
A Brief History of Socialism in America.†

[Published January 1900]

Published in *Social Democracy Red Book* (Terre Haute, IN: Debs Publishing Co., 1900), pp. 1-75.

Introduction.

The history of Socialism in America, using the word socialism to embrace the various steps by which enemies of the present social system have sought to work toward a final deliverance, seems to divide itself into seven quite clearly defined periods, as follows:

1. The earliest period, embraced between the years 1776 and 1824, when the communistic ventures of the Shakers, Rappites, and Zoarites had the entire field to themselves.

2. From 1825 to 1828, when Robert Owen made America the theater of his attempts to put his Utopian dreams into practice, by communistic experiments.

3. From 1841 to 1847, the period when Fourierism swept over the country as a craze, leading to the establishment of a great number of communities and phalanxes, all of them doomed to fail within a brief time.

4. The period from 1847 to 1856, when Wilhelm Weitling was the moving spirit in trying to organize systematic socialistic agitation. It was during this period, also, that Cabot and his Icaria flourished and waned.

5. From 1857 to 1888. This period of time seems to have been devoted to the effort of immigrant Socialists, particularly from Germany, to spread the tenets of Socialism, more particularly of Social Democracy, but unfortunately, without getting the “Yankee” ear. It was during this period that the Socialist turner societies flourished.

6. From 1888 to 1897. This period may be des-

ignated as that in which the gestation of Socialism, as native to American soil, was going on. It began with the appearance of Gronlund’s book, *The Cooperative Commonwealth*, which was soon followed by Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*.

7. From 1897 down to the present time. The period in which American Socialism having “chipped the shell” first asserts itself as a force in American politics through the formation of the Social Democracy of America, the Socialist Labor Party, by its transplanted methods, having failed to reach the American ear. Two factors which helped prepare the field for the new party were the agitation work of Eugene V. Debs and the proselyting powers of Editor J.A. Wayland, successively of *The Coming Nation* and *The Appeal to Reason*.

* * *

Chapter 5 — The Pioneers of Scientific Socialism.

The steady influx of German immigrants following the political disturbance of 1848 made it possible as early as 1850 to found Turner societies in this country, and it is an interesting fact to Socialists that all these early Turner organizations were avowedly socialistic.

Their influence on the succeeding growth of the Socialist movement in America is hard to estimate, for that growth was very slow. For years it seemed as if it would never take root among the native Americans.

†- Although first published in January 1900 by the fledgling publishing house of Eugene Debs, this unsigned article is clearly not written in Debs’ inimitable style — not to mention that it is many times the length of the typical article written by the Terre Haute firebrand. Ruling out Debs himself, internal evidence indicates the anonymous author was a delegate to the 1898 convention of the Social Democracy in America who bolted that organization to help found the Social Democratic Party.

This fear finally caused great anxiety among the leaders, and many of them lost heart because of it and dropped out of the fight.

As a matter of fact the Turners were not organized as Socialists so much for propaganda on this side of the ocean as they were for the purpose of supplementing and encouraging the movement in Germany. It is true, however, that this condition wore off and that the Turners did their share in trying to get Socialism established on American soil.

The first Socialist Turn Verein convention was held at Philadelphia, Oct. 5, 1850. Several societies sent delegates, among them Baltimore, Boston, New York, and Cincinnati, which were the strongest. The name American Gymnastic Union of North America was chosen, but this was changed the following year to the Socialistic Gymnastic Union. It had at that time 17 local societies with large memberships. When the war of the Rebellion broke out, most of the Turners went to the front to fight against negro slavery.

When the war was over the Turner Societies reorganized as the North American Gymnastic Union, and ceased to be distinctively Socialistic. In 1876 a Socialistic Turner Society and turn school existed in New York City, but it had no influence with the other societies of the country. Many of the old Turners have become Republicans as a legacy of the war, while others have become large employers and grown conservative by reason of their changed class interests.

In the spring of 1852, Joseph Weydemeyer, a friend of Karl Marx, began to disseminate the teachings of Marx and Engels as set forth in the Communist Manifesto.

In order to do this the better, he began the publication of a monthly magazine in the German language, which he called *The Revolution*. The first number was especially notable through containing a specially contributed article by Marx. The magazine could not well have been more short lived, as the second number never made its appearance. Weydemeyer had the financial assistance of a German merchant named H. Meyer, but the magazine was found too expensive to continue. Weydemeyer was an engineer under Fremont during the war and built the fortifications round St. Louis. He died in that city.

In 1853 Weitling's Arbeiter Bund dissolved, and for several years thereafter the Socialists in New York

were unorganized.

In 1857 a club of Communists was founded in New York by German revolutionists of 1848. It did considerable propaganda work and on the following year arranged a memorial meeting in honor of the Paris June revolution of 1848, with an attendance of 1,000 men of various nationalities.

In 1865 enough followers of Lassalle were located in New York for an attempt at organization. They were not able to hold together, however, and did not succeed until 3 years later.

In 1866 a congress of national labor organizations was held in Baltimore and a Socialist delegate named E. Schlegel, who was elected vice president of the congress, made an unsuccessful effort to create a political labor party.

During the year following, several members of the club of Communists, together with some members of the labor organizations in New York and in coalition with a newly formed club of Lassallites, issued a call for a mass meeting for the purpose of starting a proletarian political party. The meeting was held Jan. 20, 1868, in the Germania assembly rooms in the Bowery [New York City] and was well attended. An organization known as the Social Party was effected and a platform adopted which embodied the principles of the International of Marx, together with several positive demands for the laboring class.

During the following summer an address was sent to the central body of the International at Geneva, Switzerland, by the temporary Central Committee of the party, and signed by its president, F.A. Sorge.

During the same year the National Labor Union, which had previously held aloof from politics, reconsidered the matter and formed the Labor Reform Party. The members of the Social Party did not wish to in any way obstruct this class-conscious action of the trade organizations and so ceased all agitation under their party name and gave the new movement all their strength. The result was that the new political party sent a delegate to the congress of the International which was held that year at Basle, Switzerland. The name of the delegate was A.C. Cameron. W.H. Sylvis, who served as one of the presidents of the Labor Reform Party, was one of the hardest working Socialists.

In 1869 the Social Party took on new life and was strengthened by an affiliation with the Interna-

tional through the London office. Soon the International became international in fact, by the formation of sections in the various cities of the United States, which sections did a valuable work by keeping in close fellowship with the various labor unions.

During all this time the "respectable" people of the United States had increased their apprehension as to Socialism and Communism. The foreign news was full of lurid accounts of the "new social terror," which the American capitalist editors took good care to supplement with denunciatory and foreboding editorials. This "respectable" element breathed a little easier in 1870, when Judge Thomas Hughes, the Christian Socialist and author of *Tom Brown at Rugby* and *Tom Brown at Oxford*, made a lecture tour through the country.

The year 1871 was notable for the arrival of a number of French refugees, the Paris Commune having just been suppressed. These people "brought with them a spirit of violence," Prof. Ely says. During this year *The Arbeiter Union* was established, with the honored Socialist and revolutionist, Dr. Adolph Douai, as editor. The following year Victoria Woodhull, prominent among cognate lines, espoused the International and *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly* took on a socialistic flavor. Mrs. Woodhull Martin is now editress of *The Humanitarian* of London, a magazine that numbers among its contributors such notable Socialists as Grant Allen, E. Belfort Bax, Prof. Caesar Lombroso, Bernard Shaw, Prof. Alfred Russell Wallace, J.A. Hobson, and the like.

The year 1872 was an important one for the cause in America for it witnessed the removal to New York of the headquarters of the Marx International. This came about in this way: There had been a growing feeling between the two wings of the organization. On the one side were those who believed in the ballot, headed by Marx, on the other the followers of Bakunin, who were Anarchists. It was felt that the Anarchists must be got rid of at any cost and so the congress of the International for 1872 was held at The Hague, where Bakunin could not come from Switzerland, because he would have to cross countries where he would be arrested. This gave the Marxists control, and to make their victory more lasting the headquarters was removed from London to New York. Bakunin held a congress of his own at Geneva and thus two

Internationals took the place of one. By the removal of the headquarters to New York, the struggle between the Socialists and the Anarchists reappeared on the new shore.

