies. That was until 1924, when a group of diplomats and industrialists drafted a compromise that interpreted the resources clause as not applying retroactively. This arrangement kept the diplomatic peace until President Lazaro Cardenas nationalized the oil industry in 1938. Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 273-277.

word about McAdoo in the pages of *Labor*, Keating privately told the would-be candidate to withdraw his name from consideration.[993]

McAdoo's fall, Teapot Dome, and the BLP's rise emboldened those coming to St. Louis. As Norman Thomas supposed, with "the Sinclair and Doheny scandal on the one hand and the success of the British Labor Party on the other… it was impossible to defend the old parties." He claimed that privately, even the standard trade unionists "recognized that it was necessary to take out of the hands of private individuals whose public utilities and natural resources which have been so outrageously exploited by the forces of privilege."[994] Louis Budenz agreed. "The victory of British Labor has quickened the pulses of all progressive American workingmen: 'Why cannot the same result be duplicated here?' has been an oft-heard question," the *Labor Age* editor insisted. "And then, as if in answer, there has come the Great Oil Party-- not only covering the G.O.P. with that much-desired fluid, but the Democrats as well." Certainly, attendees were more determined than at any point in the previous year to make peace between factions, publish a genuinely radical program, and plot the groundwork for a presidential campaign. Among the resolution committee's first orders of business was to formally congratulate the British Labour Party on its successful campaign and for inaugurating a

[993] As Keating recalled in his memoir, "I knew McAdoo very well. He asked my advice and I urged him to get out of the race. 'As a practical proposition,' I said, 'you can't explain the Doheny incident.'" Still, in the pages of *Labor*, he continued to praise McAdoo and dismiss the charges against him. "We, as representatives of railroad labor," he wrote in one February editorial, "assert our belief that his availability as a candidate has not been impaired and that there is no valid reason why any fair-minded person should oppose Mr. McAdoo's nomination." Keating maintained these "emphatic denials" through July of that year. Edward Keating, *The Story of Labor: Thirty-three Years on Rail Workers' Fighting Front* (Washington, D.C.: Rufus H. Darby, Co., 1953), 156; "M'Adoo Will Stick," *Labor* (February 23, 1924), 1; "National Progressives to Meet in Cleveland July 4," (February 23, 1924), 3; Douglas B. Craig, *After Wilson: The Struggle for the Democratic Party, 1920-1934* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 37-39; David Burner, *The Politics of Provincialism: The Democratic Party in Transition, 1918-1932* (New York: Alfred A, Kopf, 1968), 107-111.

[994] Norman Thomas, "The St. Louis Conference and Further," *Justice* (February 29, 1924), 4.

program of "economic justice at home and justice in international relations." The committee further welcomed the election as providing "conclusive evidence that workers in any country having universal or general suffrage may come into peaceful control of their government whenever they have the intelligence and the will to do so." CPPA organizers very much hoped that American workers would follow this trend.[995]

The Conference called upon all those "pledged to the interests of the producing classes" to join together in nominating a president who would truly represent them. Their president would advocate for public owned railroads and power stations "with democratic operation," an end to judicial review, the right to organize, a child labor amendment, a government marketing corporation to sell surplus agricultural goods and pay farmers a minimum price for their yield, progressive taxation, "reconstruction" of the federal reserve, and a referendum on war. It was the first complete platform the CPPA adopted and it sailed through the convention with little controversy.[996]

So driven was the CPPA executive council to maintain unity in the ranks that it issued the New York State Brotherhoods a soft-handed rebuke for their exclusion of Socialist Party members the previous August.[997] The Brotherhoods remained the core of

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[995] "CPPA Holds Historic Meeting," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (March 1924), 189; *Report of the Proceedings of the Third Conference for Progressive Political Action Held at St. Louis Missouri February 11, 12, 1924*, 14, 24. People's Legislative Service Papers. Library of Congress. Box 4: Conference for Progressive Political Action. St. Louis, Mo. Feb 11-12.

[996] *Report of the Proceedings of the Third Conference for Progressive Political Action Held at St. Louis Missouri February 11, 12, 1924*, 6-7. People's Legislative Service Papers. Library of Congress. Box 4: Conference for Progressive Political Action. St. Louis, Mo. Feb 11-12.

[997] "State or local organizations organized, constituted, and conducted in violation of the provisions contained in these rules shall not be considered part of the'' Conference, assistant grand chief of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers E.H. Kruse determined. The head of the New York railroad delegation, Thomas E. Ryan, protested. "We propose to support this organization, but we do not propose nor agree to support a socialist when a progressive Democrat or Republican could be considered," he thundered, "If this is not a nonpartisan organization, I am out of place in the room." Numerous delegates spoke in defense of the resolution, calling the affair regrettable and "unsavory." William Johnston begged Ryan and his supporters to forget the past and not "lose sight of the future." The Conference passed the measure.

the CPPA, but they, too, had to make concessions to keep the coalition together and win a victory like the British Labour Party. To help appease the socialist wing of the CPPA, the Committee on Credentials invited nominated B.C. Vladek, manager of the *Forward*, to join the organization's central board. Vladek's nomination pointed to the increasing importance the predominantly Jewish garment trades played in labor's political ambitions. While the *Forward* was not strictly a labor paper, it had several hundred thousand Yiddish speaking subscribers, many whom worked in the needle trades and adjacent industries. The paper's editors, including Vladek, had joined the socialist movement around the turn of the century and the publication advanced a generally social-democratic view of politics and current events. The ILGWU invited *Forward* officials to its annual conventions and *vice versa*.[998]

While Vladek might not have invoked the BLP directly, he did strongly support its style of politics. Asked to give a speech toward the end of the St. Louis meeting, Vladek explained that his socialism was secondary to his faith in organized labor. As a Jew born in the Russian Empire, a one-time Czarist prisoner, and a political refugee in the United States, the publicist admitted his distaste in voting for a Democratic party split between corrupt machines in the North and white supremacists in the South. Neither could he pull the lever for Republican candidates too often serving monopolists and

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Report of the Proceedings of the Third Conference for Progressive Political Action Held at St. Louis Missouri February 11, 12, 1924, 17-19. People's Legislative Service Papers. Library of Congress. Box 4: Conference for Progressive Political Action. St. Louis, Mo. Feb 11-12; David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1955), 170-171.

[998] "Eleventh Day– Friday Evening Session. May 12, 1922– 7:30 PM. *Report and Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union*, 187; "Cahan, Branstetter, Roewer and Algernon Lee Address Delegates," *Justice* (May 12, 1922) 5; Third Day— Wednesday Afternoon May 3, 1922– 2:30PM. *Report and Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union*, 38.; Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 166, 233, 249.

robber barons. “Hundreds of thousands of immigrants like myself have voted for years the Socialist ticket not because they are full-fledged Socialists but because they look for a party with a high purpose,” he told the convention. “What we want is organization,” Vladek insisted, “organization of the laboring and progressive elements of this country who have a purpose and a policy and who are not swayed from their path by petty experiences of the eternal political and economic fight.” Though there may have been a time where he and his compatriots looked with “contempt upon leaders of labor who refused to recognize Socialism,” they had learned to expect no right to leadership until they had earned that right. “It is only by serving labor,” Vladek determined, “by participating in all the problems of its existence that we could hope to secure its confidence and turn it into a mighty factor of progress for the whole country.”[999] He, for one, would stick with the CPPA.

The garment trades unionists followed Vladek’s line closely. They saw a political movement born out of trade unionism– whether as an independent third party or not– as vastly superior to an increasingly ineffective and marginalized Socialist Party. As Max Danish editorialized shortly before St. Louis, “the development of the British Labor Party is enormously suggestive for us. It grew out of British legal decisions which crippled the power of the unions. It was developed in response to the realities of the situation rather than in accordance with dogmatic Marxianism.” While he warned that it would not serve the ILGWU to be “imitators” and follow the BLP pattern for pattern, American labor would do well to give the voters the option to defend “the interest of the people against privilege” at the ballot box. In the early months of 1924, these groups continued to fund

[999] *Report of the Proceedings of the Third Conference for Progressive Political Action Held at St. Louis Missouri February 11, 12, 1924*, 27.

and support measures to broaden the appeal of social democratic union politics. The *Forward* association, the ILGWU, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and the Furriers continued to underwrite and contribute to the *New Leader*, *Labor Age*, Brookwood Labor College, and the American Labor Party. The ALP, in particular, was almost entirely an extension of the needle trades unions.[1000]

At the St Louis conference, the CPPA had taken its boldest stance yet. It agreed not just on a statement of principles, but a more holistic platform that united the Conference's disparate adherents. As Coyle summarized, the Conference emerged "stronger and more determined than ever." The adopted platform was "direct evidence of the overwhelming demand of the farm and labor forces of the nation that the legislative means now at hand be used to obtain control of the people's government." He concluded by pointing once again to the British Labour Party resolution welcoming labor to take "peaceful control" of their governments.[1001] That the BLP emboldened and inspired the CPPA was beyond doubt. Across the Atlantic, British workers had risen to the top of government power– having gained strength gradually in every election along the way. The BLP offered a visionary program and exploited growing dissatisfaction with the two major parties. In this regard, the Conference hoped to mirror the British example. Crucially, both the transportation unions and their radical counterparts found inspiration in social democratic victories abroad. This shared vision continued to unite them.

[1000] "Why Not an American Labor Party?" *Labor* February 15, 1924, 4; General Council Minutes, Financial Report, 1923-1924. American Labor Party Papers. Tamiment Library. Folder 5.
[1001] "CPPA Holds Historic Meeting," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (March 1924), 189

"Leaders Without an Army:" Communists and the St. Paul Convention

The diffuse members of the CPPA continued to profess a robust anticommunism during the run up to Election Day. While the Conference did not produce any formal statement on the Workers Party, it did reject any possible cooperation implicitly. At the end of 1923, William Mahoney, editor of the *Minnesota Union Advocate* and a foundational figure in the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, called for a "unity conference" of regional labor parties prior to the November election. On June 17th, in St. Paul, the convention delegates would announce a new Labor Party and nominate a presidential candidate. While left unstated, it was widely assumed Mahoney would nominate Robert La Follette.[1002] The call was remarkably similar to the one John Fitzpatrick had sent out the previous July. Much like Fitzpatrick's in Chicago, Mahoney also planned to include communist delegates. Though no communist himself, Mahoney had some respect for William Z. Foster and his radicals in the Trade Union Education League. He likewise felt that excessive redbaiting was dangerous for the labor movement and that the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party was large and organized enough to easily outmaneuver a few bands of communists.[1003]

Rejecting Mahoney's proposal, the CPPA declared that its next meeting would not take place until July 4th–after the GOP and Democrats had their convention. In a symbolic gesture, the leadership would hold the meeting in Cleveland, a stronghold of the

[1002] Boyden Sparkes, "'Indorsement' of La Follette Due in St. Paul," *New York Herald Tribune* (June 17, 1924), 1; "A.F.L. Warns Unions to Shun St. Paul Meeting," *New York Herald Tribune* (May 30, 1924), 3; "Will Urge Committee of 48 to Join La Follette Movement," *Baltimore Sun* (May 29, 1924), 1; "Shipstead May Be Candidate of Third Party," *New York Tribune* (February 24, 1924), 4; "Socialists Shy at La Follette as Republican," *Baltimore Sun* (May 30, 1924), 1; "Want La Follette to Lead New Party," *New York Times* (April 13, 1924), E1; "United Support for La Follette by Third Party," *Baltimore Sun* (March 18, 1924), 13; "Third Party Meeting Called for St. Paul," *Atlanta Constitution* (March 12, 1924), 4.
[1003] James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 297-299.

Railroad Brotherhoods. Albert Coyle claimed the decision "set at rest" the question of whether or not the CPPA supported Mahoney's efforts.[1004] There was to be no cooperation with communists.

CPPA members were cool to Mahoney's overtures from the start. Morris Hillquit politely, though immediately, turned him down.[1005] As the SPA leader explained to several CPPA officials, he believed any direct condemnation from him could hand the Workers Party more propaganda to use against its supposed "redbaiting" opponents. An outright denunciation gave "too much importance to the Communist intrigues," he wrote CPPA official and former AFL legislative director Arthur Holder.[1006]

Albert Coyle, too, wished the Minnesotan organizer well and refused to belabor the reason for his opposition. "The eyes of the nation's progressive voters will be on the St. Paul Conference," he wrote, "in the hope that even if third party advocates cannot agree upon a common platform, they shall at least agree to do effective teamwork in critical places with progressives who believe in non-partisan methods."[1007] But as the months dragged winter into spring, Mahoney showed no willingness to abandon his convention or cut the communists loose. The CPPA's response became more urgent.

By early March, Mahoney's colleagues in the Minnesota-FLP began to isolate him. Mahoney's "premature action in the national field" could "alienate rather than attract" progressive voters, state chairman F.A. Pike wrote in the party's main newspaper, the *Minnesota Daily Star*. With the backing of Thomas Van Lear, a prominent labor

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[1004] "Progressives Shun St. Paul Conference," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (March 1924), 190.
[1005] Ignoring any mention of the Workers Party, he claimed he could not "participate in it with propriety before the Socialist Party has taken a stand."
[1006] William Mahoney to Morris Hillquit January 4, 1924. Papers of Morris Hillquit. Microfilm: Reel Three; Morris Hillquit to Arthur Holder, April 21, 1924. Papers of Morris Hillquit. Microfilm: Reel Three.
[1007] "Third Party Conference Called for May 30th," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (January 1924), 35; Mahoney to Hillquit January 4, 1924; MH in reply, January 7, 1924.

official and the *Daily Star's* editor, he openly worried that the June convention would draw in few attendees and spawn a party representing "only a small minority" of the wider movement. Their cautions spread widely. Writing from New York City, Harry Lang, the *Forward's* labor editor, similarly cautioned the would-be St. Paul attendees against forming "a party of leaders without an army." Any new ticket would need the support of mainline American unions.[1008]

Indeed, Samuel Gompers became so exceedingly worried about Mahoney's conference that he called an emergency meeting at the AFL's office in Washington, D.C.[1009] Invited to the session were William Johnston, Keating, Basil Manly, Henrik Shipstead, Magnus Johnson, and a host of other members of the Minnesota and Wisconsin congressional delegation. Gompers clearly feared the possibility that communist delegates might not only capture another party but nominate La Follette and taint the senator's reputation by proximity. As he told the assembled guests "there is being maneuvered a movement that unless it is checked the political gains for the past two years will be lost." While Magnus Johnson and Shipstead both defended Mahoney's personal reputation and credited him with delivering thousands of votes in St. Paul, they conceded that preventing communist infiltration took precedence. If Mahoney did not fall into line, he had to be cut loose. Before adjourning the meeting, Gompers requested a list

[1008] F.A. Pike, "Pike Explains His Views on Third Party Policies," *Minnesota Daily Star* (March 6, 1924), 4; Harry Lang, "The Movement for a Third Party and the Unions," *Justice* (March 7, 1924), 4.
[1009] The AFL executive council had already started considering endorsing La Follette on a third party ticket– something the Federation had never done before. While Gompers and the council would ultimately back La Follette after the Democrats failed to advance a suitable labor platform, the threat of communist participation in the CPPA gave them pause. "Gompers on Why Labor Supports La Follette," *New York Times* (Oct. 19, 1924), 12; "Gompers Tells Labor La Follette Will Win," *New York Times* (Oct. 26, 1924), 6.

of potential attendees and promised to compel them against attending.[1010] The CPPA would make similar overtures.

Mahoney refused to let Gompers, the CPPA, or anyone in his own party deter him from holding the meeting. A new party was necessary, he argued, and the Brotherhoods and standard trade unionists would do anything to stop that outcome. As for the inclusion of "minority parties," Mahoney saw no imminent danger. Ed Keating and "a few fanatic socialists" had caused the St. Paul organizers "some great annoyance" by amplifying the supposed threat, he claimed. The communists may have been "very noisy," but they cut a "small figure" compared to the rest of the invitees. "In Minnesota we have the communists who issue pretentious declarations and give the impression that they are a dominating factor in the Farmer Labor movement in Minnesota," Mahoney explained to William Johnston, "As a matter of fact they are of minor importance in the matter of voting, but are fine workers and generous contributors." He suggested that the best course to chart with the Workers Party was to "keep them busy doing political work and make them forget their dreams."[1011]

For all his appeals, Mahoney changed no minds. Even John Fitzpatrick refused to try again. In mid-May, the once politically rebellious Chicago Federation of Labor voted to re-adhere to the AFL's nonpartisan electoral policy. The Socialists and left-led unions in the CPPA decided against attending at the beginning of the year and did not waver from that commitment. Their reasoning was simple. The communists were clearly not genuine in their promises of cooperation. Workers Party delegates were only attending St.

[1010] "Conference with Minnesota and Wisconsin Congressmen Concerning the Communist Convention to be held in St. Paul, June 17. April 28, 1924. American Federation of Labor Records: The Samuel Gompers Era. Microfilm: Reel 123.
[1011] William Mahoney to William H. Johnston, April 16 1924. Morris Hillquit Papers. Reel Three.

Paul "to 'unmask,' to 'expose' and 'pitilessly,' 'mercilessly' and 'ruthlessly' to criticize," wrote a correspondent for the *New Leader*, quoting from a Third International "United Front" pamphlet.[1012]

The Workers Party leadership did little to repair its reputation. Throughout 1924, communist delegates planned to split the progressive ranks with hope of gaining new adherents. Earl Browder told an audience that "the rivalry June 17 and July 4 is creating a class division in the farmer labor party movement, which we want." Weeks before the St. Paul meeting, he claimed that the inclusion of Progressive groups "represented by the La Follette elements in Congress" would have given the movement "divisions within itself which would have made it impossible for it to carry on an aggressive fight." For those with any knowledge of the communists and their prior splits with the Socialist Party and the Fitzpatrick group, the meaning was clear. The Workers Party would agree to "working class unity," but had no intention of lasting cooperation with socialists, progressives, or non-committed radicals.[1013]

Hardly anyone of the socialist left seemed to show interest in Mahoney's conference. If any Socialists or Farmer-Laborites did waver, the garment unions held them in line. The CPPA gave the garment unions and their associated radicals the ability to cooperate with millions of other organized workers. Joining the St. Paul convention would almost certainly close the door on that budding relationship. As American Labor

[1012] "C.F. of L. Returns to Gompers Plan," *New Majority* (May 24, 1924), 1; "Communists Want Labor Party Only to Split It," *New Leader* (May 10, 1924), 1; "Communists Absorb Selves," *New Leader* (May 24, 1924), 1; Jennifer Luff, "Labor Anticommunism in the United States and the United Kingdom, 1920-1949," *Journal of Contemporary History* 53 vol. 1 (2018), 109-133; Jacob Zumoff, *Communist International and US Communism, 1919-1929* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 130-150.
[1013] "Browder Urges Workers Rally Behind June 17," *Daily Worker* (May 3, 1924), 2; "June 17th After La Follette," *Daily Worker* (June 7, 1924), 4; C.E. Reuthenberg, "The C.P.P.A. In the Open," *Daily Worker* (May 14, 1924), 6; "Too Much Yeast," *Minnesota Union Advocate* (June 19, 1924), 4.

Party secretary Marie MacDonald noted in the summer of 1924, it was presently "impossible" for ALP delegates to push for a "Labor Party in name as well as start for such in fact." Her reasoning was that "organizations which had always been regarded as Socialist unions, such as those comprising the Needle Trades and other radical unions, were definitely decided that they wish to stay with the Conference under all circumstances and considerations."[1014] The ILGWU, at least, was absolutely committed to following the CPPA whether it immediately declared for a new party or not.

Harry Lang asked Garment Workers delegates to the July 4 meeting to attend with "their vision undimmed concerning practical possibilities of this movement." Even the "non-partisan" strategy the more conservative unions exposed "a germ of independent political activity." Abraham Cahan agreed with this notion. Having just returned from a trip to London to cover the British election for the *Forward*, Cahan told his readers that "You cannot import Socialism from Russia, Germany, or France. It must be developed in an American way just as in England it developed in a purely English way." And by speaking to workers with "common sense" they would join the CPPA, join the workers' struggle, and come to socialism over time.[1015]

Just as B.C. Vladek claimed, many socialistically inclined garment trades workers were willing to change their voting patterns if a new group promised to defend labor rights and attack entrenched privilege. Since 1922, it had become increasingly apparent that the CPPA would not only meet these needs but outperform the old SPA as well.

[1014] Executive Committee Minutes, July 14, 1924. American Labor Party Papers. Tamiment Library. Folder Four. General Council Minutes, March 24, 1924. American Labor Party Papers. Tamiment Library. Folder Five.

[1015] Harry Lang, "The Movement for a Third Party and the Unions," March 7, 1924, 4; "Convention Holds Interesting Sessions," *Justice* (May 16, 1924), 3. *Report of the Proceedings of the Seventeenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union*, 16.

When William Johnston addressed the ILGWU's bi-annual convention, he emphasized the importance of political action– just as the International and its socialist allies had done since its inception. It was "useless to expect the labor unions to perform the work, the duties, the functions that they are organized for so long as you permit special interests to control the reins of government," Johnston claimed. He also told the gathered delegates that he *personally* believed it was the most "propitious" time for a new political party.[1016] On hearing that the crowd cheered.

With the left and right wings of the Conference for Progressive Political Action united against St. Paul, Robert La Follette repudiated Mahoney. He made clear that he would accept the nomination of no group associated with Communism. In an open letter to Wisconsin attorney general Herman Ekern, he called the decision to include Workers Party delegates a "fatal error." Echoing the colleagues who addressed the matter before him, he argued that communists' real purpose was "dictatorship of the proletariat." They were uninterested in "curing, by means of the ballot, the evils which afflict the American people," but rather sought to "divide and confuse the Progressive movement and create a condition of chaos." While he maintained the right of the Communist Party to maintain ballot access and practice free speech, he believed their revolutionary and anti-liberal beliefs made them the "mortal enemies of the Progressive movement." While La Follette was no supporter of unfettered capitalism, any system of government that rejected the ballot box earned his ire.[1017]

[1016] *Report of the Proceedings of the Seventeenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union*, 16.

[1017] *The Facts: La Follette-Wheeler Campaign Text-Book* (Chicago: La Follette-Wheeler Campaign Headquarters, 1924), 125-127; "La Follette in Statement Denounces the St. Paul Convention of June 17," *Labor* (May 31), 1; Louis F. Budenz, "When Is a Third Party Not a Third Party?" *Labor* (May 16, 1924), 4; "La Follette Repudiates Communists," *Capital Times* (May 28, 1924), 1.

In the end, the St. Paul conference was an abject failure. While Mahoney expected several thousand to attend, only around five hundred delegates did so. As an immediate consequence of La Follette's letter, J.A.H. Hopkins and the Committee of 48 abandoned their plans to travel to St. Paul. In a public statement, Hopkins declared he could no longer accept in "good faith" the cooperation of the Communist-dominated Federated Farmer-Labor Party. "The Communist movement in this country is admittedly controlled by the Moscow international," he told the press, "Thus the whole situation in regard to the St. Paul convention has changed."[1018] With the 48ers backing away, the Workers Party gained a virtual lock on the meeting. Shipstead and Magnus Johnson, whom Mahoney had expected to attend, were "conspicuous by their absence," one reporter noted.

While the convention immediately created a new Farmer-Labor Party ticket for the upcoming presidential election, it did not, as Mahoney hoped, name La Follette as its candidate. The delegates instead gave former Illinois Federation of Labor president Duncan MacDonald the honor. Within a month, the new FLP appointed at St. Paul cut out Mahoney, dropped MacDonald, and refused to back La Follette under any circumstance. William Z. Foster and Benjamin Gitlow– two outspoken communists– headed the national ticket. To Mahoney's additional horror, the communists attempted to run rival candidates against labor and Minnesota FLP-endorsed politicians down ballot as well. The communists put themselves at the center of the new party and sought to undermine its rivals on the left no matter the cost.[1019]

[1018] "Will Urge Committee of 48 to Join La Follette Movement," *Baltimore Sun* (May 29, 1924), 1; "St. Paul Convention Sidelights," *Minnesota Daily Star* (June 17, 1924), 4.
[1019] "All is Well That Ends Well," *Minnesota Union Advocate* (July 17, 1924), 4; "Painters Repudiate Taint of Communism," *Minnesota Union Advocate* (July 31, 1924), 1; "Communists Double Cross in St. Paul,"

The CPPA-aligned press sighed wearily over the result. Inviting the communists to St. Paul divided the Minnesota FLP in warring factions, a contributor to the *New Leader* wrote. "Capitalist reaction alone can profit from this situation."[1020] William Kohn declared that "once more the gang acting upon orders from Moscow has done its destructive work. Our communist pests have again succeeded in capturing themselves and opening the eyes of the bonafide trade unionists and farmers who still had faith in these underground sneaks."[1021] Unable to convince any meaningful number of Americans to support their cause, and under strict orders from the Comintern, the Workers Party continued to seek influence through deception and parliamentary maneuver.[1022]

The most interesting facet of the St. Paul convention was not communist intrigues but the centrality anti-communism continued to play in American labor politics.[1023] As

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New Leader (July 19, 1924), 2; "St. Paul Parley Opens Arms to Communists," *Minnesota Daily Star* (June 17, 1924), 1,4; "La Follette Attacked in Mahoney Keynote at Third Party Rodeo," (June 17, 1924), 1.

