

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDEPENDENT WORKING-CLASS POLITICS:
THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND THIRD PARTY MOVEMENTS
IN
NEW YORK, CHICAGO, AND SEATTLE, 1918-1924**

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In memory of my parents
Ellen and George,
and to the
arrival of my nephew Jamie

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This comparative study of independent working-class politics in New York, Chicago and Seattle between 1918 to 1924 is inspired by the debate over the absence of a working class party in the USA. Ever since Werner Sombart asked, "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?" historians and social scientists have contested the answer.¹

The weakness of socialism is not a problem unique to the USA. Indeed mass socialist parties are a rare phenomenon; they only exist in a few countries. Seen in this light there is nothing particularly unusual about the American situation. However Sombart was questioning the absence of a working-class party in a country he considered to have an advanced working-class.²

¹Werner Sombart, Why Is There No Socialism In The United States?, (White Plains, N.Y.: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1976; orig. 1906).

²There is an extensive range of literature concerning the absence of a working class party or third parties in general. Some like Richard Oestreicher, Urban Working Class Political Behaviour and Theories of American Electoral Politics, 1870-1940, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); and the following: Murray S. Stedman, Jr and Susan W. Stedman, Discontent at the Polls: A Study of Farmer and Labor Parties 1827-1948, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967); C. M. Rehmus, Doris B. McLaughlin, and F. H. Nesbitt (eds), Labor and American Politics, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978), have related working class electoral behaviour to the US electoral system.

Others such as Steve J. Rosenstone, Roy L. Behrand, Edward H. Lazarus, Third Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure, (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1984) have considered the issue without a stress on working class activity to create its own party, but on the failure of third parties in general. One common theme in all these studies is the antipathy of the US

electoral system to new parties, making the vote for a third party a wasted vote. It is this, rather than a lack of discontent, that for these authors explains the continuing attachment to the main parties.

David J. Saposs, Left Wing Unionism: A Study of Radical Policies and Tactics, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967; orig. 1926); William English Walling, American Labor and American Democracy, Vol 1 (New York: Workers Education Bureau of America, 1926); Gary Marks, Unions in Politics: Britain, Germany and the United States in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1989); and Gwendolyn Mink, Old Labor and New Immigrants in American Political Development, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1986) have focused on the craft nature of the AFL as an explanation of labour's failure or refusal to build its own party. Mink links this theme to the issue of immigration. The relationship between ethnic groups and native labour is an explanation which is one well rooted in exceptionalist historiography, and the literature is far too extensive to list here. The consequences of ethnicity for working-class political activity will be considered in the case studies that follow (Chapters three to eight). Patricia Cayo Sexton, The War on Labor and the Left, (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1991) argues against this explanation, emphasising the repressive nature of the American State and bosses. Philip Taft, Labor Politics American Style, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1968), suggests that AFL state federations, if well organized, could look after the political and legislative needs of union members. Thus strong union organization made a third party redundant.

Stanley Shapiro has concentrated on the relationship between progressives, labour and the state. The failure of progressivism to reestablish itself after the war is for him a major explanation for the non-existence of a third party. See Stanley Shapiro, "The Great War and Reform: Liberals and Labor" Labor History, 12:3, (Summer 1971); Stanley Shapiro, "The Passage of Power: Labor and the New Social Order", Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 120:6 (December 1976).

Jean Heffer and Jeanine Rovet, Why Is There No Socialism in the US, (Paris: Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1988) provides a collection of essays debating the issue inside the framework of exceptionalism. More recently William E. Forbath, in his Law and the Shaping of the American Labor Movement, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press 1991) has claimed to have found the missing answer. The use of injunctions forced the AFL to abandon any long term political strategy of its own in favour of political patronage from the main parties. Though there is some truth in this, Forbath applies his theory to the whole of the AFL, ignoring factional and regional differences.

Compared to the situation in other advanced capitalist countries, such as Britain and Germany, the political accomplishments of American organized labour were extremely limited. However, at the time of Sombart's treatise the future of labour parties in the other two countries was by no means certain, even though by the end of the first two decades of the twentieth century, organized labour in Britain and Germany had built independent political parties. These parties were reformist parties that believed in making change by utilizing the existing political and economic system. Both parties opposed revolution and, while not particularly radical, they represented working class interests through their direct link to the organized working class. It is the absence of this type of labour party in the USA that concerns this dissertation.³

It is not the intention to consider this question in an ahistorical sense, but rather to ask "why was it in the period that followed the First World War, that US labour's attempt to establish its own party failed?" Nor is this dissertation directly concerned with the debate over "exceptionalism". It concurs with Aristide R. Zolberg's view that "the 'exceptionalist' tradition and its mirror image, 'the end of ideology' approach, are so bound up in ideological controversy that they have outlived their usefulness as intellectual frameworks suitable for contemporary research". In rejecting the exceptionalist framework it is not intended to deny that the American working-class has its own distinctive history and development. If it did not, there would be no need for this study. It is not distinctiveness that is rejected here but, to quote Zolberg, the method of evaluating "working-class formation by positing one national pattern as the theoretic norm in relation to which all others are treated as deviant cases". Indeed this method drains the term "exceptional" of all content, for every working class has its own distinct history. They are all exceptional. At the same time there are many similarities between the working-classes of all countries. Yet those with a powerful working class party are in a minority. It could be argued that it is in countries, such as Britain or Germany, where powerful parties linked to the unions have been

³For a general history of German Labour and its political party in this period see Carl E. Schorske, German Social Democracy, 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983; orig. 1955); and for Britain, James Hinton, Labour and Socialism: A History of the British Labour Movement, 1867-1974, (Great Britain: Wheatsheaf Books, 1983).

established, that the working-classes are exceptional. The existence of the working class is not conditional on the building of its own party but on its conflicts, which take many forms, with its ruling class.⁴

To avoid confusion and sterile debate this study sidesteps the exceptionalist framework. However, it is necessary to briefly consider the way in which exceptionalist thinking shaped American labour historiography. The old school of labour history has put institutions and leaders at its centre; the policies of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), and its leadership's "pure and simple" business unionism, have stood in for the entire membership. This includes AFL president Samuel Gompers' rejection of any independent workers party in favour of a "non-partisan policy" of choosing between the two established parties. In other words, the whole organized working class has rejected independent politics. Thus Gwendolyn Mink claims, "In fact American Trade Unionism explicitly rejected the idea of independent labor

⁴Ira Katznelson and A. Zolberg (eds), Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp.397-402. Michael Zuckerman has gone further, claiming that "American exceptionalism is a subject that reduces smart people to prattle." "Prolegomenon to the Paradoxes of American Exceptionalism" a paper to the 1995 Commonwealth Fund Conference, to be published as the, "The Dodo and the Phoenix: A Fable of American Exceptionalism", in Rick Halpern and Jonathan Morris, (eds), New Perspectives on American Exceptionalism, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 2 and 26 (of original paper).

The literature against exceptionalism is wide and varied, a small sample of which follows. Neville Kirk, "The Limits of Liberalism: Working Class Formation in Britain and the USA", in Halpern and Morris cited above; Mike Davis, "Why the US Working Class is Different", New Left Review 123, (1980); Sean Wilentz, "Against Exceptionalism: Class Consciousness and the American Labor Movement", International Labor and Working Class History 27,(1984); Michael Kammen, "The Problem of American Exceptionalism: A Reconsideration", American Quarterly 45:1, (March 1993). A recent example of the way in which exceptionalism still haunts labour history is Kim Voss, The Making of American Exceptionalism: The Knights of Labor and Class Formation in the Nineteenth Century, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,1993).

For recent expositions of exceptionalism see, Seymour Martin Lipset, American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), and Byron Shafer, (ed), Is America Different? A New Look at American Exceptionalism, (Oxford, 1991).

politics" This is a simplification that does not correlate to the concrete evidence.⁵

This study maintains that the characterization of American trade unionism as purely concerned with job consciousness and explicitly rejecting independent politics is inadequate. The reality was significantly different. Even by 1920 American trade unionists had the experience of across industry national strikes and of solidarity action on behalf of other workers. In Seattle AFL unions directed the General Strike. In Chicago the AFL city body tried to organize the unskilled in steel and meatpacking, and lent solidarity to striking clothing workers. In 1919 there was a massive wave of working class struggle across the United States. The majority of the unions involved were affiliated with the AFL. This militancy did not express itself solely in industrial terms but spilled over into the political field. The United Mine Workers of America voted for a labour party. Major city centres of the AFL embarked on projects of building labour parties. Samuel Gompers battled against these city labour bodies for several years.

The victory of the AFL's non-partisan policy was not automatically assured. Neither side believed that some pre-determined theory doomed them to failure. If they had, they would not have fought a bitter struggle to control the political destiny of the AFL. Between 1918 and 1924, those supporting the Labor Party seriously contested the political policy of the AFL. In 1924, the AFL supported an independent presidential candidate for the first time in its history. This was partly a result of the political activity of its membership during the previous six years. Paradoxically, the defeat of the La Follette presidential campaign in 1924 represented the final victory of those who opposed independent political action. Why was it that the supporters of a labour party or independent political action met defeat? To answer that question, it is necessary to examine the

⁵Gwendolyn Mink, p.18.

The old school of labour history's theory that American trade unions restricted themselves purely to "job consciousness" is ably illustrated in J.R. Commons, History of Labor in the United States, 4 Vols, (New York: Macmillan, 1935-6) and Selig Perlman, A Theory of the Labor Movement, (New York: Macmillan, 1923). Marc Karson in his American Labor Unions and Politics 1900-18, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958); and Gwendolyn Mink (cited above) have continued to reinforce this argument up to the present day.

experience of those members of the AFL who tried to build labour parties. Yet for the most part historians have paid scant attention to this activity.⁶

The few publications dealing with the AFL and the attempts to build labour parties between 1918 and 1924 were written over 20 or 30 years ago. Only one book covers the whole of the period spanned by this study, Nathan Fine's history of Labor And Farmer Parties In The United States 1828-1928. However a book that covers such a vast sweep of history at a national level, though an excellent outline of the period, cannot detail grass-root activity. Therefore it is a history written mainly from above, a story of national institutions and events. Fine also believes that the period of 1918-1924 was one which saw labour on the offensive. He argues that the economic boom of the early twenties and the national rail strikes of the period are evidence of workers going on the offensive. He refutes the argument that defeats imposed on the labour movement were responsible for increased political consciousness. I maintain that the situation was far more complex than Fine allows for, and the chapters dealing with the specific case studies will investigate the relationship of labour's victories and defeats to independent political activity.⁷

Kenneth Campbell MacKay's book, The Progressive Movement of 1924, is far less satisfactory. His concentration on national events and institutions leads him to underestimate the importance of the AFL to the La Follette campaign. Fine, who was actually involved in independent political action, in this era avoids such an error. Fine and MacKay's books are the best of published material available on this period. Labour historians have for the most part ignored this dimension of US working class history. David Montgomery gives only brief reference to it in his Fall of the House of Labor. Although Philip Foner does provide greater emphasis in his History of the Labor Movement In The United States, he raises more questions than he answers. A few articles in Labor History relate indirectly to the

⁶Philip S. Foner, History Of The Labor Movement In The United States: The TUEL to The End of the Gompers Era, Vol 9, (New York: International Publishers 1991), Chap 19 passim.