The first proclamation from the new headquarters was an appeal to workingmen to emancipated labor and to eradicate all national and international strife. The disastrous times of the following year helped its agitators and it made no little headway. During 1872 a socialist congress was held in New York with 22 sections represented by delegates.

In 1874 the Socialists founded the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party at a convention held at Philadelphia. A. Strasse, a cigarmaker and a representative of the practical American labor movement, was made secretary. Two resolutions were passed; one to unite all Socialist groups in the country, and the other to place the matter in the hands of the executive officers. Representatives of the United Workers, an English-speaking organization and of the International held conferences and in 1876 succeeded in uniting on the federative principle. A general labor convention was called, which was held at Pittsburgh. There were 106 delegates, only 20 of whom were Socialists. The latter managed to dominate the convention, but the meeting was a failure and accomplished nothing.

This was in effect the end of the International. It had done wonders in getting the advancing laboring people out of the hands of the capitalistic politicians. It also caused several valuable papers to be published, the *Verbote* of Chicago and the *Labor Standard*, among others. It was helpful to the unions and kept them in touch with the other trade organizations.

Later in 1876, another labor party was started, the Workingmen's Party of the United States. It was soon internally disturbed, the newcomers from Germany disagreeing with those of longer residence over tactics. The former wanted to follow on the same lines as the party in Germany. Many of the Marxists of longer residence left the party, but the times were so bad that it nevertheless made considerable headway, especially as a result of the serious railway strikes of 1877.

In 1876 J.P. Maguire, an excellent speaker, made a notable agitation tour of the country. Several papers soon after began to exist, among them the *Chicago Arbeiter Zeitung*, founded by Paul Grottkau, Joseph

Brucker's *Milwaukee Socialist*, daily, and also an English weekly a year later in Milwaukee, called *The Emancipator*. In Chicago, Albert Parsons and G.A. Schilling were at the head of an English-speaking section.

In 1877 the Workingmen's Party met at Newark, NJ, abandoning the International, or what was left of it, to the Communistic Anarchists. The trades unions had already left it.

At the Newark meeting the name of the party was changed to the Socialistic Labor Party.

In 1877 the Socialists cast their lot with the Greenback Labor Party, owing to its advocacy of certain labor reforms. This party got quite a vogue with laborers and farmers, who were caught, some of them, by its "unlimited paper money" dream, while others endorsed the spirit of the party. This was the forerunner of several similar parties including the late lamented People's Party, and was bitterly opposed to all silver as well as gold money. In the November election in New York a vote of 1,365 was run up and considerable voting strength was manifest all over the country for a year or so. In 1877, also, a labor ticket in Cincinnati polled 9,000 votes, but it fell back to 1,500 a year later. In 1879 four labor candidates in Chicago were elected to the city council and the labor candidate for mayor got 12,000 votes. Three men were elected to the Illinois legislature, but they were in no sense class-conscious., In 1878 the labor candidate for governor of Ohio received 12,000 votes.

It was at about this time that the Anarchists began to show strength. The line between Anarchism and Socialism was not at this time sharply drawn in the Socialist organizations, in spite of the fact of their being opposites. Both being critics and denouncers of the present system, however, they were able to work together.

As a result of the brutalities of the militia and regulars in the railway strikes of 1877, a new plan was devised by the Chicago agitators. This found expression in the *Lehr & Wehr Verein* (teaching and defense society), an armed and drilled body of workmen pledged to protect the workers against the militia in the case of a strike. But a Commune anniversary festival was held in 1879 in Chicago, and the *Lehr & Wehr Verein* paraded. Instantly the capitalists were taken with a panic. The result was the prompt passage of a law

forbidding any company of men to drill or bear arms without a state permit. A test was made of the constitutionality of this law, but both the state and the national supreme courts considered it wise and upheld it. The arms-bearing tactics were opposed by the Executive Committee of the SLP, the Secretary of which was Philip Van Patten. A fight ensued between the *Verbote*, which was the weekly edition of the *Arbeiter Zeitung* of Chicago, and the *Labor Bulletin*, the official party organ, which Van Patten edited. Grottkau was not an Anarchist, but he had resented the assumption of authority which the Executive Board displayed and had given his support to the extreme wing, even becoming a member personally of the *Lehr & Wehr Verein*. Matters led on till the SLP convention, held in New York in 1881, at which several members of the extreme wing were excluded because they did not acknowledge the "authority" of the party. The use of the word "authority" incensed some of the Anarchistic members and one section in New York rebelled and tried to start a more radical organization. One of the leaders was Justus Schwab, and an English monthly paper was arranged for, called *The Anarchist*. The new party was called the International Workingmen's Association.

In 1882 Johann Most, the Anarchist firebrand, came to this country and the Anarchists became more dominant than ever. Grottkau, however, realizing the way things were tending, began to occupy middle ground. Things in Chicago were growing warm, and he tried hard to bring back the former conditions. In the East matters were much the same and when the SLP convention met in 1883 at Baltimore, the Anarchists were given the cold shoulder, it being decided not to affiliate in any way with their organization, which had been perfected at Pittsburgh a month earlier in the year.

Grottkau was now thoroughly enlisted against the Anarchists, realizing that they were inimical to the true interests of the proletarian movement. He fought valiantly for his view of the matter and wrote and spoke ardently, but the ground he had himself prepared was against him. He held a notable debate with Most in which he had decidedly the best of the argument and achieved an intellectual and argumentative victory; but not so thought the crowd, which was still filled with his previous teachings. A few weeks later he was forced

to retire from the *Arbeiter Zeitung* and to turn over the editorial pen to August Spies, the former business manager and a man more to Most's liking. Spies remained in that post and it brought him to the gallows — unjustly, as all honest men must admit — and the same fate might possibly have come to Grottkau had he remained in charge.

The *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, the German Socialist daily which was started in 1879, studiously ignored Most, because he had been expelled from the Social Democratic Party in Germany. Not so the *Labor Bulletin*. It tried to fight him, but failed, as Most used ridicule for argument and was more agile than his opponent. Van Patten, the editor, finally gave up in disgust, taking refuge in a government job. He was not the only discouraged Socialist, for the movement during the years 1880-85 was at a very low ebb.

And then came the memorable year 1886. The agitation for an 8-hour workday, which Grottkau had helped start, had grown to large proportions. A united demand was to be made May 1 for the change in hours. In Chicago the excitement was high. The McCormack reaper workers, where the men were out on strike, was visited by a crowd of excited people. There was a conflict with the police and one of the rioters was shot. A meeting of protest was held at the Haymarket [square] on the evening of May 4, about 350 Anarchists and laborers being present. A.R. Parsons had finished speaking and Samuel Fielden was holding forth, when 7 companies of police appeared and commanded the crowd to disperse. Some unknown person threw a bomb, which exploded with terrible effect, causing the death of 5 officers and wounding some 60 others. August Spies, A.R. Parsons, Louis Lingg, George Engel, Michael Schwab, Samuel Fielden, Adolph Fischer, and Oscar Neebe were tried for the affair and the trial was such a travesty on justice that the Socialists put aside their feeling of hostility to the Anarchists and held indignation meetings all over the country. Capitalism in Chicago had been long uneasy over the hysterical threatenings of the Anarchists, both at their street meetings and at their halls. The police frequently broke up their meetings and brutally clubbed the members.

The result was that the Anarchists were even more bitter toward the police than they were at the capitalist system itself, and they use the most vengeful and threatening language, which the police and the

capitalistic newspapers were quick to give publicity to. The people of Chicago were whipped into a state of terror by the newspapers and when once the leaders of the Anarchists were in the meshes of the law, capitalism did a popular thing when it demanded their blood. Judge Gary plainly showed his anxiety that they should suffer the death penalty, and men were admitted to the jury who made no secret of their feeling toward the men on trial. "Chicago Hangs Anarchists," declared the capitalistic *Chicago Tribune* during the trial, and it soon became clear that Anarchy was on trial and that a failure to prove the connection of the prisoners with the mysterious bomb thrower would not stand in the way of hanging them. As to the bomb thrower, it was quite clear that he was some fellow who had been moved to revenge himself on the police for their past brutalities. The upshot of the trial was that Spies, Fischer, Engel, and Parsons were hung. Lingg, who would also have hung, committed suicide in his cell, or at least it is claimed he did. Schwab, Fielden, and Neebe were sent to prison and afterward pardoned by Gov. Altgeld in a document showing the utter unfairness of the trial.