[1020] "History is Repeated in St. Paul," *New Leader* (June 21, 1924), 1; "Threatened Split at St. Paul Forces Communists to Give Up Plan to Form 'Labor' Party; Conference is Total Failure," *New Leader* (June 21, 1924), 1; "Communists in Action," *Upholsterer's Journal* (July 1924), 71.

[1021] "Communists Double Cross at St. Paul," *New Deal* (July 19, 1924), 2; J.H. Ryckman, "The Failure at St. Paul," *Labor Age* (August 1924), 5.

[1022] In his memoir, Benjamin Gitlow recalled that the rivalry between Stalin and Trotsky over Lenin's mantle in 1924 virtually ensured a change in policy on the United Front. With Stalin favoring a retreat from fomenting global revolution and instead building "socialism in one country," and Trotsky forming a "left opposition" and calling for a return to revolutionary footing, the Comintern ordered the American party to end any cooperation with the La Follette movement. The effect, Gitlow wrote, was that "at almost the very moment [Mahoney] was making an agreement with the communists for the calling of the June Seventeenth Convention to nominate La Follette for President, steps were being taken in Moscow to repudiate that agreement." The Comintern, in short, accelerated the timeline in which the American section was to break away from the reformist elements. Benjamin Gitlow, *I Confess: The Truth About American Communism* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1939), 204-210; Jacob Zumoff, *Communist International and US Communism, 1919-1929* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 130-150.

[1023] The transportation unions had always presented themselves as a bulwark against irresponsible radicalism. La Follette's trip to Europe solidified his distaste for Bolshevism– even if the senator could acknowledge Soviet industrial gains. American left wing unions had similarly bristled under United Front policies. Not only had leaders like Benjamin Schlesinger learned of communist efforts to undercut social democrats abroad, but they faced strong challenges to their union leadership at home. Communist organizers continued to make gains in ILGWU locals in the mid-twenties. They would also capture the Furriers Union outright by mid-decade.

the 1924 election approached, La Follette progressives, socialist trade unionists, and railroaders increasingly highlighted democracy as the shared virtue that distinguished them from their communist rivals. As William Johnston wrote in his final public letter disavowing the St. Paul convention, "Our conference… has taken an irrevocable stand on the principle of democracy in industry, government and politics… We are opposed to all forms of dictatorship, whether exercised by capitalists, politicians, or workers, by Fascisti or Communists." Burton Wheeler would quote Johnston nearly verbatim at a campaign rally for Labor Day in Boston. Writing from the non-communist left, Leon Chasanowich

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The ILGWU tried to walk a fine line between repressing its communist locals and preserving union democracy. As Garment Workers president Morris Sigman told the "disruptors" in his union during the 1924 convention:

> We look upon you as producers, as workers. This organization of ours is organized to defend the economic laws and the economic improvement in the shop and in the factory. We cannot accomplish this unless we have unison and unity among all our workers. So when you come and tell me that you are a Communist or a Socialist, I shall listen to you. State your idealism and spread it convert me to become a Communist or any 'ist,' but please don't force me to believe in your religion, to take you for granted. Don't do what Spain did to Jews centuries ago.

Factional fighting and foul play continued on both sides in the struggle throughout the decade, however, with both the incumbent leadership and communist upstarts occasionally relying on misinformation, violence, and intimidation to assert control. Sigman, Schlesinger, Dubinsky, and the union's "rightwing" did undoubtedly respond to communist intrigues by undercutting union democracy. At the end of 1924, Sigman undertook a heavy-handed expulsion of communist leaders in his union. The expulsion gave credibility to communist claims that the international was an oligarchic clique. As Dubinsky biographer Robert D. Parmet writes, many of the leftwing rank and file "saw its fight as their fight for democracy within the union. Communism was not their concern." Jennifer Luff agrees, writing "Communist organizers were most successful when they adopted and amplified the concerns of the rank and file unionists, and when they downplayed radical politics in favor of practical, day-to-day concerns. But most union members rejected the premises of Communist ideology, especially the doctrinaire Bolshevist version espoused by American Communists in the 1920s."

Within two years, the communists had won control over several locals and New York City's joint board. The leftwing, however, won control by promising a militant response to employer attempts to cut wages and increase hours. When they ultimately led a strike in the summer of 1926, they failed to win any real gains and nearly destroyed the union's finances. The result was a resurgence of the anticommunist wing of the union that would empower David Dubinsky into the 1960s. Robert D. Parmet, *the Master of Seventh Avenue: David Dubinsky and the American Labor Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 34-53; Daniel Katz, *All Together Different* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 87-92; Jennifer Luff, *Commonsense Anticommunism: Labor and Civil Liberties Between the World Wars* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 109-110; Paul Michel Taillon, *Good, Reliable, White Men: Railroad Brotherhoods, 1877-1917* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

(New York representative of the labor-Zionist party Poale Zion), too, determined that communists and fascists shared "the worship of physical force and contempt for democracy." In Europe, and elsewhere, only a strong coalition between progressive liberals and social democrats could avert a backsliding into painful authoritarianism.[1024]

The Comintern's "united front" policy, and its uneasy middle ground between immediate revolution and cross-class collaboration, had from the beginning been too confused to be effective. Beginning in Europe, social democrats quickly realized that communist claims to cooperation were disingenuous. Trade union leaders facing dissent amongst the rank and file were equally unlikely to make peace. Socialists and communists shared many beliefs and could take "important immediate steps" together, Norman Thomas wrote in 1924. But it was "impossible to cooperate with any group which seems to make a virtue of bad faith," he lamented.[1025]

Anticommunism continued to serve as a factor uniting socialist and standard trade unionists. The CPPA had consistently charted a democratic road to power. Both progressives and socialists had sincere ideological reasons to oppose cooperation with communists. Together, they imagined a more just American economy and a more vibrant democracy. In their covenant with the nation's voters, they promised they could attain

[1024] "Johnston Urges St. Paul Forces Join Cleveland," *New Leader* (May 31, 1924), 1, 11; "Says Reds Are Paid to Foil La Follette," *New York Times* (June 18, 1924), 3; Leon Chasanowich, "The New Situation in Europe," *Justice* (June 20, 1924), 5; As Wheeler told his audience: "We are living under the dictatorship of a small class that controls the financial resources of the country. I am opposed to a dictatorship of any kind, whether it be of the proletariat, the Fascisti or the financial and commercial interests of our own country. I would prefer, however, a dictatorship of the common people of America to a dictatorship of the House of Morgan." "Speech delivered by Senator Burton K. Wheeler at Boston Commons on Labor Day. Sent to you at Senator Wheeler's telegraphic request (Sept. 29) for use of speakers etc.," Socialist Party of America Papers. National Office Correspondence, January 1924-December 1924. Proquest: 201901_010_1001.
[1025] Norman Thomas, "Working Together," *Justice* (June 27, 1924), 9.

these results without bloodshed. Indeed, the CPPA stood in the middle ground between rightwing and leftwing authoritarianism.

"A Humanitarians' Reunion:" Politics and Pageantry in Cleveland, 1924

On Independence Day, 1924, the Conference for Progressive Political Action held the most important event in its short history. Since its founding nearly three years prior, things had gone conspicuously well for the labor-backed organization. It had elected scores of politicians across the country from the local to the federal level. It had held the famously fractious broad American left together through numerous twists and turns. The socialists, labor union members, organized farmers, and progressive reform groups that made up the CPPA were united around anti-communism, the British Labour Party, and Robert La Follette. In late June, the Cleveland City Council (which had a strong pro-labor bent) voted unanimously to rent out the municipal Public Auditorium for a modest $1 a day fee rather than the usual $1,000 cost. With seating for more than ten thousand people, the hall was one of the newest and grandest convention centers in the country. Indeed, the Republican Party had used the space for its annual convention only a few weeks prior. The venue lent the CPPA an extra air of prestige.[1026]

The CPPA executive council meticulously planned the Cleveland convention. With the help of a one-thousand-dollar donation from the Forward Association,[1027] William Johnston sent out invitations, arranged for speakers, and secured equipment to broadcast parts of the convention live over the radio. What happened under the ornate

[1026] "Cleveland– City of Distinction," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (June 1924), 421; "Stage is Set for C.P.P.A. Gathering," *Labor* (June 28, 1924), 1.
[1027] Around $17,000 adjusted for inflation.

ceiling of the Cleveland Public Auditorium was pure pageantry. The decor was simple and self-evident in its meaning and intention. Draped behind the speaker's podium was a massive American flag. On stage left and right were portraits of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Robert La Follette. Each day began with a religious invocation (delivered by a reverend on the first day and rabbi on the second), and a reading of a foundational American text. On July 4th, a chorus sang "America" and a reading of the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address.[1028]

William Johnston's opening speech, broadcasted live over the radio nationwide, covered the CPPA's most important themes. The Conference stood with the voters demanding a "New Deal," he claimed. The Machinist promised the dissatisfied electorate a "realignment of political forces in the United States along fundamental lines." His organization excluded "the boodlers, the bosses, the exploiters, the profiteers and the prejudice-blinded fanatics"-- all those who stood in the way of progress. This included the "Communist tools of reaction," Johnston clarified. Tying in the British Labour Party, he told his national audience that President La Follette would join Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald in fighting for "economic freedom" and against "imperialist aggression in every part of the world."[1029] The speakers who followed similarly hit on economic justice, anti-communism, and the British Labour Party.

[1028] "Opening of the Progressive Political Action Conference," *Altoona Tribune* (July 7, 1924), 5, Stenographic Report of the Convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action Held in Cleveland, Ohio, Which Nominated Senator Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin as a Candidate for President of the United States. Held July 4 and 5. Volume 1, 1-16. The Records of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Library of Congress. Box 1.

[1029] Stenographic Report of the Convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action Held in Cleveland, Ohio, Which Nominated Senator Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin as a Candidate for President of the United States. Held July 4 and 5. Volume 1, 16, 28-36. The Records of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Library of Congress. Box 1.

Striking a moderate tone, the CPPA speakers insisted that only their candidates could follow the Labour Party's model and stave off both capitalist and communist reaction. Senator Henrik Shipstead praised La Follette for having "refused throughout to compromise with capitalism," and for having "refused utterly to compromise with Communism." Robert La Follette Jr. followed suit. His father would stomach neither dictatorship of the proletariat nor a dictatorship of plutocracy, the future senator insisted. Victoria McAlmon and the Minnesota FLP delegation cheered at both the exclusion of communist delegates and referred to the BLP as the "idol" of the convention. "Knowing most of the leaders of the British Labor Party from personal and sometimes more or less intimate contact," Morris Hillquit claimed, "I can say and testify here that you have right on this platform, right in your own midst here, men and women fully as capable, fully as devoted to the cause of labor and fully as able to make a success of our movement as they have made it on the other side." [1030] Even at the Statler, an ornate hotel a few blocks from the auditorium where the delegates roomed overnight, the BLP was clearly on many minds. Charles Merrill, a *Boston Globe* reporter who would soon become famous for his Scopes trial coverage, interviewed several railroad workers who told him La Follette was the "obvious Ramsay MacDonald of American politics." Like the Labour Party, Merrill added, the CPPA was "repudiating" the communists and "appealing to the conservative labor organizations."[1031]

[1030] Victoria McAlmon, "Gophers Back Fighting Bob; Mahoney Out," *Minneapolis Daily Star* (July 5, 1924), 1; "Labor Cheers Liberal Ship from Britain," *Minneapolis Daily Star* (July 5, 1924), 1; Stenographic Report of the Convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action Held in Cleveland, Ohio, Which Nominated Senator Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin as a Candidate for President of the United States. Held July 4 and 5. Volume 1, 94, 98, 122; Volume 2, 261-275. The Records of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Library of Congress. Box 1.

[1031] Charles A. Merrill, "La Follette's Aim Like the Role of MacDonald," *Boston Globe* (July 3, 1924), 13. As written in the previous two chapters, the British Labour Party was loudly anticommunist. Despite pushing for Soviet diplomatic recognition, Ramsay MacDonald often sparred with the Russian government.

These conversations at the Statler were significant. In some ways, the hotel was where the real convention took place. What happened at the auditorium was pageantry, a deliberate attempt to present a united front– especially given the occurrences at the infamous "Klan Bake" democratic convention that year in New York.[1032] At the hotel, the constituent forces of the CPPA caucused and hammered out disagreements.

For some attendees, the Statler was an exciting place to be. "No account can ever give you anything of the spirit of those days," feminist writer Zona Gale told Belle Case La Follette. "The lobby of the Statler was like a humanitarians' reunion." Reformers like Gale, Oswald Garrison Villard, Hariott Stanton Blatch, and Norman Thomas conversed in the same space as locomotive engineers, machinists, and Yiddish and Italian garment workers. All the while, Morris Hillquit, La Follette Jr., and William Johnston sprinted through the lobby—making sure their groups stayed in line. American Labor Party field secretary Marie MacDonald wrote plainly of the work required to present a "harmonious united front." Within the public auditorium, she wrote, "everything seemed very quiet and restrained and it might have appeared as tho it were a steam-rollered group." But at the Statler, the railroaders, socialists, and Farmer-Laborites broke into their own mini conventions. They worked late into the night ensuring they would act in an "organized, orderly way on the floor."[1033]

For a detailed overview, see Jennifer Luff, "Labor Anticommunism in the United States and the United Kingdom, 1920-1949," *Journal of Contemporary History* 53 vol. 1 (2018), 109-133.

[1032] For descriptions of the tumultuous 1924 Democratic Convention, see Douglas B. Craig, *After Wilson: The Struggle for the Democratic Party, 1920-1934* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 51-74; Michael Kazin, *What it Took to Win: A History of the Democratic Party* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022), 156-159; Bruce J. Schulman, "Farewell to the 'Smoke-Filled Room': Parties, Interests, Public Relations, and the Election of 1924," *America at the Ballot Box: Elections and Political History*, eds. Gareth Davies and Julian E. Zelizer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

[1033] Zona Gale to Belle Case La Follette, July 11, 1924. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box D16. Folder, Gale, Zona; Organizer's Report, July 30, 1924. American Labor Party Papers. Tamiment Library. Microfilm. Folder 5: General Council Minutes.

There were a few sticking points the CPPA had to overcome. The first was the choice of La Follette's running mate. La Follette and his group wanted to choose the vice-presidential candidate after the convention—giving them enough time to survey the field and pick an established politician, preferably a Democrat, to balance out the ticket. The convention's leftwing wanted a radical trade unionist to receive the nod. Specifically, the American Labor Party pushed for James Maurer, a longtime socialist, former state representative, and head of the Pennsylvania AFL to take the position. Under pressure from Hillquit, the garment trades delegates and the CPPA leadership the ALP yielded on the issue. "It would be greater political wisdom for the radical parties and progressive labor groups to prove to conservative labor that we did not wish to stampede or railroad them into anything that they were not ready for," Marie MacDonald reported to the Labor Party executive council. The left groups reached a similar decision on the CPPA's plan of organization. Some SPA members believed it prudent to submit a minority report from the floor demanding La Follette run at the head of a proper labor party, one that would also nominate down-ticket candidates. Hillquit, La Follette Jr., and Johnston dissuaded them from pursuing the course. Diffusing the "extremely tense" backroom debate, all representatives agreed that the CPPA would definitively take up the new party question in February 1925, that national Conference would watch over state chapters to ensure that each constituent group had proper representation, and that each state CPPA would have the freedom to endorse down ballot races. At around three in the morning on July 5th, La Follette Jr. accepted the report on behalf of his father and the convention proceeded.[1034]

[1034] Organizer's Report, July 30, 1924. American Labor Party Papers. Tamiment Library. Microfilm. Folder 5: General Council Minutes.

The Conference leadership avoided another third rail: diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union. La Follette himself supported recognition, as did the entirety of the garment workers delegation and several prominent members of the Railroad Brotherhoods.[1035] But the CPPA had to court the American Federation of Labor, the leadership of which vehemently rejected the Soviet regime. At no point did Russian recognition come up for a vote. When CPPA representatives met with Matthew Woll and Chester Wright of the AFL executive council after the Cleveland meeting, they insisted that they deliberately avoided the potentially thorny topic: "We didn't want the question brought in, because we knew how some of our people felt about it." The CPPA leadership was exceedingly careful in determining which issues could divide their ranks and which issues would unite them.[1036] This was quite evident in how the Conference chose to include women and African Americans in its political apparatus.

Public Welfare, Not Private Profit: Progressive Women, Workers' Education, and the 1924 Election

The Conference had made careful and deliberate decisions to embolden women reformers without necessarily demanding justice for women in the workplace. Trade unions were hesitant to organize women during the war and in many cases pushed

[1035] Timothy Healy of the Stationary Firemen and William Johnston made statements in favor of recognition. Albert Coyle frequently included articles on recognition in the *Locomotive Engineer*. "American Alliance for Trade Relations With Russia," *Machinists' Monthly Journal* (January 1921), 18-19; US Senate, "Relations With Russia," *Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate* 66 third session on Res. 164 A Resolution Providing for the Reestablishment of Trade Relations With Russia, and so forth. 6-31; Burton K. Wheeler, "Shall We Recognize Russia?" *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (December 1923), 973; Borah Demands Russian Recognition," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (February 1924), 109.

[1036] "Report to Gompers on Conference Between Matthew Woll, Chester Wright and Robert LaFollette on LaFollette's campaign and the possibility of selecting a labor man for Vice President," July 11, 1924. American Federation of Labor Records: The Samuel Gompers Era. Microfilm: Reel 123.

employers to fire these workers to make room for men returning from the front lines.[1037] That so many labor unions continued to fight so urgently against the presence of women in male-dominated crafts after the war seriously rankled reformers in organizations like the National Women's Trade Union League (NWTUL). "Either the A.F. of L. and its affiliated organizations do not recognize and support the right of the working people of the United States to organize, or they do not recognize women as people," wrote social worker Katherine Fisher. "The second assertion contains the most truth."[1038] But by the 1924 election, women in the CPPA witnessed at least a minor reversal in their fortunes.

At the end of the St. Louis meeting of the CPPA, a delegate rose to note that not a single woman served on the Conference's national committee. The representatives all agreed that the "women of America should be so represented," but invited no one at the time.[1039] In the months between the St. Louis and Cleveland conventions, women in the CPPA worked to ensure the leadership did not ignore them again. Between May 8th and 11, psychologist and National Women's Party founder Isabelle Kendig, education advocate Meta Berger (Victor Berger's wife), Charlotte Perkins Gilman, journalist (and future editor of the *Nation*) Freda Kirchwey, Mary Manly, Harriot Stanton Blatch, and a number of other women formed the Women's Committee for Political Action (WCPA). The WCPA held a meeting and invited speakers like William Johnston, Norman Thomas, National Women's Party secretary and peace advocate Emma Wold, and Rev. John A. Ryan, head of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, to discuss disarmament,

[1037] Maurine Weiner Greenwald, *Women, War, and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 87-233.
[1038] Katherine Fisher, "Women Workers and the A.F. of L.," *Justice* (September 2, 1921), 9.
[1039] *Report of the Proceedings of the Third Conference for Progressive Political Action Held at St. Louis Missouri February 11, 12, 1924*, 14, 24. People's Legislative Service Papers. Library of Congress. Box 4: Conference for Progressive Political Action. St. Louis, Mo. Feb 11-12.

cooperative economics, and electioneering. The women invited from abroad Lida Gustava Heymann, SPD member and German suffragist, and Edith Picton-Turbervill, a commanding figure in the British YWCA and a Labour Party candidate. At the end of the meeting, the group declared in favor of the CPPA but maintained a nominally independent status, and unveiled a program for public ownership of transportation, resources, and credit, an end to "judicial abuses" such as injunctions and the repeal of minimum wage and child labor protections, and improved "democratically controlled machinery for the adjudication of international disputes."[1040] If the goal of the WCPA was to amplify the role of women in the Conference for Progressive Political Action, it succeeded.

In late June, the CPPA's national committee doubled its membership to invite an *equal* number of women to the leadership. Jane Addams, Frances Axtell, president of the wartime U.S. Employee Compensation Commission, socialists Meta Berger, Harriot Stanton Blatch, and Bertha Hale White, and garment workers Rose Schneiderman, Elizabeth Christman, and Fannia Cohn all joined the board. While men dominated the Cleveland convention committee assignments, a quarter of the positions went to many of these new inductees.[1041] During the conference itself, several women delivered keynote addresses. National committee member Mabel Costigan called upon the CPPA to

[1040] *Report on the National Conference of the Woman's Committee for Political Action held in Washington, May 8-11, 1924*. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress Box: D18. Folder: Manly, Mollie (Mrs. Basil M.).
[1041] Johnston to Local Lodges and Divisions of Organized Labor, n.d. August 1924. [Johnston B98]; Stenographic Report of the Convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action Held in Cleveland, Ohio, Which Nominated Senator Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin as a Candidate for President of the United States. Held July 4 and 5. Volume 1, 46-47. The Records of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Library of Congress. Box 1; "La Follette Radicals Arrive in Cleveland," *New York Times* (July 2, 1924), 4; "Independents Open Fight for Women's Vote," *Baltimore Sun* (July 26, 1924), 1.

inaugurate "A commonwealth of equal educational opportunities for every one, in which little children need no longer labor for their daily bread; in which sufficient food, fuel and shelter are within the reach of all." She demanded a world in which "public welfare is paramount to private profit." Harriot Stanton Blatch, invoking the memory of her abolitionist mother, resented that both the American and British political establishment had spent nearly two centuries expanding the franchise, yet had ignored pleas for women's suffrage at nearly every turn. "No party ever helped us women," Stanton Blatch exclaimed. "We fought our way through alone."[1042] Both reformers demanded La Follette take serious action on education, child labor, and equal opportunity. If he did so, women voters would reward him.

For these progressive labor-minded women, the CPPA seemed to offer more than the Democrats did. The Democratic Party had, since suffrage, also included an equal number of women on its national committee and many state bodies followed suit (the Republicans, too, made similar pledges). Just before the 1924 Madison Square Garden convention, the Democratic women's caucus had crucially won the right to name its own delegates-- a power the all-male party leadership had heretofore denied them. But this nominal equality marked only the beginning of what scholar Kristi Andersen describes as the "long process of negotiation and bitter compromise" that would play out in the decades to come. It became abundantly clear that the Democratic Party of the mid-1920s had no interest in giving the caucus any real influence. The Democratic National Committee had "sought at every turn to set up roadblocks, brake its momentum, and

[1042] Stenographic Report of the Convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action Held in Cleveland, Ohio, Which Nominated Senator Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin as a Candidate for President of the United States. Held July 4 and 5. Volume 1, 54; Volume 2, 274. The Records of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Library of Congress. Box 1.

destroy it," historian Blanche Wiesen Cook writes. "A daily and nasty battle ensued… women who had finally achieved membership status on a committee often found the doors locked, or the meetings moved to secret places." When the women's caucus unveiled its policy recommendations for a child labor amendment, a living wage, and hours and safety legislation, the DNC flatly ignored it. Eleanor Roosevelt, tasked with generating the proposals, waited outside of the locked door to the resolutions committee for several hours with her platform. They never received her.[1043]

Of course, men still dominated the CPPA. White protestants like William Johnston, Warren E. Stone, Basil Manly, and Ed Keating played outsized roles in the mission to elect La Follette. Still, there was some diversity inside the Conference. Jews and Catholics occupied leadership positions. Women, including several who were immigrants, not only had their names prominently featured on official Conference letterhead but carried real influence. At the end of World War I, women workers and reformers struggled mightily for the labor movement to hear them. That the Conference made these changes over the course of four years is a testament to the organizational growth that working women made during the early twenties. The La Follette campaign gave featured positions to women well respected in the labor movement and, unlike the Democrats, directly incorporated their longstanding demands for equality in education, for safety at work, and for affordable access to healthcare, food, and housing.