⁷Nathan Fine, Labor And Farmer Parties In the United States 1828-1928, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961).

subject, usually concentrating on AFL non-partisan political activity at the expense of the labour parties. Eugene Tobin's excellent book Organize or Perish describes the attitude of the radical progressives outside of the unions towards the FLP. Steven Fraser's Labor Will Rule deals with Sidney Hillman's attitude to the Farmer Labor Party (FLP). A few local studies, such as Richard M. Vallely's study of the Minnesota FLP, have been published as well. Books such as Tom Copeland's Centralia Tragedy, and Harvey O' Connor's Revolution in Seattle, do refer to the FLP.⁸

However, the majority of material available is that found in unpublished dissertations, some over seventy years old. For the most part these local studies are based on the states of Washington, Minnesota, and the city of Chicago. Two dissertations provide national histories. One is Stanley Shapiro's, "Hand and Brain: The Farmer Labor Party of 1920". Two problems plague this study; one is the brief period covered, and the second is the author's overemphasis on the importance of the progressives. The second dissertation, Harry Bird Sell's "The A.F. of L and The Labor Party Movement of 1918-1920" avoids an overemphasis on progressives, but concentrates too much on the AFL nationally. The fact that it is a contemporary account is a weakness,

⁸Kenneth Campbell MacKay, The Progressive Movement of 1924. (New York: Octagon Books, 1972; orig.1947); David Montgomery, The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1987); Philip S. Foner, History Of The Labor Movement In The United States Volume 8: Postwar Struggles 1918-1920, (New York: International Publishers, 1988); Foner, History Of The Labor Movement, Vol 9; (cited above); Steven Fraser, Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor, (New York: The Free Press, 1991); Tom Copeland, The Centralia Tragedy of 1919: Elmer Smith and the Wobblies, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993); Harvey O'Connor, Revolution In Seattle, (Seattle: Left Bank Books, 1981; orig.1964); Julia Greene's article "The Strike at the Ballot Box: The American Federation of Labor's Entrance into Election Politics, 1906-1909, Labor History, 32:2, (Spring 1991) is an example of labour history that emphasises the importance of the AFL's non-partisan politics but ignores insurgent activity completely, as does Erik Olssen, "The Making Of A Political Machine: the Railroad Unions Enter Politics", Labor History, 19:3, (1978).

as full documentation was not available. It also suffers from being unable to go beyond 1920.⁹

As far as local histories are concerned there is only one dissertation available on the city of New York. This does not extend beyond 1922 and offers little information on rank and file party activity. Chicago is better served, with several dissertations available on the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) and the Cook County Labor Party (CCLP). However most of these are too brief to give an adequate analysis of the period. Roger Horowitz's detailed Bachelor's thesis is limited to the years between 1919 and 1920. Therefore there is no serious analysis of the CFL and the La Follette campaign. There are several other dissertations that deal with the history of the CFL or its leaders, and these deal with aspects of the FLP and CCLP.¹⁰

Washington state has fared far better with at least two extensive political histories of the Washington labour movement. As the FLP did well in Washington, it is perhaps not surprising it is so well served. Although the two studies-- Hamilton Cravens, "A History of The Washington Farmer Labour Party 1918-1924", and Jonathan Dembo's Unions and Politics in Washington State 1885-1935-- are not solely histories of the Seattle labour movement, its political activity is central to both studies. However whole areas of the US remain untouched by detailed histories of labour's political activities in this period. As

⁹Stanley Shapiro, "Hand and Brain: The Farmer Labor Party of 1920", (PhD, University of California, 1967); Harry B. Sell, "The A.F. of L. And The Labor Party Movement of 1918-20", (MA, University of Chicago, 1922).

¹⁰Lawrence Rogin, "Central Labor Bodies and Independent Political Action in New York City: 1918-1922", (MA, Columbia University, 1931); David Dolnick, "The Role of Labor in Chicago Politics Since 1919", (MA, Chicago University, 1939); Roger Horowitz, "The Failure of Independent Political Action: The Labor Party of Cook County, 1919-1920", (Bachelor's Essay, University of Chicago, 1982); David Fickes Simonson, "The Labor Party Of Cook County, Illinois, 1918-1919", (MA, University of Chicago, 1959); John Howard Keiser, "John Fitzpatrick and Progressive Unionism 1915-1925", (PhD, Northwestern University, 1965).

lamentable this situation is, it is not the intention of this dissertation to provide these histories.¹¹

Instead this study seeks to explain why the hope and impetus that saw a wave of political activity by AFL members ran into the sand by the end of 1924. This key concern raises a series of secondary questions in its wake. How substantial was support for independent political activity inside and outside of the AFL? What barriers did the labour parties face? To what extent did the craft nature of the AFL preclude building a labour party. Did the nature of industry, workplace size and organization affect the possibilities? How did factors such as race, ethnicity and gender affect the movement, and how did the movement relate to these factors? What was the more important factor in failure, the AFL's leadership opposition, or lack of popular support at the polls? Did the American political system aid or hamper the new parties development?

This thesis is concerned with answering these questions, and this concern infuses it from the beginning to the end. In carrying out this project it is insufficient to provide a history based simply on national events. Generalizations made from national activities can lead to an underestimating of the importance of events. Thus MacKay claims that the AFL did little campaigning for La Follette in 1924. This has passed as truth into the general historiography of the period. However a closer look at the three cities in this study reveals that many unions were active in the campaign. A national balance sheet, from the La Follette headquarters, does not tell the full story. National histories that do not check general experiences with local ones are prone to such errors. Local research undermines such generalizations. For example the argument that failure was due purely to insufficient

¹¹Hamilton Cravens, "A History of The Washington Farmer Labor Party 1918-1924", (MA, University of Washington, 1962); Jonathan Dembo, Unions and Politics in Washington State 1885-1935, (New York: Garland Publishing Co, 1983). There are also dissertations that deal with specific aspects of Seattle labour's involvement in politics. Melvin Gardner De Shazo, "Radical Tendencies in The Seattle Labor Movement as Reflected in The Proceedings of its Central Body", (MA, University of Washington, 1925); William John Dickson, "Labor in Municipal Politics: A Study of Labor's Political Policies and Activities in Seattle", (MA, University of Washington, 1928); Mary Joan O'Connell, "The Seattle Union Record, 1918-1928 A Pioneer Labor Daily", (MA, University Of Washington, 1964).

electoral support is belied by the experience of Washington State, where the Farmer Labor Party came second in 1920, but declined soon afterwards. Was it the lack of electoral support that precipitated this decline? The Minnesota FLP had similar electoral support and sustained itself into the early thirties. The Chicago FLP had poor electoral support but sustained itself just as long as the Seattle party. These examples should alert the historian to the existence of other factors in answer to the question.

However in using local studies there is a risk of losing sight of any generalized conclusion. For the experience of the Seattle working class movement was different from that of New York and vice versa. All localities have their own peculiarities and commonalities. How can this dilemma be resolved? Aristide R. Zolberg considered this problem at an international level, and his solution is well suited to the problem faced here:

One way out of this dilemma is to treat each historical situation as a case of working-class formation-that is, as something akin to one of several possible states of dependent variables and that can be accounted for by reference to variation among a set of factors considered...¹²

Using this method, differences and similarities in each locality can be taken into account and tested against the overall national picture. The use of the comparative approach transcends the barrier to generalization erected by a purely local study. The use of comparison can identify the

combination of factors that best account for the variation that is found, taking into consideration that structural factors merely determined a range of possibilities within which actual outcomes resulted from constant strategic interaction among a number of players.¹³

The labour movements of three cities have been chosen as case studies to provide a comparison which can answer the questions raised above. These studies do not simply concentrate on the political or trade-union factors involved, but take into account the social and economic factors shaping working class formation in all three cities. Though the three cities chosen - New York, Chicago and Seattle - are

¹²Zolberg, p.401

¹³Zolberg, p.401.

geographically located in a line running from east to west, they were not selected for this reason. They were chosen because they were involved in independent political action between 1918-1924, and because their labour movements have been characterized in different ways.¹⁴

Chicago had been lauded as the best organized trade union city in the world in the early twentieth century. It was the Chicago Federation of Labor, dominated by progressive unionists, that launched the national Labor Party movement. The CFL did not have great electoral success with its party, but it did maintain it and take national political initiatives for several years. Seattle is famous for its General Strike; a strike controlled and led by unions affiliated to the AFL. Considering the influence of syndicalism in Seattle, real or imagined, it is perhaps surprising that it was the city out of the three where labour was most successful at the polls. New York has the reputation of having a movement dominated by craft unionists in league with Tammany Hall. This is not completely without foundation, but there was another side to New York. This included a high level of industrial action between 1919 and 1920 and, for a brief while, the domination of progressive union leaders opposed to Tammany. It is not the case that the only progressive unionists in New York were outside of the AFL.¹⁵ The labour party in New York never became substantial enough to be put to a serious test at the polls; and the party collapsed well in advance of the other cities' organizations.

¹⁴For further discussion on the use of comparative history see, James E. Cronin, "Neither Exceptional nor Peculiar: Toward the Comparative Study of Labor in Advance Society", International Review of Social History 38 (1993); Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry", Comparative Studies in Society and History 22:2 (1980); Neville Kirk, Labour and Society in Britain and the USA: Volume 2 Challenge and Accommodation, 1850-1939, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994).

¹⁵The impression that progressive trade unionism lacked any importance inside the New York AFL could be obtained by reading Melvyn Dubofsky's history of the pre war situation. He concentrates almost entirely on progressive unionism outside of the AFL. Moreover by ending his study at the beginning of the war the subsequent rise of the progressive unionists is not covered. Melvyn Dubofsky, When Workers Organize: New York City in the Progressive Era, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968).

Thus there are differences in the political viability of each movement and also in its type of trade-union organization. The workforces of all three cities worked in different types of industry in terms of sector and scale. The ethnic, racial and religious make-up of the population of between the three cities varied greatly. These factors will be outlined in Chapter Two; it is sufficient to note at this stage that the social and economic structure of each city was very different. In spite of this the labour movements in all three cities were, for the most part, dominated by AFL unions. Therefore the studies provide a combination of factors, some similar and some different. In studying the relationship between difference and similarity, the main factors that defeated organized labour committed to independent political action emerge.