Nor was Chicago the only storm center of the 8-hour agitation. In Milwaukee there was also rioting and the accompanying misrepresentation of the capitalistic press, the inventive reporters making good use of the fact that many of the leaders spoke a foreign tongue. Thus Paul Grottkau, who was then editor of the *Milwaukee Arbeiter Zeitung*, made speeches to the crowds, urging them, as a Socialist naturally would, to give up violence and redress their wrongs at the ballot box. His attitude was misrepresented, his words falsely translated, and he himself arrested as an instigator of the rioting. He was afterward found not guilty. At Milwaukee, also, the militia was ordered out by the governor, and in a conflict near the rolling mills several Polish strikers were brutally shot down.

Naturally these labor disturbances had their effect politically and in the fall election in Milwaukee a newly formed Union Labor Party, started by the money reformers, caught the labor vote and elected its entire ticket. Most of the men elected turned out to be mere politicians, however, and gave the city a disgraceful administration. In other cities labor parties also sprung up and made considerable showing on election day.

In New York, where Henry George's tax reform

ideas had gotten many supporters, George was nominated for mayor by the United Labor Party. The SLP united with the new party and George polled 67,000 votes.

In 1887, George, who was an Individualist, decided to throw the Socialists over, and at the Syracuse convention, at which he was nominated for governor, the collectivists were summarily turned down. They organized the Progressive Labor Party and cast 5,000 votes. In 1888 they cast 2,500 votes, and the party gave up the ghost.

From 1888 to 1891 the SLP remained out of politics. Lucien Sanial says that Socialism was never at so low an ebb in this country as in 1888, after the collapse of the George movement and the hanging of the Chicago Anarchists. The latter occurrence, it may be added, or rather, the Anarchist ascendancy in Chicago, did the cause lasting harm there, it having to the present day remained in the hands of the Anarchists, who have been able to some extent to thwart all efforts at successful Socialist lodgement.

Chapter 6 — The Gestation of American Socialism.

We now turn a bright page in the history of Socialism in America, for at this point the clouds of despair and failure begin to lift and the sun or promise and final triumph shines forth. As has been said, the earlier revolutionary Socialism was practically wiped out by the Civil War. After the war immigrants from Germany and France made almost tireless efforts to reestablish it, but their agitations being carried on in a foreign tongue and of necessity among foreign residents, the American people were not attracted by it, but on the contrary, their apprehension was only increased. Socialism was by them confounded with Anarchism, and was believed to be synonymous with spoilation, incendiarism, and general disorder. Even as late as 1887 an American party was organized at Philadelphia for the purpose, among other things, of excluding from citizenship “anarchists, socialists *and other dangerous characters!*” Laurence Gronlund has said that in 1880 he could count the native born American Socialists on the fingers of one hand. Had the foreign born residents suddenly left the country they would

have practically taken Socialism with them. In 1880 Judge Thomas Hughes, the Christian Socialist, founded a profit-sharing, semi-communistic colony at New Rugby, in the Cumberland mountains of Tennessee, and delivered several lectures in the larger cities. A year later this colony had nearly 300 members and enjoyed a short-lived prosperity.

The American awakening to Socialism began with the appearance of Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* in 1888, although in 1884 Laurence Gronlund’s *Co-operative Commonwealth* was the first book to place the new theory before American readers in a popular way. This had a very fair sale and set many prominent men to thinking along new lines — and among them probably the novelist Edward Bellamy himself. *Looking Backward* was not at all scientific in its conception of Socialism or the probable Socialistic state, but it came as a great message to the American people nevertheless, and its success was phenomenal. In the succeeding few years over 600,000 copies were sold and for a time it had a record of sales of over 1,000 a day. Still it must be noted that the word Socialism nowhere appeared in the book.

Bellamy and his converts at once organized clubs, which, with a cowardice that was perhaps justified, they called Nationalist clubs, and they persisted in calling their Socialism “Nationalism.” The first club was formed in Boston, December 1, 1888, with Charles E. Bowers as president. Others sprang up all over the country, at one time their numbers being recorded as 162. Some went into politics, and one candidate in California polled 1,000 votes. In Rhode Island a Nationalist state ticket was put in the field. In May 1889, the Nationalist club of Boston began the publication of *The Nationalist* magazine, and some idea of its literary merits may be had from these names which were among its official list of contributors: Edward Everett Hale, Mary A. Livermore, Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Jennie June, Helen Campbell, Sylvester Baxter, Henry Austin, and Laurence Gronlund. Another contributor was Daniel DeLeon — this being his start in the Socialist movement, although he had previously participated in the George agitation. In 1891 Bellamy published a paper called *The New Nation*. In 1889 the Christian Socialists were also encouraged to organize, the Rev. W.D.P. Bliss being the moving spirit. Their party has never had more than a nomi-

nal existence. At about this time, too, the Knights of Labor developed great strength, but its undoubtedly Socialistic tendencies were nullified by Grand Master Workman T.V. Powderly, who kept the members out of emancipatory political efforts. In later years he became a Republican politician and was given a snug berth at Washington as a reward for his previous "services."

This year, 1889, was a notable one with the SLP. The meagre showing made by the Progressive Labor Party had not strengthened the standing of the daily *Volkszeitung* with the advertising public, and it set itself squarely against a continuance of distinct Socialist candidates in succeeding elections. This raised a storm and the National Executive Committee declared for political tactics. Great bitterness ensued, and the upshot was that the committee was dispossessed by force. The party became split in twain, the *Volkszeitung* people, led by Alexander Jonas and Sergius Schevitsch, having 27 sections back of them, and the political action faction, led by W.L. Rosenberg, the National Secretary, having 23 small ones. The Jonas-Shevitsch-Sanial faction held its convention in Chicago Oct. 12, 1889, and began what it called its "aggressive policy," a policy which began as an uncompromising attitude toward reforms and "confusionism," but which developed into boss-rule and a petty terrorism that drove the better element from the party. Previously [Oct. 2, 1889], the Rosenberg faction held its convention in Chicago, also. Its official organ was the *Volks Anwalt*, a paper which is still publishing.

In spite of these troubles there was a sort of revival of activity in 1889, which was due undoubtedly to the stimulus of Bellamy's book. It practically saved the SLP from extinction. The Sanial faction now had 70 sections.

But there was an odd sequel to the split of 1889. The Sanial faction went back on its determination to keep out of politics, and just one year later put up an SLP ticket. In Chicago in 1891 the two factions agreed to a temporary armistice and nominated Thomas J. Morgan for mayor. He got 2,500 votes.

In 1891 the *Workingmen's Advocate*, which had been published in New Haven, was moved to New York and its name changed to *The People*. Sanial's eyesight was failing and it was planned to make a berth for DeLeon, who was regarded as a great acquisition

to the party. During this year Sanial was sent as a delegate to the Brussels congress [Aug. 3-7, 1891].

In 1892 the New York faction put up a candidate from President, a comrade named Wing, who received 21,224 votes. In New York the party cast 17,958 votes, 1,337 in New Jersey, 898 in Pennsylvania, 676 in Massachusetts, 333 in Connecticut, and 22 in Florida.

In Cincinnati, in May, a National Reform Conference, the forerunner of the People's Party, convened. The following year the People's Party met at Omaha and adopted a semi-Socialistic platform — one, however, that also contained a superabundance of erroneous, middle class economics. During this year the famous Homestead strike occurred, a strike which showed the wonderful powers of resistance of the higher class of organized workmen, the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel workers.

The efforts which were made in 1892 to reunite the two SLP factions came to naught. At the convention of the Sanial faction at Chicago in 1893, 113 sections were reported, and Lucien Sanial was sent as a delegate to the Zurich conference [Aug. 9-13, 1893]. The Rosenberg faction, although strong at the start, lacked this sustaining strength of a daily newspaper such as the *Volkszeitung*, and its subsequent career was uneven and showed a gradual loss of virility. It came to be called the "traveling faction," owing to its frequent change of headquarters. This "party on wheels," as it was also dubbed, moved first to Cincinnati, then to Baltimore, then to Buffalo, then to Cincinnati again, then to Chicago, and finally to Cleveland. It then changed its name to the Social Democratic Federation and kept up a merely nominal existence until 1898, when it was merged into the then already existing Social Democracy.