[1043] Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume 1, 1884-1933* (New York: Viking, 1992), 349-350; Michael Kazin, *What it Took to Win: A History of the Democratic Party* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022), 155-157; Douglas B. Craig, *After Wilson: The Struggle for the Democratic Party, 1920-1934* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 55-57; Kristi Andersen, *After Suffrage: Women in Partisan Electoral Politics before the New Deal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 9, 16-17.

Like most in the Conference for Progressive Political Action, many women reformers, especially those connected to the NWTUL, spent significant periods of time abroad and found particular inspiration from European labor parties. Several believed that the social democratic left abroad was on the forefront of germane political issues: child labor, shorter work days, maternal health, and public education. Through 1923, the National Women's Trade Union League sent representatives to the annual meetings of the International Federation of Working Women. There, individuals like Rose Schneiderman, Agnes Nestor, Elisabeth Christman, and Maud Swartz collaborated on resolutions demanding equal citizenship rights, equal opportunity in employment ("unless scientific investigation shall have proved that a special hazard is involved for one sex more than the other"), and a universally applicable living wage. Organized working women "should be the recognized policy-determining factors respectively with reference to the conditions of their own employment," they concluded in the Federation's 1923 report.[1044]

These reformers also admired the well-established women's auxiliaries European labor parties fostered and meaningful representation on executive councils they provided. The BLP made a strong impression on Clara Wold, the suffragist and National Woman's Party, when she visited London in 1922. A. Susan Lawrence, one of the first women M.P.s and a Labour Party member, told Wold that the party's constitution required at least four women members on the executive council. This representation offered "perfect

[1044] Ethel M. Smith, "International Federation of Working Women Preliminary Statement," July 1923. National Women's Trade Union League Papers (Microfilm). Reel 14, International congress of Working Women 1923-27; Dorothy Sue Cobble, "A Higher 'Standard of Life' For the World: US Labor Women's Reform Internationalism and the Legacies of 1919," *Journal of American History* (March 2014), 1052-1085; Dorothy Sue Cobble, *For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 77-188.

equality tempered with special privileges," Lawrence explained. Pauline Newman, the director of the ILGWU's health center, also admired the BLP for its "breadth of scope and its wide inclusiveness." Newman reported that "the men" of the BLP "appreciated the knowledge and understanding on the part of their women" and consulted them often on legislative matters and electioneering. "I would that the wives of our trade union men in America could follow in the footsteps of their British sisters," Newman concluded. "It is not impossible, if the American trade union movement would once and for all realize the power that is back of the women in the homes!"[1045] By empowering working-class women, social democrats had moved their agendas forward. In short, women in the NWTUL and similar organizations continued to find that their colleagues abroad had used labor party power to advance their interests. These encounters spurred continuous involvement in the CPPA and in "New Unionism," more generally.

Many of the women witnessed such influence abroad became staunch advocates of workers' education in the United States. There were practical reasons for the turn to education. Women on both sides of the Atlantic remained largely unwelcome in labor union leadership. But education and the related fields of child labor and maternal health were pursuits that women had long dominated. The trade unions were thus much more willing to accept women into the movement as teachers and educational administrators than organizers and business agents. "It was because of our efforts to organize women … met such tremendously discouraging conditions that we felt we must take other methods and …seek some way by which we could attract women and bring them into the labor movement and to working in the labor movement by another way," WTUL president

[1045] Clara Wold, "Women Forge to Front in Labor Party," *Minnesota Daily Star* (August 31, 1922), 6; Pauline M. Newman, "Trade Union Wives in British Labor Movement," *Justice* (May 9, 1924), 3.

Maud Swartz told the National Convention of the Workers' Education Bureau. Training women in leadership and social science might not have been a perfect substitute for organizing new industries, but it might lay the groundwork for a future effort. Swartz insisted it was their "opportunity" and their "duty" to let women workers know "what is actually going on and what may be done with some of the conditions that we have to face." Her partner and vice president Rose Schneiderman shared her faith in education. When administrators from Bryn Mawr consulted her and a few WTUL compatriots for suggestions on a summer school program for working-class women Schneiderman refreshingly noted that their "point of view was welcome and given attention and consideration." The Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers would train hundreds (if not thousands) of women in the social sciences for the next several decades.[1046]

WTUL leaders Rose Schneiderman and Maud Swartz both were veterans of the Farmer-Labor Party in 1920, both had a deep interest in European workers' education, used their leadership positions in the Women's Trade Union League to invest in the Bryn Mawr summer school for women workers (a scholarship program to send working women to a college campus over the summer). The two also stumped for La Follette in 1924.[1047] But if any one person best embodied the link between women-led reform, workers' education, and the CPPA, it was Fannia Cohn. The Russian-born garment worker had first joined the ILGWU in 1906. After ten years of organizing shops and

[1046] *Workers Education in the United States: Report of Proceedings Second National Conference on Workers Education in the United States* (New York: Workers Education Bureau of America, 1922), 101-104; *Workers Education Yearbook 1924* (New York: Workers Education Bureau of America, 1924), 55.
[1047] "News and Comment," *Life and Labor Bulletin* (October 1922), 3-4; "International Federation of Working Women," *Life and Labor Bulletin* (August 1923), 3; "News and Comment," *Life and Labor Bulletin* (November 1923), 3-4.

pickets, the membership elected her to the International as a vice president, the first woman to occupy such a union position in the country. By the end of the decade, Cohn's passion was workers' education.[1048]

Appointed secretary of the Garment Worker's education department, Cohn inaugurated a sweeping program of "Unity Centers" and extension work. While the ILGWU had offered some educational opportunities since its founding, it was not until 1918 that the International set aside a significant appropriation for the work. Cohn firmly believed that education was a necessary component of social reconstruction. "We feel that if we are ever to have a democratic control of industry," she declared, "the individual worker as well as the organization must be prepared to share in the responsibilities of industrial management." It was the "sacred duty" for her and her fellow educators to find and train "the men and women who… will lead their brothers and sisters to triumphant Industrial Democracy." She also believed workers' education would bring about disarmament and peace. That it could "eradicate the memories of the past" that led to war and herald in an era of "unity of purpose."[1049]

A standard American education would preclude these possibilities for change, she claimed. Much like Frederic C. Howe, Cohn had real concerns about the potentially

[1048] Louis Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers: A History of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, Inc., 1924), 482-505; For an excellent biographical overview of Cohn, see Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) (second edition), 169-203; Arthur Gleason, *Workers' Education: American Experiments (With a Few Foreign Examples)* (New York: Bureau of Industrial Research, 1921), 18-27, 58-59.
[1049] *Workers Education in the United States: Report of Proceedings First National Conference on Workers Education in the United States* (New York: Workers Education Bureau of America, 1921), 48; "The International Convention on Workers' Education," *Justice* (October 17, 1924), 10.

noxious effect wealthy donors could have on higher education.[1050] She believed union-funded initiatives would be "unchecked and unhampered by a board of trustees who represent accumulated wealth and in whose interests it is to retain conditions as they are." The object of most public education was to "adjust the individual to the environment… perpetuating our world as is." The object of workers' education was to "adjust the environment to the needs of modern life." With this in mind, Cohn also insisted that workers' education would fulfill a more practical and short term need: providing schooling to those often prevented from receiving one.[1051]

Many of the immigrant women took advantage of the Unity Centers to improve their English. "Our students like to go to their classes because they were not the kind they had been used to attending in the public schools," garment worker Sarah Shapiro told a conference on workers' education. "They went to the latter in order to learn English, but instead they were taught how to love the flag." Recalling the tense war years and the ever present threat of the espionage act, Shapiro noted "The pupils liked our classes because they felt free to express themselves there. They did not feel afraid of the teachers, they did not feel that the teachers were going to report them, or that the teachers were different from them." Mary Goff, another Unity Center graduate concurred. She noted the freedom her fellow students found in learning English amongst other non-native speakers and how much that contrasted with the New York school system: "Sometimes the student in our classes feels very much embarrassed by not possessing a good command of English or

[1050] As written chapters previous, Howe viewed awards like the Carnegie endowment for teaching with a deep skepticism. Frederic C. Howe, *Revolution and Democracy* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, inc., 1921), x-xviii, 5, 8, 21, 64, 80-83, 98, 118-119, 189-192.
[1051] *Workers Education in the United States: Report of Proceedings Second National Conference on Workers Education in the United States* (New York: Workers Education Bureau of America, 1922), 52-54; Fannia Cohn, "Why Workers' Education Should Be Under Trade Unions," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (March 1923), 202.

because he feels himself a stranger. These things we are overcoming. They are frequent occurrences in public schools."[1052] The Unity Centers had thousands of enrollments each year and the ILGWU maintained an educational program well into the 1960s.

While leaders like Cohn designed workers' education to appeal to laborers regardless of gender, it had a specific appeal to women. The former shop floor organizer rejected the idea that women were a temporary phenomenon in industrial life and not worth organizing into unions. She resented that of the estimated three-and-a-half-million women toiling in factories nationwide, only some two hundred thousand were organized– primarily in her own ILGWU. Women in her education programs would learn that "the Trade Union Movement is based on the principle of equal opportunity for men and women" and "that women have enjoyed the same right as men to hold office and to select women as officers in trade unions, but have seldom taken advantage of this right." Working women would likewise have to learn that the "cry of equal pay for equal work" was meaningless unless women gained "the power of trade union organization to back it up." Her program would present organized labor and cooperative economics as the most potent tonic for discrimination, poverty, helplessness.[1053]

Cohn's work in education dovetailed neatly with the CPPA's political vision. Like her colleagues in the Women's Trade Union League, Cohn too visited Europe to investigate their workers' education programs. Traveling through Great Britain twice, once in 1922 and then in 1924, Cohn praised the British Labour Party for its thoroughgoing program– especially in how it linked education, intellectualism, and mass

[1052] *Workers Education in the United States: Report of Proceedings First National Conference on Workers Education in the United States* (New York: Workers Education Bureau of America, 1921), 87, 94.
[1053] Fannia M. Cohn, "What Can Workers' Education Do For Working Women?" *Justice* (August 29, 1924), 10.

politics. The BLP had "accumulated within its group for the past four decades a vast amount of experience in the economic, political and cooperative fields," she wrote in a feature for *Justice* and the *New Leader*. "It has learned to cooperate with the progressive intellectual forces of the country who gladly place at its disposal their technical skill and intellectual skill and spiritual glow and fire." The United States, she added, was "destined to travel" the same path, bring about its own labor party, and lay the groundwork for lasting economic change.[1054]

To help bring about this shift, Cohn went beyond the ILGWU and took leadership positions in the Workers' Education Bureau (WEB)-- the AFL-backed umbrella organization coordinating labor's adult education programs– and Brookwood Labor College. At both institutions, she helped coordinate resources and materials for talented workers looking to hone their skills. Brookwood, a residential labor college in Katonah, New York, was something of a flagship for American workers' education. Unions would provide the resources to send their best and brightest for a two-year program that taught labor history, organizing basics, journalism, and leadership. Brookwood also fostered the arts, encouraging students to pursue theater. In addition to Cohn, Rose Schneiderman, John Fitzpatrick, James Maurer, Thomas Van Lear, John Brophy (UMW District 2 president), Abe Lefkowitz (American Federation of Teachers Vice President), and Toscan Bennett (Connecticut Labor Party founder) all say on the school's board, called the "Labor Co-Operating Committee." Louis Budenz, the editor at *Labor Age*, often took

[1054] Fannia M. Cohn, "The Labor Movement in England and America," *Justice* (September 12, 1924), 5; Fannia M. Cohn, "The American Labor Movement and the English," *New Leader* (October 4, 1924), 8; Fannia M. Cohn, "Workers' Education in America and the ILGWU," *Justice* (June 30, 1922), 10; "Vice-Pres. Fannia M. Cohn Sails to Attend European Labor Education Parley," *Justice* (August 4, 1922), 1; Fannia Cohn, "The Brussels Conference on Workers' Education," *Justice* (September 22, 1922), 7; "Fannia M. Cohn Leaves for London Education Convention," *Justice* (August 8, 1924), 2.

part at Brookwood events, and A.J. Muste soon became the school's president. Every single one of these members took part in the CPPA and would go on to support La Follette for president.[1055]

Brookwood's leadership and student composition leaned left, but more conservative unions like the Machinists and Brotherhoods still sent students to Katonah. Phil E. Ziegler of the Railway Clerks joined the committee in 1923 and worked with Cohn to draw Warren Stone (ultimately without success) into the project. In what Bennett described as the "finest bit of publicity" Brookwood had this far received, Railway Clerk and Brookwood student Israel Mufson penned an article for the *Locomotive Engineers Journal* describing the value of his education. Mufson, who had recently been involved in contract negotiation with his employer, confessed to finding the company's ledgers indecipherable. Content to believe that his employer was on the rocks financially, he conceded several wage scale improvements. "It was our ignorance, our complete, unadulterated, shameful ignorance that the company took advantage of," Mufson lamented. "We were not prepared with the proper facts to substantiate our plea." But at Brookwood he had learned better and had become determined that future members would "see in a column of figures more than a lot of numbers."[1056] This was the result that Cohn and her colleagues hoped to for.

Because of her role in workers' education, Cohn was a natural choice for the CPPA's national committee. The Conference and La Follette clearly hoped that reform-

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[1055] "Labor Co-Operating Committee," n.d. 1923. Brookwood Labor College Records. Walter P. Reuther Library. Wayne State. Box 11. Folder 2.

[1056] "Phil. E. Ziegler Taken By Death," *Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks Bulletin* (May 1957), 154; Toscan Bennett to Labor Cooperating Committee, March 21 1923. Brookwood Labor College Papers. Walter Reuther Library. Wayne State University. Box 11 Folder 4; Fannia Cohn to Toscan Bennett, July 23, 1923. Brookwood Labor College Papers. Walter Reuther Library. Wayne State University. Box 11 Folder 6; Israel Mufson, "From Loyalty Upwards," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (March 1923), 200-201.

minded women would vote *en masse* for the progressive ticket. At an eleventh-hour campaign stop in Baltimore, Harriot Stanton Blatch told her audience that "If La Follette is not elected, it will be the women's fault." Referencing the recent October British election that saw the BLP lose forty seats, Blatch insisted that "The Labor party… would never have been defeated if enough educational work had been done among women workers."[1057] To draw in this support, the CPPA sought figures like Cohn who could unite the overlapping movements for child welfare, bread-and-butter economic reform, maternal health, and disarmament. All of these themes remained constant throughout the campaign trail in the months to follow.

In his Labor Day radio address, Robert La Follette told his national audience: "We are in this campaign contending for the principle that every man *and woman* under the American flag who lives by useful and creative work of the hand or brain or both, is entitled to an equal chance for advancement in life, the equal protection of the laws, and equal participation in control of government."[1058] The statement not only borrowed heavily from the BLP's 1918 constitution, Clause IV of which committed the party to "secure for the workers by hand or brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof," but made an outright claim for legal equality and industrial justice.[1059] In his own Labor Day address in Boston, Burton K. Wheeler asked his audience whether the government should "be left in the hands of the small group that has cornered the national wealth and exploited the people" or handed over to be "so

[1057] "La Follette's Wife to Talk Here Today," *Baltimore Sun* (November 2, 1924), 16.
[1058] Italics added.
[1059] Arthur Gleason and Paul U. Kellogg, "The England They've Been Fighting For," *Survey* (November 30, 1918), 243; "Speech to be Delivered by Senator La Follette, exclusively to a Radio Audience. For release at 3:30 P.M., Eastern Standard Time, Monday, September 1.," La Follette Family Papers. Box 228. Folder: 1924 Campaign: Labor Day Speech.

administered that the right of every man, woman and child to food and clothing and shelter and health and happiness is placed above property rights and claims of profit."[1060]

In a New York City radio address on October 17, Belle Case La Follette addressed women directly. Acknowledging that the "high cost of living affects every home" and that an "estimated ninety per cent of the ten billions of dollars paid out annually for food, shelter, and clothing is spent by women," she outlined in great detail how La Follette's program would alleviate seemingly intractable economic problems. It was not the "small grocer and the butcher round the corner" who were "responsible for the rapid rise in prices." Rather, Case La Follette blamed Congress and the Wilson, Harding, and Coolidge administrations—all of whom worked to empower monopolists and plutocrats. She once again referenced the Esch-Cummins Transportation Act of 1920. Government ownership of the rails could have lowered transportation costs, improved the delivery time of crucial goods on time, and prevented strikes damaging to the greater economy. She also insisted that the federal government's refusal to sponsor public hydroelectric projects likewise kept energy prices above what they should be. By helping lower the cost of essentials the progressives in congress would make the economy work for working people, she insisted. While unclear who penned Case La Follette's speech, it had all the hallmarks of labor-intellectual partnership that undergirded workers' education and projects like the People's Legislative Service and League for Industrial Democracy.[1061]

[1060] "Speech delivered by Senator Burton K. Wheeler at Boston Commons on Labor Day. Sent to you at Senator Wheeler's telegraphic request (Sept. 29) for use of speakers etc.," Socialist Party of America Papers. National Office Correspondence, January 1924-December 1924. Proquest: 201901_010_1001.
[1061] Belle Case La Follette, "Why the Home Maker Should Vote for La Follette," La Follette Family Papers. Box D42. Folder: Radio Speech, October 17, 1924, "WJZ."

Campaigning to keep his congressional seat in Harlem, an area in which the garment workers had strong electoral pull, Fiorello LaGuardia frequently tied demilitarization and economic justice together. "I found in my experience that if a man dropped a 1,700 pound bomb and killed many unhappy people he was a great American and a hero," the New York congressman said, "but if he sought to have the city appropriate sixteen cents for a quart of milk for some babies, then he is a radical." Cohn was likely personally involved in the LaGuardia campaign. The 17th New York Assembly District, which the American Labor Party hoped to win, comprised much of LaGuardia's congressional boundaries. The ALP's candidate was Mollie Friedman, a longtime ILGWU organizer, business agent, and Executive board member. She had also gone through the union's extension services for her education. In campaigning for Friedman, Cohn made familiar appeals to the cross sections of femininity, childhood, education, and labor. "Who can be relied upon to stress the absurdity of child labor when hundreds of thousands of adults are out of employment," Cohn asked rhetorically—no one but "a working girl like Mollie Friedman, who began to work at an early age and was compelled to satisfy her yearning for an education during the few spare hours which should be devoted to rest and recreation."[1062] In Albany, Friedman would address "congestion in our schools, housing and transportation, observation of factory laws." Hers was a working-class message filtered neatly through the lens of the women's reform movement.

[1062] Fannia M. Cohn, "Why Harlem Citizens Should Elect Mollie Friedman to the Assembly," *Justice* (October 31, 1924), 11; Stenographic Report of the Convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action Held in Cleveland, Ohio, Which Nominated Senator Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin as a Candidate for President of the United States. Held July 4 and 5; Volume 2, 218-220. The Records of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Library of Congress. Box 1.

Despite running well ahead of both the Republican in the race and the statewide socialist candidates in her district, Friedman ultimately lost her election. Incumbent Meyer Alterman, a Tammany-backed Democrat with a fairly liberal record, won comfortably with sixty per cent of the vote. Cohn, the ILGWU international, and LaGuardia all acknowledged that Friedman's tireless campaigning helped the competitive up-ballot races in her district. LaGuardia, returning to congress with a safe plurality (and the only representative on a "Progressive Party" ballot line), told the CPPA campaign managers that the garment workers and socialists in his district had acted "splendidly" and entered into his campaign with "cooperation and generosity." La Follette, likewise, carried East Harlem handily in the presidential race, winning the 17th by more than a thousand votes over Coolidge and Davis. "We succeeded," Friedman stated, "in once and for all establishing the fact that American Labor must have an independent political party and that the desire on the part of the workers was there to form such a party." The 17th assembly district became a stronghold for the American Labor Party during the Depression years.[1063]

Between the armistice and the 1924 election, women in and around organized labor fought to take their place in the movement for working-class politics. From their base in workers' education and related reform movements, women like Fannia Cohn, Mabel Costigan, and Harriot Stanton Blatch succeeded in gaining a foothold in the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Cohn's story is particularly indicative of this

[1063] "The City Vote," *New York Times* (November 6, 1924), 6; "Mollie Friedman Thanks Her Campaigners," *Justice* (November 14, 1924), 3; Ray Borst, "Strife May Peril Lehman Program," *Buffalo Evening News* (January 4, 1935), 38; "G.O.P. to Frame Assembly Plans," *Buffalo Evening News* (November 4, 1937), 19; Fiorello LaGuardia to Robert La Follette, September 2, 1924. La Follette Family Papers. Library of Congress. Box B99. Folder: LaGuardia, Fiorello.

trend. Her ability to combine education, healthcare, and disarmament, long considered more feminine realms of reform, with trade unionism and cooperative economics found a receptive audience in the CPPA. In turn, politicians in La Follette's orbit used these talking points (with some success) to bring in voters. In the years to come, many of these same women would hone this rhetoric and make it a key component of New Deal liberalism.[1064]

"Heads I Win, Tails You Lose," the CPPA, The Ku Klux Klan, and Civil Rights in the 1924 Election

Moments after Harriot Stanton Blatch finished her July 5 speech to the CPPA on the long struggle to expand voting rights in the United States, William Pickens, dean of Morgan College and NAACP field secretary, approached the microphone. Pickens, the only Black delegate at the entire convention, was eager to put his famed oratory to use and make the case for legal racial equality to an audience largely hostile to the idea. "I am sure that you will regard it as a singular accident that there happens to be no representation there of the American negro who is one-tenth of the great American people," he began. Such an "accident" was unfortunate, Pickens continued, for in his view there was among African Americans "more of the feeling of political independence than at any time in the last hundred years." Both the Democratic and Republican parties had failed to advance Black interests since the civil war and they were no longer

[1064] Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) (second edition), 121-168; Brigid O'Farrell, *She Was One of Us: Eleanor Roosevelt and the American Worker* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 30-79; Michael Kazin, *What it Took to Win: A History of the Democratic Party* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022), 145-171; Dorothy Sue Cobble, *For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 153-220. Robyn Muncy, *Relentless Reformer: Josephine Roche and Progressivism in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 143-192.

interested in "the idea of mere political gratitude to the dead past."[1065] A new party, especially one dedicated to the interests of working people, would profit by harnessing this insurgency.

Pickens directly appealed to labor's current distaste for the two-party system. "We, too, know how they played with you," he declared. The "the little game that these two great parties, the great interests, the powerful and wealthy people… a sort of game like this, 'Heads I win, tails you lose.'" Just as the Democrats and Republicans had failed to protect child labor, ban injunctions, and support collective bargaining rights, they time and time again stopped short of adequately protecting the franchise and acting on the ongoing crisis of lynching and vigilante justice. Neither the Wilson, Harding, or Coolidge administrations agreed to end the U.S. occupation of Haiti. "There is not much difference between being in the belly of the whale from being in the sea," Pickens concluded, eliciting laughs from the audience.[1066] If the CPPA promised to pursue these legislative avenues, the twelve million Black people living in the United States– especially the several hundred thousand with voting rights living in northern cities– would reward La Follette at the polls. Unfortunately, though unsurprisingly, the Cleveland convention passed only a resolution advocating an end to American occupation in Haiti and the Caribbean at large; the delegates remained conspicuously silent on civil rights, lynching, and the Ku Klux Klan.

[1065] Stenographic Report of the Convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action Held in Cleveland, Ohio, Which Nominated Senator Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin as a Candidate for President of the United States. Held July 4 and 5; Volume 2, 277. The Records of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Library of Congress. Box 1.

[1066] Stenographic Report of the Convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action Held in Cleveland, Ohio, Which Nominated Senator Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin as a Candidate for President of the United States. Held July 4 and 5; Volume 2, 277. The Records of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Library of Congress. Box 1.