Before proceeding with the case studies, the next chapter will detail the change in US labour relations created by the First World War. These changes at a national and local level altered the attitude of some AFL members towards the state, encouraging the belief that it could be used to carry out reform. This new optimism led to the demand for independent political action. The chapter also outlines the general economic, political, social and trade union background to each city. The case studies of New York, Chicago and Seattle follow immediately after this. The case studies start with the formation and subsequent decline of the labour parties, and end with the La Follette presidential campaign, which many labour party activists had hoped would revive their fortunes. The chapters are ordered in two chronological periods, Chapters Three to Five cover 1918-1920, and Chapters Six to Eight cover 1921 to 1924. As far as possible, each chapter investigates the same range of factors as the previous, so that the whole thesis is infused with the comparative method. The final chapter evaluates the study's contribution to the understanding of the relationship of the US working class to independent political action.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM RECONSTRUCTION TO LABOUR PARTIES: THE CRUCIBLE OF WAR

We mined the coal to transport soldiers,
We kept the home fires all aglow,
We put Old Kaiser out of business,
What's our reward? We want to know!¹

Between 1918 and 1919 the post-war reconstruction of American society became an issue of importance for employers, workers and government. While President Wilson planned for "democracy and peace" on the world stage, labour began to consider its plans for democracy and peace at home. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) formed reconstruction committees at national, state, and city levels to formulate its plans. Labour parties emerged out of these plans for reconstruction in some areas, most notably in New York and Chicago. This chapter traces the process that began with the issue of reconstruction and ended in independent political action in the cities of New York, Chicago and Seattle.

America's involvement in World War One boosted the economy, created full employment, and raised the confidence of labour. In 1917 and 1918 strikes took place across a wide range of industries. Workers demanded higher wages to keep up with war-driven inflation; others struck for shorter hours or union recognition. The metal trades, heavily involved in munitions production, had more strikes than any other sector. Close on their heels came the building trades, shipbuilding, mining and transportation. These were not the only areas

¹"Miners on the War Path", Coal miners' song at the 1919 UMW Cleveland Convention, Undated report Heber Blankenhorn Papers, box 4, folder 6, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

involved, and strikes took place across a wide range of occupations, including women telegraphers. All these industries were central to the war effort.²

The growing disruption became of increasing concern to the government, which also feared that wage increases would fuel inflation. This wartime experience was the crucible for the labour party movement. Any discussion or understanding of both the AFL's temporary break with voluntarism, and the trajectory of labour party activism, must begin with the corporatist experiments of the wartime administration.³

In an attempt to obtain social peace, so that the war effort could be pursued without hindrance, President Wilson obtained a "no-strike pledge" from Samuel Gompers, President of the AFL. Gompers, however, was unable to get the Executive Council of the AFL to agree to the pledge. To overcome labour's objections to calling a truce during the war, Wilson initiated the National War Labour Board (WLB). The aim of the WLB was to prevent strikes and lockouts for the duration of hostilities. Workers' rights to organise and bargain collectively were conceded, but this did not mean a closed shop. The employers' right to organise was guaranteed, as well as existing union conditions.⁴

The employers' right to meet with representatives of non-union employees was not to be undermined, but it was stated that all workers had a right to a living wage. Established by Presidential proclamation on 8 April 1918, the National War Labor Board, was composed of representatives of capital, labour and the public. Its role was to interpret and carry out the principles and functions outlined above. It became the supreme court of industry, overseeing industrial relations during the war.⁵

²Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S Dept. of Labor, Government Printing Office, Monthly Labor Review, Vol 10, (June 1920-December 1920), p. 1506 passim.

³For details of wartime corporate administration see James Weinstein, The Corporate Ideal In the Liberal State: 1900-1918, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), Chapter 8, passim.

⁴W. Jett Lauck, Political And Industrial Democracy, 1776-1926, (New York: Funk and Wagnall, 1926), p. 13.

⁵Ibid, pp. 13-15.

Some historians have described the AFL's wartime cooperation as a break with voluntarism. For example Gary Fink argues that voluntarism was a national policy that prevented national political involvement, but did not affect local organization. Fink, "The Rejection of

Prior to the war the AFL advocated the principle of voluntarism, the belief that workers should improve their conditions through their own economic organization, and not depend on the state for reform. This anti-statist philosophy argued that state involvement in the industrial field would deprive workers of their rights and constrain the exercising of their economic power.

However, state and city AFL organizations pursued legislation locally, while nationally the AFL supported reforms for working women and children. Samuel Gompers, the strongest advocate of voluntarism, broke with this principle in order to mobilize labour for the war effort. He not only tolerated the intervention of the state through the WLB, but along with other leaders even accepted nationalization of key utilities such as railroads for the duration of the war. After the war the rail unions and the majority of the AFL leadership continued supporting nationalization of the railroads, forcing the issue through the AFL convention of 1920 over Gompers' objections.⁶

Wartime labour shortages, coupled with the frequent intervention of the WLB in favour of striking workers, produced a growing confidence amongst trade unionists and an increase in union membership both inside and outside the AFL. The WLB and its Joint Chairman, Frank Walsh, won the respect of a layer of trade-union officials and members. Union recognition, equal pay for equal work for women, a 44-hour week, and wage increases were typical of awards enforced by the WLB to end disputes.⁷

Under the Board's protection, union membership grew by nearly one million by the end of the war. The Board did not succeed in preventing all strikes; indeed the number of disputes increased. As Joseph McCartin has argued:

Voluntarism", in Charles M. Rehmus, Doris B. McLaughlin, and Frederick H. Nesbitt (eds), Labor and American Politics, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1978), pp. 108-129.

⁶William E. Forbath, Law and the Shaping of the American Labor Movement, (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1991). Forbath believes that the unions were forced into voluntarism by American Law. There is no doubt that this partly explains the behaviour of sections of the AFL, but he describes voluntarism as the most important aspect in the development of American trade unionism. For an alternative view, see Fink, cited above.

⁷Example of the activities of the WLB can be found in Edward Berman, Labor Disputes And The President Of The United States, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), Chapter 5.

By allowing workers to connect democracy in industry to democracy in Europe, the federal program had the effect of offering a potent vocabulary to labor militants who had little trouble in seizing it to attack the authority of employers.

The belief that the war was for democracy abroad increasingly saw workers take up the slogan of industrial democracy. The war against the Kaiser and Prussians abroad also became a war against "The American Junkers". Workers demanded the de-kaisering of industry, rather than higher wages and shorter hours.⁸

An example of this dual use of the war effort is the pledge issued by the Chicago Federation of Labor President (CFL), John Fitzpatrick and its Chairman, Edward Nockels:

Organized Labor of Chicago, representing half a million men and women, dedicate their Labor Day, September second, nineteen eighteen, to win the war. We pledge to our fellow working men and women of the Allied nations that we will never surrender until Labor's rights and Democracy is acknowledged the world over.

This is ambiguous language. While supporting the war, its main concern is the rights of labour. For shop-floor militants industrial democracy was not an abstract issue; it meant the ability to defend or improve conditions against ruthless employers. The WLB provided a vocabulary and legitimacy for these struggles. However, for much of the AFL leadership involvement with the WLB was merely an emergency measure for the duration of the war; they had no desire to see such government intervention continue afterwards.

The ending of hostilities raised the question as to whether the relationship created by the WLB would continue. More conservative-minded AFL leaders desired a return to the status quo, but more

⁸Pennsylvania Labor Herald, 22 November 1918, quoted in McCartin, "An American Feeling", Industrial Democracy in America, Nelson Lichtenstein and Howell John Harris (eds), (Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 73. Joseph A. McCartin, "Labor's Great War: Workers, Unions, and the State, 1916-1920" (PhD. dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1990), pp. xxii-xxviii.

⁹Joseph McCartin, "An American Feeling", pp. 70-73. Statement dated 12 September, 1918, John Fitzpatrick Papers, box 7, folder 50, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois, (hereafter cited as Fitzpatrick Papers).

progressive-minded leaders - and even some industrialists, statesmen and publicists - believed that the remarkable achievements of industry during the war should continue. Some sections of big business pressed for a closer relationship between government and industry. They needed the government to deal with workers who obstructed war-time production. Wilson dealt with opposition in two ways; one was the repression of Socialist and IWW organisations and their publications; the second was to make concessions to labour and mobilise pro-war liberal groups. This suited a corporate ideology that sought to strengthen and expand production by involving the trade unions, while excluding those which were antagonistic to capitalist development. Therefore the AFL had to be drawn into a working relationship with the government and the employers; this had been done by forming the WLB. The joint chairmen were, William Howard Taft, chosen by the employers, and Frank P. Walsh, chosen by the employees. The employers had five representatives on the board, as did the employees.¹⁰

Central to this vision of reconstruction was the concept of industrial democracy. This was not a precise and definable term; it could mean different things to different people. Frank Walsh described it as the prospect of every engine of production, every man, and every instrumentality being hooked up into one cooperative drive for the people. The AFL leadership's view of industrial democracy was similar: shop committees should not just discuss wages and conditions, but also means of increasing output. Nevertheless, the reconstruction program adopted by the AFL convention made no mention of shop committees or of continuing the operation of agencies like the WLB. Working life could be democratized only by trade unions. However, the reconstruction programme did not say how this could be achieved, apart from extending the AFL. It called for an end to the use of injunctions against the unions, and making it a crime for any employer to deprive workers of the right to join a union. The philosophy of "voluntarism" remained intact. This in itself was contradictory, for on the one hand the AFL leadership advocated an extension of democracy for the whole of society, while on the other they remained committed to their exclusive view of union membership, and to a refusal to be involved in

¹⁰Lauck, p. 16; Weinstein, pp. 220-236 passim; Edward Berman, Labor Disputes And The President Of the United States, (New York: Columbia University, 1924), pp. 138-139; Robert Cuff, The War Industries Board, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973).

independent politics. By their own economic strength workers would improve their living standards. Economic strength, in this usage, did not mean striking, or adopting militant, class-struggle style unionism.¹¹

The attitude of the AFL leadership was demonstrated by its reaction to the local metal trades councils. These had been formed in factories and shipyards to coordinate the struggles of the different trades. Such councils had existed before the war, but their role had been a limited one. During 1917 and 1918 they displayed considerable local initiative, and often preempted the role of national trade unions in formulating demands and leading strikes. The independence of the councils disturbed the national officers of the unions involved as much as it did the employers. In 1919 the leaders of the AFL moved to control the metal trades councils, which had proved very effective in the electrical, machine tool, automobile, and shipbuilding industries. The metal trades department of the AFL decreed in February 1919 that no local metal trades council could order a strike unless the local affiliated unions had received permission from the internationals concerned. Any attempt on the part of any local council to force a sympathetic strike in any locality would be considered a violation of the union's laws.¹²

To summarise, the leadership of the AFL saw industrial democracy as being made to fit the disciplined craft confines of the AFL, with union leaders negotiating with big business on the workers' behalf, and, at the same time, acting as a pressure group on behalf of the whole population to extend democracy. Though the AFL only represented a minority of US workers, its leaders sincerely believed that the strengthening of the AFL was good for the whole population of America. However, no concession was made to those wishing to modernize the craft-based union.