The year 1893 was notable in many ways. Bellamy's *New Nation* suspended publication, but the Yankeeifying of Socialism was given an immense advance by the founding of *The Coming Nation* at Greensburg, Ind., by J.A. Wayland. It had a unique style and elements of popularity which began to run its circulation up by magic. Another notable fact was the founding of the American Railway Union by Eugene V. Debs, who showed his comprehension of the solidarity of labor by originating this plan of superseding the various single craft organizations by one general, mutu-

ally helpful and mutually protective one. His plan was an unconscious contribution to the Socialist movement. Within one year, the ARU had won one of the greatest railway strikes in the history of the American labor movement — the Great Northern Railway strike.

The year 1894 began with the developing of the Coxey movement. Jacob S. Coxey was a well-to-do horse breeder at Massillon, Ohio, who was a money reformer and who had devised a “non-interest bearing bond” scheme, which was warranted to bring on the millennium for the middle class, and, “of course,” be of great benefit to the working class in consequence. To draw attention away from the tariff agitation of the two capitalist parties, he originated a Commonweal army of the unemployed — a “petition in boots,” that was to march to Washington, DC, and demand relief. In the later part of March they started, 120 strong, and they were to get signatures en route for the bond and good roads schemes. They finally reached Washington, but Capitalism dealt with them very easily — it arrested the leaders for walking on the grass! Other armies which started from various parts of the country soon disbanded.

Interest in the Commonweal army had scarcely died away when the memorable Pullman strike broke out, followed by the almost complete tie-up of the railroads of the United States by the ARU. The first quadrennial convention of the order was held at Chicago in June [1894], the reports showing a membership of over 150,000 men. At that time the strike of the unfortunates at the “model” industrial town of Pullman was in force, it having begun May 11. The operatives there were being paid scandalously low wages, yet were held it town by debts owing to the company for rentals (\$70,000 in all, George M. Pullman claimed!) which the masters refused to lowed to correspond with that of surrounding property. The matter came before the ARU convention and the Pullman company was asked to arbitrate the strike. It peremptorily refused, declaring that it did not propose to have any interference with its business operations and that there was “nothing to arbitrate.” After due negotiation, the ARU declared a boycott on Pullman cars, the members of the organization throughout the country being ordered to refuse to move trains that had not cut off their Pullmans, until the rights of the Pullman employees were granted. True to their class feeling, the railroads re-

fused to cut off the Pullman coaches, and so a gigantic battle began.

It opened Tuesday noon, June 26 [1894]. Mr. Debs was in charge of the strike, assisted by Sylvester Keliher, the General Secretary, and the other officers. By sunset the first day the strike had been felt upon the Illinois Central system and other lines as far west as St. Paul. On the second day 15 lines of railroad were tied up, and 5,000 members of the union had quit work. Traffic was paralyzed in Colorado, New Mexico, California, and on both Northern and Southern Pacific systems. On the third day over 40,000 railroaders were out. The battle amazed everyone. Neither passengers or freight could be carried on any of the important railroads west of Chicago, while the eastern lines were also crippled. All California and adjoining country was train-bound. Transportation had been brought to an end. The power of the union was manifest, but the railway managers declared they would fight to the bitter end. A General Managers’ Association was formed on the fourth day to crush out the ARU. The latter had kept within legal bounds, but the railway magnates conceived the idea of calling the power of the government to their aid. On the fifth day J.R. Sovereign, of the Knights of Labor, pledged the cooperation of his order. The strike was now felt in the Gould system, the Union Pacific, the Monon, and elsewhere. The Illinois Central called on the authorities for help, claiming that its property at Cairo was in danger. Governor Altgeld sent three companies. Labor organizations throughout the country began to swing in line. The general managers were desperate, for so long as they fought fairly they were out-generalled. Attorney General Olney and President Cleveland came to the rescue, however, by sending General Miles and regiment of regulars to Chicago without being requested to do so by Governor Altgeld. The state officials declared this move to have been unnecessary, and, in fact, unconstitutional. Public order had not been in danger, and the presence of the US troops was looked on as a delicate attempt to inflame the mob and incite it to disorder.

The general managers now boasted of success. On the seventh day, July 2, Judges Woods and Grosscup, at Chicago, issued a sweeping omnibus injunction and Debs and his associates were enjoined from further prosecution of the boycott. On the tenth day

some of the sympathizers with the strikers became more or less demonstrative and there were evidences that the railroad companies intended employing disguised detectives to incite the crowds on to overt acts in the hope of gaining public sympathy and thus hastening an end to the tie-up. The tenth day witnessed so much disturbance that Gov. Altgeld was moved to telegraph the President to withdraw the federal troops. The request was denied. In California 5 companies of militia declared their sympathy with the strike. In Colorado Gov. Waite took sides with the strikers. A serious strain was manifest at all points, although the ARU members used all precautions to prevent their cause being hurt by violence. On the twelfth day there was bloodshed, two volleys being fired into a Chicago crowd of sympathizers. The federal authorities now began to treat the strike as an insurrection. Later it leaked out that they contemplated declaring martial law at Chicago, when it would have been an easy matter to take the strike leaders to the lake front and shoot them down.

Passing over the succeeding days, with their strain and turbulence, the shooting to kill by the regulars on the thirteenth day, the firing into a crowd of men, women, and children at Hammond, Ind., the suspicious burning of freight cars, the partial resumption of business on some few roads, with the help of the intimidation of the courts, the proclamations of the Capitalistic tool, Cleveland, we come to the fifteenth day, when Debs was arrested upon indictment by a federal grand jury. Two days later the labor leader proposed to the general managers, through the mayor of Chicago, to end the strike on condition that the unionists be restored to their places, excepting those who might have been proven guilty of illegal conduct. This was contemptuously refused, and other measures were tried. By the 17th of July, traffic, after a fashion, had been resumed on the railroads. On this day Debs, Keliher, and two other officers were imprisoned for alleged contempt of court. The next day the troops were withdrawn from Chicago. On the 19th, 43 other strike participants were imprisoned, under excessive bail.

In September Debs and his fellow officials were tried, a jury being denied them, and nearly three months later Judge Woods sentenced Debs to 6 months and his lieutenants to 3 months in Woodstock jail.

The case was carried to the Supreme Court, which sustained the lower court. The imprisonment began in May 1895. The trial of Debs had been a travesty of justice, as Capitalism succeeded in saving the general managers from being brought into court, so that it could be shown who really broke the law and destroyed property. Out of this came Debs' famous aphorism: "Government by Injunction."

But let us get back to the Socialist movement itself. At about the time these stirring scenes were being enacted, J.A. Wayland was perfecting plans to begin a communistic experiment near Tennessee City, Tenn., a domain of 1,000 acres being secured there. The wonderful growth of his paper encouraged him to make the attempt. The colony was begun in July [1894], a modern perfecting printing press and outfit being moved down into the woods. Of course there were many eager to join, and the result was what might be expected. There was little real harmony. It was an eye-opener for the Socialist editor, and in less than a year later he withdrew, leaving the press, paper, and other things behind him. The colony continued the publication of the paper and thus continued to make many converts to abstract Socialism, although Wayland's editorials were missed from its columns.

In 1895 the Rev. W.D.P. Bliss organized an American Fabian Society at Boston. It began a paper, *The American Fabian*, calculated to interest a certain class in Socialism. In SLP circles the year was marked by a clash between the New York *People* and the St. Louis *Labor*, edited and published by Gustave Hoehn and Albert Sanderson. *Labor* was printed in many editions for various localities, with its name slightly altered to give it a local look. It had been authorized by the Chicago convention of [July] 1893, but the "aggressive" policy of the "powers that be" in the party meant to maintain control of the party press, and when *Labor* seemed to be a dangerous rival to *The People*, a quarrel was started which ultimately, it is claimed, caused the discontinuance of the Socialist newspaper union at St. Louis, and *Labor* as well. In August 1895, Mr. Wayland reestablished himself at Kansas City and began the publication of *The Appeal to Reason*, moving later to Girard, Kansas, where rents are lower. His paper at once achieved a large circulation and has continued to grow in influence until today it has over 80,000 paid subscribers and is increasing the Socialist

strength as it has never increased before.

In November of this same year Debs' imprisonment at Woodstock came to an end and a multitude of admirers assembled to escort him back to Chicago. The ovation given him was most remarkable and it culminated in a monster meeting at Central Music Hall, at which his famous speech on "Liberty" was delivered, and the world at large began for the first time to realize his practical conversion to Socialism. On the stage were several Socialists. During his incarceration Debs had read all the Socialistic works sent him and thus prepared himself for the work that he intended taking up when his time had been served.