The delegates' reaction was a blow not only to Pickens but to his allies on the NAACP's executive board who had sent him there with high hopes. The resolution acknowledged that Black "political power" had greatly increased due to the "continuous migration of black working people… to the industrial centers of the North." It declared that any political party hoping for a bloc vote from northern African Americans would need to "first convince them of its determination and ability to forward their industrial and political and social emancipation." And that while this emancipation included the "same problems" of low wages and lack of "effective industrial democracy" that haunted the "laboring classes the world over," Black voters needed additional protections. Namely, the NAACP demanded firm statements against all forms of "race and color discrimination" with anti-lynching laws being a priority. If the CPPA could take this step, it could also work to reverse anti-union sentiment amongst the Black working class, which had often provided "capitalists free of charge not only cheap and increasingly efficient and non-union and union-hating labor, but also a large and growing vote in the main industrial centers of the country." But if organized labor stood at the forefront of racial justice in the 1924 election, Association leaders like James Weldon Johnson, Walter White, and William Pickens could appeal to their communities without facing the "incontrovertible fact" that unions were "greater enemies of our right to earn decent bread and butter than the captains Monopoly and Privilege."[1067] The strongly worded statement failed to have its desired effect.

[1067] At the Association's fifteenth annual convention, a majority of the delegates voted in favor of sending Pickens as their representative. *Fourteenth Annual Report of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for the Year 1923: A Summary of Work and an Accounting* (New York: NAACP, 1924), 46-48.

There are several reasons why the NAACP chose to approach the Conference for Progressive Political Action. In 1924, the Klan was at the zenith of its political power in America. After the war, Klan organizers found fertile ground for their movement amongst millions of Protestant Americans who feared new waves of Catholic and Jewish immigrants, Bolsheviks seeking communist revolution, and the potential loss of an Anglo-Saxon and Nordic majority. The KKK founded dozens of high-circulation newspapers, established radio programs, and forged deep connections into Protestant religious groups and prominent fraternal organizations.[1068] While the Klan's roots belonged to the Southern wing of the Democratic Party, the hooded order found new life from the West Coast to Maine. The deeply Republican heartland became one of the most active Klan regions in the country. In Indiana, Klan candidates had won several important elections in both party primaries. A reporter friend of Frank Walsh based in Cincinnati confirmed in the lead up to the 1924 election that "The Klan, very strong in this state, is part and parcel of the Republican party." In short, neither of the two major parties wished to rile up the "invisible empire."[1069]

At its 1924 convention, the GOP passed no resolution condemning the Klan by name– despite some loud protests to introduce one.[1070] Neither did the party of Lincoln add any clause for the expansion of civil or voting rights. And while Coolidge and his party did urge congress to pass anti-lynching legislation and maintained its belief in the

[1068] For an excellent overview, see Felix Harcourt, *Ku Klux Kulture: America and the Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).
[1069] William Zimmerman to Frank Walsh, September 11, 1924. Frank P. Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 13. Folder: September 21-30, 1924; For the Klan presence in Akron, Ohio, see Thomas R. Pegram, "The Ku Klux Klan, Labor, and the White Working Class During the 1920s," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 17 (2018), 373-396.
[1070] "Klan Issue Rises to Vex Party at Cleveland," *New York Herald* (June 7, 1924), 2; "Republicans Worry Over Split in Maine," *New York Times* (July 21, 1924), 3; "Klan and Dry Issues Worry Republicans," *New York Times* (June 8, 1924), 1.

"constitutional" equality afforded through the Fourteenth Amendment, many Black progressives saw these gestures as meaningless. The House of Representatives had finally passed the Dyer Antilynching Bill in early 1922, but dozens of Republicans still voted against it. And despite having more than sixty percent of Senate's seats, the party had no appetite to break the Southern filibuster against it. Many in the Black press resented this failure.[1071] "There is but a thin partition between political cunning and moral cowardice," Kelly Miller wrote of the Republican fear of antagonizing the Klan. A general nod to the GOP's past in enshrining the 14th and 15th amendments and a vague promise to reintroduce lynching law would not do. "Reaffirmation of the general principles of the Ten Commandments has no weight against a specific sin," Kelly wrote again. "When the negro complains of the denial of his rights there is little satisfaction to be assured that the Republican party believes in the Constitution."[1072] Dissatisfaction ran high.

African Methodist Episcopal Church Bishop John Hurst, a major NAACP activist in Baltimore, blamed the Republican leaders for hiding behind the Democrats' clear moral failings on racial equality. In the last half century, the Republicans have provided loyal Black voters with nothing but "broken promises"-- knowing full well that "the Negro could not turn to the Democratic party to get justice."[1073] The Democrat

[1071] As the NAACP executive council announced at the 1924 convention: "although in power in all branches of the government, [the GOP] has specifically failed to pass the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, to abolish segregation in the government offices at Washington, to take any action with regard to 'Jim-Crow" cars in interstate travel, to withdraw our military forces from Haiti, or to make a loan to Liberia." *Fourteenth Annual Report of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for the Year 1923: A Summary of Work and an Accounting* (New York: NAACP, 1924), 46-48.
[1072] Kelly Miller, "The Negro and the Klan," *New York Times* (September 7, 1924), x10; "Negro Conference Endorses Third Party," *New York Times* (July 1, 1924), 3; "Dyer Urges Our Voters to Rally to Grand Old Party," *Chicago Defender* (September 20, 1924), A14; "Republican Party Gave Race First Recognition," *Chicago Defender* (September 6, 1924), A7.
[1073] Pamphlet, "La Follette and the Negro, A Consistent Record of 35 Years From 1889 to 1924." NAACP Papers. Folder: Politics, May-June 1924. Proquest: 001422_020_0076.

"Klanbake" convention certainly proved Hurst's assumption correct. Like their Republican colleagues, Democratic leaders had desperately hoped to avoid an open conflagration over white supremacy. William Jennings Bryan, who saw the CPPA's success as evidence that his brand of Southern-Midwestern populism was still the party's future, frantically moved across the convention floor to bury a potential debate. It was to no avail. Oscar Underwood, an aristocratic and deeply conservative Senator from Alabama who resented the Klan's hold on the party base, introduced a resolution condemning the hooded order. The liberal Northern Al Smith supporters pushed for a debate. The Klan-backed supporters of William Gibbs McAdoo fought back. Badly bloodied from the verbal (and at times physical) sparring, neither side left Madison Square Garden satisfied. While Hurst, Pickens, and others in the NAACP leadership credited the Northern liberal Democrats for their fight against the KKK, there was no doubt that nationally the party remained at the mercy of the Solid South.[1074]

NAACP leaders like secretary James Weldon Johnson, assistant secretary Walter White, William Pickens, W.E.B Du Bois, and John Hurst wanted something beyond a "choice between half-hearted friends and half-concealed enemies." They wanted to take part in a movement that would fight for racial equality, anti-imperialism, and economic justice, something that might "give the American Negro and other submerged classes a chance to vote more directly for economic emancipation from monopoly and privilege and for a fairer chance to work according to ability and share more equitably the social

[1074] Lynn Dumenil, *Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 201-202; Michael Kazin, *What it Took to Win: A History of the Democratic Party* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022), 156-157; Douglas B. Craig, *After Wilson: The Struggle for the Democratic Party, 1920-1934* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 51-74.

income."[1075] As written previously, Black Americans very much believed in post-war transatlantic reconstruction. Individuals like Du Bois and Pickens saw 1919 as the ideal time to push for Europe and the United States to commit to decolonization. Several others, like Robert Bagnall, James Weldon Johnson, and Mary Townsend Seymour hoped that trade unions, flush with a desire for a new social order, would include African Americans in their economic and political visions.[1076]

Writing in 1922, pioneering African American historian Carter G. Woodson, too, saw some grounds for "for hope in the forces which bid fair to bring about a social readjustment involving the leveling of society." Before the war, Black people, still mostly living in the South, had been on the outside of Populist and Progressive reform, he argued. Those advocating for economic justice below the Mason-Dixon line, politicians like "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman and James K. Vardaman, made clear that they stood for the working class if it was white and white only. But the war and the subsequent Great Migration shifted the existing paradigm. While Woodson openly acknowledged the violence inflicted on the migrants by "the degraded class of whites," he also noted that Black reformers found a new set of allies: white urban radicals. "Increasing persecution… is gradually forcing Negroes on the defensive into the ranks of the Socialists and Radicals," he wrote. "Negro preachers, editors, and teachers, who for years pleaded at the bar of public opinion for the recognition for the Negro as a man, now find themselves unconsciously allied with the most radical forces in the United States." Woodson appeared to have mixed feelings about this possibility. He credited this new

[1075] *Fourteenth Annual Report of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for the Year 1923: A Summary of Work and an Accounting* (New York: NAACP, 1924), 46-48.
[1076] See pp. 147-163.

formulation with pushing the AFL into a stronger position on organizing Black workers and for prodding the Northern leaders "still trying to decide how large a share of social justice, how much of the world-wide democracy, the Negro should enjoy" into action. But he also saw his fellow African Americans as naturally "conservative" and "constructive" and saw a "general upheaval" as increasingly possible if the ranks of the "malcontents" were to swell too large.[1077]

That reformers in the NAACP found support in radical circles after the war is beyond doubt. These connections spanned even oceans. Like the progressive trade unionists of the CPPA, NAACP leaders had even fostered some positive relationships with the British Labour Party. On their way to attending the 1921 Pan-African Congress, W.E.B. Du Bois and Walter White met with representatives of the BLP to gauge their support on decolonization and legal equality. They hoped the BLP would condemn lynching outright and take a stand against extralegal racial violence in a way that would both shame the British Empire the United States. Both men left somewhat impressed.

White particularly enjoyed his lunch with longtime Fabian H.G. Wells at London's Reform Club. Wells had fallen into step with all of his suggestions on "the bringing of English public opinion to bear on the subject of lynching," White reported to the NAACP's board. The political utopianist and science fiction author responded favorably to a request to tour America with an eye fixed on race. White offered to show Wells "Negro homes, churches, business institutions and other signs of progress" in Harlem and Washington, D.C. "It need hardly be emphasized that such steps will be of tremendous value in having a man who is as widely read as Mr. Wells to know what the

[1077] Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro in Our History* (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, 1922), 329-332.

Negro is doing and to have him as one of the propagandists for the colored man," White concluded. Harold Laski– who had spent much of the preceding decade teaching in the United States– likewise agreed to take part in an international committee to investigate lynching and offered to make "it obligatory that the question of lynching in the United States and economic background of lynching be studied as part of the regular course" at the London School of Economics.[1078]

White and Du Bois also asked that the Labour Party prod American trade unions to abandon their *de facto* and *de jure* segregation. While the BLP had no real authority across the Atlantic, it was an inspiration to many of the progressive railroad unions, all of whom wantonly discriminated. Further, the party's affiliated Trade Union Congress did send fraternal delegates to the AFL's annual conventions and could theoretically use the time as a bully pulpit. In White's recollection, Du Bois "presented in able fashion the facts regarding the treatment of Negro labor in the United States and emphasis was laid upon the fact that while white labor would never be free as long as it did not work to see that all labor should be free." Laski, jumping in again, promised to "secure the presentation of the question of the treatment of the Negro labor in the United States by organized labor" at an upcoming meeting of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU). Sidney Webb, likewise, asked that the NAACP keep him "informed of all matters affecting Negro labor or the Negro in general which should be brought to the attention of Parliament for action." Both of these matters were mostly symbolic. Only the ILGWU, which had a loose relationship with the International Clothing Workers

[1078] Walter White to Mary White Ovington, September 15, 1921. NAACP Papers. Folder: Pan African Congress 1921. Proquest: 001422_018_0240_0001; "Report to Board by Walter F. White on English Committee on Lynching." NAACP Papers. Folder: 1921 Meeting of the Board. Proquest: 001412_004_0126.

Federation, had any direct ties to IFTU and no act of parliament could affect anything outside its borders.[1079]

Labour Party leaders were likewise reluctant to condemn American lynching too loudly. The British Empire was hardly innocent when it came to racialized violence. The imperial regimes in South Africa and India had both a long history of violently suppressed uprisings and using terror to maintain a strict racial hierarchy.[1080] Much like the United States, several industrialized cities in Great Britain saw uprisings and riots between 1919 and 1921as white British dockworkers and sailors (typically strong BLP supporters) brutally attacked the Africans, Afro-Caribbeans, and South Asians that had filled vacant positions during the war. The British were also in the midst of fighting a bloody counterinsurgency in Ireland. The counter-rebellion seemed to give Webb and the rest of his Labour Party delegation the most pause. Irish-Americans, were, after all, a strong well of support for the nationalist cause. "If we Englishmen interfere in the lynching problem, America can quite properly point to English atrocities in Ireland," White recorded them as saying. Du Bois and White countered that "lynching in the United States directly or indirectly created unrest among Negroes throughout the world" and that England "with more colored subjects than any other nation, was directly affected by lynching in the United States." The NAACP members claimed to speak with a Black South African in London who had a detailed knowledge of American lynching data. The pair insisted the BLP press ahead with some kind of public condemnation. The United

[1079] "Report to Board by Walter F. White on English Committee on Lynching." NAACP Papers. Folder: 1921 Meeting of the Board. Proquest: 001412_004_0126; S.Y., "What Schlesigner Saw and Heard in Europe," *Justice* (October 6, 1922), 7.
[1080] For an overview, see Caroline Elkins, *Legacy of Violence: A History of the British Empire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2022), 37-193.

States was so "sensitive to outside criticism and particularly to British criticism," that such a protest could sway public opinion. It was at least worth a try.[1081]

Du Bois and White were under no illusions regarding the limitations of their newfound British allies. Many, they felt, held too tightly to paternalism and offensive tropes. After meeting with members of the Anti-Slavery and Aboriginal Protection Societies, "Dr. Du Bois… scathingly condemned so-called philanthropic organizations which believe in working for the natives in Africa and refuse, meanwhile, to work with Africans." Wells, White recalled, claimed that most of his colleagues thought of African Americans as appearing "with a ring through his nose, a love for gaudy and ridiculous clothing, and as one whose chief amusement is indulging in some regular cannibalistic orgy." There was likely no lack of insensitive and intolerant remarks. But both NAACP representatives determined that the BLP would soon "be the dominant factor in England," and therefore the agreements to (at least softly) condemn lynching and take up racial equality in trade unions were "of great import."[1082] They still believed the BLP offered a more promising position on the "color line" than the Tories.

Their optimism seemingly spread in Black reform networks back home. Kelly Miller would call the 1923 British election the "Most significant indication of the economic and industrial restlessness of the times" and praised the BLP for giving workers, white and Black, a "fairer show in the game of life." Miller believed the Labour

[1081] Jacqueline Jenkinson, *Black, 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 1-29; "Report to Board by Walter F. White on English Committee on Lynching." NAACP Papers. Folder: 1921 Meeting of the Board. Proquest: 001412_004_0126.
[1082] Report of the Secretary (For the October Meeting of the Board) 1921. NAACP Papers. Folder: 1921 Meeting of the Board. Proquest: 001412_004_0126; Walter White to Mary White Ovington, September 15, 1921. NAACP Papers. Folder: Pan African Congress 1921. Proquest: 001422_018_0240_0001; "Report to Board by Walter F. White on English Committee on Lynching." NAACP Papers. Folder: 1921 Meeting of the Board. Proquest: 001412_004_0126.

Party would take a fresh view of colonialism. The BLP "proclaims a new hope to the backward peoples under British dominion who hitherto have been overborne and heavy laden in order to swell the dividend of the exploiters," he wrote.[1083] In 1927, NAACP field director Robert Bagnall, speaking at Brookwood, insisted that Black workers in the urban north were "familiar with the labor movement in Europe." As a result, many of these workers were developing "a new militancy which is absolutely unequaled in this country." The Labour Party was an example of what Bagnall called the "economic basis… of progress toward civil rights." British workers "found that until they began to take power of work and some systems that they would continually be exploited and

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[1083] "Kelly Miller Says," *Baltimore Afro-American* (February 8, 1924), A9.

The Labour Party did proclaim a softer policy on colonialism than the Conservatives, but there were clear limits on the type of autonomy they were willing to *someday* extend to the Empire's peripheries. In *Labour and the New Social Order*, Webb wrote on behalf of the party:

> With regard to that great Commonwealth of all races, all colours, all religions and all degrees of civilization, that we call the British Empire, the Labour Party stands for its maintenance and its progressive development on the lines of Local Autonomy and "Home Rule All Round"; the fullest respect for the rights of each people, whatever its colour, to all the Democratic Self-Government of which it is capable, and to the proceeds of its own toil upon the resources of its own territorial home; and the closest possible co-operation among all the various members of what has become essentially not an Empire in the old sense, but a Britannic Alliance.

While some committed radicals in the Independent Labour Party did favor outright independence for Britain's colonies, most on the British social democratic left did not. BLP leaders like Ramsay MacDonald spoke and wrote about the Empire's atrocities in Oceania, Africa, and South Asia, but nevertheless believed that the United Kingdom played a "civilizing" role abroad– with the state instilling democratic, socialist, and liberal values. For this reason, most of Labour in the early years preferred a commonwealth system with limited home rule over outright independence. They likewise looked at nationalist movements with deep suspicion. MacDonald's second government, for instance, walked back its promises on home rule in India and used its powers to arrest Gandhi and crack down on his movement– much to the dismay of American socialists. As BLP historian Andrew Thorpe writes of the party's slow embrace of decolonization "Labour ministers were committed to the maintenance of Britain's position as a great power. Though this stance was occasionally questioned… it was never successfully challenged."

"U.S. Socialists Query British Labor on India," *New Leader* (May 10, 1930), 2; H.N. Brailsford, "Britain's Rule of Fear in India," *New Leader* (May 24, 1930), 5; H.N. Brailsford, "MacDonald and Gandhi," *New Leader* (May 17, 1930), 3; Paul Kelemen, "The British Labor Party and the Economic of Decolonization," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 8 No. 3 (Winter 2007); Andrew Thorpe, A History of the British Labour Party (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 128-129; Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London: Verso, 2019), 198-204, 270-288.

denied cultural opportunities and civil rights. The workers in America had the same experience."[1084]

But while the NAACP and other Black reformers found much to admire in the BLP, it had a far more mixed opinion of the American organization seeking to take up its mantle. James Weldon Johnson claimed to have received CPPA materials in the run up to the 1922 election, but ignored them at the time.[1085] The NAACP executive board was singularly focused on passing the Dyer anti-lynching bill, which the House of Representatives passed but the Senate had delayed. The Association was, therefore, wholly committed to electing senators pledged to advancing the bill. This put the NAACP at odds with many CPPA-backed candidates.

The Association found allies in politicians like Truman Newberry, Albert Beveridge, and Joseph S. Frelinghuysen. All of these senators, however, had voted for Esch-Cummins and were archfoes of labor and the CPPA. Even the NAACP had to look past these candidates' economic records. Frelinghuysen was "an aristocrat with lots of money, and obliviously on the side of capital," complained one organizer. But the NAACP needed the Dyer bill passed, while most of the CPPA's members gave it little priority.[1086]

Samuel Ralston, the Conference endorsed Democrat who defeated Beveridge in Indiana, may not have been an outright Klan supporter, but he did gain from its support

[1084] Bagnall did not elaborate further on Black workers and their familiarity of the European labor movement. Robert. W. Bagnall, "The Economic Foundations of Civil Liberties," Brookwood Labor College Records. Walter P. Reuther Library. Box 44 Folder 11: "Negro Symposium, May 19-20, 1927."
[1085] William English Walling to James Weldon Johnson, 11 August 1922. NAACP Papers. Folder: William E. Walling, 1919-1926. Proquest: 001412_024_0442; James Weldon Johnson to Abram L. Harris, June 21, 1924. Folder: Politics, May-July, 1924. Proquest: 001422_020_0076.
[1086] W.R. Valentine to Walter White, July 31, 1922. NAACP Papers. Folder: Politics, 1922. Proquest: 001422_019_0606**.** For more on CPPA candidates, see pp. 349-388.

and did little to disavow the hooded order. Representative George Huddleston of Alabama and Senator Morris Sheppard of Texas were regular fixtures of La Follette's progressive bloc and both stridently opposed the anti-lynching law. And when La Follette and his supporters worked to deny the Republican Senate majority the chairmanship of the Committee on Interstate Commerce, they threw their support behind Ellison Durant Smith. The South Carolina senator was well-known as one of most outspoken white supremacists in congress.[1087] La Follette himself might have had a fair record on civil rights. He fought for political appointments for Black Republicans in the South, called for investigations into the 1919 riots, personally supported anti-lynching legislation (though was absent when Dyer's bill came to the floor), and advocated for increased federal funding for Howard University, but he proved time and time again more than willing to subvert civil rights legislation for his other legislative priorities.[1088]

With the avowedly white Railroad Brotherhoods in the driver's seat and the NAACP committed to move heaven and earth for the Dyer bill, the two forces rarely met on common ground. When they did overlap, it was usually over a leftwing candidate. Though Mary T. Seymour stood no chance of winning, the NAACP enthusiastically received news about her run for Connecticut Secretary of State. Seymour, a Black

[1087] Jill Weiss Simins, "Complicit in Neutrality? Samuel Ralston Denied Klan Affiliation," *Indiana History Blog* (July 17, 2018). https://blog.history.in.gov/samuel-ralston-denies-klan-affiliation/, accessed November 1, 2022; Thomas R. Pegram, "The Ku Klux Klan, Labor, and the White Working Class During the 1920s," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 17 (2018), 373-396; John W. Owens, "Ellison DuRant Smith, Friend of the Poor Man," *The Sun* (December 18, 1923), 10; Albert Hinton, "The Hon. Ellison Durant Smith," *New Journal and Guide* (August 5, 1944), 6; "Wallace Aides Bar Cotton Demands," *New York Times* (October 2, 1938), 1; "Smith Of Carolina Walks Out Again," *New York Times* (June 26, 1936), 15.

[1088] Pamphlet, "La Follette and the Negro, A Consistent Record of 35 Years From 1889 to 1924." NAACP Papers. Folder: Politics, May-June 1924. Proquest: 001422_020_0076; Ernest Gruening, "Senator Robert M. La Follette's Stand on Issues to Vital to the Negro's Interest." La Follette Family Papers. Box: B208. Folder: "Racial Issue."

woman, had been a founding member of the Farmer-Labor Party, which in 1922 adopted a plank demanding strict enforcement of the "13th, 14th and 15th Amendments with reference to the Negroes and effective legislation to secure to the Negroes full civil, political, industrial and educational rights." The Wisconsin branch of the NAACP– centered amidst North Milwaukee's small but vibrant Black community– also helped return socialist candidate Victor Berger to congress. Republican William H. Stafford, who took Berger's seat two years prior, drew the Association's ire by voting against the Dyer bill. George E. DeReef, the branch leader, approached the socialists and secured a promise that they would take on lynching at the federal level. The Black vote likely gave Berger a critical edge, allowing him to defeat the incumbent by about three thousand votes. In late November, Walter White praised DeReef on the "splendid work done by the Milwaukee Branch to defeat Stafford." Berger began his political career in the early twentieth century defending segregation and making overtly white supremacist comments. While it is unclear just how much his personal feelings had changed by the end of his term in congress, he nevertheless became one the House's most stalwart proponents for antilynching bills and general civil rights in the South.[1089] These elections brought the progressives in the NAACP, like Johnson, White, and Pickens, into closer association with the Socialist Party and the radical unions and groups affiliated with it.

The urban organized left had proven to be an increasingly reliable ally for civil rights after the First World War. The needle trades were among the few labor unions in

[1089] "G.O.P. Failed to Carry Out its Platform," *Baltimore Afro-American* (May 8, 1926), 2; "Flays G.O.P. For Breaking Its Promises," *Chicago Defender* (May 8, 1926), 12; "Drafts New Anti-Lynching Law," *Chicago Defender* (April 21, 1928), 1; "Berger's Federal Aid Bill," *Broad Ax* (May 8, 1926); "Berger, Wisconsin Socialist Introduces Anti Lynch Bill," *Afro-American* (April 21, 1928), 1; Socialist-Farmer Labor Party of Connecticut, "A Tip to Colored Voters!" n.d. November 1922; Walter White to George E. DeReef, November 28, 1922. NAACP Papers. Folder: Politics November-December 1922. Proquest: 001422_019_0856_0001.