¹¹David Montgomery, "Industrial Democracy or Democracy in Industry", in Lichtenstein and Harris, cited above, p. 36. David Montgomery, The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 417-418.

¹²Machinists Monthly Journal, 31 March 1919, p. 233; quoted in David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work Technology, and Labor Struggles, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 125.

This attitude did not take into account the fact that the nature of the AFL had changed dramatically during the war. Before the war most AFL disputes took place on a craft or local basis. Solidarity, or across-industry strikes were rare, as were general strikes. After the war many trade unionists in some sectors, most notably meatpacking and steel, formed joint committees to negotiate across entire industries. This new situation offered possibilities for reforming or modernising the AFL, but the leadership was opposed to any such changes. However, some sections of the AFL did take up the challenge offered by the new situation - in particular the progressive union leaders of the Chicago and Seattle labour movements.¹³

THE PROGRESSIVE OPPOSITION

John Fitzpatrick, President of the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL); was a full-time organizer for the AFL, but he was not a typical AFL official. Under his leadership the CFL advanced a militant, class-conscious style of trade unionism. Fitzpatrick played an active role in mass-organizing drives in meatpacking and steel during the 1917-19 era. He supported the efforts to unionize female teachers, and played a leading role in the campaign to free trade unionist, Tom Mooney, from prison. He had little faith in government action and believed the giant corporations were beyond its control. Indeed government was more likely to be controlled by them, hence the use of the courts and the army against striking unionists. He believed it was necessary for labour to be able to "balance power" with the industrialists.¹⁴

However Fitzpatrick did not believe that workers were strong enough to create that balance immediately, especially because of the limitations of the AFL. For organized labour to counter the power of the employers it would be necessary to extend its ranks to include the unskilled, women and blacks. But even this would not be enough: it

¹³For detailed studies of these strikes see: David Brody, Labor in Crisis: The Steel Strike of 1919, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Philip S. Foner, Postwar Struggles, 1918-1920: History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Vol 8, (New York: International Publishers, 1988); Rick Halpern, "Race, Ethnicity and Union in the Chicago Stockyards, 1917-1922", International Review Of Social History, 37, (1992).

¹⁴Halpern, p. 33; John Howard Keiser, "John Fitzpatrick And Progressive Unionism 1915-1925", (PhD. Northwestern University, 1965), p. 28.

would still have to confront the power of the state, its courts and troops. From this it logically followed that the old non-partisan politics of the AFL could no longer be used by labour; both Republicans and Democrats had betrayed the working class. Both had used the courts against the unions and carried out the bidding of big business. Workers needed their own party that could utilise the existing state to curtail the power of the employers, and provide welfare for the workers.¹⁵

Fitzpatrick's experience of the WLB and his involvement with Frank Walsh had changed his attitude towards the relationship possible between the state and workers. Like Fitzpatrick, Walsh had a Roman Catholic and Irish background. A labour attorney from Kansas, he dedicated his legal career to labour, representing it in major court hearings. A progressive Democrat, he did not join the Labor Party, although he gave it much money and support.¹⁶

Fitzpatrick's plans were not revolutionary; he advocated that workers utilize the state by creating their own political party. The power of the employers would be balanced by a combination of independent political action, and an extension of trade unionism. However, he did not propose breaking with the AFL to form industrial unions; instead he proposed an amalgamation of the trades inside each industry, and in particular the recruitment of the unskilled. Fitzpatrick primarily sought to create a place within the AFL for unskilled industrial workers. At the same time, he did not wish to destroy the traditional craft-union orientation of the AFL, for it was clear that such organization was still necessary in many instances. Instead, he desired to expand and modernize the outlook of the AFL, making it more effective in dealing with modern industry. Historian John Keiser describes this process as "federated unionism", a step towards industrial unionism. The big difference between Fitzpatrick and the more conservative leadership of the AFL was that he wanted to pursue this policy more aggressively and consistently. Gompers, for example, was prepared to be on the National Committee to organise Iron

¹⁵The official AFL policy was not to support any party on a permanent basis. Instead the main parties and candidates were questioned on issues of importance to labour. It meant supporting Republicans in some areas, and Democrats in others. Labour would influence the political process by rewarding its friends, and punishing its enemies. This policy was known as "Non-Partisan".

¹⁶Sister Marie Eucharist Meehan, C.S.J., "Frank P. Walsh and the American Labor Movement", (Phd, New York University, 1962), *passim*.

and Steel Workers, but when it became clear that a national strike could not be avoided, he resigned from it.¹⁷

Keiser describes independent political action as a strategy which had a similar goal to Fitzpatrick's economic program: "to raise labor to a position from which it could counterbalance the power of industry in American Society". Though not revolutionary, these ideas were a radical break with the voluntarism of Gompers and the AFL leadership. For Fitzpatrick industrial democracy could not be achieved without independent political action.¹⁸

Not everyone in the CFL was of the same opinion as Fitzpatrick. Its delegates included Populists, and the more radical Socialists, as well as "pure and simple" trade unionists. This diversity of opinion never got out of hand. Fitzpatrick never denied any delegate the opportunity to speak, but at the same time he kept firm control. The most cohesive group of radicals were the hundred or so grouped around William Z. Foster. Foster was the founder of the Trade Union Educational League, a syndicalist organisation dedicated to industrial unionism. However, unlike the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the strategy of Foster's organisation was to "bore from within" the AFL rather than to establish independent organizations. The endorsement of the CFL, and its financial support, made it possible for Foster and other radicals to organize "federated unionism" in the stockyards, where they formed the Stockyards Labor Council. The radicals had a different concept of industrial democracy. They believed in "workers' control", which did not mean cooperation with management through committees, but workers' self-management. Industrial Unionism would be a key step to achieving this democracy. Most of these militants paid little regard to political parties. Foster had refused to include in an Iron and Steelworker strike bulletin "the mild advice" that steel workers should join a labour party, until Fitzpatrick had ordered him to do so.¹⁹

¹⁷Keiser, pp. 45, 67-8.

¹⁸Keiser, p. 124.

¹⁹Keiser, p. 75; Halpern, p. 33; Montgomery, *House of Labour*, p. 425; Commission of Inquiry, *Interchurch World Movement, Report on the Steel Strike of 1919*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), p. 36; Edward P. Johanningsmeier, *Forging American Communism: The Life of William Z. Foster*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 155-7.

Though Fitzpatrick had a different viewpoint from the radicals, he continued to work with those he disagreed with. Though eventually Foster and Johnston joined the Workers Party (the US Communist Party), Fitzpatrick's industrial strategy saw him remain inside the Farmer Labor Party. Each view of industrial democracy and reconstruction had political consequences for the labour movement. The orthodox AFL view of non-partisan and voluntarist policies led to supporting either Democrats or Republicans. Fitzpatrick's "federated unionism" and counterbalancing of the employers' power led to the formation of a labour party, and the radicals' "workers control" to the forming of a Communist Party. But in early 1919 the Communists were not organized. Nor did the syndicalists have any major influence inside the AFL. Therefore in this period it was the advocacy of a labour party by progressive unionists, such as Fitzpatrick, that typified the major opposition to the AFL's conservatives.

THE RACE FOR RECONSTRUCTION

With the end of the war the issues outlined above became urgent for workers and employers alike. Prior to 1918, the discussion of reconstruction had been restricted to the AFL national leadership. The end of the war saw a growing awareness amongst the AFL membership for the need to influence and plan economic reconstruction. An increasingly strident debate took place within the AFL, not only about the nature of reconstruction, but also about how it could best be implemented. This entailed a challenge to the concept of voluntarism and, for some activists, a call for an independent labour party.

However, the end of the war meant demobilization and economic contraction. Employers responded by discharging labour, cutting costs and increasing hours. Union leaders were well aware that the employers wanted to rescind the concessions they had made during the war. The unions were forewarned by the International Association of Machinists, which had obtained a copy of an Employers Association letter, announcing the need for an employers offensive against "Gompers and other Bolsheviks".²⁰

²⁰International Association of Machinists to Frank Walsh, 28 November, 1918, Frank Walsh Papers, box 7, folder 7, New York Public Library, New York, New York, (hereafter cited as Walsh Papers).

Once again the unions could expect the law to be used against them. As for the concessions the Wilson administration had made during the war, these had been due to national necessity rather than any real interest in labour's welfare. The same party which passed the Clayton Act used injunctions against striking miners in November 1919.²¹

Though workers' confidence had grown, there was growing unease at what the post-war settlement would bring. Rank-and-file trade unionists saw a great difference between their actual position after the war, and the rosy picture of the future painted for them during the war. Increasingly, progressive and radical union leaders in the AFL began to raise the issue of political action. The Seattle Union Record proclaimed:

Never has the case been more clearly stated. Labor has got to control political power in the proportions it attains economic power, because in our modern industrial life these two forms of power dovetail into each other, and one cannot progress without the other.

With this in mind trade union activists began to consider plans for reconstruction.²²

In particular they looked to the reconstruction plans of the British Labour Party and its political achievements. Progressive, AFL, and Socialist publications carried extensive coverage of the British Labour Party and its reconstruction programme. Though they were looking abroad for solutions, the need for those solutions was firmly rooted in the real circumstances and experiences of American workers. In formulating plans for reconstruction, some sections of the AFL came to the conclusion that they could not trust either of the two old parties to carry out their programme. To implement it they needed a party on the same lines as the increasingly successful British Labour Party. Influenced by President Wilson's "Fourteen Point" programme for world peace, the Chicago Federation of Labour produced "Labor's Fourteen Points"; and went on to form an Independent Labor Party (see Appendix I, Labor's Fourteen Points). Across the country the creation of labour parties, or demands that the AFL form such a party, mushroomed.²³

²¹Harry B. Sell, "The A.F. of L. and the Labor Party Movement of 1918-20", (M.A., University of Chicago, 1922), p. 31.

²²Sell, p. 33. Union Record, 8 June, 1918, cited in Sell, p. 34.

²³New Majority, 4 January, 1919.