The 9th Convention of the SLP was held at New York, July 4-10, 1896. There were 94 delegates present. State organization was reported in California, Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island. The sections numbered 200. Charles H. Matchett was nominated for the Presidency and Mathew Maguire for the Vice Presidency, and a platform was adopted. Perhaps the most notable piece of legislation undertaken by the convention, in the light of subsequent developments, was the endorsement of the newly started Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance. This was done by resolution, which declared among other things that the AF of L and the K of L had "fallen hopelessly into the hands of dishonest and ignorant leaders." It is doubtful if any of the 71 members who voted for this measure realized the injury it was destined to work to Socialist propaganda or to the standing of the SLP among American workingmen. This new trade organization was started by Daniel DeLeon, after he had failed to control the Knights of Labor. Following the New York convention the leaders of the SLP began an indiscriminate campaign of vilification against non-Socialist labor leaders, which grew in bitterness year by year and made enemies for Socialism of many well-meaning laboring men.

The unattached, or independent, socialists remained with the People's Party up to the time of its national convention in St. Louis in 1896. When that convention threw over its Socialistic leanings and came out for the free silver craze, the Socialists gave up hope of carrying on further propaganda within the party and severed their connection with it. One of the delegates to the St. Louis convention was Victor L. Ber-

ger of Milwaukee, who helped straightaway to organize a boom there for Mr. Debs for President. The Chicago convention of the Democratic Party had come out for free silver and nominated Bryan and the plutocratic Sewell. The Populists were willing to endorse Bryan, but they could not go Sewell. The middle-of-the-road men succeeded in reversing the order of nominations so that a candidate for Vice President was selected first, Sewell was "rolled" and Thomas E. Watson of Georgia chosen. Meantime the Debs forces worked like beavers. They secured 412 written pledges out of a total of 1,300 delegates, and Congressman Howard agreed to make the nomination speech. It was even claimed by a local paper that 22 states were in line for Debs, with 16 of them pledged. On the evening on which it was expected a nomination would be made, Debs' stock was high and the Bryan shouters began to talk compromise. Mr. Debs' forces were asked if they would be satisfied with second place on the ticket. There is no knowing what might have happened by for a trick of the Bryanites, who turned off the gas and forced an adjournment till morning. In the morning Henry D. Lloyd read a telegram to the convention from Mr. Debs (who had all along insisted that he did not want a nomination), asking that his name be withdrawn. Bryan was then nominated.

In the 1896 Presidential election, the SLP candidates, Matchett and Maguire, polled 36,564 votes, among these being the ballots of the independent Socialists.

Chapter 7 — Social Democracy.

Social Democracy is but another term for democratic Socialism. In this sketch of the development of the Socialist movement in America, we have seen first the Utopian forms of Socialism, Communistic Socialism, and finally, in the Socialist Labor Party, a kind of Socialism, or rather of Socialistic propaganda, in which a hierarchy ruled, and which, besides heresy-hunting among its own members, instinctively stood for a Socialist state in which the administration of affairs would, to say the least, be bureaucratic. Such an administration would be quite apt to develop into a despotism. Presented in such a spirit, Socialism had little attraction for the Yankee lover of freedom, and so it

had to make way historically for a truly democratic type — for a party standing for social democracy. The party which had this mission to perform was formed during 1897, reconstructed the following year, and is today the leading Socialist party in the United States, while the Socialist Labor Party, autocratic and boss-ridden, is split in twain and poisoned unto death by its own virus. Its mission is past and its demise will not be mourned.†

On January 2, 1897, Eugene V. Debs issued a card to the Associated Press, announcing his conversion to Socialism, and his conviction that, apart from political action, trade unionism was inadequate to accomplish the emancipation of the working class. He showed the fallacy of free silver or mere money reform, and said that the issue was between Capitalism and Socialism, and that from thenceforth his labors would be in the Socialist ranks. This practically committed the ARU to Socialism. Mr. Debs, however, did not join the SLP, but was in correspondence with several independent Socialists who believed the SLP too hopelessly narrow and boss-ridden to ever achieve success in the United States, and who tried to enlist his sympathy toward starting a new clear-cut party, standing for democratic rather than autocratic Socialism. For the time being nothing came of these negotiations.

These independent Socialists were stronger and more active in Milwaukee than anywhere else, were locally organized into a *Social Demokratishcher Verein*, and had the added strength of a daily Socialist newspaper in the Germany language, edited by Victor L. Berger. This paper, the *Vorwärts*, had the distinction of being the oldest established Socialist daily in the United States, but had in its earlier days weathered brief periods of suspended animation and on two occasions a change of name. The Milwaukee independents had kept up their organization for years, suc-

cessfully standing the onslaught of the SLP and confidently expecting that the time must soon come when a national American party, having like aims, would make its appearance and crowd the unworthy SLP from the field. The *verein* was made up in part of old SLP men, and they were most of them not only trade unionists, but leaders in their respective unions. Among them were the editor of the *Vorwärts*, John Dorfler, Jacob Hunger, Joseph Roesch (who had been a personal convert of Weitling), George Moerschall, Charles Dipple, Ernest Kuehnel, and others. Latterly they made up a wing of the local People's Party, not as Populists, but as recognized Socialists. In this way they made propaganda and made some valuable converts.

At about this time a Brotherhood of the Cooperative Commonwealth was organized through *The Coming Nation* and Mr. Debs was made its organizer. It had a rather Utopian scheme of planting colonies in some western state with a view to the political capture of the state. The members of the ARU finally decided to merge that organization into the B of the CC, and a convention of the two was called at Chicago, June 18, 1897.

The denouement was quite unexpected to the rank and file of both the ARU and the B of the CC, for it was nothing less than the launching of a national political, Socialist party, with the colonization scheme relegated to the rear. This was the result of work on the part of several scientific Socialists, headed by Victor L. Berger. The work of perfecting the organization was done in a committee which met evenings, during the convention, at McCoy's Hotel. In this committee, besides Messrs. Debs, Keliher, and the ARU officers, were Victor L. Berger, Jesse Cox, Seymour Stedman, Charles R. Martin, and Frederic Heath. Messrs. Berger and Heath, owing to business demands, were forced to be at their home, Milwaukee, during the daytime,

†- The reference to a "split in twain" SLP refers to the 1899 party split, in which an insurgency around the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* — antagonistic to the dual unionism of the ST&LA and personally hostile to *The People* editor Daniel DeLeon and the SLP's leadership corps — attempted by means of special meetings and the use of the recall to win control of the party apparatus. This insurgent Right Wing made use of a somewhat dubious party legality which led the regular Left Wing to hurl the disparaging moniker "Kangaroos" at their rivals, a phrase borrowed from the steamroller "kangaroo courts" of the old west. The so-called "Kangaroos," including among their ranks such luminaries as Henry Slobodin, Morris Hillquit, and Algernon Lee, held their own "10th SLP Convention" from Jan. 27-Feb. 2, 1900 in Rochester, New York. After a bit of convoluted factional maneuvering over the next 18 months, this insurgent SLP Right Wing merged with the Social Democratic Party at a "Socialist Unity Convention" beginning July 29, 1901 in Indianapolis, a gathering which established the Socialist Party of America. The regular (so-called "DeLeonist") SLP Left Wing held their own 10th Convention in New York City, June 2-8, 1900. Both the Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist Party maintained organizational continuity throughout the entire 20th Century and into the 21st, albeit at an extremely atrophied level.

and so made the trip to Chicago every evening during the week, and returning on an early train each morning — a round trip of some 170 miles.

A clear-cut Socialistic platform and constitution were adopted and these were promptly accepted by the convention. The National Executive Board chosen was composed of the old ARU officers: E.V. Debs, James Hogan, Sylvester Kelihier, R.M. Goodwin, and William E. Burns — the “five prisoners of Woodstock.” Headquarters were established at 504 Trude Building in Chicago, and Mr. Debs’ old *Railway Times* removed thither and rechristened *The Social Democrat*. The first issue appeared July 15th, a 4-page form, 6 columns to the page. During this time the Capitalist press had been rather friendly to the movement, mistaking its true significance. The colonization plan, which was supposed to be the main object, was looked on with favor; for Capitalism, unable itself to deal with its mors embarrassing class of victims, the unemployed, would be pleased, indeed, to have that class enticed away to some colony in the wilderness, thus being relieved of the burden of its support. But a concerted march to the polls by the proletariat was quite a different matter, and the newspapers soon changed their attitude to one of apprehension and attack.