America that responded to the Great Migration by not only permitting Black workers to join, but by putting resources into organizing drives. The ILGWU resultantly donated money to "organs of the Negro press which spread union agitation and propaganda among the workers of the race."[1090] A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, the Black editors of the Socialist Party-aligned *Messenger*, were both beneficiaries of this trend. While both Randolph and Owen remained skeptical of the NAACP's perceived lack of attention to the "big economic problems of the Negro," by the mid-twenties the pair grew closer to the Association because of its work promoting Black trade unionism, its demands for American withdrawal from Haiti and the Virgin Islands, and its distaste for Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement League. Randolph also praised the NAACP's adroit lobbying work in getting the Dyer anti-lynching bill out of the House of Representatives. The NAACP "made those old weazened politicians feel that perhaps the public is about to demand that something be done about this American sport," he concluded. "For this splendid work, it deserves no grudging mead of praise." Randolph and Owens strongly approved of the NAACP's 1924 third party resolution, which they argued had finally marked a turn away from its "bourgeois stigma." Its call for a new party that would defend racial equality *and* industrial democracy "breathed the flaming spirit of an awakened, aroused and thinking Negro." It offered "a thoughtful and reasoned expression on our big, vital and pressing problems, appealing in a definite and fearless voice to the wide, toiling masses."[1091] The two Black socialists were pleased.

[1090] International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, *Report of General Executive Board to the Sixteenth Biennial Convention*, May 1, 1922. 78, 107; *Report and Proceedings of the Sixteenth Convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union*, 46.

[1091] Chandler Owen, "Du Bois on Revolution," *Messenger* (September 1921), 246; "Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill Passes House," *Messenger* (February 1922), 347; "The N.A.A.C.P.'s Conference," *Messenger* (July 1924), 210; "The N.A.A.C.P.'s New Spirit," *Messenger* (September 1924), 281.

Beginning in 1924, the NAACP worked with the ILGWU on grants to send young Black organizers to Brookwood Labor College. The American Fund for Public Service, under the stewardship of ACLU founders Roger Nash Baldwin and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (ACW organizer and future USW officer Clinton S. Golden, economist Leo Wolman, journalist Freda Kirchwey, and James Weldon Johnson would all join the board for stretches of time in the twenties) granted their request and awarded funds for two students with the possibility of renewal. Working with the ILGWU and Urban League, James Weldon Johnson decided to award the grants to Floria Pinkney, a dressmaker and YWCA organizer, and Thomas Dabney, a teacher and part time journalist. They would both graduate Brookwood in 1926 and continue to take active roles in the labor movement for years to come.[1092]

As the garment trades worked to bring Black workers into its ranks, the Socialist Party of America (in New York especially) sought to organize them politically. In all its conventions post-1920, the SPA made public declarations for racial equality. After the Detroit Convention in 1921, the Party called for "the enforcement of the amendments of the federal constitution to insure the franchise to the Negro." Two years later, the socialists decreed an "unrelenting warfare of education against such bigoted and reactionary movements as the Ku Klux Klan, which aim to make of the Negro people a race of serfs, to be perpetually exploited by a white ruling class."[1093] On the ground, the

[1092] A.J. Muste to Floria Pinkney, September 13, 1926. Brookwood Labor College Records. Walter P. Reuther Library. Box 72 Folder 29; Fannia Cohn to AJ Muste, September 17, 1929. Brookwood Labor College Records. Brookwood Labor College Records. Box 89 Folder 31; James Weldon Johnson to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, September 16, 1925, October 8, 1925. American Fund for Public Service Records. New York Public Library. Reel 6. Folder: "#2 Brookwood Inc." Victoria W. Wolcott, *Living in the Future: Utopianism and the Long Civil Rights Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 23-29.
[1093] "Socialism and Unionism," *Socialist World* (June 1923), 2; "Important Actions of the Convention," *Socialist World* (June-July, 1921), 4-5; William P. Jones, "Nothing Special to Offer the Negro," *International Labor and Working Class History* 74 no. 1 (Fall 2008), 212-224.

SPA sought out Black leaders who could help reach new members. Aside from Randolph and Owen, both committed socialists at the time, the party elevated Frank Crosswaith. Born in the Caribbean, Crosswaith moved to New York City and entered the labor movement by working as an elevator operator. After the *Forward* Association granted him a scholarship in 1918, Crosswaith became a committed socialist and worked the rest of his career as an organizer, holding positions in the ILGWU, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the Negro Labor Committee, and the 1941 March on Washington Movement.[1094]

The SPA had proven itself useful by advocating Black entry into the labor movement, by aiding in fundraising, and by providing a national platform and logistical support for civil rights. Invited to speak at the NAACP's 1922 annual convention, Charles Ervin, then editor of the *New York Call*, declared that what united socialists and members of the NAACP was a belief in "mass action." Whether through lobbying, pamphleting, strikes, or protests, both movements understood that accumulating "mass power" through spectacle was the only way forward. "Certainly, patience is a virtue," Ervin told the crowd, "but not the patience to sit down and wait, but the patience to fight until you get what you are fighting for." Ervin's speech seemingly resonated with James Weldon Johnson, who referenced it directly in his keynote address. "Power! Power! That is the thing," the secretary said of the speech. "It is a new thing to us. We have had it but

[1094] Algernon Lee to Frank R. Crosswaith, October 11, 1918. Frank Crosswaith Papers. Schomburg Library. Box 1. Personal Papers Folder 1; Richard Parrish, "Frank R. Crosswaith, 1894-1965." Frank Crosswaith Papers. Schomburg Library. Box 1. Folder: Biographical Information. Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 40, 160, 164; William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014), 43.

we did not realize it and did not know how to use it. I contradict the assertion that we are a weak people."[1095]

The socialists may have been a small band, but they were a loud and principled one. It is unlikely that William Pickens would have been able to address the CPPA's Cleveland convention at all if it were not for the left-wing's interference. "The brotherhoods, the unbrotherly brotherhoods, were master," Pickens wrote in his debrief for the Associations executive board. Johnston and railroad leaders "had prearranged not to touch the inflammatory domestic issues - Klan, Religion, Race," he determined. "They were diplomatic with us, but I could see beneath their words and faces that there was a great desire both to pacify us and to be rid of our dangerous insistence upon these outlaw issues." Pickens listed a small group of left-wing allies who aided him. Journalist Helen Todd, a suffragist and factory inspector, and former-socialist and NAACP founder William English Walling stood by him throughout. He developed a great deal of respect for Norman Thomas, whom Pickens described as running frantically from room to room in an effort to introduce a resolution condemning the Klan.[1096]

It was also exceedingly likely that Johnston only allowed Pickens– who was never formally given a timeslot– to address the convention directly because Abe Lefkowitz and Harriot Stanton Blatch insisted upon it. Both speakers immediately preceded Pickens and kept their remarks relatively short. Both also had connections with civil rights organizations. Lefkowitz, a founder of both the AFT and Farmer-Labor Party, had for

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[1095] Address Delivered by James Weldon Johnson, June 19, 1922; Address Delivered by Charles W. Ervin, Editor of the New York Call. June 19, 1922. NAACP Papers. Folder: 1922 Conference. Proquest: 001412_008_1050.

[1096] Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors, July 14, 1924. Folder: Board of Directors 1924. Proquest: 001412_001_0988; William Pickens to James Weldon Johnson, July 6, 1924; William Pickens to James Weldon Johnson, July 8, 1924. NAACP Papers. Folder: Politics July-August 1924. Proquest: 001422_020_0219.

years been on the Urban League's steering committee. It was Lefkowitz who introduced a resolution for racial equality at the 1920 AFL convention. He also helped lead the floor fight to include a similar measure in the FLP's presidential platform that year.[1097] Stanton Blatch, who frequently touted her family's abolitionist background, had earned the NAACP's praise for her aid in preventing Tennessee Senator John K. Shields's nomination to the Supreme Court. Upon hearing that Shields might ascend to a lifetime position, Stanton Blatch recalled in the *New York Call* an interview she had with the senator a few years prior. Asked if he supported women's suffrage, Shields not only responded negatively but included a racist diatribe. "N*gger women," he supposedly told her, "would be a problem. You see, we couldn't treat the wenches as we do the men; we just club the N*ggers if they come to the polls." The Black press circulated Stanton Blatch's comments and appealed to the Harding administration. Shields denied ever meeting the socialist reformer and promised to uphold all federal law if appointed to the bench. But when NAACP lobbyists asked him to elaborate he once again claimed it would "have been better for the country if the negro had never been enfranchised," insisted that expanding voting rights to Black women was "against the interest of our people," and called the Dyer anti-lynching bill "calculated to create strife, trouble and violence between the races in the South." Harding did not move forward with Shields's nomination.[1098]

[1097] See pp. 149, 257.

[1098] For several decades, the Supreme Court's complexion had been six Republicans and three Democrats. As both Justices William R. Day and John H. Clarke announced their retirement, analysts widely speculated that Harding would nominate Shields, a Democrat, and George Sutherland, a former Republican senator from Utah. "Ask Harding Not to Name Southerner to the Supreme Court," *Baltimore Afro-American* (November 10, 1922), 9; "Two Supreme Court Justices Are Expected to Retire," *Wall Street Journal* (September 7, 1922), 2; "Supreme Court Recesses," *New York Tribune* (October 24, 1922), 20; "Senator Shields May Replace Day," *Baltimore Sun* (October 22, 1922), 10; Harriot Stanton Blatch, "After Reading My Call," *New York Call* (October 28, 1922), 3.

Pickens repeatedly told James Weldon Johnson and Walter White that "It was mostly Socialist influence that gave me any aid [at] the CPPA conference." Using pressure from the "rank and file," the socialists and garment unions created enough action on the floor to "force an opening" for the NAACP delegate. Pickens also took credit after the SPA adopted its own anti-Klan shortly after the CPPA convention. "As direct result of our agitation and attack," Pickens telegrammed from Cleveland, "socialists who had been in progressive meeting later got resolution into their own meeting against Klan and against color discriminations by labor unions." This resolution, he initially thought, was "worth what it is worth." The socialists denouncing the Klan did not mean La Follette did, but more accurately described the "sentiment of socialist wing."[1099]

Nevertheless, the Socialist Party's plank, which emphatically condemned "the Ku Klux Klan and every other effort to divide the workers on racial or religious lines or to effect political purposes by secret and terroristic methods," was the first denunciation of the hooded order that election season. A second resolution urging white workers to co-operate "whole-heartedly with their Negro fellow workers, encouraging their organization in labor unions, and breaking down the prejudices that still survive" added an additional civil rights component to the Party's messaging. The SPA did have some trouble passing the resolution. William H. Henry, the party secretary in Indiana, told his fellow radicals that the Klan "permeated" his chapters. Taking on the KKK could have devastating consequences on his diminishing rolls. "Then you must explain why workers are at each other's throats," Walter T. Mills of California shot back. "You must either tear

[1099] Telegram from William Pickens to James Weldon Johnson, July 6, 1924; Telegram from William Pickens to James Weldon Johnson, July 9, 1924; William Pickens to James Weldon Johnson, July 6, 1924; William Pickens to James Weldon Johnson, July 8, 1924. NAACP Papers. Folder: Politics July-August 1924. Proquest: 001422_020_0219.

down the flaming cross or crucify the labor movement upon it." The party upheld the additions by eight percent.[1100]

The press took notice. The Republicans, Democrats, and Progressives had all either dodged the hooded order or failed to pass an effective resolution condemning it– only the SPA had the stomach for battle. Normally, the Socialist Party of America was a non-factor in presidential elections. But in 1924, it was part of a coalition that could conceivably win several states. The idea of socialist organizers streaming through urban centers denouncing the Klan and stumping for La Follette haunted Northern Democrats. Herbert C. Pell Jr., state chairman of the New York Democrats, openly worried that his party's candidates would suffer catastrophic losses everywhere but the Solid South unless the DNC took *some* position against the Klan.[1101] Governor Al Smith, in particular, survived in office by only the narrowest of margins and relied on immigrant and Black voters. The top of the ticket ceding the Klan issue to the Socialist Party could sway just enough votes to doom him.

With the SPA keeping the hooded order in the headlines, the Klan remained a hot button issue in the La Follette camp. Undeterred by the Cleveland convention, the NAACP kept up pressure on the CPPA to take a more aggressive stance and come out for racial equality. On July 11, the Association issued a formal press release calling on the CPPA to amend its platform and make a statement. Behind the scenes, Weldon Johnson,

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[1100] "Resolutions Adopted by the Socialist Party Convention at Cleveland, July, 1924," *Socialist World*, 10-11; "Klansmen Hit By Socialists," *Sioux City Journal* (July 9, 1924), 1; "Socialist Party Denounces Klan," *Louisville Courier-Journal* (July 9, 1924), 5; "Socialist Party Condemns Klan Openly By Name," *Paducah News-Democrat* (July 9, 1924), 1; "Socialist Party Condemns Klan," *The State* (Columbia, S.C.) (July 9, 1924), 1; "Socialist Party Condemns Klan in Resolutions," *Baltimore Sun* (July 9, 1924), 13. For more on labor and the Klan, see Thomas R. Pegram, "The Ku Klux Klan, Labor, and the White Working Class During the 1920s," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 17 (2018), 373-396.

[1101] "Must Name Klan, Democrats Insist," *New York Times* (July 26, 1924), 2; "Klan Is Denounced by Chairman Pell," *New York Times* (August 15, 1924), 4.

White, and Pickens asked sympathetic liberals to approach La Follette directly. Journalist Lewis Gannett told La Follette Jr. that Weldon Johnson felt "very much up a tree because he induced his Negro friends to indorse" the CPPA prior to the Cleveland convention. "Of course he is as sure as you and I that there is more sincere friendship for the Negroes in the new movement than in either of the old parties," he added, "but it would help enormously if the Senator could find some way to make that clear in public." Perhaps the most forceful advocacy came from Oswald Garrison Villard. The grandson of William Lloyd Garrison, a founding member of the NAACP, and editor of the *Nation*, Villard was a bridge between the liberalism of the Progressive Era and reconstruction liberalism of the 1920s. Originally something of a classic liberal, after the war he watched the British Labour Party closely, hoped the CPPA would lead to a similar party in the United States, and forged close connections between his magazine and groups like the League for Industrial Democracy and Arthur Gleason's Bureau of Industrial Research.[1102]

The "colored people of the country were very much disappointed" in the CPPA lack of action, Weldon Johnson told Villard. La Follette could still repair the damage if he issued "a strong statement embracing a declaration in favor of the enactment by Congress of a law against lynching; a definite statement regarding the Ku Klux Klan, and a comprehensive declaration of the civil rights of colored American citizens." Villard had in fact already written the senator on the omission of both planks. He noted that the socialists, who "alone had the courage to speak out against the Klan and denounce it,"

[1102] Lewis S. Gannet to Robert M. La Follette Jr., July 11, 1924. NAACP Papers. Folder: Politics July-August 1924. Proquest: 001422_020_0219; H.W. Massingham, "British Labor Celebrates Victory," *The Nation* (February 6, 1924), 135; "The Brighter Side in Washington," *The Nation* (March 5, 1924), 246; Benjamin Stolberg, "Third Party Chances," *The Nation* (April 2, 1924), 364; "Is Labor a Lost Hope," *Nation* (February 20, 1924), 196.

generated "a great deal of remark." A strong condemnation from La Follette himself would bring many voters into the CPPA's camp. "I can give you most positive assurance that if you can speak out at an early date upon the negro question and the Ku Klux Klan, it will mean many thousands of voters in New York State alone," he concluded. At the end of July, armed with a new letter from Weldon Johnson, Villard met La Follette in a closed door meeting in Washington, D.C. Barraged once more with the same talking points, this time the senator relented.[1103]

On August 5, with the leftwing of his coalition pushing him into action, La Follette became the first presidential candidate to attack the Klan. He was "unalterably opposed to the evident purposes of the secret organization," the Senator wrote. His condemnation of the Klan, however, did not lead to any specific civil rights platform. The candidate insisted that he had always stood *personally* "without reservation against any discrimination between races, classes and creeds." He further believed that every American citizen was "entitled to the full exercise of his constitutional rights."[1104] He issued no additional call for anti-lynching legislation nor any renewed demand for legislation to address political and economic discrimination. Charles Ervin, whom the Amalgamated Clothing Workers had loaned to the La Follette campaign to manage fundraising initiatives, recalled later that the senator's decision to not say more was not an easy one. "I have no right to make pledges to the colored man which I know if I am

[1103] James Weldon Johnson to Oswald Garrison Villard, July 23, 1924. NAACP Papers. Folder: Politics July-August 1924. Proquest: 001422_020_0219; Villard to Robert M. La Follette, July 11, 1924. La Follette Family Papers. Box: B101. Folder: 1924, Villard, Oswald Garrison.
[1104] *The Facts: La Follette-Wheeler Campaign Text-Book* (Chicago: La Follette-Wheeler Campaign Headquarters, 1924), 128-129.

elected I would not be allowed by Congress to carry out," he allegedly told Ervin during the race. He would make "no new statement on this issue just to get votes."[1105]

La Follette's Klan statement still had broken an uncomfortable silence in the 1924 campaign. Catholics in the Democratic Party once again feared losses. Two weeks after La Follette's statement, Frank Hague, the Irish Catholic mayor of Jersey City and head of the Party's statewide machine, ultimately convinced John W. Davis that his choice was either to condemn the Klan or finish third in every Northeastern state. The next day, in the oceanside town of Sea Girt, New Jersey, Davis claimed "Whenever any organization, no matter what it chooses to be called, whether the Ku Klux Klan or by any other name, raises the standard of racial and religious belief as a test of fitness for public office, it does violence to the spirit of American institutions." He called upon Calvin Coolidge to join him "in entirely removing this topic from the field of political debate."[1106] It was an open invitation to deemphasize race in the election.

Coolidge himself refused. Never one to campaign, he tasked his running mate General Charles G. Dawes to handle the controversy. Dawes made his statement a few days later in Maine, a state in which the Klan had effectively taken over the Republican Party. Dawes agreed with Davis that the Klan had "no proper part in this or any other campaign." He went on, however, to strongly imply that the Klan served as an unfortunately effective bulwark against "radicalism under LaFollette, the largest section of which, the Socialists, fly the red flag." Members of the Klan represented "only an

[1105] Charles Ervin, *Homegrown Liberal: The Autobiography of Charles W. Ervin*, ed. Jean Gould ed. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1954), 107.
[1106] "Davis' Denunciation of Klan is Cheered By Jersey Throng," *Washington Post* (August 23, 1924), 1; "Davis Heckled, Assails K.K.K.," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (October 17, 1924), 1; "Davis Wins Praise for Attacking Klan," *New York Times* (August 24, 1924), 1.

instinctive groping for leadership, moving in the interest of law enforcement, which they do not find in many cowardly politicians." He brought up the previous year's political crisis in Oklahoma as an example. As written previously, Oklahoma labor, organized farmers, and the former state Socialist Party had coalesced behind Democrat Jack C. Walton's gubernatorial campaign. After Walton had pushed a series of progressive reforms, however, the state's Klan rebelled. Walton declared martial law in Oklahoma City to reassert control, but the legislature was unwilling to see his administration through and impeached him after a year.[1107]

In Dawes's retelling, Walton had removed the former president-- "a man who believed in the old-fashioned doctrines of the Constitution"-- to install a "Socialist who was likely to teach the young men of that state some new-fashioned doctrines which… are not those of Constitutional Americanism." To add to the perilous situation, Walton's pardons had "loosed upon the state… a horde of hardened criminals." The Klan organized in the "interest of law and order" to compel the legislature into action. Dawes's statement on the Klan was duplicitous, designed as both a perfunctory denunciation as

[1107] Walton had passed a series of popular measures aiding farmers, workers, and public school students. He had, however, spelled his own doom by trying to simultaneously please his party's conservative wing, anchored by the Klan and the oil interests, and the leftwing Reconstruction League that guided him through the primary. The League's foremost demand to appoint George Wilson, an extension teacher at Oklahoma State (then called AM Stillwater), as president of the university. With an eye toward workers' education, they hoped Wilson would usher in a more democratic curriculum and vigorous extension program that would educate more of the state's citizens, not only the children of the wealthy. Wilson's appointment, however, infuriated the university's leadership and its trustees. The Klan soon picked up the issue and protested it as well. After only a few months, Walton fired Wilson– alienating his leftwing supporters. Increasingly isolated, Walton attempted to strengthen his position with an all-out political war on the KKK. Sparking upon unrest in Oklahoma City, Walton called in the state's national guard and declared martial law. With much of his party against him, the Reconstruction League uneager to defend him, and Republicans looking to discredit their opponents, the legislature easily removed him from office. "Death Calls George Wilson from Life's Battle for Farmers," *Oklahoma Leader* (February 6, 1925), 1; "Here's Your Chance," *Oklahoma Leader* (September 5, 1924), 7; "Wilson Named College Head," *The Advance-Democrat* (May 24, 1923), 1; "About Politics and Politicians," *Harlow's Weekly* (May 12, 1923), 6; "Chance to Teach Radicalism to Oklahoma Youth," *Daily Freelance* (Henryetta, OK) (May 22, 1923), 1; "Wilson Brings Guard of Militia Officers," *Stillwater Gazette* (June 8, 1923), 5; James R. Green 399-403; Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1940), 386-387.

well as a tacit endorsement of potentially extralegal grassroots mobilization against perceived radicalism. It was hardly difficult to see why CPPA supporters like Louis Budenz called him the "American Mussolini."[1108]

But even La Follette clearly tempered his attack on the hooded order, much to the dismay of the NAACP. In his written statement, La Follette made clear that while he condemned racial discrimination his campaign only had one central theme: "the combined power of the monopoly system over the political and economic life of the American people." Like Davis and Coolidge, he hoped to escape the controversy rather than face it head on. From his attack on "economic despotism," he would "not be turned aside." While the CPPA did devote resources to hire Black organizers and print campaign materials for African American voters, no one in the La Follette camp ever described a concrete civil rights program. The two men assigned to craft the campaigns specific messaging on race were G. Victor Cools, a Black economist with various appointments in the Co-Operative League of America, National Negro Progressive League, and NAACP, and Ernest Gruening, an editor at the *Nation* and a future senator from Alaska. Gruening, hired as a publicity director, worked with Cools to draft a list of talking points that would make La Follette look good on race without committing him to any potentially unpopular measures. To that end, they noted that La Follette was not only the first candidate to denounce the Klan in 1924, but had spoken out against the post-war racial violence that had rocked urban America, had a long history of appointing Black people into state and federal patronage appointments, and had voted for a $470,000 appropriation for Howard

[1108] "Says Klan is Opposed to Welfare of Civilization," *Boston Sunday Globe* (August 24, 1924), 10; David Lawrence, "Dawes' Remarks Regarding Klan Not Sufficient," *Akron Beacon Journal* (August 25, 1924), 1; "Dawes Commends Ku Klux Klan, but Attacks its Methods," *Buffalo Sunday Times* (August 24, 1924), 1; Louis F. Budenz, "Is This The 'Lincoln Period'?" *Justice* (June 20, 1924), 7.

University. He had also encouraged the Wisconsin congressional delegation to vote for the Dyer bill and would have voted for cloture in the Senate had he not been "kept from his desk by illness," they added.[1109] "It is an axiom that a man's past action is a good barometer of what to expect of him in the future," Gruening concluded.

Privately, Cools acknowledged that La Follette's position on racism was lacking. In a letter to James Weldon Johnson, Cools wrote that he had long believed that only an independent party could free Black people from "political, economic, and social serfdom." La Follette's movement, in his estimation, offered "the greatest inducements" in the 1924 election presented a "unique opportunity to show the authorities behind the two old parties that the black man has a brain which he uses." The CPPA could not, however, be too openly militant on race. The La Follette campaign could only win the election and "change the economic status of the masses" by keeping his base in organized labor intact. "He and his advisors have decided to eliminate as far as possible the moral issues," Cools wrote, attempting to persuade Weldon Johnson. "Our strength is too precious to waste on factional strife. We must conserve it to fight our principal enemies, the big interests." Neither Gruening nor Cools fully convinced Weldon Johnson or Walter White that La Follette's record was clean enough for him to avoid a more forceful comment.