Even the AFL reconstruction programme was influenced by the growing radicalization. It demanded:

Public and semi-public utilities should be owned, operated or regulated by the government in the interest of the public.
Whatever final disposition shall be made of the railways of the country in ownership, management or regulation, we insist upon the right of the workers to organise for their common and mutual protection and the full exercise of the normal activities which come with organization.

The AFL reconstruction programme made a strong appeal to radicals and militants in the labour movement with its call for an extension of democracy and union rights.²⁴

But it was stronger on rhetoric than real radicalism, for there was no strategy offered to achieve the programme's aims. No Democrat or Republican administrations would pass such a programme. However, when it came to political activity the AFL had nothing new to say. Independent political action by labour was rejected as "disastrous". It was argued that the non-partisan policy was a proven success, they should stick to the policy of rewarding friends and punishing enemies. Yet when it came to the use of injunctions or state repression, there was no difference between Democrats and Republicans. The AFL had supported the Democrats in 1912 and 1916, yet in 1919 a Democratic administration launched a massive offensive against the left of the labour movement. It also stood idly by as the employers conducted a massive open-shop campaign. The programme gave no sense of the attacks being made on the unions; its main concern was to outflank those who wanted to break with its non-partisan policies. Thus it paid lip-service to growing radicalization and the desire for reform, but offered no practical solutions. It was to be business as usual. In a period of mass radicalization, this failure to implement change created dissension and debate inside the AFL. The main contributors to that debate were those who advocated independent political action, and those who were committed to the status quo.²⁵

²⁴"American Federation of Labor Reconstruction Program." Reproduced as Appendix 1, in Sell, p. 161.

²⁵Sell, pp. 162-166.

THE LABOUR PARTY IMPULSE

That there was significant support inside the AFL for the "Labor Party idea" is sustained by a report in the Intercollegiate Socialist, in which Abraham Epstein analysed a survey from an organization that had the "confidence of labor in a leading industrial state of the East". Of 285 unions answering the questionnaire, 89 per cent favoured the formation of a labour party. Some unions claimed that they couldn't discuss the issue, due to union regulations. However in most trades there was overwhelming support for a labour party.²⁶

The article confirms that there was substantial support inside the AFL for the formation of a labour party. The syndicalists were not influential enough inside the AFL to have their alternatives considered, and the Communists had not yet organized a party. There was a brief attempt to carry out syndicalist or soviet-style policies in Seattle, but these lost influence due to the defeat of the General Strike.²⁷ However there was one organisation with substantial influence and support inside and outside the AFL whose attitude was significant.

That organisation was the Socialist Party of America (SPA). Though its main strength was in unions outside of the AFL, especially those in the needle trades, it did have considerable influence inside the AFL, particularly in the Machinists Association. It also had a long tradition of being the main socialist electoral alternative to Republicans and Democrats. Its electoral support in some areas was substantial. It is quite common for historians to assert that the party had peaked as an electoral force by 1912. Although, this was true for the Socialists' presidential vote, the organization still got a substantial vote in areas such as New York, Wisconsin and Milwaukee. In New York City, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Three, its vote in

²⁶Railroads were 99.1 per cent in favour, but printers gave a 90.8 per cent negative vote. Miners strongly approved, 6,310 UMWA members voted overwhelmingly in favour. Of 60 locals participating 48 voted unanimously for, but only one unanimously against. The votes of the six City Central trades councils stood 85 per cent for and 15 per cent against. The article appeared in The Intercollegiate Socialist, Vol VII : 4, (April-May 1919), pp. 15-16.

²⁷The General Strike and the consequences of its defeat are discussed in detail below.

1918 was still increasing. Therefore in late 1918 and early 1919 the attitude of the Socialist Party towards the labour party was of considerable importance. However, the Socialist Party was not a monolith, and its members had different attitudes towards the new party. In New York and Chicago they opposed the labour parties at the polls, but in Seattle they cooperated. As the experience with the Socialists was varied in each city, the differences will be examined further in each of the three case studies.²⁸

Labour's experience of wartime corporatism created the impulse for the formation of labour parties. For the first time the state had played a positive role in industrial relations. Many sectors of previously poorly organized workers had improved their conditions and hours, often with the help of the WLB. Many feared that the end of the war would see the loss of the gains made. Therefore it was in a contradictory atmosphere of growing confidence and growing apprehension that the debate on reconstruction led to the logic of independent political action. The experience was not the same everywhere. As we shall see later, the Chicago movement was still defiant when it formed its party; in Seattle the movement had just suffered serious defeat. To prepare the ground for a comparison of independent political action between the three labour movements, it is necessary to sum up the main economic, political and trade-union backgrounds, of each of the three cities used as a case study. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to this task.

²⁸For example of Socialist decline by 1912 see Weinstein, The Decline Of Socialism In America, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), pp. 326. For countervailing trends against this general decline see Evans Clark, "The 1918 Socialist Vote", Intercollegiate Socialist, Vol VII: 2, (December-January 1918-1919).

In 1911 the Socialists controlled the International Association of Machinists, Montgomery, House Of Labor, p. 291. James Weinstein, the Decline, p. 36, states that "While the Socialists never succeeded in winning a majority within the American Federation of Labor, their strength had become considerable by 1912. In that year Max Hayes received almost one-third of the vote running against Gompers for the presidency of the Federation...".

NEW YORK

New York City had more manufacturing enterprises in its confines than any other city in America. However the bulk of these were small scale, and the largest sector was the needle trades. New York was the nation's garment-making capital; over 160,000 workers, almost one in every six of New York labourers, earned their livelihoods in the clothing trades. Although the clothing trades' economic importance was remarkable, other manufactures were also significant. The value of manufactured goods in New York City exceeded that of any state in the Union except New York and Pennsylvania, and New York City possessed 26,000 of the state's 31,000 manufacturing concerns. But New York businesses were small in the age of conglomerate industries such as Standard Oil, American Tobacco, and United States Steel; small firms with minimal capital investments, carrying on limited production, characterized New York's industrial structure.²⁹

However, this picture of New York does not convey the full story. Even in New York there were large industries. In New York City and the Borough of Brooklyn, 39,279 workers were employed in shipbuilding. Some of these yards were quite large establishments, but it was not just a matter of establishment size; all yards employed carpenters, and those who were in the AFL-affiliated carpenters union had city-wide contact with those involved in construction. New York's docks and harbours also provided large scale employment.³⁰

By 1920 those "gainfully employed" in Greater New York totalled 2,531,412, of which 27.3 per cent were women. In Greater New York 14.29 per cent of these women were in trade unions, an increase of 30 per cent since 1914. However the majority worked in the clothing and textile trades.³¹ In 1913 New York as a whole had 491,793 trade-union

²⁹Melvyn Dubofsky, When Workers Organize: New York City in the Progressive Era, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), p. 5.

³⁰United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States, Volume IX, (1920) (Washington Government Printing Office, 1920), p. 1026-7 passim.

³¹By 1913 the largest unionized sector in the state was the clothing sector with 226,528 members; 95 per cent of these were in New York City. (Of the 78,522 women in unions, 67,409 were in textiles and clothing.) The second largest grouping were the construction trades with 138,735 members, followed by transportation with 93,995. Metals, Machinery and Shipbuilding had 37,452, and Printing and Binding 30,730. Seventy three per cent of all these trade unionists worked in New York

members, the rest of the state had 173,455. If we assume that the number of trade unionists in New York City was at least 639,330 by 1920, just over 25 per cent of the total workforce was in unions. New York had a union membership well above the national average.³²

The majority of AFL-affiliated trade unionists were American-born, or of Irish, German and English origin. In the clothing trade unions outside the AFL - the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and other needle trades unions - Italians and Jews from Eastern Europe predominated. But the majority of unskilled labourers belonged to no union at all. It was only in the needle trades that the unskilled had been successfully organized. Attempts to win union recognition for the unskilled in other sectors had failed.³³

New York City had more strikes than any other city. Three hundred and sixty-three strikes and lockouts were recorded for 1916, 484 for 1917 and 1918, and 360 in 1919. Of course New York had more establishments than any other city, but nonetheless many of the strikes involved large numbers of workers, and many occurred in sectors outside of clothing. Thus in October 1919, 100,000 shipbuilding workers struck in New York City and its vicinity. In February 125,000 building trades workers struck. Prior to 1919 the largest number involved in a single strike had been the 60,000 men's clothing workers in 1916. Many of these strikes broke through the old craft boundaries. This aspect of New York labour militancy, and the nature of its organization will be looked at in detail in Chapter Three.³⁴

City. New York State Department of Labor, New York Labor Bulletin, April 1914, p. 1. These figures are taken from the New York State Department of Labor, Special Bulletin, No.110, (April 1922), pp. 6-31.

³²The figure 25 per cent is obtained by dividing union membership into 2,531,412 gainfully employed in Greater New York, Special Bulletin, cited above.

The figures for union membership are estimated as the New York State Department of Labor has not provided them for this period, but I have probably underestimated the increase. Union membership more than doubled nationally between 1910 and 1920, from 2,052,402 to 4,795,100. This was an increase of trade unionists as a percentage of the employed from 8.6 per cent to 17.5 per cent. Figures taken from Leo Wolman, Ebb and Flow In Trade Unionism, (National Bureau of Economic Research, New York, 1936).

³³Dubofsky, p. 2 and Chapter 7 passim.

³⁴Monthly Labor Review, Vol 10, (June 1920), pp. 1506-1510. Considering the large-scale strikes that occurred in New York in this period it is surprising that there is no major study of them.

Unions in New York, as was the case in most urban centres, were affiliated to city - and statewide bodies. In 1918 there were two active central labour bodies in New York City affiliated with the American Federation of Labour. They were the Central Federated Union of New York (CFU), and the Central Labour Union (CLU) of Brooklyn. Central bodies formally existed in the Bronx and in Richmond, but these were defunct. Two other central bodies existed, the United Hebrew Trades and the Women's Trade Union League. Though not official AFL bodies they were made up of unions affiliated to it. The CFU and the CLU were the most important labour bodies in New York. They included the majority of the AFL workers in the city. Of the two the CFU was by far the larger and the more important.³⁵

Unlike Chicago or Seattle the trade-union movement was divided literally in half, with half of the unions affiliated to the AFL, and the majority of the needle trade unions unaffiliated. To complicate matters further the city AFL unions were often at loggerheads with the unions affiliated to the State Federation. New York City had far more unionists than the rest of New York State, but because upstate New York had a greater number of locals, the New York City majority became a minority within the Federation. Upstate unions tended to be more conservative than New York City organisations, primarily because public opinion was decidedly less favourable to unions in these areas.³⁶

The division between the central and state organizations preceded the argument over independent political action. For the most part, Gompers supported the State Federation, and they him. However, in December 1918, the State Federation opposed an aspect of voluntarism, voting overwhelmingly in favour of a bill for compulsory health insurance. Gompers made it clear he was opposed to compulsory insurance on humanitarian grounds, although he did not oppose voluntary schemes. This incident demonstrates that war-time experiences had

³⁵Lawrence Rogin, "Central Labor Bodies and Independent Political Action in New York City:1918-1922", (MA., Columbia University, 1931), p. 2.