The Social Democracy began at once a vigorous campaign, being badgered in various ways by the less orderly members of the SLP. Mr. Debs made his first speech for the new party at Milwaukee July 7 [1897]. He had a monster audience, and a few evenings later the first Wisconsin branch was formed. But loud calls were now coming from the great miners’ strike in West Virginia, and he hurried to the coal fields and gave the strikers the benefit of his counsel. While speaking bareheaded at noonday near a mining camp, he was overcome by the heat, the effects of the sunstroke being with him all summer, and obliging him to cancel various engagements. The other members of the Executive Board visited various parts of the country on organizing tours and made good headway.

The *Social Democrat* appeared promptly each week. The first issue contained congratulations from the veteran labor leader, John Swinton, from Laurence Gronlund, and also from a committee of St. Louis ministers headed by H.G. Vrooman. The second issue announce the formation of branches in 16 states and also the conversion of the North Side Populist Club

of New York City, which joined in a body. All over the country, well know Socialists who had not been able to agree with the tactics and spirit of the SLP took up the cause of the new party, and in New York an entire Jewish district organization of the SLP voted to join outright.

The third number announced the appointment of the colonization commission, the appointees being Richard J. Hinton of Washington, DC, W.P. Borland of Michigan, and Cyrus F. Willard of Boston. The colonization scheme now became a bone of contention, a good many members being decidedly opposed to it. This feeling grew as the importance of the colonization feature increased in the party work and it was evident that it would sooner or later lead to an almost open rupture. One phase of it was peculiarly distressing. It gave Anarchists an opportunity to take active part in the party work and to voice their sentiments at meetings and in the party press. Thus, shortly after the party was established, Johann Most, in his *Freiheit*, advised his readers to join, and other Anarchist papers appeared friendly. And so the colonization scheme was approved by the Utopian Socialists and the Communistic Anarchists within the party, and opposed by the scientific Socialists. The colonization commission itself increased the feeling by ignoring the party’s recorded intention and went about the country examining various properties. Among the places it visited were Tennessee, Colorado, New York, Washington, and Idaho. At one time it had even offered to undertake the building of a railroad in Kentucky.

In its attitude toward the organized labor movement the party was at all times consistent. At a labor conference, held at St. Louis to discuss the miners’ strike, in the latter part of August [1897], members of the party took a leading part, Mr. Debs being one of the signers of the call, and the resolutions passed by the body being drafted by two members of the party, Victor L. Berger and G.C. Clemens of Kansas. In the fall of the year Mr. Debs made a tour of the East, holding big meetings everywhere. In January he went through the South. In March Messrs. Debs and Kelihier went together through the East and one of the results of the tour was the decision of two large sections at Haverhill, Mass., to join the Social Democracy. With them came James F. Carey, whom they had previously elected to the city council.

In February [1898] the Social Democracy began its first political battle. At Milwaukee, which was one of its strongholds, a convention was held on February 1, and a complete city ticket nominated. It was headed by Robert Meister, a machinist, as candidate for mayor, and a strong local platform was adopted. The Milwaukee campaign, which was vigorously waged, was looked on with great interest by the members of the party, who helped in such ways as was possible. The labor unions assisted in the campaign and it was partially through their contributions that the local managers were able to bring Paul Grottkau from California to make addresses in German. His telling speeches were a feature of the canvass. Addresses in English were made by Mr. Debs, Jesse Cox, Seymour Stedman, and others. When the votes were counted it was found that the Social Democracy had cast over 2,500 votes, while the long-established SLP only managed to get 423 into the ballot boxes.

At Sheboygan, Wis., the Social Democracy elected two aldermen, Fred Haack in the 5th Ward, on a vote of 171, and Oscar Mohr in the 7th Ward, on a vote of 106. In Richmond, Ind., where a ticket was also put up, the candidate for mayor received 89 votes.

The elections over, attention was again attracted to the party's incubus, the colonization plan, and as the date of the June convention of the party approached, the feeling against it was more marked and outspoken. Utopian and fantastic, the colony idea drew support from gullible people from all classes and no trouble was experienced in getting contributions for it. It appealed to the romantic instinct and Robert Owen himself could not have enlisted people any more readily. By March the colony fund reached \$1,419.01. In April it was \$2,289.38. All this time the commission was moving about mysteriously. Finally, in May, it announced that the party would establish colonies in Tennessee, Washington, and Colorado, as a part of a gigantic plan to be announced in the future. Just before the convention, word was given out that the colony would be established in Colorado, in the Cripple Creek region. The commission had been caught by a gold-brick promoter! At about the same time it was announced in the Social Democrat that Secretary Willard had gone to Denver and closed a contract by which the party was to get 560 acres, on which was a gold mine of "the deeper you go, the richer

the ore" variety! He had arranged to pay \$3,000 in 60 days, \$2,000 in 90 days, and to give the owners \$95,000 in 5% bonds, and for the balance to issue \$200,000 in first mortgage bonds, those of the owners to be a part thereof. "Then if we sold the entire amount of bonds," said the commission, "we would have \$100,000 after paying for the property, and could use, say \$25,000, to develop the mine and the balance to establish the colony. Who will get bond no. 1?" (!)

The national convention was opened Tuesday morning, June 7th, at 9 o'clock, in Uhlich's hall on North Clark Street, Chicago. This is an historic hall, having been the birthplace of the ARU, as well as the place in which the great strike of 1894 was declared. There were 70 delegates, representing 94 branches, present. Chairman Debs presided. Outwardly the meeting presented the picture of a pleasing and harmonious gathering, creditable to the Socialist movement. Under the surface, however, there was a hostility that meant almost certain rupture. The presence of such well-known Anarchists as Mrs. Lucy Parsons, wife of one of the victims of the outrageous Haymarket trial, Emma Goldman, common-law wife of Berkman, who shot Manager Frick at the time of the Homestead strike, and others, all enlisted under the colonization wing, the members of which were now using the phrases of the Anarchists at sneering at political action, showed that a parting of the ways must come. It rapidly developed that the colonization forces had organized to get control of the convention and had even gone to the length of organizing local "branches on paper" within three days before the convention, in order to increase its list of delegates and make its control a certainty. These branches had been organized by William Burns and the other members of the National Board, with the exception of Messrs. Debs and Keliher. When the convention had come to order, and after a credential committee had been elected consisting of J. Finn of Chicago, J.C. DeArmand of Colorado, and W.L. Johnson of Kansas, Secretary Keliher announced to the convention that 11 branches in Chicago had been organized under such suspicious circumstances that he had withheld charters from them, preferring that the matter be dealt with by the convention itself. He was convinced, he said, that they were organized solely for the purpose of packing the convention, and that they had no existence in fact. This caused some

turbulence and when the credential committee reported in favor of admitting the “fake” branches, the excitement increased, the debate lasting all day. In the evening the majority of the National Board met and granted charters to the 8 branches, the delegates of which were seated next morning.

A Committee on Rules was elected, consisting of C.F. Willard of Chicago, Isaiah Frank of New York, and Frederic Heath of Milwaukee. The other committees were as follows: On Resolutions: Frederic Heath of Milwaukee, A.S. Edwards of Ruskin, Tennessee, and J.S. Ingalls of Chicago. On Constitution: Isaiah Frank of New York, L.L. Hopkins of New Jersey, and W.P. Borland of Michigan. On Ways & Means: F.G.R. Gordon of New Hampshire, George Koop of Chicago, and Jacob Hunger of Milwaukee. On Organized Labor: G.A. Hoehn of St. Louis, Hugo Miller of



Margaret Haile

Indianapolis, and Joseph Barondess of New York. On Officers' Reports: William Butscher of New York, T. Phillips of New York, and Anna Ferry Smith of California. On Platform: John F. Lloyd, Victor L. Berger, and Margaret Haile. Auditing: W. Winchevsky of New York, J. Grundy of Pittsburgh, and Seymour Stedman of Chicago. President Debs, Margaret Haile, and C.F. Willard were appointed to draft resolutions on the death of Edward Bellamy, to be telegraphed to a memorial meeting being held in Boston. The message sent was as follows:

The first national convention of the Social Democracy of America pays tribute to the memory of Edward Bellamy, first to popularize the ideas of Socialism among his countrymen and last to be forgotten by them.