Both NAACP leaders did feel, in the words of Lewis Gannett, "up a tree" in regards to the La Follette situation. Weldon Johnson, White, Pickens, and Hurst had done

[1109] *The Facts: La Follette-Wheeler Campaign Text-Book* (Chicago: La Follette-Wheeler Campaign Headquarters, 1924), 128-129; "Thomas Reads More Letters," *Shreveport Times* (September 6, 1924), 12; "Begin Suit to Deprive Negroes of Citizenship," *The Morning Call* (Paterson, N.J.) (October 6, 1924), 1; Emmett Scott to Robert M. La Follette, February 20, 1924. Box B98. Folder: Howard University. Ernest Gruening, "Senator Robert M. La Follette's Stand on Issues to Vital to the Negro's Interest." La Follette Family Papers. Box: B208. Folder: "Racial Issue."

a great deal of persuading to get the Association's board to send an envoy to the CPPA convention and the decision was not without controversy. Several Black papers questioned the logic of openly antagonizing the Republican Party by throwing in with a radical movement backed by several overtly racist unions. One editor called the move a "bad political blunder." Another called it "errant madness."[1110] Only a few weeks after the Cleveland convention, Weldon Johnson was on the defensive. The secretary vigorously denied that the NAACP had thrown in with La Follette. "The fact is, the [NAACP] did not endorse La Follette or any other candidate," Weldon Johnson wrote in a late-July press release, "What the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is aiming at is the emancipation of the Negro from voting blindly for any party." While he and his allies on the NAACP board had hoped that La Follette would provide a clear and better alternative to Coolidge, that hope "did not materialize in Cleveland." Weldon Johnson maintained his faith that "a vigorous, progressive third party, similar to the Labor Party in England, would be the Negro's political salvation in America," but the CPPA was likely not that vehicle.[1111]

Responding directly to Cools and Gruening, White and Weldon Johnson aired their disappointment in no uncertain terms. The progressives had "completely ignored every one of the issues which are most vital to the Negro," White wrote. "We were thus left open to attacks which have come from conservative colored Republicans who have made full use of the argument that the NAACP endorsed a third party movement which

[1110] N.A.A.C.P. Advice on Third Party Draws Comment of Race Editors," *New Journal and Guide* (July 26, 1924), 7; "When Leaders Run Away," *Pittsburgh Courier* (November 22, 1924), 16.
[1111] James Weldon Johnson, "Colored Advancement Association Corrects Misrepresentation of Its Third Party Utterances," July 25, 1924. NAACP Papers. Folder: Politics July-August 1924. Proquest: 001422_020_0219

did not offer to the Negro even so much as the Republican Party." White several times mentioned his sympathy for the La Follette campaign, calling the candidacies of Coolidge and Davis "laughable" in comparison, but the CPPA had evaded racial equality in a fashion too "cowardly" to tolerate. The colorblind economics Cools advocated would not sway White. "Many of us who class ourselves as liberal on national and international problems are not allowed to think as liberals but, instead, are forced by circumstances which are as familiar to you as to me to think as Negroes first and liberals second," he wrote. And while Weldon Johnson never gave up on pushing La Follette's people to issue a strong statement "in favor of the full rights of American citizenship to all citizens regardless of race or color," he too finished the campaign embittered. The "absolute failure" of the CPPA to "take any stand on human rights as they apply to the Negro in the United States about completely destroyed the chance of interesting the colored people at large in the Third Party movement" the NAACP secretary wrote to Gruening. Weldon Johnson also complained of the "good many knocks" he had to endure from the conservatives in his organization for sticking his neck out.[1112]

White and Weldon Johnson withdrew from active participation in the 1924 campaign by the end of September. Others in the Association chose to support La Follette even without a strong civil rights statement. Bishop Hurst told his congregants and readers in Baltimore that "it would be folly for… colored Americans not to take

[1112] Walter White to G. Victor Cools, August 8, 1924, August 14, 1924; James Weldon Johnson to Ernest Gruening, September 16, 1924. NAACP Papers. Politics August-September 1924 . Proquest: 001422_020_0285.

As historian Mark Schneider summarizes the outcome of the election, "The likelihood is that White and Johnson voted for Davis while Pickens and Du Bois voted for La Follette, all feeling disgusted. Thus the 1924 election laid the groundwork for the historic change of the 1930s." Mark R. Schneider, *We Return Fighting: The Civil Rights Movement in the Jazz Age* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 50-55.

advantage of the glorious opportunity furnished" by the CPPA. Further, La Follette and the CPPA both pledged to end the Haitian occupation– something neither party promised to do. Du Bois heartily agreed on the Haitian point and hoped to issue a rebuke to the party of "mass privilege, monopoly and condescension which now masquerades as the party of Abraham Lincoln." He claimed to share the CPPA's belief "in the economic foundations of most… social problems." And while the famed sociologist and NAACP founder wished the "anti-Negro Railroad Brotherhoods" would let their candidate "say a plainer, cleaner word on the Negro," he reminded himself that no candidate in 1924 had done better.[1113]

Of all the Black NAACP leaders that initially gravitated toward the CPPA, William Pickens took the most active role in the election. Since the convention, Pickens had displayed an appreciation for the left wing of the Conference– a group he believed had demonstrated "courage and consistency." Responding to A. Philip Randolph, who had asked for his impressions of the Cleveland meeting, Pickens wrote that he liked "Progressives as individuals, and I liked their economic program. It represents some forward steps." But he confessed that "But so far as the Negro as a group is concerned, there could be no special interest in the Progressive Program except in so far as the Negro is part of the economic whole." A more just economic program was good, of course, but Black voters had "special and separate" interests that needed addressing. These trepidations were not pressing enough to prevent Pickens from volunteering to speak on the CPPA's behalf. He joined the NY CPPA's organizing committee and spoke alongside LaGuardia, Norman Thomas, John Haynes Holmes, Morris Hillquit, A. Philip Randolph,

[1113] "Bishop Hurst Urges Support of La Follette," *Baltimore Afro-American* (October 10, 1924),10; Du Bois, "Opinion," *Crisis* (September 1924), 199-200; "How Shall We Vote?" *Crisis* (November 1924), 13.

and Frank Crosswaith at various rallies in Harlem, including one at the famed Abyssinian Baptist Church. He had even briefly considered making his own run for congress in a district comprising most of Black Harlem, but changed his mind. The GOP had ultimately nominated a Black candidate to take on the Democratic incumbent and Pickens worried that the Black press would view him as a spoiler– A. Philip Randolph ended up running in his place.[1114] And while he never shared the stage with La Follette himself, he did introduce his daughter, Fola La Follette, when she spoke to a Black audience of more than a thousand at the Douglass theater in Baltimore.

Pickens took an active part in the campaign. When Gilbert Roe and Arthur Garfield Hays (La Follette's campaign managers for New York City) asked for additional Black organizers, he provided them.[1115] But Pickens also never stopped pushing for a better platform on civil rights and an even more vigorous condemnation of the Klan. "A

[1114] "Going on Today," *New York Herald Tribune* (October 8, 1924), 30; "In the Current Week," *New York Times* (October 5, 1924), E14; "Independents Plan Drive in New York," *Atlanta Constitution* (October 3, 1924), 3; "Dr. Thomas Declares New Party is Issue," *New York Times* (October 20, 1924), 3; "Campaign Workers Hear La Follette," *New York Times* (September 23, 1924), 2; "Negro Socialist Rally" *New Leader* (October 4, 1924), 8; La Follette's Wife to Talk Here Today," *Baltimore Sun* (November 2, 1924), 16; "La Follette Plans Win Out in Albany," *New York Times* (August 17, 1924), 3; "Miss LaFollette and Wm. Pickens at Rally Here," *Baltimore Afro-American* (November 8, 1924), 8; William N. Jones, "Colored Vote Will Decide Issue Next Tuesday," *Baltimore Afro-American* (October 31, 1924), 8; "Bishop Hurst Urges Support of La Follette," *Baltimore Afro-American* (October 10, 1924), 10.

The Republicans nominated Charles H. Roberts, a dentist and former alderman, to run in the 21st. It was the first time the party nominated a Black candidate for Congress in the city. After this turn, Pickens determined that "the whole business would be construed by the enemy as a sort of double-crossing of the colored voters and might do more harm for the Liberal cause than it would do in the end." William Pickens to Joseph Cannon, August 20, 1924. NAACP Papers. Politics August-September 1924. Proquest: 001422_020_0285; "Dr. Roberts to Run for Congress," *New York Age* (August 16, 1924), 1.

[1115] He suggested a John W. Youngblood, an editor for a paper called the *Brooklyn Ledger*, and Rev. J. Julian Jenkins A.M.E. Jenkins remained a reverend in the New York area until the end of the decade. HE later resurfaced in Olean, New York, where in the mid-thirties he helped organize a "Council of Social Agencies" and helped coordinate relief payments. Youngblood seemingly joined the League of Struggle for Negro Rights (a Communist organization) in the early 1930s. "To Hold Discussion on Manchurian Situation," *New York Age* (December 12, 1931), 3; "Plan to Remove Remains of Former Worshipers Marks Church Extinction," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (April 12, 1928), 1; "Unemployment Problems Aired at Meeting Here," *Olean Times-Herald* (January 23, 1936), 2.

man who has fought privilege for more than a generation like Senator La Follette cannot surely afford to attack a medival[sic] menace like the Klan, even if he has to lose by it," he told G. Victor Cools, "In his own time, which I hope will be very soon, the Senator should say a definite word about the constitutional rights of colored people." Even though that "definite word" never came, Pickens remained convinced that given the "poor choice between Ku Klux Klan and Republicans, and Lynching Democrats" he could still vote for La Follette without hurting his "personal self-respect."[1116]

Having leaders like Hurst, Pickens, and Du Bois certainly helped attract some attention to the Progressive campaign. The rallies in Harlem and Baltimore were apparently engaging and well-attended.[1117] In Washington, D.C., Black lawyer and future congressman Arthur W. Mitchell spoke at several events in the mid-Atlantic on behalf of the La Follette-Wheeler Ticket. The *Washington Tribune* frequently reported on CPPA and other La Follette rallies throughout the capital. In far off California, a San Diego-based political club named the Douglas League also apparently endorsed the senator as well. In the end, the exact number of Black votes La Follette received is difficult to determine. La Follette won 32,580 votes in the city of Baltimore, but it is unclear how the campaign fared in the historically Black parts of town. In upper Manhattan he won about seventeen percent of the vote in the heavily-Black nineteenth assembly district, but only about ten percent in the district that comprised most of central Harlem– where both the

[1116] Pickens to Cools, August 11, 1924. NAACP Papers. Politics August-September 1924. Proquest: 001422_020_0285. William Pickens to Foster Cook, October 6, 1924. NAACP Papers. Politics September to October 1924. Proquest: 001422_020_0370.
[1117] "Among the Churches," *Pittsburgh Courier* (October 11, 1924), 13; "Miss LaFollette and Wm. Pickens at Rally Here," *Baltimore Afro-American* (November 8, 1924), 8.

Democrats and Republicans nominated a Black candidate.[1118] Regardless, most Black voters clearly stuck with the GOP.

The nation's largest Black papers, the *Chicago Defender*, *New York Age*, and *Pittsburgh Courier*, all roundly criticized La Follette as a dangerous radical and encouraged their readers to stick with Coolidge, the fair-minded inheritor of Lincoln's legacy. The *Courier* took a particularly hostile stance on the CPPA and the La Follette movement, going so far as to briefly amplify a conspiracy theory that La Follette, Wheeler, and a few other senators fabricated the evidence behind the Teapot Dome scandal.[1119] The small Chicago-based newspaper, *The Broad Ax*, claimed that all Black voters saw in the CPPA was "an attack on the Constitution, which they have abided by… Reds, whom they fear, and … demagoguery which confuses them." The *California Eagle*, likewise, claimed La Follette would take no steps to abolish the "Southern oligarchy," but rather seemed interested "only in destroying the sources from which the United States Government derives its revenue and in ovedriding[*sic*] the Constitution of the United States." The pro-Republican and anti-labor bent of most of the nation's Black

[1118] "La Follette Club Organized Here by Local Men," *Washington Tribune* (September 13, 1924), 1; "Mitchell Speaks for La Follette," *Washington Tribune* (October 4, 1924); "La Follette to Discuss Issues," *Washington Tribune* (July 19, 1924), 1; "The City Vote," *New York Times* (November 6, 1924), 6; "Coolidge City Lead Mounting to 125,000," *NYT* (Nov. 5, 1924), 1; "La Follette Adherents Make Their Mark in South Baltimore," *The Sun* (Nov. 5, 1924), 5; Shannon King, *Whose Harlem Is This, Anyway?* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 110-112; "Atty. Pope B. Billips Names for Assemblyman," *New York Age* (August 2, 1924), 1; "A Misnomer," *California Eagle* (October 31, 1924), 8.

[1119] "Means- Wheeler Scandal Throws Glaring Light on La Follette Campaign," *Pittsburgh Courier* (September 27, 1924), 1.

The conspiracy came about after Gaston B. Means, a notorious conman who once swindled investors out of more than a $100,000 for a hoax investigation into the Lindbergh baby kidnapping, recanted testimony that he had collected bribes on behalf of Harry Daugherty. Means, as it turns out, had lied about his involvement in the affair to avoid sentencing on two fraud cases involving the theft of $200,000 in liquor from government warehouses and a dubious glass coffin enterprise. "Gaston B. Means Dies in Prison," *New York Herald Tribune* (December 13, 1938), 6.

papers did not change in 1924.[1120] After the election, New Jersey-based banker George E. Cannon publicly resigned from the NAACP executive board over its perceived efforts "to lead the Negro into the meshes of the Democratic and so-called progressive or socialist parties." The "open hostility of the officials of the Association towards President Coolidge and the Republican Party virtually makes the Association an anti-Republican organization and a pro-Democratic and Socialist organization," Cannon wrote in his letter.[1121]

The Republican-aligned Black press often specifically targeted the CPPA's stance on the Supreme Court. This is almost certainly what the editors of the *Eagle* meant when they accused La Follette of "overriding" the constitution. Rienzi B. Lemus, the Black leader of the Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees (an independent union that had organized a few lines during the war) and a member of RNC's "colored section," warned that La Follette's amendment could result in a Southern-controlled Senate running roughshod over the Fourteenth Amendment. "Congress could segregate you," he warned a crowd in Pittsburgh.[1122] The Conference for Progressive Political Action had indeed demanded a constitutional amendment assigning fixed term limits for Supreme Court

[1120] The Man on the Corner, "Straw Vote or Ballot Which Continues to Run Through the Columns of the Daily Newspapers Throughout the Country, Clearly Indicates, that Hon. Calvin Coolidge will be Elected President of the United States Tuesday, November 4," *The Broad Ax* (Oct. 4, 1924), 1; "Winter of Discontent," *California Eagle* (October 17, 1924), 6; "Endorses Coolidge's Speech of Acceptance," *California Eagle* (September 12, 1924), 3; W.J. Wheaton, "Comments," *California Eagle* (August 27, 1924), 12; "La Follette and Labor Unions," *Pittsburgh Courier* (September 27, 1924), 16; "William Ferris, African Scholar, Favors Coolidge," October 4, 1924, 2 ; "G.O.P. Not Worried About Democrats and La Follette," *Chicago Defender* (October 4, 1924), A11. "Women's Political Study Club Praises G.O.P. Stand," *Chicago Defender* (September 20, 1924), A7. "The Reason for Coolidge," *New York Age* (October 25, 1924), 4; "President Coolidge Given Tremendous Vote by Country in Returning Him to Office," *New York Age* (November 8, 1924), 1; "Making A Choice," *New York Age* (October 18, 1924), 4.
[1121] Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors, November 10, 1924. NAACP Papers. Board of Directors, 1924. Proquest: 001412_001_0988.
[1122] "Dining Car Men for Coolidge," *Pittsburgh Courier* (October 11, 1924), 2.

justices and allowing congress to restore laws struck down via judicial review.[1123] Because the degree to which the Supreme Court had nullified hours and wages legislation, circumvented boycott and strike protections, and continued the use of the injunction in labor disputes, a plank of this kind was near universally popular in labor circles. In 1922, the AFL invited La Follette to speak on the subject of the Court. The convention applauded him when he referred to the US as a "judicial oligarchy" and called for an amendment insisting that Congress have sole legislative power. At that same meeting of the AFL, Benjamin Schlesinger won Gompers's support to form a committee, headed by Morris Hillquit, to draft the language of such an amendment and investigate other potential legal counters to the Court's attack on industrial legislation. Labor periodicals filled pages with denunciations of the Court during the mid-twenties.[1124]

[1123] La Follette and his former law partner, Gilbert E. Roe, devised a few drafts of the hypothetical amendment. All of them would have required the Supreme Court to submit any law it deemed unconstitutional back to congress for final review. If two-thirds of the House and Senate agreed to overturn the Court's order, then the law could not be deemed "unconstitutional for any purpose." Gilbert E. Roe to Robert La Follette, January 7, 1924. La Follette Family Papers. Folder: 1924, Roe, Gilbert E.

[1124] Lefkowitz determined that if "the people are to rule and America is to work out her economic and political destinies peacefully, further encroachments of the Supreme Court must cease. Property rights must give way to human rights." Louis Budenz agreed, taking a more historical view. "In Lincoln's day the Supreme Court was the citadel of Slavery," he wrote, "Today it is the stronghold of monopoly." Even correspondents for the British Labour Party called the Supreme Court "the most potent bulwark against democracy." American reformers frequently pointed out that the United Kingdom had no equivalent of judicial review. "In England the veto has not been exercised by the Executive in any case for more than two centuries… Yet England is not governed by a mob," wrote North Carolina Chief Justice Walter Clark. "Report and Action on Men and Platforms," *American Federationist* (September 1924), 707; *Report of Proceedings of the Forty-Second Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor* (Washington, D.C.: Law Reporter Printing Company, 1922), 232-243; "Pres. Schlesinger on Special Supreme Court Committee," *Justice* (June 23, 1922). 1; "The A.F. of L. Convention and Our International," *Justice* (June 23, 1922), 6; J.B.C., "Supreme Court and the Minimum Wage Laws," *Justice* (April 20, 1923), 8; Ethel M. Smith, "The Supreme Court vs. Itself," *Justice* (April 11, 1924), 8; Abraham Lefkovitz, "Supreme Court Usurpation," *Upholsterer's Journal* (June, 1923), 56; Edwin F. Ladd, "Tyranny of the Courts is the Supreme Issue," *New Leader* (November 1, 1924), 4; "U.S. Supreme Court Rapped for Killing Labor Legislation," *Labor* (January 5, 1924), 3; John Elliott, "The Other Election: America's Judicial Oligarchy," *New Leader* (London) (October 31, 1924), 8; Louis F. Budenz, "Is This The 'Lincoln Period'?" *Justice* (June 20, 1924), 7; "Court Curbs Power of People," *La Follette's Magazine* (June 1923), 93; "U.S. Courts and Big Interests in Unholy Alliance-- La Follette" *Capital Times* (February 10, 1922), 1; Walter Clark, "Courts Take Power Away From People," *La Follette's Magazine* (September, 1923), 134.

The NAACP also weathered sharp questioning from the left. Earl Browder and William Z. Foster accused the CPPA, with some truth, of tolerating "the Fascist K.K.K." in its state branches. They questioned how any liberal or radical organization could support such a compromise. William English Walling, a former socialist and NAACP founder who became a liberal Democrat, agreed that La Follette muted pressing concerns over prohibition and race "for the very strong reasons (among others) that some of the unions supporting him the longest and most devotedly… are among the few labor organizations excluding negroes and… are most likely to contain numerous members of the Klan." A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen both stumped for La Follette but did so with a great deal of reluctance. "It is not sufficient to say that because Negroes are farmers and laborers that the party representing primarily farmers and working people is *ipso facto* the representative of the Negro," Owen wrote. "The Chairman, William H. Johnson is leader of the machinists union, which excludes all but sober industrious white men in its constitution. The sixteen railroad unions… are notorious in their frank exclusion of Negroes." In his write up of the most pressing issues of the 1924 campaign– unemployment, railroads, tariffs, taxes, rent, and disarmament– Randolph argued that the CPPA had the best position on each. He nevertheless called La Follette's direct silence on race "One of the most disappointing and unfortunate mistakes." A single speech made personally would have had a marked difference, he determined.[1125]

[1125] "Doings and Misdoings of the Month," *Labor Herald* (October 1924), 227; William Z. Foster, "La Follette, Gompers, and Debs," *Labor Herald* (October 1924), 230; William English Walling, "La Follette and Labor," *New York Herald Tribune* (Aug. 8, 1924), 10; A. Philip Randolph, "The Issues– The Negro and the Parties," *Messenger* (October, 1924), 345; A. Philip Randolph, "Election in Retrospect," *The Messenger* Vol. 6 No. 4 (December 1924) 371, 390.

While the more activist wing of the NAACP clearly resented how badly La Follette and the CPPA bungled civil rights, many were able to find some hope in the result. The Ku Klux Klan had nearly escaped criticism from any of the presidential candidates in 1924. But after La Follette opened his attack both Davis and Coolidge had to follow, at least to some degree. For the first time, several African American commentators noted, the Northern Black vote was a competitive one. Each of the campaigns (though not going as far to declare for racial equality) attempted to appeal to voters of color. As a result, African Americans had a real choice in the election and could weigh the party platforms presented to them. "For the first time in the history of the black voter, black folk have been prominent in the councils of each party organization and have voted for each party in large numbers," Du Bois concluded, "and they have done this without meeting to any extent the accusation of being 'traitors' to their race." He described the African Americans who voted Republican as embodying a "last pathetic appeal for justice in the face of unparalleled flouting of black men by this administration." William N. Jones of the *Afro-American* echoed these views, claiming that "for the first time there has been a real threat of breaking the traditional allegiance that has made the [Republican] party sure of this vote." The Black men and women who voted for La Follette "without hope of reward" worked toward a political realignment in the years to come. Randolph hoped, too, that something would give. Black voters had to break with their "slavish allegiance" to the Republicans, he thought.[1126]

Even the more conservative Kelly Miller noted that the "one conspicuous advantage which the Negro gained from the campaign is the division of his vote." He

[1126] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Election," *The Crisis* Vol. 29 No. 2(Dec. 1924), 55; William N. Jones, "Day by Day," *Afro-American* (Nov. 15, 1924), A9.

estimated that of the "element of the race which makes a thought approach to political questions, about five out of ten were for La Follette, three for Coolidge and two for Davis." Miller did lament that Coolidge, who had the least to say on the Klan, won so handily– especially considering his position at the head of Lincoln's party. The hooded order had "bored into the Republican party like a worm into the heart of an apple," he bemoaned. "We can only hope that it will not eat out the core and leave it a hollow shell."[1127] At least now Black voters had more options.

Conclusion

The CPPA's 1924 campaign was one of both tragedy and promise for reformers in the NAACP. The World War had fundamentally changed Black life in America. By the mid-twenties, millions of African Americans toiled in urban industrial jobs. But often locked out of unions, these workers had little recourse to improve conditions. White northerners, already fearful of foreign "radicals" emigrating from abroad, reacted violently to waves of Black people leaving the South for better opportunities. Hoping to win back the white Protestants who left for Wilson, the Republican party shelved the few civil rights initiatives it maintained from the Reconstruction years. A lust for foreign markets and natural resources also meant that the US government was unlikely to end its occupation of Haiti and the Virgin Islands. For individuals like Pickens, Du Bois, Bagnall, White, and Weldon Johnson, the industrial democracy and anti-militarist focus of post-war reconstruction offered a potential tonic to all these ills. Positive initial meetings with members of the British Labour Party reinforced this belief. But the

[1127] "Kelly Miller Says," *Afro-American* (November 15, 1924), A9.

American reconstructionists who founded the CPPA were less than reliable allies for racial justice. The Machinists and Brotherhoods kept the "social questions" of race and religion firmly out of the CPPA's purview. In the Senate, La Follette's progressives had little qualm working with, and indeed elevating, white supremacists to advance their goals.

But at the same time, NAACP progressives discovered that socialists and the leftwing intellectuals who aligned with them could be useful allies. Harriot Stanton Blatch, Abe Lefkowitz, and Norman Thomas led the fight for a CPPA and socialist attack on the Klan. Frank Crosswaith, Randolph, and Owen offered connections to the progressive ranks of organized labor and organizations like the League for Industrial Democracy and the American Fund for Public Service. Working with the social democratic left, the NAACP publicized the lack of major party action on the Klan, secured La Follette's condemnation, and complicated the standard American election calculus. Though it would take another decade to fully develop, in 1924 African Americans began to reevaluate their relationship to the Grand Old Party. The Conference for Progressive American Action played a role in that shift.