³⁶Irwin Yellowitz, Labor and the Progressive Movement in New York State 1897-1916, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), p. 28.

radicalized the members of the AFL, but had not changed Gompers, who in this instance remained committed to his pre-war philosophy.³⁷

However the differences between Gompers and the State Federation were soon forgotten as they united to oppose independent political action. However the State Federation leadership was not a consistent ally, for it had another agenda, namely its alliance with Tammany. Gompers would discover to his cost that when forced to choose, the Federation feared losing the patronage of Tammany more than the support of the AFL president.

In spite of the small unit size of New York manufacturing, unionization was as well developed as that of other major cities. However, unlike Chicago or Seattle, New York unionization was divided between two centres. In Seattle and Chicago the AFL city central labour bodies had no serious competitors for the leadership of the local movement. In Chicago, even where unions existed outside the AFL, there was a good relationship between the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) and those unions. (For example the CFL gave support to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACW), and Hillman, its President, supported Fitzpatrick's campaign for Mayor.) This was not the case in New York City; one centre was the mainly craft-organized American Federation of Labor, while the other consisted of the progressive unions, mainly in the clothing trades. Indeed, the largest union in New York was the ACW, which was outside the AFL, and worked closely with the Socialists. Though after the war most of the leadership and active membership of the New York central body was progressive, it had little record of independent political action. It enjoyed good relations with social progressives, especially the Women's Trade Union League, and the Hebrew Trades. The war had a radicalizing influence on the city's AFL leadership, and some of its craft unions, causing some of them to break with non-partisan politics. However this radicalization could not immediately overcome the divisions that existed in the working class and union movement, nor could it create a leadership with the prestige and roots of a Fitzpatrick, or a Duncan in Seattle. These weaknesses, as dealt with in later chapters, created difficulties for a leadership recently converted to independent political action.

³⁷Letter, Lynch to Gompers, 18 December 1918, Letter, Gompers to Lynch, 23 December 1918, The Gompers Papers, reel 240, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

CHICAGO

Chicago was a city with production on a far larger scale than New York or Seattle. It was a major centre of industrial production and, due to its geographical position at the juncture of water and rail transport, a market-place for agricultural and primary goods. The largest national manufacturer of agricultural machinery, International Harvester, had its Deering and McCormick plants based there. Chicago was a major steel manufacturing area, with plants in South Chicago, Chicago Heights and neighbouring Indiana. The AFL-organized Chicago Federation of Labour enjoyed widespread support from organized labour under its jurisdiction. Hence the importance and centrality of Chicago in the meatpacking, steel, coal and rail strikes of the immediate post-war period.³⁸

By 1900 the meatpacking industry was Chicago's largest manufacturing employer, accounting for 10 per cent of wages and a third of total manufactured goods in a highly developed and diversified metropolitan economy. Between 1909 and 1919 the packinghouse workforce more than doubled, growing from 22,064 to 46,474.³⁹ The industry was dominated by five giant manufacturers. During the course of the war, the labour force in one of Chicago's largest plants more than doubled to 17,000. The industry's need for refrigerated rail cars, and extensive rail links, explains the demand for the large-scale production of steam rail-road cars.⁴⁰

Clearly Chicago had a far more concentrated manufacturing industry than New York, confined to a smaller geographical space, and with far larger workforces per establishment. However some sectors were

³⁸Robert Ozanne, A Century of Labour-Management Relations at McCormick and International Harvester, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p. 38-39 passim; Brody, pp. 69, 79. Economic information from the U.S. Department of Labour, Monthly Labor Review, 12, (January 1921), pp. 168-81; and Homer Hoyt, One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933) p. 205, quoted in Roger Horowitz, "The Failure of Independent Political Action: The Labor Party Of Cook County, 1919-1920", (BA. Essay, University of Chicago, 1982).

³⁹US 14th Census, p. 345.

⁴⁰James R. Barrett, Work and Community in the Jungle, Chicago's Packinghouse Workers, 1894-1922, (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1987), pp. 19 and 56; US 14th Census, p. 345.

similar. For example, the Men's Clothing industry employed 31,287 workers, and Women's Clothing 9,147, mostly in small establishments.⁴¹

Chicago's workforce was not an homogenous one.

Two-thirds of the population of Chicago was either foreign-born or of foreign-born parents. Of the remainder Charles Merriam believed that "perhaps 200,000 are colored. The number of persons actually born in Chicago is of course very small..". As many as 40 different nationalities worked in the stockyards; by December 1918, 20.8 per cent of the workforce was black. This, as we will see later, had consequences for the political and trade-union situation in Chicago.⁴²

Nonetheless Chicago was a well organized union city. By September 1903 there were 243,000 trade union members in Chicago.

The city could challenge London for the title, trade union capital of the world. Possibly one-third of those members worked in the packing houses, where militant shop committees united the activists of dozens of craft unions...The Chicago Federation of Labor defiantly used sympathy strikes as the touchstone of its success.⁴³

By 1918 the Chicago Federation of Labor had 300,000 affiliated members. The CFL did all it could to encourage the foreign-born and blacks to join the unions. Organizing drives in steel and the stockyards attempted to recruit the unskilled irrespective of nationality or colour. Though in the Stockyards 90 per cent of Northern-born blacks were members of the unions, very few of the three-quarters of the blacks who had recently arrived from the South joined the unions.⁴⁴

The CFL did all it could within the confines of the AFL to encourage women's trade unionism. Margaret Dreier Robins, a leading

⁴¹ 14th Census, p. 345.

⁴² Charles Merriam, Chicago: A more intimate View of Urban Politics, (New York: MacMillan, 1929), p. 187, quoted in Horowitz, p. 15. Though Merriam's overall picture is correct, he has exaggerated the number of blacks in Chicago, the 14th Census stated there were "109,000 negroes "in the city in 1920. This might well underestimate the total, but it is unlikely to be by as much as 100 per cent. Barret, p.49.

⁴³ Montgomery, Worker's Control, p. 57.

⁴⁴ David Fickes Simonson, "The Labor Party Of Cook County, Illinois, 1918-1919", (MA., University of Chicago, 1959), p. 10. Halpern, p. 34 passim; David Brody, The Butcher Workmen, (Cambridge, Ma., Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 89-9.

member of the WTUL, complained that in Amsterdam women played very little part in the labour movement. She felt they needed an example of what could be done, and told Fitzpatrick she had invited them all to come to America.

I would have them meet, not one or two, but scores and scores of women labor leaders! And I went on and told them how the Chicago Federation of Labour stood by us and how they helped and if they wanted to know something fine to come to Chicago!! [Sic]

Robins, was elected to the executive board of the CFL, and was involved in countless strikes in Chicago. An activist closer to the ground, expressed similar sentiments. The Die and Tool Makers donated a hundred dollars a year to the WTUL. They also gave one hundred to the Steel Strike, the activist said she felt proud that the League was considered equally as important as a big national strike.⁴⁵

When it came to recruiting the unskilled, blacks, women and foreigners, Chicago was in advance of the policies of the AFL. It could be said in every sense of the word that Chicago was in the vanguard of world and American trade union struggles, and that it led the initiative to build a labour party. But its vanguard position was not translated into dominance inside the AFL or the local State Federation.

In 1919 175,000 trade unionists were affiliated to the State Federation. In Illinois there were about 1,100 organisations inside the State Federation, and about 1,400 (mostly small) outside; this included only AFL unions, for the others were not eligible for membership of AFL bodies. Many locals did not register all their members to save on per capita tax. Taking these factors into account it is not unreasonable to estimate that there were possibly 400,000 members actually in the area covered by the Federation. With the single exception of New York, it had the largest affiliated membership of any state federation in the country. The CFL, like the New York central body, never dominated the state federation of Illinois. Its 300,000 union membership never produced more than a third of the delegates at state conventions.

⁴⁵Margaret Drier Robins to Fitzpatrick, 30 September 1921, Fitzpatrick Papers, box 10, folder 75; Letter "Membership Campaign", Agnes Nestor Papers, box 2, folder 1-15 October 1919, Chicago Historical Society; Ruth Milkman ed, Women, Work and Protest: A Century of US Women's Labor History, (London: Routledge, 1991), Chapter Two passim.

However, unlike New York, the relationship between the CFL and the State Federation was friendly, and for the most part each gave the other support.⁴⁶

Chicago, like New York, was a centre of strike activity. Two of the nine most important disputes of 1919 took place there. Sixty-five thousand stockyard employees struck in the August, and 115,000 building trades workers were locked out in July. In surrounding Illinois, steelworkers and miners were also involved in mass disputes.⁴⁷

Though Chicago was smaller than New York, manufacturing took place on a far larger scale. This may well have made "federated unionism" easier to achieve. Unlike New York there was only one trade-union centre of any significance, and that was the CFL. Also, John Fitzpatrick, as a major figure in Chicago progressive and trade union politics, was much respected and commanded the loyalty of a wide grouping of trade-union activists. He was on very good terms with Sidney Hillman, President of the ACW, and with leading members of the WTUL, such as Margaret Dreier Robins, and was involved with progressive, Irish and Catholic organizations. No leader with such a wide variety of contacts and support existed in New York. Thus the CFL had widespread influence in the locality and did not have the problem of a rival power base. Not having a majority inside the State Federation was not a problem as the two organizations had a good relationship. However there were problems, as we shall see later, in the failure to organize black workers into the union movement, and the ethnic rivalry encouraged by the existence of Republican and Democratic party machines.

SEATTLE

Seattle did not initially have a large manufacturing base like Chicago or New York: it was war-time production that created a large workforce there. Though syndicalism was widespread in Washington State, in Seattle it was the AFL-organized Seattle Central Labor Council (SCLC) which dominated the labour movement. In spite of the presence of radicals at its meetings it remained firmly under the control of local AFL leaders. However, Seattle labour was severely weakened by the

⁴⁶Eugene Staley, History of the Illinois State Federation of Labor, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), pp. 206, 315, 563.