At the close of the second day, when scarcely anything had been done, save talk, it became apparent that the “gold brick” faction, as it was called, was trying to prolong discussion so that those from a dis-

tance would have to leave before the convention was concluded. This would give them a clear coast, as their strength was mainly local and made up in no small party by Chicago Anarchists, who had come in by means of the “fake” locals. More and more it dawned on the Socialists that they were pitted against a conspiracy that would hesitate at no desperate move to maintain its supremacy. On the third day, Thursday [June 9, 1898], National Committeeman Hogan made sweeping charges against Secretary Keliher, evidently with the intention of prolonging the “do-nothing” tactics. The charges were afterward found to have no foundation in fact.

C.F. Willard read the report of the Colonization Commission and the facts it presented only increased the determination of the antis to sever all connection and responsibility with the affair. To put it mildly, they felt that the party had been engaged in securing money on false pretenses. In the evening the antis held a caucus and resolved to fight colonization uncompromisingly.

During the early hours of Thursday Chairman Debs made his report. It showed that on his Eastern tours he had addressed 143 public meetings in 77 days. Secretary Keliher's report showed that the total receipts for the year were \$8,965.88. Disbursements, \$8,894.44.

On Friday [June 10] afternoon the Committee on Platform reported, Committeeman Lloyd submitting a minority report in the interests of the “goldbrick” faction. A protracted and animated debate followed. The feeling ran high. The anti-colonization people were incensed at the way in which the time of the convention had been frittered away, and were, moreover, without hope of wresting the control from the hands of their opponents. It was finally decided to debate the platforms to a finish and then permit a vote upon them. Afterwards they would quietly abandon the convention and organize a new party. The debate lasted until 2:30 o'clock in the morning, and a vote was taken on the minority report. It resulted in 53 for and 37 against. There was an exultant yell from the “goldbrick” faction, but their joy turned to uneasiness when those of the opposition were seen quietly leaving the hall after a motion to adjourn had been carried.

Across North Clark Street was the Revere house,

where most of the delegates stayed, and where the anti-colonization faction had held its caucus the evening before. Thither they went and soon assembled in Parlor A. A strange coincidence it was, but it was in this very room that the jury that hung the Anarchists came to their bloodthirsty decision! It was a sort of retribution which made that room also the birthplace of the



coming great national party of Revolutionary Socialism. Everyone present was alive to the importance of the step, and the proceedings were carried on with despatch and in as subdued voices as possible, so as not to disturb the guests of the hotel. Frederic Heath was made Chairman and F.G.R. Gordon Secretary. The platform reported by the majority of the committee in the Uhlich Hall convention was adopted, the name "Social Democratic Party of America" chosen, a temporary National Committee, composed of those present, constituted, and an address to the membership of the Social Democracy ordered prepared. The meeting adjourned at 4 o'clock, just as the rays of a bright sunrise began to bathe the window panes.

Later in the day, the delegates reconvened at Hull House, on South Halsted Street. Jesse Cox presided and William Mailly acted as secretary. The following National Executive Board was elected: Jesse Cox, Sey-

mour Stedman, Eugene V. Debs, Victor L. Berger, and Frederic Heath. Resolutions on the death of Edward Bellamy and Paul Grottkau were passed and the resolutions on organized labor, drafted by Messrs. Hoehn, Miller, and Barondess, reenacted. A.S. Edwards was made National Organizer and Jacob Winnen made a tender of the affiliation of the Social Democratic Federation, which was favorably listened to and the members received into full membership.

Shortly after the convention, the National Board met in Chicago and revised the platform. A constitution was prepared and an address drawn up. This latter, which stated the facts regarding the split, was mailed to all members of the old Social Democracy. The circular also announced the opening of headquarters in Chicago and the appointment of Theodore Debs as National Secretary and Treasurer. The motto of the party was stated as: Pure Socialism and no compromise.

Meantime those left in the Uhlich Hall convention adopted the Lloyd platform and elected the following National Committee: James Hogan, W.P. Borland, R.M. Goodwin, John F. Lloyd, L.L. Hopkins, I. Frank, C.F. Willard, R.J. Hinton, and G.C. Clemens. They became a colonization party, pure and simple. Being in possession of the National Headquarters and the official organ, they were able to make a showing for a few weeks, but the fact that their strength was local soon began to tell, and with the third issued under their charge the *Social Democrat* succumbed. A fourth issue was in type, but the printer demanded cash in advance. Their only hope was to actually colonize. In August [1898] Messrs. Willard and Ingalls went prospecting and finally found a location at the head of Henderson Bay in the state of Washington. A number of members began the pioneer work and in time a colony was in full swing, nourished and cheered by money paid in by nonresident members for the purchase of shares. The colony is still in existence [Jan. 1900], with 110 members, and a little paper, *The Co-operator*, is published each week. In the state of Washington, also, is the Equality colony of the old Brotherhood of the Cooperative Commonwealth. It is located at Edison, and has had a hard time of it. N.W. Lermond, its leading spirit, is no longer with it. Its members live in log houses and have not had time thus far to even think of the old dream of capturing

the state of Washington through the ballot.

On July 9 [1898], the Social Democratic Party issued the first number of *The Social Democratic Herald*. It was of 4 pages, 4 columns to the page. A.S. Edwards was editor. The third issue announced the selection of a national headquarters at room 56, 126 Washington Street, Chicago, directly opposite the city hall. The paper was issued under the most trying circumstances, the split having disheartened many Socialists, so that the party grew very slowly. It was not until fully a year after that real headway began to be made, outside of a few party strongholds like Massachusetts, Milwaukee, and St. Louis. In November the place of publication was changed to Belleville, Ill., as a measure of economy. It remained there until June of the following year (1899), when it was brought back to Chicago and issued in larger page form — 5 columns instead of 4.

In spite of the setback the movement had received, the party went into the fall campaign at several points. In Wisconsin a full state ticket, headed by Howard Tuttle of Milwaukee for Governor, was nominated. The Massachusetts members nominated Winfield P. Porter of Newburyport. In New Hampshire, Sumner F. Claflin was at the head of the ticket. Nominations were made in 5 assembly districts in New York. Missouri nominated Albert E. Sanderson for judge of the Supreme Court and made several congressional nominations, and a local ticket was put up at Terre Haute, Ind.

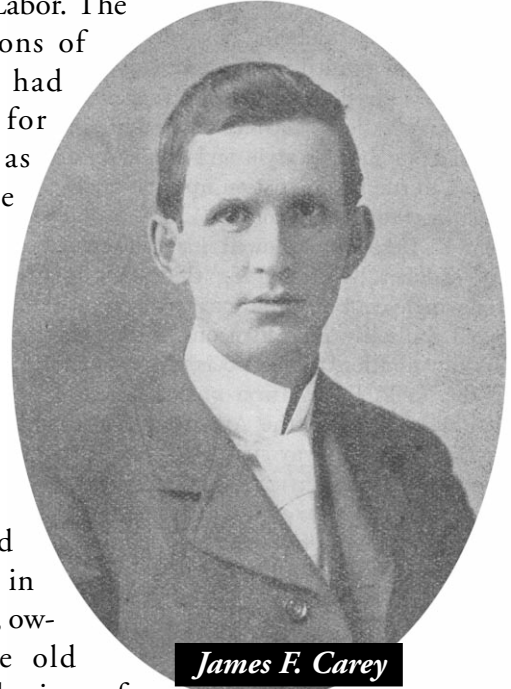
In its issue of Saturday, November 12, the *Herald* brought the glad tidings of victory in Massachusetts — the election of two members of the state legislature from the Haverhill district: James F. Carey and Lewis M. Scates. Mr. Debs had helped in the campaign there and had had a record-breaking meeting, with an overflow. The party made a good showing in the other states where there were candidates. In Wisconsin it had more than twice as many votes as the SLP, and the same was the case in St. Louis, a former SLP stronghold.