Conclusion: "We Parted As Friends"

In the end, Robert La Follette received around five million votes–roughly seventeen percent of the total. While a strong showing for a third party in the United States, especially one running unapologetically to the left, the La Follette came nowhere near victory. Adding salt to the wound were several losses down ballot. Despite polling more than 100,000 votes above his total in the 1923 special election, Minnesota Senator Magnus Johnson lost his bid for a full term. Iowa Senator Smith W. Brookhart would not return either. With the outcome of the election decided by less than a thousand votes, Daniel F. Steck, Brookhart's Democratic opponent, appealed to the Senate to review the election for irregularities and Congress voted in his favor. Calvin Coolidge, who hardly campaigned at all, pointed to the growing economy, rising agricultural prices (a bad crop in Canada coupled with new tariffs and slightly looser agricultural credit had caused a brief rebound), and a recent settlement to the Ruhr crisis and let the voters decide. If the voters wanted to trade in Coolidge's stability for La Follette's radicalism, it was their prerogative. The Republican Party remained the home for the American white protestant majority.[1128] Neither Davis nor La Follette were able to break through.

The Conference for Progressive Political Action would not survive long after the election. Exhausted from the election, the socialists, liberals, and standard trade unionists decided to stop delaying a vote on forming a new party. The Brotherhoods voted no and

[1128] "Shall Steck Unseat Brookhart?" *Washington Post* (August 13, 1925), 6. On the agricultural economy in the 1924 campaign, see Theodore Saloutos and John D. Hicks, *Twentieth Century Populism: Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West, 1900-1939* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1951), 375; Russel B. Nye, *Midwestern Progressive Politics: A Historical Study of Its Origins and Developments, 1870-1958* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), 312-315. On the 1924 Dawes Act, George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 458-460.

withdrew from the proceedings. The socialists and La Follette progressives voted yes, but disagreed on what the new party would look like– something based on the British model, where the SPA would be allowed to remain nominally independent, or a new Progressive Party with a singular membership. Neither faction made headway with the other. La Follette Jr. determined that despite sharing the desire for a "better political system and a more just economic situation," the best tactic was likely splitting the ranks and revisiting cooperation on an *ad hoc* basis. In effect, the coalition would keep the CPPA model without a formal structure. The delegates departed the final meeting of the Conference with expected disappointment, but also with mutual understanding. "We parted as friends," James Oneal wrote. Two years later, David Saposs would write that "the reciprocal feeling of good will between the socialists and the trade union leaders" that developed during the CPPA years "did not suffer materially during this liquidation of united independent political action." All groups were "anxious to perpetuate this feeling."[1129] He was correct in many regards.

It is tempting to see the collapse of the Conference as the closing of a chapter for American labor. Within only a year and a half of the CPPA's demise, Eugene Debs, Samuel Gompers, Robert La Follete, and Warren Stone all died. A debilitating stroke in 1926 forced William H. Johnston, who perhaps did more than any other labor leader to keep the organization alive, into an early retirement.[1130] But the CPPA lived on in spirit if not in name. Postwar reconstruction had left an indelible mark on American trade

[1129] David J. Saposs, *Left Wing Unionism: A Study of Radical Policies and Tactics* (New York: International Publishers, 1926), 44-46; "Chicago and After," *New Leader* (February 28, 1925), 12; Belle Case La Follette and Fola La Follette, *Robert M. La Follette: June 14, 1855-June 18, 1925* (New York: MacMillan, 1953), 1156-1157.
[1130] "William H. Johnston of Washington Dead," *Newport Mercury* (April 2, 1937), 3.

unionism and the broad American left. The reformers who took inspiration from the British Labour Party and plotted a social democratic future continued to work toward their dream. Many found themselves a part of the New Deal state. Others would drift into the mid-century civil rights movement. The Conference itself may have fallen apart, but the lessons it imparted on grassroots political mobilization remained.

The strategy that undergirded the CPPA's electioneering continued to bring results. Keating published special election issues of *Labor*, unions formed statewide chapters to name candidates for primaries, and international unions continued to distribute funds to bring its members to polls. Labor-backed candidates had an excellent run between 1925 and 1926. In Wisconsin, Robert La Follette Jr. swept a special election to fill his father's seat, a position he would hold for the next twenty years. Victor Berger would win his last term in the House and Governor John J. Blaine successfully primaried Irvine Lenroot, the standpat Republican who survived a progressive challenge in 1920. Labor also not only managed to reelect Smith W. Brookhart to the Senate, but did so by denying Albert Cummins renomination. Cummins was the Senate *pro tempore* and author of the Transportation Act of 1920– still a glaring black mark for most trade unionists. On the East Coast, trade unions pushed Tammany Hall to nominate Robert F. Wagner as the party's standard bearer against conservative Republican James Wadsworth. Wagner was one of the most labor-friendly politicians in the state, having earned organized labor's admiration for his investigations into worker safety after the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire. In December 1921, Wagner, then a justice on the New York Supreme Court, issued an injunction *against* several New York-area clothing manufacturers and allowed the ILGWU to seek between three and four million dollars in damages. "Precedent is not our

only guide in deciding these disputes," Wagner ruled, "for many are worn out by time and made useless by the more enlightened and humane conception of social justice." Various journalists called his decision "one of the most important and far-reaching decisions ever handed down in the interests of labor." Several Garment Workers leaders, including Fannia Cohn and Rose Schneiderman, ended their traditional affiliation with the Socialist Party and American Labor Party and stumped for Wagner throughout the city in 1926. The editors of *Justice*, typically very vocal in their support for SPA/ALP candidates, made no endorsement prior to the election.[1131]

The 1924 election proved that trade unions, while not strong enough to carry a candidate to the White House single handedly, could nevertheless elect a slew of candidates to Congress. La Follette found support in urban areas with a high union density coast to coast. Often mischaracterized as the candidate of disgruntled farmers, the

[1131] In the winter of 1921, New York garment manufacturers made a coordinated effort to drive down wages. Despite still operating under a contract with the ILGWU enforcing a 44-hour week and a "week-work" system, the manufacturers abruptly instituted a 49-hour week and a piece-work system of production. The business owners' protective association charged that "the union waged a campaign of sabotage against productivity," nullifying the contract and giving the manufacturers the right to impose changed. The union went on strike and hired Morris Hillquit and Samuel Untermeyer to bring a suit to the Supreme Court alleging that the manufacturers had engaged in a criminal conspiracy to break contract rules. Wagner agreed, enjoined the owners, and ended the dispute. The decision handed the ILGWU a victory at a time in which labor was very much on the defensive.

"The Road to Political Power," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* (December 1926), 907; "Labor Group Backs Wagner for Senate," *New York Times* (October 10, 1926), 22; "Deny Disaffection in Tammany Ranks," *New York Times* (October 26, 1926), 3; "Railroad Firemen Endorse Wagner," *New York Times* (October 14, 1926), 1; "Green Urges Voters to Support Wagner," *New York Times* (October 15, 1926), 9; "John J. Blaine's Life Story Reveals He was Known as 'Lone-Fighter' in Politics," *Capital Times* (April 17, 1934), 9; "Ex-Sen. John J. Blaine is Dead," *Capital Times* (April 17, 1934), 1; "Grasp of Coolidge Slipping a Little," *Lincoln State Journal* (June 20, 1926), 3A; "Union Granted Injunction in Clothing Case," *Baltimore Sun* (January 12, 1922), 1; "Strikers Win Big Victory in Garment War," *New York Tribune* (January 12, 1922), 1; "Union's Injunction Remains Unchanged in Garment Strike," *New York Tribune* (December 2, 1921), 8; "Strike Charges Called Plot by Garment Firms," *New York Tribune* (December 23, 1921), 5; Max Danish, "The Injunction Works Both Ways," *Labor Age* (February 1922), 6; "Is It Right or Is It Wrong?" *Justice* (December 9, 1921), 6; Morris Hillquit, "Injunctions Against Employers," *Justice* (December 9, 1921), 7; "Agreement in Cloak Industry Must Be Restored," *Justice* (December 23, 1921), 1; "Our Victory," *Justice* (January 20, 1922), 6; "President Gompers Among Our Critics," *Justice* (February 3, 1922), 6.

Wisconsin senator actually outperformed his national average in the nation's large metropolitan areas.[1132] He won Milwaukee and Cleveland, then two of the largest cities in the country, and nearly captured San Francisco and Pittsburgh. He carried several small cities like Dubuque, Iowa and finished first in several assembly districts in the Bronx, East Harlem, and New York's Lower East Side. These statistics, coupled with Davis's poor performance in the urban north, proved to Frank P. Walsh that any future liberal party *had* to include labor and take up the CPPA's platform.

Walsh, a Democrat who supported La Follette, told a friend that if his party "was worth saving" it had to take the best parts of McAdoo populism and the CPPA platform, which he considered "slightly more advanced in certain directions." He decried the Democratic Party's return to what Oswald Garrison Villard described as "Grover Cleveland liberalism." As a liberal and a Catholic, Walsh believed that Al Smith's nomination in 1928 would reverse the party's fortunes. Enlisting the help of former CPPA secretary Frederic C. Howe, he formed the Progressive League for Alfred E. Smith, an organization dedicated to "deliver the bulk" of La Follette's five million votes to Smith. Though the pair succeeded in getting Republican senators George Norris and John Blaine to cross party lines and endorse Smith, they failed to generate much publicity. The Smith campaign itself struggled to fully energize former La Follette voters. The initial Democratic Platform included no attack on the injunction, hesitated on investments in public power, and backtracked on farm subsidies. Smith had also tapped John J. Raskob, an executive at Du Pont and General Motors, to chair the DNC. While a

[1132] "City of Cleveland Gave La Follette 8,000 Plurality," *Labor* (November 8, 1924), 1; David Burner, *The Politics of Provincialism: The Democratic Party in Transition, 1918-1932* (New York: Alfred A, Kopf, 1968), 136-141; "The City Vote," *New York Times* (November 6, 1924), 6.

proponent of the open shop, Herbert Hoover generally supported collective bargaining and a union's right to a role in management. By election day, the contest had largely distilled into one over prohibition, which the Democrats assumed would win them the East, and Smith's Catholicism. Many of the Railroad Brotherhoods, satisfied in the short term with the passage of the 1926 Railroad Act and in favor of prohibition, backed Hoover. The AFL and most of the major internationals made no endorsement. While Smith's history as the labor-friendly governor of New York certainly earned loyalty amongst organized workers, it is difficult to determine how much support he received. The La Follette bloc had clearly split.[1133]

[1133] "Progressives Aim to Throw Vote to Smith," *Baltimore Sun* (September 14, 1928), 1; Oswald Garrison Villard to Robert M. La Follette, July 11, 1924. La Follette Family Papers. Box: B101. Folder: 1924, Villard, Oswald Garrison; Frank P. Walsh to Daniel C. Roper, September 5, 1924. Frank P. Walsh Papers. New York Public Library. Box 13. Folder: September 1-20, 1924; Kenneth E. Miller, *From Progressive to New Dealer: Frederic C. Howe and American Liberalism* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2010), 358-360; Douglas B. Craig, *After Wilson: The Struggle for the Democratic Party, 1920-1934* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992),160-165; Allan J. Lichtman, *Prejudice and Old Politics: The Presidential Election of 1928* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 188-193; For a more optimistic view of the Smith campaign's appeal to progressive voters, see Robert Chiles, *The Revolution of '28: Al Smith, American Progressivism, and the Coming of the New Deal* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 170-171.

It is likely that many AFL unions supported Hoover. Before his death, Gompers very much admired the then commerce secretary for his work on the President's Conference on Unemployment in 1921. Gompers believed the future of American labor revolved around voluntary cooperation between management and labor. As he described in a 1922 meeting of the executive council:

> There must be opportunity for progressive evolution within industry, won by ourselves by our economic power, or else we must deal with revolution. The constructive method is based upon cooperation to work out better methods, followed by intelligent acceptance of results through mutual agreements. There has been long in my mind a thought that there ought to be annual or biennial gatherings of representatives of international unions of the same industrial group with the employers in that group for the consideration and determination for some period of time as to conditions in the industry, not including wages, except as the demands of the workers for improvement in their conditions… We have always declared, and it has been a deep-seated conviction with us, that the worst feature of political government is its efforts to deal with economic and social problems.

"Employment and Unemployment," *Monthly Labor Review* 13 No. 5 (November 1921), 126-148. Executive Council Minutes, September 9-16, 1922. American Federation of Labor Papers. Proquest: 002035_008_0011.

Walsh and Howe had much better luck in 1932. Now calling their group the National Progressive League, the pair invited a bevy of former CPPA members. As he did in the People's Legislative Service, Basil Manly (who had since 1924 become a well-known Washington correspondent for several newspaper chains) took over writing open letters and pamphlets. Harold Ickes, who had played a small but vocal role in stumping for La Follette in Chicago, handled outreach to fellow progressive Republicans– he helped recruit Henry A. Wallace to appeal to Midwestern farmers. They also brought on CPPA-veteran Donald Richberg, who in the early twenties took over Glenn Plumb's position as the Brotherhood's chief counsel. Richberg brought with him several railroad union heads and handled outreach to the Brotherhoods. Howe distributed funds (largely received from the FDR campaign) and arranged for George W. Norris to make a coast-to-coast speaking tour. Other League members included Felix Frankfurter and Edward Costigan, both former CPPA supporters.[1134]

The Roosevelt administration clearly believed that the National Progressive League had helped him to victory. Frederic C. Howe earned a position in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, under Wallace, Ickes began his long stint at the head of the Interior Department, and Basil Manly became head of the Federal Power Commission. Howe and Manly, in particular, serve as a direct line from the post-war reconstruction into the New Deal.[1135]

[1134] "Norris to Talk for Roosevelt," *Washington Post* (September 26, 1932), 1; "Labor Leaders Join the Norris League," *New York Times* (October 3, 1932), 4; "Labor Chiefs Deny Fight on Roosevelt," *New York Times* (October 24, 1932), 9; "Asks Revaluation of All Railroads," *New York Times* (July 5, 1923), 24; Kenneth E. Miller, *From Progressive to New Dealer: Frederic C. Howe and American Liberalism* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2010), 377-380.
[1135] "Basil Manly Dies; Noted Economist," *New York Times* (May 12, 1950), 57.

In a sharp change from the CPPA days, "independent" political action would largely become an appendage of liberal wing of the Democratic party. Certainly, some unionists and leftist radicals continued to suggest forming something akin to a labor party well into the 1940s. After the 1928 election, philosopher John Dewey worked with University of Chicago economist Paul H. Douglas to form the League for Independent Political Action (LIPA). Sounding the familiar refrain that the Democrats and Republicans were hopelessly corrupt, Douglas and Dewey demanded a new grouping to "compare with the British Labor party." Though LIPA drew interest from old CPPA stalwarts like James Maurer, Zona Gale, and Du Bois, organized labor never developed an interest. In the early 1930s, and on the recommendation of his colleague Harold Ickes, Douglas would soon take a job in the National Recovery Organization.[1136] He would end his career thirty years later as one of the Senate's most liberal members.

After the American Federation of Labor accused Brookwood Labor College of harboring communist sympathies, A.J. Muste formed the Conference for Progressive Labor Action (CPLA) to take on outdated craft unions and organize new industrial workers.[1137] The CPLA sought to chart a middle course between "the reactionary group

[1136] "Dr. John Dewey Will Head new Political Party," *New York Herald Tribune* (September 9, 1929), 7; "Ickes Diary Discloses His Unvarnished Opinions of Hugh Johnson, Moley, Richberg, Social Affairs," *Washington Post* (January 17, 1954), M1; Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: the Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 119-123. Douglas outlines his thoughts on LIPA and the need for political realignment in his 1932 book, *The Coming of a New Party*. Paul H. Douglas, *The Coming of a New Party* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1932); On Douglas and his assistance in organizing the International Brotherhood of Red Caps, see Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color*, 168-169.

[1137] The charge of communism was likely just a smokescreen. While communist students did attend Brookwood, they were minority on campus. AFL vice president Matthew Woll had more likely targeted the institution because it taught young trade unionists to question the Federation's leadership, push boundaries, and act politically. Woll, who had long felt that workers' education should teach only practical skills, resented Brookwood's overt leftist bent. In the summer of 1928, Woll advised all AFL members to stop sending students to the school. Though Brookwood stayed open another decade, it had a much smaller body and catered to a more exclusively socialist audience. Charles F. Howlett, *Brookwood Labor College and the Struggle for Peace and Social Justice in America* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), 201-235; Richard J. Altenbaugh, *Education for Struggle: The American Labor Colleges of the 1920s and 1930s*

in the A.F. of L." and the communists who could "rally around themselves at best only the 100 per-centers of their own type." Its Conference's central goal was to organize the industrial masses without discrimination in occupation, skill, gender, or race. While the CPLA demanded immediate reforms to improve the standard of living– a five day work week, social insurance, an end to injunctions, and recognition for the Soviet Union– its ultimate aim was "a new social order controlled by workers"[1138] Muste recruited a series of Brookwood graduates as field organizers and sent them to strikes across the country– a textile strike in Marion, North Carolina being the first real campaign. AFL-affiliated unions, including progressive ones, complained that by organizing labor actions without the sanction of an established labor organization, the CPLA drifted dangerously close to dual unionism. The Conference found itself increasingly isolated. By 1931, Muste became convinced that the CPLA had failed as an educational group for industrial unionism and needed to be reborn as a political party that held its members to a strict discipline. Many of Muste's allies, including Abe Lefkowitz, abandoned the project. "Labor must form the backbone of a worthwhile labor party," Lefkowitz wrote. A "new paper political party" with "lovely militant phraseology" would only confuse postpone a proper realignment.

Muste and the tiny core that remained in the CPLA would rename itself the American Workers Party in 1933. The AWP would win an important strike at the Auto-

(Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); Victoria W. Wolcott, *Living in the Future: Utopianism and the Long Civil Rights Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 31; Leilah Danielson, *American Gandhi: A.J. Muste and History of Radicalism in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 107-125

[1138] "New Years and New Policies," *Labor Age* (January 1929), 1; "Our Program Summarized," *Labor Age* (February 1929), 5; "Address of William Ross at Eastern Regional Conference, March 16, 1930 at Labor Temple, 2nd Avenue and 14th Street. Brookwood Papers. 28 Folder 8. Leonard Bright to A.J. Muste, August 12, 1931. 28-13. Muste to Bright, October 20, 1931. 28-13; Abe Lefkowitz to Muste, November 16, 1931. CPLA: Correspondence. 28-14

Lite factory in Toledo, but just as quickly fade away into obscurity.[1139] Like the AWP, the Socialist Party of America and the Communist Party of America retained an independent ballot line, but had little ballot success beyond a few local elections.[1140] Certainly, whatever success the third party left enjoyed paled in comparison to the Congress of Industrial Organizations and its various political wings.

The CIO was born in 1935 out of the same impulse that drove Muste to form the CPLA. But led by John L. Lewis, head of the America's largest union, the CIO's attempt at mass organization was far less quixotic. The CIO benefited immensely from the NRA, Wagner Act, and other New Deal labor protections. FDR and CIO worked closely. The Roosevelt administration pushed labor legislation and hired leftwing economists like David Saposs and Heber Blankenhorn to work on the National Labor Relations Board. In return, the CIO formed Labor's Non-Partisan League and CIO-PAC to support New Deal candidates in labor strongholds. Both organizations were the brainchild of Sidney Hillman, a veteran of the CPPA.[1141]

[1139] Leilah Danielson, *American Gandhi: A.J. Muste and History of Radicalism in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 159-162, 180, 184-186, 194-195; Jack Ross, *Socialist Party of America: A Complete History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 339-341.

[1140] The Socialist Party continued to elect mayors and council members in Reading, Pennsylvania (where James Maurer, head of the Pennsylvania-AFL had built his labor-backed machine), Bridgeport, Connecticut (where a small but militant labor movement had existed since World War I), and Milwaukee, where Daniel Hoan stayed in office until the late 1930s. Frank Zeidler, a professed socialist, was mayor of Milwaukee until 1960. Andrew Biemiller, a Milwaukee socialist, became a Democratic congressman from Wisconsin from the late 1940s into the 1950s– then becoming the longtime legislative director for the AFL-CIO. Jack Ross, *Socialist Party of America: A Complete History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 337, 444.

The Communists never truly advanced an electoral agenda under their own party name– preferring in the 1930s and 1940s to elect Popular Front allies in the major parties or on the ALP ballot line. Nevertheless, the height of their success was electing two members, Peter Cacchione and Benjamin Davis, to the New York City Council. Harvey Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 407; Mark Naison, *Communists In Harlem During the Great Depression* (New York: Grove Press, 1983), 313.

[1141] "New Deal to Be Topic," *Baltimore Sun* (July 1, 1936), 10; "Senate Conferees Accept NLRB Cuts," *Baltimore Sun* (May 16, 1940), 13; "David Saposs, 82, Labor Economist," *New York Times* (November 16, 1968), 37.

Established in 1936, Labor's Non-Partisan League followed the Conference for Progressive Political Action's model almost exactly. It provided funding and informational materials to union locals in competitive areas and encouraged a high turnout for pro-labor candidates. While the vast majority of endorsed candidates were Democrats or Republicans, the League empowered third parties in areas where they could make a difference. In Minnesota the CIO backed the Floyd Olson's Farmer-Labor Party and in Wisconsin it relied on the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation, an alliance between the La Follettes, socialists, and state Federation of Labor. To turn out the leftwing vote in New York City, Hillman brought in David Dubinsky, B.C. Vladeck of the *Forward*, and Harry Laidler of LID to rebuild the dormant American Labor Party. The ALP ballot line allowed the traditionally radical unions to support candidates like LaGuardia, Marcantonio, and Roosevelt without having to go through the major parties. It also allowed leftwing labor to continue to nominate its own candidates in local elections. The League proved to be a great success, driving up the vote for New Deal candidates in what became a landslide election. Hoping to permanently commit the CIO to political action– the League had fallen prey to infighting around 1940– Hillman established CIO-PAC in 1944.[1142]

Perhaps the most crucial difference between the League/CIO-PAC and the CPPA was the role of the Communist Party. Unlike the Conference, which repeatedly banned

[1142] Michael Kazin, *What it Took to Win: A History of the Democratic Party* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022), 172-203; Steven Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 356-378; Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 87-91, 249; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) (Second Edition), 362-364; Frank A. Warren, *An Alternative Vision: The Socialist Party in the 1930s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), 81-108; Jack Ross, *Socialist Party of America: A Complete History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 372-374, 383-384.

communists from participating, the CIO – for a time -- relied on them. A few CIO unions (United Electrical and the United Farm Equipment Union, for instance) were communist controlled and most had CP-dominated locals. International Longshoreman and Warehouse Union president Harry Bridges represented the CIO on the West Coast and Len De Caux and Lee Pressman were high-level strategists in the central office—all were (or had been) members of the Communist Party. But this relationship was tenuous and ultimately temporary. Disputes between communists and social democrats in the American Labor Party split the organization by the early 1940s. Dubinsky and the non-communists formed the Liberal Party, which held a prominent ballot line in New York into the 1970s. The provision in the 1947 Labor Management Relations Act requiring loyalty oaths led to some communist expulsions, but the final and complete break between the CPUSA and CIO happened after the 1948 election. That year, the communists hoped CIO-PAC would endorse Henry Wallace on the Progressive Party– the CPUSA functionally controlled the third party and crafted for it a pro-Soviet foreign policy. The CIO's board, following the lead of President Phillip Murphy and field director John Brophy, declined. Brophy had bolted both the Farmer Labor Party conventions of 1923 and 1924 after the communists took control; he would not change his mind a quarter century later. Murray, like Brophy, had been in the UMW in the 1920s and took an active part in the CPPA's 1924 "progressive party" campaign. He stood by his work then, but would not countenance this new experiment. "All the labor organizations… were provided an opportunity to formulate ideas with reference to the selection of candidates and the preparation and pronouncement of policies." La Follette was purely labor's candidate. Wallace, Murray decided, was more interested in courting

Soviet foreign policy and the communist left. Murray endorsed Truman and worked to expel the dissenting unions the following year. The CIO would remain loyal to the Democrats.[1143]

Many women reformers made the journey from CPPA progressives to New Deal Democrats as well. Many historians have written extensively on the role of trade union women in crafting major pieces of American social welfare legislation.[1144] Several of these women, including Fannia Cohn, Maud O'Farrel Swartz, Rose Schneiderman, Mary Dreier, Elizabeth Christman, Agnes Nestor, Frieda S. Miller, and Pauline Newman, took active roles in boosting La Follette. Most of them also spent time abroad in Europe during the twenties to study the social democratic labor movement and had positions in labor education. After La Follette's loss in 1924, most of these women began to slowly accept roles in the Democratic Party. Much of this trend had to do with the enthusiastic lobbying of Eleanor Roosevelt, Frances Perkins, and Belle Moscowitz, Al Smith's political advisor. Roosevelt had tried to get Schneiderman and the National Women's Trade Union League to back the Democrats in 1924. But given the Klan fiasco, weak labor platform, and the short shrift the party gave the women's caucus on child welfare,

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[1143] CIO Executive Board Minutes, January 22, 1948, 236. AFL-CIO Papers. Executive Board Minutes. Proquest; Daniel Soyer, *Left in the Center: The Liberal Party of New York and the Rise and Fall of American Social Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021); Daniel Soyer, "Executed Bundists, Soviet Delegates and the Wartime Jewish Popular Front in New York," *American Communist History* 15 no. 3 (2016), 293-332; Thomas W. Devine, *Henry Wallace's 1948 Presidential Campaign and the Future of Postwar Liberalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 200-234; Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 253-293; John Brophy, *A Miner's Life* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 210.