⁴⁷Monthly Labor Review, Vol 10, June 1920, p. 1506.

defeat of its General Strike in February 1919. The Farmer Labor Party (FLP) was formed partly as a consequence of this defeat. Labour was also weakened by the decline of what proved to be only a temporary economic boom. The city lacked the economic diversity and strength of New York and Chicago, and suffered greatly from the ending of war-time production.⁴⁸

Seattle was a far smaller city than either New York or Chicago. In 1920 its population was only 315,312. The city's growth had not been based on industry, but on its position as the major rail-terminus for the Alaskan Gold Rush. The population of Seattle was far more homogenous than New York or Chicago; blacks, for instance, were less than one per cent of the total population. Over 73 per cent of the population were described as "Native White". Of the 23.4 per cent "Foreign-Born White", 48 per cent were naturalized. The remaining 3.5 per cent of the population were of Indian, Chinese, or Japanese origin. Thirty-three per cent of those described as foreign born came from Canada (not including French speaking) and the United Kingdom. The rest came from a variety of mainly Western European States, and a smaller number from Eastern and Southern Europe.⁴⁹

The main industry before the war was lumber and timber production. However the war created dramatic changes, especially in shipbuilding. Federal funds made the Seattle economy boom. More than 35,000 men were employed in the metal and wooden shipyards and allied trades. The shipyards became the largest employer in Seattle. In 1919 there were 110 AFL local craft unions in Seattle, and though the unions could not enforce a closed shop, unionization in the shipyards was almost 100 per cent. The largest of the shipyard unions was Local 104 of the Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders, whose membership peaked at 20,000. Before the war it had only a few hundred members. Next in size

⁴⁸Carlos A. Schwantes, The Pacific Northwest, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. 192.

⁴⁹Robert Friedham, The Seattle General Strike, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), p. 23. Fourteenth Census of the United States, Vol III, Population 1920, p. 275. By comparison the census recorded 35.4 per cent foreign-born in New York, and only 38.4 per cent of these were naturalized. The biggest ethnic groupings were not from the UK or Canada, but Italy and Eastern Europe. In Chicago 109,000 African-Americans made up 4.05 per cent of the population.

were the Machinists Hope Lodge 79 and the Shipyard Laborers with about 4,000 each, and then a score of crafts, many with more than a thousand members each. These came together in the Metal Trades Council, which met weekly to consider major strategy and became the most progressive wing of the local labour movement. These locals and those from other branches of the movement were represented in the SCLC, the main voice of Seattle unionism. The building trades, older and more traditional in their approach to union problems, had their own trades council, as did the metal workers, maritime workers, and other trades. However, most unions, even conservative ones as well as the more radical Metal Trades, were affiliated to the SCLC.⁵⁰

The Pacific North West had a strong syndicalist tradition. In the lumber and mining industries the IWW often organized the majority of workers. Though the belief in 'One Big Union' was quite common, and the IWW claimed that their membership had increased in the Seattle shipyards during the war, they and other syndicalists had no option but to operate inside the AFL. One reason for this was the necessity of keeping a craft card as a passport to employment outside the area. Also, unlike areas of more primary industry outside Seattle, the AFL unions represented workers in negotiations with the employers. Established skilled workers in the shipyards were especially loyal to the AFL, though not necessarily to its national leadership and policies. Even amongst these skilled workers there was a feeling that industrial unionism would be preferable to craft organization. Although James Duncan, Secretary of the Seattle Central Labor Council, opposed Gompers frequently, and relations between the SCLC and AFL headquarters were often strained, they were never broken. Some vocal elements in the local union movement advocated breaking with the AFL, but Seattle's labour leaders, for all their differences with the AFL leadership, refused to be isolated from the mainstream of American labour. Thus defiance was often breathed in speeches before the SCLC, but was rarely carried out.⁵¹

⁵⁰Friedham, pp. 27, 48, 57, 58.

⁵¹Carlos A. Schwantes, "Left Wing Unionism in the Pacific Northwest: A Comparative History of Organized Labor and Socialist Politics In Washington and British Columbia, 1885-1917, (PhD, University of Michigan, 1976), p. 272-4 passim. Carlos A. Schwantes, Radical Heritage: Labor, Socialism, and Reform in Washington and British Columbia, 1885-1917, (Seattle: University of Washington Press,

Though the SCLC formally supported industrial unionism it never managed to establish it. Duncan was pragmatic and encouraged informal cooperation to avoid punitive measures from the AFL. When, in 1920, the SCLC tried to modify its constitution to create a form of industrial unionism, Gompers forced it to rescind the changes. The failure to achieve the aim inside the AFL led to increasing tension between those who supported diluted industrial unionism and those who wanted "pure" industrial unionism. However there was no question that the SCLC spoke for all unions and that the final decisions of labour were made on the floor of the Council's weekly meetings.⁵²

Friedham in his book on the Seattle General Strike observed that:

Seattle labor was not formally organized in a distinctive manner. But the use to which the organization was put was distinctive. Rather than feeling primarily responsible to their craft nationals and internationals, Seattle locals gave their loyalty primarily to their local coordinating bodies - the trade councils and the Central Labor Council. No matter what union a Seattle worker belonged to, he was most conscious of being a member of a Seattle labor organization...

The Seattle labour movement supported everything Samuel Gompers rejected - the Farmer Labor Party, industrial unionism, and nationalization of key industries. It was so distinctive that even the IWW characterised it as a movement "affiliated - more in form than in spirit - with the American Federation of Labor".⁵³

However, informally, the SCLC did organize in a distinctly different manner. "Duncanism", named after the SCLC secretary James Duncan, substituted for industrial unionism. In practice "Duncanism" meant strong central control of all unions in the area by the SCLC, close cooperation of all allied trades and trades councils, and an attempt to synchronize wage claims and disputes within a single industry. It is worth noting that "Duncanism" is very similar to the

1979), p. 155; Friedham, pp. 27, 41.

⁵²Friedham, p. 49; Harvey O'Connor, Revolution In Seattle, (Seattle: Left Bank Books, 1981; orig. 1964); p. 109.

⁵³Friedham, pp. 26-27.

"federated unionism" practised by Fitzpatrick and the CFL in Chicago.⁵⁴

The SCLC was sympathetic to women's suffrage and the unionization of women, and its newspaper, the Union Record, gave prominence to women's activities. In July 1917, both the Federation of Trade Unionist Women and Seattle Women's Label League, wrote to the State Federation of Labor officers, requesting that it provide a women organizer. The State Federation replied that it had insufficient funds. The SCLC proved to be more progressive and appointed a women's organizer. New unions of women workers and new women's sections in male craft locals were formed in Seattle as a result.⁵⁵

Across the nation as a whole there were nine strikes or lockouts in 1919 involving 60,000 workers or more; the Seattle general strike of February 1919 was one of these major disputes. New York and Chicago were at the centre of three more of these strikes. But even taking Seattle's smaller size into account, it took part in fewer disputes than many other cities. Thus in 1919 there were 18 strikes and lockouts compared to New York's 360, and Chicago's 124. This partly reflects the devastating blow to the movement caused by the failure of the general strike and the following repression. The strike was in sympathy with striking shipbuilding workers. Until the end of the war they had been bound by the AFL agreement with the WLB that exchanged union recognition for the right to strike. The workforce was increasingly disgruntled with the failure of wages to keep pace with inflation. Immediately after the Armistice, the Metal Trade Council demanded a wage increase. A stalemate developed between the workers and the employers, and with both sides refusing to give ground, the demand for a general strike grew. It was the SCLC that decided to put the issue to a referendum of all its affiliates. The vote in favour of striking was overwhelming, not just in the metal trades, but even amongst printers,

⁵⁴Friedham, pp. 27, 47-49 passim. It is surprising that Friedham describes the Seattle labour movement as unique, for "Duncanism" was no different to the federated unionism carried out by the CFL in organising the stockyards or that of the Marine Workers Affiliation in New York. See Chicago and New York above for full details. There was liaison on the issue between Seattle and Chicago, thus James A. Duncan addressed the CFL on federated unionism. Minutes of Chicago Federation of Labor, 19 January 1919.

⁵⁵Kathryn J. Oberdeck, " 'Not Pink Teas' The Seattle Working Class Women's Movement, 1905-1918", Labor History, 32: 2, (Spring 1991), pp. 204-220 passim.

carpenters, teamsters and cooks. Some saw the strike as being no more than one of sympathy action with the shipbuilding workers, others believed that it could lead to revolution.⁵⁶

Of course revolution was not the aim of the SCLC which had assumed the employers would back down. The ambiguity of aims was summed up by the Union Record which stated labour was on the road that led to "No One Knows Where". In spite of impressive organization, which included food kitchens, emergency supplies and workers' stewards to keep the peace, the strike collapsed. It collapsed in the face of the intransigence of the employers, and the fear on the part of the SCLC leadership that the strike might get out of hand in an increasingly repressive situation. It ended quietly, leaving the shipbuilding workers out on strike on their own.⁵⁷

The AFL nationally immediately claimed that its sound counsel, and not troops or repression, was responsible for ending the strike. The result strengthened the hands of the conservatives in the SCLC. For progressives feared that if the radicals continued to get their own way the Seattle labour movement would be destroyed. They did not completely disown the radicals, but subordinated them to their own policies, which meant allying with the conservatives against them. Of course this exacerbated the tension between the radicals and progressives, and strengthened the moderates. This led to a series of bitter rows and factional fights which seriously weakened the progressives.⁵⁸

The weakness of the Seattle economy also added to labour's problems. With the end of the war shipyard employment declined rapidly. In a situation of growing unemployment, thousands of shipyard workers were laid off; those that remained suffered wage reductions. The metal trades unions were devastated by the closure of the shipyards. The membership of Boilermakers' Local 104 fell by two thirds. The Shipbuilding Laborers' Local, formerly a thousand strong, was reduced

⁵⁶Monthly Labor Review, Vol 10, June 1920, pp. 1506-1509. O'Connor, Chapter 6 passim.

⁵⁷O'Connor, Chapter 6 passim.

⁵⁸Friedham, Chapter 7, passim. The consequences of the split between progressives and radicals will be dealt with in the later chapters on Seattle.

to fifteen diehards, with \$7.00 in their treasury by the spring of 1920.⁵⁹

The Seattle labour movement was weakened by defeat far earlier than New York or Chicago, but the SCLC remained under the control of the progressives, and kept its leadership position within the local movement. But its ability to challenge the AFL nationally and at state level had been weakened by the defeat of the February strike. Like New York and Chicago, it was a minority inside the state federation. At the 1919 annual convention of the Washington State Federation, Seattle had over 250 delegates out of 700. Even more important was the control conservatives had of the convention's machinery. Of seventy-three committee positions, only five unimportant ones were given to either progressives or radicals.⁶⁰

In spite of these problems, the SCLC remained capable of further initiatives due to its dominance of the local movement, weakened or otherwise. Seattle is often thought of as a centre of syndicalism, but, as outlined above, the AFL unions dominated the city's labour movement. It had less of a problem from separate union movements than New York. All trade unionists - syndicalist, moderate, socialist or radical - looked to the SCLC as the main centre of the labour movement. Like Fitzpatrick, James A. Duncan was a leader with considerable stature and local support. However, unlike New York and Chicago, the whole of organized labour had suffered a serious defeat in the early months of 1919. It was hit harder and earlier by unemployment and the employers' offensives against union organization.