Scarcely had the joy over the Massachusetts victory died away than that state presented the party with another surprise. On December 6th the Social Democrats of Haverhill succeeded in electing John C. Chase, mayor; Charles H. Bradley and J.W. Bean, aldermen; Joseph Bellefeuille, James W. Hillsgrove, and Albert

L. Gillen, councilmen; Newman W. Wasson, school commissioner; and Frank S. Reed, assistant assessor.

In December, members of the Social Democratic Party created quite a stir by making Socialism an issue at the convention at Kansas City of the American Federation of Labor. The

trades unions of England had come out for Socialism as the wage workers' only hope, and while there was no reason to believe that the success could be had all at once in the AF of L, owing to the old



James F. Carey

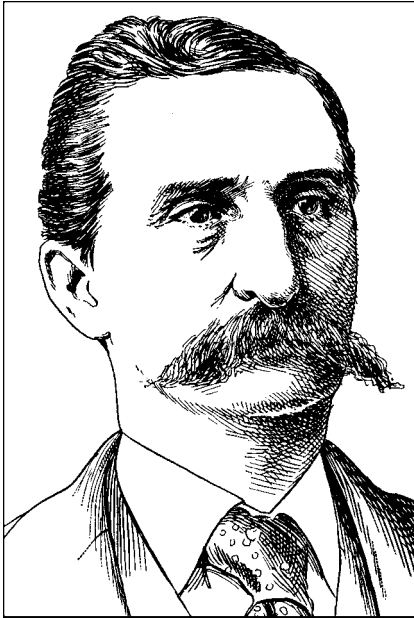
party predilections of certain of its most influential leaders, yet a beginning could be made — in fact a beginning had been made in former of the federation conventions. Among those who went to Kansas City were James F. Carey of Haverhill, William Mahon of Detroit, John Tobin of Boston, Victor L. Berger, and Seymour Stedman. The SLP was represented among others by editor Max Hayes of Cleveland. The result was that an interesting debate was precipitated which was duly telegraphed to the daily papers all over the country and which caused a good deal of talk in union circles. The vote taken showed more strength than the Socialists were supposed to have in the body — 493 for the Socialistic resolution to 1,971 against.

In the spring election of 1899, a local ticket was put up in Chicago, with Thomas G. Kerwin at the head. At Spring Valley, Ill., the Socialist miners also put up a local ticket. Their candidate for mayor was James Beattie. At Pacific, Wis., a local ticket was nominated, and nominations were also made at St. Louis and Baltimore. And out of this came a victory, too, the party ticket at Pacific making a clean sweep.

In June 1899, the Socialist Party of America, an

independent organization having headquarters in Texas, officially joined the Social Democratic Party, as the result of a conference held between its president, W.E. Farmer of Bonham, Texas, the members of its Executive Board, and Mr. Debs, who was in the South on a lecture tour.

During June the SLP, which had long been filled



W.E. Farmer

with internal dissension, experienced a split of the most disintegrating sort. Two factions were warring for the mastery in New York City, where the National Executive Committee was located. One was led by DeLeon, Sanial, and Hugo Vogt, and the other by the proprietors of the New York *Volks-*

zeitung. The despotic sway of DeLeon had not been relished and bad feeling existed all over the country. Some were jealous of it, others were disgusted by it. Of these latter was Eugene Dietzgen of Chicago, whose father, Joseph Dietzgen, had been a compatriot with Karl Marx. Dietzgen saw how DeLeonism was perverting the movement and rebelled against it. He had been friendly to the Social Democratic Party, and this was made a pretext by some of DeLeon's henchmen in Chicago to prefer charges and to ultimately expel him. He issued a pamphlet in March against DeLeonism under the title *Leze Majesty and Treason to the "Fakirs" in the Socialist Labor Party*, and sent it to every section of the party in the country. This, in conjunction with a weekly onslaught on DeLeonism which Wayland's *Appeal to Reason* was making in the interests of a united socialist movement, had some effect.

At a meeting of the general committee of Section Greater New York, at the Labor Lyceum on East Fourth Street, held on the evening of July 8 [1899], a pitched battle took place. It was the first meeting after the semi-annual election of new delegates, and the

DeLeon faction had discovered that a majority of the new committeemen were hostile to it. It was therefore on its guard. The DeLeonites controlled the National Executive Committee of the party, a committee which the other side intended to depose in a summary manner. The meeting had scarcely begun before the two factions came to blows. The following from the account of one of the eyewitnesses will give some idea of the scene that followed:

This act of violence on the part of Keep was the signal for an outburst of passion seldom witnessed in any political meeting, much less in a meeting of Socialists. The delegates pummeled each other until blood was seen flowing from many wounds. Men were sprawling upon the floor, others were fighting in the corners, upon the tables, chairs, and upon the piano. Hugo Vogt, having climbed upon the latter, yelling and fairly foaming from the mouth..." etc.

Finally the DeLeon contingent withdrew. On Monday evening, July 10 [1899], another fight took place. The *Volkszeitung* faction had held a meeting, deposed the National Committee, and elected one in its stead. A committee was sent to the office of *The People* to demand the party property. They attempted to force their way in and were repulsed by DeLeon and others, who were in possession, with clubs, bottles, and other weapons. The police were called in and obliged the intruders to retire. In the morning, still under police protection, the DeLeon people removed the office effects to another location which they had rented. As a result of the split, two SLPs took the place of one. Each faction issued a weekly *People*, and printed many columns of denunciation of the other side. Throughout the country the small party bosses in the main took sides with DeLeon, while the strength of the *Volkszeitung* faction came from San Francisco, Chicago, and Philadelphia. Many sections, disgusted with the turn affairs had taken, joined the Social Democratic Party outright. The quarrel in New York soon got into the courts, where the DeLeon party was given official recognition. The same was true in Massachusetts and other states, and the other faction was thus left in a bad plight. In their dilemma the rank and file turned to the Social Democratic Party, making overtures, which at the present time seem to indicated a coming together of the two bodies under the SDP banner within a few months, provided the leaders still hold out.

During the Spring of 1899 the so-called “farmers’ program” in the platform of the Social Democratic Party was the subject of considerable debate. Socialists whose Socialism was static rather than dynamic charged that this part of the platform was reactionary. Those who supported it held that concentration was not taking place in the rural districts as the early fathers of the Socialist movement had predicted and that this fact had to be reckoned with if the party to show itself scientific. The fact that the SLP singled out that part of the platform for attack and ridicule had its effect, however, and finally at a party conference held in Chicago July 6 [1899], it was decided to eliminate the farmer demands subject to referendum vote of the party. This vote, which was afterward taken, sustained the action of the conference. This conference, which was called by the National Executive Board, also fixed on the first Tuesday in March 1900 as the time for the party convention for the choosing of nominees for the national campaign, and Indianapolis was chosen as the convention seat.

The National Board held monthly meetings at Chicago during the year. One of its notable acts was the appointment of Eugene Dietzgen (who had meantime become a member of the party) as the party delegate to the International Socialist Congress to be held at Paris in 1900 [Sept. 23-27]. Mr. Dietzgen left for Europe soon after with the intention of remaining until the congress. In October [1899] the National Board passed adversely upon the action of the branches of the party in New York City in affiliating with a newly organized Independent Labor Party, which grew out of the Brooklyn trolley strike. It was found that the ILP was not only not a class-conscious party, but also

that it was being controlled by capitalistic politicians. The branches were reminded of the constitutional provision against fusion with any other party and ordered to withdraw from the compact, which was done, the party candidates being also withdrawn. For this reason the party was not represented in the Fall election in New York.

New courage came to the party in 1899 in November and December election. There was an increased vote at all points where tickets were put up, and in Massachusetts James F. Carey was reelected to the legislature from the Haverhill district and Frederic O. McCartney from the Plymouth district. In the local elections in December, John C. Chase was reelected mayor of Haverhill over a combination of Republicans and Democrats — in short, the battle was between Socialism and Capitalism — and the party maintained its position in the city council. At Brockton, C.H. Coulter, one of the hardest working Social Democrats in Massachusetts, was elected mayor with 1,500 plurality, two aldermen also being elected.

We have traced the history of Socialism in America from its earliest phases down through the years until we now see it clarified and resolute and ready for the great political battle of 1900. It is already in the first flush of victory, it being only in recent years that the Socialists have been able to elect any of their candidates. The times are changing, the need of Socialism is every day more and more apparent and the people themselves are beginning to understand it as it really is, and therefore to want it. The movement is now entirely native to the soil. Nothing can prevent it from “making history” in the years that are just before us.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2006. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.