[1144] Dorothy Sue Cobble, *For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 155-188; Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) (second edition), 117-252; While not a trade unionist herself, Josephine Roche was heavily involved with the United Mine Workers and helped craft welfare legislation during the New Deal, Robyn Muncy, *Relentless Reformer: Josephine Roche and Progressivism in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 1-9.

Roosevelt had a tough sell– especially considering the CPPA's direct appeal to women workers. By the end of the twenties, however, liberal Democrats like Al Smith continued to appoint women like Perkins in positions of authority and make meaningful remarks on child and maternal welfare legislation.[1145]

The Republicans in the White House, conversely, had done little to advance a child labor amendment and in 1927 earned the ire of reform women nationwide by not using their Senate majority to properly fund and renew the 1921 Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act. Sheppard-Towner, which provided federal resources for maternal health and established the Children's Bureau, had been one of few bright spots of twenties reform and the crown jewel of several women-led progressive organizations. Controversy around the act convinced individuals like Mary Dewson, Florence Kelley's research secretary at the National Consumers' League, to take a direct role in one of the few established political organizations willing to undo the damage: the New York Democratic Party. Dewson became a confidant to Eleanor Roosevelt and the head of the Women's Division of the DNC. Several colleagues who had taken roles in the CPPA followed suit.[1146]

Swartz and Schneiderman helped establish the 1920 Farmer-Labor Party, stumped for the CPPA, and consulted for numerous workers' education projects. Like Dewson, the pair grew close to Eleanor Roosevelt and became active Democrats. Swartz later became the head of New York's Department of Labor and Schneiderman served on the National

[1145] Michael Kazin, *What it Took to Win: A History of the Democratic Party* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022), 145-171; Brigid O'Farrell, *She Was One of Us: Eleanor Roosevelt and the American Worker* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 1-54; Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume 1, 1884-1933* (New York: Viking, 1992), 288-396.
[1146] Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 151-157; Susan Ware, *Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism, and New Deal Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

Recovery Administration's labor advisory board. Newman and Miller had roles in the ILGWU's health center and the Philadelphia Trade Union College, respectively, and would go on careers in state government and in the International Labor Organization.[1147]

Fannia Cohn remained with the ILGWU and aside from campaigning for Wagner, never took a political post with the Democratic Party. And though David Dubinsky removed her as the head of the educational department in 1935– elevating the British-born Brookwood instructor Mark Starr in her place– Cohn continued to design curriculum and reach new students. One of these students was Maida Springer, a Panamanian-born activist who had moved to New York as a child, found work in the garment industry, and joined the ILGWU in 1932. Around that time, she became inspired by Schneiderman and Newman, who used their connections with the Roosevelts and their offices in the needle trades and WTUL to begin organizing new groups of women workers in the laundry and domestic industries. Many of these newly organized women, like Springer, were Black. After Newman encouraged Springer to seek out ILGWU-sponsored workers' education, Cohn became a mentor for the aspiring trade unionist. She became active in Local 22 and later in the decade met Pauli Murray and Ella Baker. Both women were Brookwood Labor College graduates and strongly believed that racial, gender, and economic equality went hand in hand. All three women would be instrumental figures in the "classic" Civil Rights era of the 1950s and 1960s.[1148]

[1147] Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) (second edition), 121-168; Dorothy Sue Cobble, *For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 189-220; *Workers Education in the United States: Report of Proceedings Second National Conference on Workers Education in the United States* (New York: Workers Education Bureau of America, 1922), 3-4.

[1148] Fannia Cohn, "Can Women Lead in the Labor Movement," *Oklahoma Labor* (April 9, 1936), 7. "Pressers Union Meets in Harlem," *New York Age* (April 28, 1934), 3; "American Adventures in Workers Education," *New Leader* (December 12, 1936), 8; Dorothy Sue Cobble, *For the Many: American Feminists*

As argued throughout this dissertation, organized labor hardly made giant strides toward civil rights during the 1920s. The Railroad Brotherhoods and the many organizations they funded– the People's Legislative Service, Reconstruction League, All-American Cooperative Commission, and even the CPPA– celebrated post-war reconstruction and heralded industrial democracy without uttering a word on racial equality. Though amongst the left-wing reconstructionists, there was a noticeable trend toward rethinking old assumptions on the color line. Nowhere was this more apparent than in two radical mid-twenties organizations: the American Fund for Public Service (AFPS, Garland Fund) and Brookwood Labor College. After the AFPS had provided the NAACP to send two students, Thomas Dabney of the Urban League and Floria Pinkney of the ILGWU, to Brookwood, James Weldon Johnson decided to stay involved with both the Association and the Fund. He joined the board of the Fund and worked to approve several grants related to organizing Black workers and advancing civil rights. With Johnson's input, the Garland Fund supported A. Philip Randolph in his early efforts to organize the Pullman Porters, approved $3,000 for an Urban League study on "the relation of Negroes to Trade Unions," and released several thousand dollars to Frank Crosswaith's Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers. The committee (eventually renamed the Negro Labor Committee) helped organize Black workers in New York City through the 1960s, took an active part in the 1940s March on Washington Movement, and launched Crosswaith into his position as New York's first Black member

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and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 176-177, 183-184, 185; Victoria W. Wolcott, "Networks of Resistance: Floria Pinkney and Labor Interracialism in Interwar America," *Journal of African American History* (Fall 2020), 567-592, Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire*, 195-203; William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2013), 109-111.

on the Housing Authority.[1149] The AFPS also provided funds to the NAACP to keep the organization solvent– specifically issuing more than $25,000 (nearly $500,000, adjusted for inflation) to carry out the legal defense for Ossian Sweet, the Black dentist on trial for murder for defending his own property in Detroit.[1150]

Both Dabney and Pinkney excelled at Brookwood and had extended roles in the labor movement. Pinkney, a dressmaker by profession, joined the ILGWU sometime prior to 1920. Her abilities as an organizer soon caught the eyes of Fannia Cohn, ILGWU local 22, the Young Women's Christian Association, and the NAACP. After getting to know her, A.J. Muste told James Weldon Johnson that she had "quite an exceptional faculty for getting along with people and gives unusual promise as an organizer." After attending both Bryn Mawr and Brookwood on scholarships, she returned to the ILGWU and YWCA as an organizer. She briefly helped Crosswaith in Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers. In 1930, Pinkney won yet another scholarship to attend the International People's College in Denmark. Built on the Danish folk school system (the very same that Frederic C. Howe lauded in his Danish study a decade prior), Pinkney gained a further appreciation for social democracy, education, and organized labor. She

[1149] A 1951 biography claimed that the Negro Labor Committee represented 250,000 members in New York (though it was likely less) and that he had led organizing drives for the Newspaper Guild, Laundry Workers, Grocery Clerks, Building Trades, Restaurant Employees, and garment workers. Testimonial Dinner in Honor of Frank R. Crosswaith Press Release, October 6, 1951. Frank Crosswaith Papers. Schomberg Center, New York Public Library. Box 1. Folder: Correspondence, 1918-1941, 1952.
[1150] H.H. Broach and James Weldon Johnson to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, November 25, 1925; H.H. Broach and James Weldon Johnson to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, January 7, 1926. American Fund for Public Service Papers. New York Public Library. Folder: Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Reel 6. James Weldon Johnson to Roger Nash Baldwin, November 26, 1924. American Fund for Public Service Papers. New York Public Library. Folder: Urban League. Reel 10; James Weldon Johnson to American Fund for Public Service. Board of Directors, June 5, 1925. American Fund for Public Service Papers. New York Public Library. Folder: Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers. Reel 13; Moorfield Storey to American Fund for Public Service, October 22, 1925. Folder: NAACP. Reel 10. On Ossian Sweet, see Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2004).

took these lessons back home and applied them to her local struggle for racial and industrial democracy. Pinkney finished her known labor career by teaching labor economics classes at an Urban League site supported by money from the New Deal Works Progress Administration.[1151]

After graduating, Dabney made an extended tour of Europe as a correspondent for the *Baltimore Afro-American*. He spent significant amounts of time in London and wrote appreciatively of the Independent Labour Party. ILP leader Fenner Brockway, Dabney reported, was one of the few white Britons to fully support decolonization in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. He also claimed Brockway was "greatly impressed with the campaign to organize Negro porters"—likely a reference to the newly formed Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Traveling through the Soviet Union, Dabney likewise insisted Russian communists had "contempt" for the labor color line in America. Returning to America in early 1927, Dabney struggled to find "something definite to do in the trade union movement." He found temporary work with the American Negro Labor Congress, a communist front organization in Philadelphia, but A.J. Muste eventually convinced Dabney to resign. Muste warned that a prolonged association with the Communist Party would cut him "off from much chance to do anything through more regular channels." The Brookwood secretary likely considered the communists' recent role in the disastrous garment strikes in New York City and Passaic, New Jersey.[1152]

[1151] For an excellent biography on Pinkney and an analysis of her role in interracial feminist labor organizing, see Victoria W. Wolcott, "Networks of Resistance: Floria Pinkney and Labor Interracialism in Interwar America," *Journal of African American History* (Fall 2020), 567-592; Floria Pinkney to Muste, July 25, 1930. Brookwood Papers. Walter P. Reuther Library. Box 89 Folder 31; A.J. Muste to James Weldon Johnson, June 24, 1926. American Fund for Public Service. Folder: NAACP. Reel 10.

[1152] Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Red Thread: The Passaic Textile Strike* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2021); Andreas Meyris, Review of "The Red Thread," *New Jersey Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (Winter 2022), 352-355.

Though both Muste and Dabney hoped he could find work with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the Brookwood graduate instead went to work as a researcher for the Urban League before taking a job as a principal at an all-Black high school in Virginia. Dabney seemed to stay in the labor movement, however, interviewing tobacco workers in Winston-Salem for a potential union drive and organizing his fellow teachers. Dabney noted that Black teachers received less pay than white teachers with the same level of training, an inequity he hoped to correct.[1153]

Pinkney and Dabney are prime examples of the reconstruction *milieu* that guided labor after the First World War. They attended Brookwood, the flagship of the workers' education system that was a direct outgrowth of post-war new unionism– on the suggestion of James Weldon Johnson and Fannia Cohn, both of whom expressed interest in the "new social order" advocated by the British Labour Party. Weldon Johnson came to the American Fund for Public Service largely as the result of his deepening connections with the organized left, a relationship that seemingly survived the 1924 La Follette fiasco. The two NAACP scholars themselves went abroad and developed direct connections to European social democracy. Both carried a lasting impression that civil rights and economic rights were intertwined. This concept became a core tenet at Brookwood. The year after Dabney and Pinkney graduated, Muste held a symposium on "the negro in industry and in the labor movement." He invited Charles S. Johnson of the Urban League to review his AFPS-sponsored study on Black trade unionists, A. Philip

[1153] Thomas Dabney to Muste, September 25, 1926, February 5, 1927.; Muste to Dabney, August 5, 1927; Muste to Dabney, March 7, 1928; Dabney to Muste, July 30, 1929; Dabney to Muste, December 13, 1930. Brookwood Labor College Records. Walter P. Reuther Library. Box 81 Folder 1-7. "British Labor Is Opposed to Imperialism," *Baltimore Afro-American* (January 1, 1927), 5; "Russians Have Contempt for Labor Color Line in U.S.," *Baltimore Afro-American* (September 11, 1926), 3; For a short biography on Dabney, see Victoria W. Wolcott, *Living in the Future: Utopianism and the Long Civil Rights Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 24-27.

Randolph to discuss his work with the BSCP, and NAACP director of branches Robert Bagnall to speak on "the economic foundation" of civil rights. Worth noting is that William Pickens was supposed to attend instead, but was likely indisposed because of a trip abroad to the first World Congress of the League Against Colonial Oppression. It was Pickens's first time meeting members of the British Labour Party abroad.[1154]

Bagnall mentioned the British Labour Party in his symposium speech. Bagnall also declared that "the way to freedom is power" and that those "who create are those who ought to… at least… count most largely in the formation of government." Seven years after Bagnall attended the Farmer-Labor Convention and left impressed, he still maintained his faith in reconstruction and a new social order.[1155] During the Depression years, the NAACP became increasingly focused on building its membership and taking part in larger grassroots movements for racial, civic, and economic equality. As historian

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[1154] Pickens went to the congress as a representative of the NAACP, but at the invitation of the Communist dominated American Negro Labor Congress. Lovett Fort-Whiteman, the Labor Congress Organizer, had courted Pickens heavily throughout 1926. Pickens seemed to have found the first meeting useful– he recycled talking points from the meeting at the Fourth Pan-African Congress in New York in August 1927.

"The proletariat, the workers, the producers of the goods of human society are beginning to sense a common interest in a common cause, and a need for mutual support– in Moscow, in Hankow, in Passaic," Pickens declared.

Pickens would leave the League Against Imperialism after its second meeting in 1929, complaining that it had become communist dominated and ineffective. His attending the World Congress would haunt him some fifteen years later when the Dies Committee used his attendance to accuse him of Stalinist sympathies and remove him from a post at the Treasury Department.

William Pickens to Lovett Fort-Whiteman, July 19, 1926, Lovett Fort-Whiteman, September 1, 1926, Lovett Fort-Whiteman to William Pickens, October 2, 1926. William Pickens Papers. Schomburg Center, New York Public Library. Reel I; "Negro Congress Told 'Race' Isn't Cause of Woes," *New York Herald Tribune* (August 22, 1927), 7; "William Pickens Gives Interview in Germany," *Chicago Defender* (August 17, 1929), A1; John Elliott, "Anti-Imperialist Delegates Clash at Conference," *New York Herald Tribune* (August 4, 1929), A1; "Is Pickens a Communist?" *Baltimore Afro-American* (February 20, 1943), 4.

[1155] Robert. W. Bagnall, "The Economic Foundations of Civil Liberties," *Brookwood*. "Negro Symposium." 44-11; "Symposium on the Negro in Industry And in Relation to the Labor Movement," Brookwood Labor College Records. Walter P. Reuther Library. Box 44 Folder: 4. See pp. 147-152 for more on Bagnall's impressions.

Thomas Sugrue writes, "During the New Deal and World War II, a new, broader conception of rights pervaded American politics. Blacks and whites alike came to view an empowered federal government as the guarantor of positive as well as negative rights." That the most important turn in civil rights during the 1930s was the realization that "racial inequality was embedded in American economic, legal, and political institutions." Beth Tompkins Bates argues that a "new guard" in the NAACP, partially inspired by socialism and communism, pushed the Association toward mass action and labor participation.[1156] Undoubtedly, the rise of industrial unions in the 1930s and the growing threat of fascism abroad spurred the sometimes cautious NAACP into a more militant position. But the roots for this turn extend back to the 1920s and transatlantic calls for a new social order. This new labor orientation to civil rights was a critical throughline from post-war reconstruction to the New Deal state and mid-century liberalism. It was hardly the only connection.

The increasingly prominent role of intellectuals and politicians in American labor was a hallmark of the 1920s. While there was never truly a point in American labor history when trade unions did not conscript professionals and lobbyists for assistance, post-war reconstruction clearly supercharged this phenomena. Arthur Gleason and Heber Blankenhorn funneled their interest in the British Labour Party into the Bureau for Industrial Research and drafted nationalization and cooperative plans for major American

[1156] Both Sugrue and Bates focus on the National Negro Congress (NNC), a Popular Front organization founded in the mid-thirties. For a few years the NNC, under the leadership of A. Philip Randolph, held meetings declaring for an end to discrimination in employment and in labor unions, planning new organizing drives with the CIO, and plotting a mass action campaign against lynching. The NNC collapsed after the Communist Party changed course on its anti-fascism and broke apart the Popular Front in 1939. Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), xvi xxvi; Beth Thompkins Bates, "A New Crowd Challenges the Agenda of the Old Guard in the NAACP, 1933-1941," *American Historical Review* 102 No. 02 (April 1997), 340-377.

unions. Basil Manly, Frederic Howe, and Albert Coyle similarly brought their fascination in European labor cooperatives to the People's Legislative Service and the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Leaders and trailblazers like Rose Schneiderman, Fannia Cohn, Mary T. Seymour, William Pickens, Robert Bagnall, and James Weldon Johnson conceived of post-war reconstruction and fought to expand the frontiers of American social justice.

This epilogue has offered a snapshot into how some of these intellectuals found their way into the New Deal state– either by directly working for government agencies, stumping for FDR and his liberal allies, or by profoundly influencing young activists at the grassroots. The twenties were, of course, a very different time from the Depression years. In the first half of the interwar United States, Congress reversed the liberal reforms of the Wilson era. That was less true after 1929, when millions of Americans railed against Herbert Hoover for not doing enough to combat economic calamity. The state of international politics had also changed. La Follette had come back from his trip to Europe in 1923 concerned about another world war, but hopeful that the social democratic middle ground would hold back the tide of authoritarianism. Toward the end of the decade, Coolidge had managed to (at least temporarily) bring peace to the Ruhr and at the end of his presidency sign the Kellogg-Briand Pact to ostensibly outlaw future conflicts.[1157] A decade later, Japan had plunged East Asia into war, Mussolini had stamped out democracy at home and led his own conquest in Africa, and the Nazis had

[1157] For more on Coolidge's foreign policy, see Stephen A. Schuker, "American Foreign Policy: The European Dimension, 1921-1929," in *Calvin Coolidge and the Coolidge Era : Essays on the History of the 1920s*, ed. John Earl Haynes (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997), 289-304; Warren I. Cohen, "America in the World in the 1920s," in *Calvin Coolidge and the Coolidge Era : Essays on the History of the 1920s*, ed. John Earl Haynes (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997), 233-242.

taken Germany and threatened Europe with calamity. On the opposite side of the political spectrum was Stalin's Soviet Union, which stood opposed to fascism but, too, sought territorial expansion and a crushing of dissent at home. Much of what became New Deal liberalism grew out of this distinctive environment.[1158]

Yet at the time FDR took office, there existed in the United States a cohort of experienced radicals, steeped in post-war reconstruction and European social democracy, well-versed in cooperative economics and nationalization schemes, schooled in cutting edge labor techniques, and seasoned by years of working-class political organizing. Over and over again, the Roosevelt administration reached out to veterans of the CPPA– or those trained by them– to fill advisory and administrative roles. At the grassroots, former reconstruction activists continued to build unions and push for greater government relief. As a brief aside, it should be noted that some individuals who emerged from workers' education facilities, Brookwood in particular, also played outsized roles at the grassroots. In addition to the civil rights figures listed earlier, there was Len de Caux, who worked as the CIO's main publicity director until losing his position in the anti-communist purges of the late forties; and Rose Pesotta, who succeeded in organizing the largely Mexican workforce of the Los Angeles garment industry in 1933 (establishing a toe hold in a city long hostile to unions). Most notably, Walter and Roy Reuther, future leaders in the United Autoworkers and CIO, attended Brookwood in the 1930s.[1159] Twenties reconstruction planted many seeds that flowered during the New Deal.

[1158] For more internationally-focused works on the New Deal, see Kiran Klaus Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013).

[1159] Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 50-51; Daniel Katz, *All Together Different* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 194-195.

Closing Vignette: Victoria McAlmon and Small-Scale Reconstruction

Victoria McAlmon, a recurring figure throughout this project, demonstrates the long afterlife of reconstruction. Graduating from college just at the end of the First World War, McAlmon took a job as a teacher in Minneapolis. Appalled by her working conditions, she became an early organizer for the American Federation of Teachers, helped found the Minneapolis Women's Trade Union League, and earned a position as vice president of the Minnesota Working People's Nonpartisan Political League, the group Thomas Van Lear created to organize labor politically. After traveling to London to study the Labour Party and interview Margaret Bondfield in 1922, she got directly involved with the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party– unsuccessfully seeking office at least once– and would act as a delegate to the Cleveland meeting of the CPPA. Losing work in the Depression, she relocated to be with her mother and sister in Southern California. She found work in the employment office at Los Angeles Junior College. Suggesting at least a passing association with workers' education, she told reporters that her mission was to "clear away the cobwebs of antiquated methods and subjects." Education needed to be relevant to the "social, economic and cultural fields" of the time.[1160]

Her task was securing employment positions for recent graduates, an unenviable duty as joblessness nation-wide remained staggeringly high. But as it turned out, McAlmon had a knack for helping students-- particularly by navigating the vast bureaucracy of the burgeoning New Deal state. Establishing contacts in the US Department of Labor, McAlmon secured a Federal Emergency Relief Administration

[1160] "Youth Out of Economic Plan, Says Teacher," *Oakland Tribune* (January 4, 1934), 4B.

grant to employ four hundred of her students as teachers, researchers, and aids. She was not overly impressed with the paltry 36 cents an hour the grant afforded her to pay out.[1161] "The New Deal will have to function a great deal better before it will be able to take care of college students adequately," she explained. McAlmon lamented that of the seven hundred students looking for work, only sixty found a permanent position. But the federal program kept many students, and perhaps even their families, out of a potentially far worse scenario. Her efforts attracted the attention of Alma Whitaker, a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*. After hearing her story, Whitaker offered McAlmon a prominently featured write up.[1162]

It would be a stretch to call McAlmon and her fellow reconstructionist social democrats forerunners of the New Deal. Post-war reconstruction was very much rooted in its own time. The catastrophic First World War had upended American socialism, Bull Moose Progressivism, and Wilsonian liberalism. A similar crisis of confidence in Europe propelled social democrats into power. Americans of a multitude of backgrounds and identities strongly believed that by building worker power, bringing industrial democracy to the farm and shop floor, and by establishing their own papers, banks, and schools, they could mimic the process and bring about a "new social order" on an international scale.

[1161] Around seven dollars, adjusted for inflation. CPI Inflation Calculator, *Bureau of Labor Statistics.*
[1162] "20,000 March in Greatest Labor Parade," *Minnesota Daily Star* (September 5, 1921), 1; "Labor Assembly Committees Named," *Minnesota Daily Star* (January 26, 1922), 9; "Meetings Political--Industrial--Co-operative--Social," *Minnesota Daily Star* (October 9, 1923), 11; Victoria McAlmon, "Gophers Back Fighting Bob; Mahoney Out," *Minneapolis Daily Star* (July 5, 1924), 1; "Working People's Political League Out For Shipstead," *Labor World* (July 24, 1920), 1; Elaine Showalter (ed.), *These Modern Women: Autobiographical Essays From the Twenties* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1979), 109-115; Mary Dillon Foster, *Who's Who Among Minnesota Women: A History of Woman's Work in Minnesota from Pioneer Days to Date, Told in Biographies, Memorials and Records of Organizations* (Self Published, 1924), 187; Alma Whitaker, "Woman Seeker of Work," *Los Angeles Times* (August 6, 1934), 6; "Plot to Oust Reacher Laid to Vote Foes," *Minnesota Daily Star* (June 14, 1924), 1.

This vision for a just world after the armistice did not come to pass. But as the Roosevelt administration sought to rebuild American democracy during a time of Depression and war, they found from the previous decade more than a few useful blueprints.

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