So far the chapter has outlined the state of the economies and the labour movements of the three cities; now it will turn to the political background of each movement, and the actual formation of labour parties. This section will analyze the political situation faced by those advocating labour parties. It is necessary to take into account the obstacle of Democratic and Republican machine politics, and also opposition inside the labour movement, whether from Socialists, or the AFL nationally or locally. The aims of those activists building the new parties, and their strengths and weaknesses in mobilising support for their project, will also be discussed.

⁵⁹Friedham, p. 164.

⁶⁰Hamilton Cravens, "A History of The Washington Farmer Labor Party 1918-1924", (MA Thesis, University of Washington, 1962), p. 85.

PARTY TIME

NEW YORK

To sum up the political affiliations of New York labour is a difficult task, for alliances constantly changed. To complicate matters further, the leadership of the movement was often divided. Thus in 1905, large numbers of workers deserted the Democrats by voting for Hearst. The CFU supported him, and the State Federation opposed him. In 1908 the State Federation, the CFU and the CLU supported the Democrat candidate William Jennings Bryan, but they failed to deliver a strong labour vote. James Holland, a leader of the CFU and later president of the State Federation, was friendly with Tammany, but Tammany opposed attempts to legislate for workmen's compensation. Holland switched allegiance to Sulzer, an anti-Tammany Democrat. The State Federation passed a resolution attacking Tammany, and supporting Sulzer in his fight to rid the state of the most "disgraceful political outfit" that existed in "this great republic".⁶¹

The State Federation then tried to win its aims by developing a compromise labour program with the State Association of Manufacturers and the new Industrial Commission. This course of action, however, divided the reform forces. In attempting to outflank Tammany, the alliance with small business meant watering down proposed legislation to protect workers. The State Federation alienated not only its old enemy the CFU, but even the Women's Trade Union League. But the breach with Tammany was temporary, for in 1920 Holland was again known as a strong Tammany man.⁶²

Only one factor remained constant in this world of ever changing political alliances: whatever the issue, the CFU and the State Federation were most likely to be on opposite sides. However, the CFU was more consistent and fought for comprehensive reform legislation, wanting politicians to serve the needs of labour. The State Federation preferred horse-trading, and rejected independent political action because it lacked the power to ignore patronage. The constant conflict

⁶¹Yellowitz, pp. 198, 219, 232.

⁶²Yellowitz, pp. 123-124; Rogin, p. 20.

and rivalry meant that the AFL unions did not speak with a single voice. Unlike Seattle and Chicago, the CFU did not have its own newspaper, and it certainly was not socialist, though in 1915 it did endorse the Socialist Party daily the New York Call. This it did to ensure that official labour news and reports could be published. Inevitably a request by the CFU that the State Federation give financial support to the Call was refused.⁶³

Though Yellowitz maintains that New York labour lacked a tradition of class-conscious voting, and for the most part that was true, a sizeable minority consistently voted for the Socialist Party. Central to winning the Socialist vote were the activities and support of the progressive trade-union leaders, especially the ACW. The electoral success of the SPA, and its roots in the progressive unions in New York, created problems for those building a new party. It also gave the Socialists less reasons to be cooperative. It was not until the SPA had seriously declined that the New York Socialists become centrally involved in building a labour party.⁶⁴

In late 1918 the central labour bodies formed reconstruction committees. The reconstruction committees chairman, Thomas J. Curtis, President of the International Tunnel and Subway Constructors Union, and Deputy Commissioner of the New York State Workingmen's Compensation Commission, was central to the drafting of policy. The policies outlined in the committees' reports were not orthodox AFL policies. The CFU reconstruction committee's report of 10 November 1918 declared that labour must demand minimum wage laws and health insurance. It was hardly a surprise when Curtis, in making his report on 29 November, stated that the committee proposed the organization of an independent labour party in New York City. The CFU met on 6 December 1918 and passed a resolution endorsing the proposal.⁶⁵

⁶³Yellowitz, p. 37.

⁶⁴New York Call 7 November 1918, noted that 85,624 had voted for the Socialist candidate for governor in Greater New York. The next day's Call claimed that the Socialist vote had risen in the city, and that the Party was a "Real Political Factor Now". A comparison with the vote for governor in 1916 showed that votes won had more than doubled. There was no sense of foreboding or of imminent decline in the Call of this period.

⁶⁵Rogin, p. 3.

The resolution stated that a reconstruction programme favourable to labour could not be achieved without a "political medium" in full sympathy with its provisions. They needed to educate workers by "hand and brain" in the need to secure for their own benefit a greater share of the wealth they produced. This meant building a "political movement" as well as the "industrial movement". The only effective means of securing the democratic reforms that would guarantee the just rights of the workers was for them to form their own party. A conference of all affiliated organizations was announced to take place in early January 1919, to create the American Labor Party.⁶⁶

Gompers responded by meeting the ringleaders on 10 December 1918; he lectured them against independent political action, but the insurgents were not deterred. The conference went ahead and adopted a platform very similar to that of the 14 points proposed by the Chicago Federation of Labor. This included: the right of free speech and assembly; public works to prevent unemployment; public ownership of all public utilities; the democratic control of industry, commerce and education; equal rights for men and women; and representation of labour in all governmental departments and commissions. A demand for progressive taxation of income was followed by a call for world peace and for a league of workers.⁶⁷

However a platform is meaningless without support. Therefore it is necessary to consider how substantial support for the new party was in the New York labour movement. The founding convention was attended by 886 delegates, 360 affiliated to the CFU, and 180 to the CLU. Another 50 were affiliated to the WTUL, while 288 came from local unions. The United Hebrew Trades and the United Board of Business Agents of the Building Trades were each represented by two delegates.⁶⁸

This looks impressive at first sight, but the total number of union locals and local unions represented adds up to no more than 146, yet the New York Labor Bulletin in April 1914 recorded 760 union organizations in New York in 1913. We can assume that the number of organisations was greater in 1919. Only a fraction of New York labour organizations attended. Significantly there is no trace of the ACW at

⁶⁶New York Call, 7 December 1918, quoted in Rogin, p. 5.

⁶⁷Rogin, pp. 8-10.

⁶⁸Rogin, p. 8.

the conference. The ACW complained that its locals had not received invitations. Unaffiliated organizations like the ACW were only offered two delegates. The ACW believed that if a representative New York Labor Party were to be formed, then it was important that their locals be invited. The ACW did believe there was great enthusiasm and support in labour bodies for a labour party. It stated that 58 of its locals had supported Cook County Labor Party. The mistreatment of the ACW had been a serious mistake by the New York Party, one that strengthened the hands of those Socialists who opposed the project.⁶⁹

Many of the smaller progressive unions had attended, but they were represented by Socialists, and only had a small membership. The most active progressive organizations in the city, the Women's Trade Union League and the Hebrew Trades, supported the new party. Whatever the founding conference represented, very little of it was turned into active support.⁷⁰

The attitude of the SPA proved to be problem for a weak organization trying to establish itself. The Socialists had a traditional base of support at the polls, and received financial assistance from many progressive unions. This meant less funds were available to the new party, and created an electoral barrier that was difficult to surmount. The relationship of the Socialists to the new party will be detailed in Chapter Three.

The new party was confronted with many difficulties from the outset. It faced the barrier of an influential Socialist Party, and fierce opposition from the national and state AFL leaderships. Though founded on a wave of enthusiasm, it was the weakest of the three parties detailed in this study. This theme will be developed further in Chapter Three.

CHICAGO

Mainstream Chicago politics were a highly confusing affair: the City Council was dominated by the Democrats, and the Mayoralty by the Republicans. To complicate matters further, both parties were split into factions. The incumbent Republican Mayor, William Thompson, was in the habit of backing Democratic candidates in ward elections. Thompson

⁶⁹Advance, 27 December 1918.

⁷⁰Rogin, p. 14.

liked to appear as a progressive, and though his platform was not particularly radical he tried to appeal to Germans:

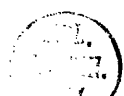
...by taking a neutral stance on the war, to the Irish by attacking England and King George, and to progressive elements by calling for municipal ownership of transit lines and the retention of the nickel fare on the traction lines. For the workers he emphasised the opposition of the Loop papers (which opposed Thompson) to demonstrate independence of business interests.⁷¹

Thompson was supported by a small section of organized labour and enjoyed substantial black support. Indeed his re-election in April 1919 was so narrow that without the black vote he would have lost. This was confirmed by the African-American Chicago Defender, which claimed that it was the only major newspaper to support Thompson and that it had played a major role in electing "Big Bill". Thompson thanked the Defender and black Republicans for their support but denied that he had "given undue recognition to the Colored people"; all he had done was to give them fair and equal representation. Thompson certainly offered blacks in Chicago more than rhetoric; he had opened city jobs to them in unprecedented numbers. On the city council, the two black aldermen from the second ward became the Mayor's floor leaders. The Democratic machine looked elsewhere for its support. Rivalry between the parties and the bases of ethnic support was a source of constant tension. It would be one of the contributory factors in the racial rioting of July 1919.⁷²

The Democratic Party was in the early stages of constructing the ethnic-based machine which came to dominance in the 1930s, but in 1919 that development was in the future and by no means assured. Through control of various departments of the decentralized city government of Chicago, the Democratic Party was able to provide a ladder of success for some immigrants by providing positions and jobs in city government and agencies. This put immigrant groups in a position to lobby for their share of growing city services. The Polish community, concentrated in the factory districts in the North-West and South-West areas of the city, was a notable backer. Another example of patronage

⁷¹Horowitz, p. 17.

⁷²Chicago Defender, 5 April 1919; Simonson, pp. 50-51; Halpern, p.



was the Irish gangs involved in the race riots of 1919, which were linked to Ragen's Colts, an "athletics club" sponsored by Democrat Alderman Frank Ragen.⁷³

The Socialists in New York claimed that they had increased their size and share of the vote in the elections of November 1918, but in Chicago in April 1919 the best that could be said of their vote was that it was stagnant. Indeed, if we take into account that women had won the vote, then the actual share of the vote had declined. The Socialist candidate for Mayor gathered 24,079 votes in 1919; in 1915 they had got 24,452. Their highest achievement had been 25,883 votes in 1911, when William E. Rodriguez stood (ironically he joined the Labor Party). It would also appear that more Socialists in Illinois and Chicago switched allegiance to the Labor Party than in New York. For example Duncan McDonald, a veteran of the Socialist movement in Illinois, endorsed the Labor Party of Cook County and spoke on behalf of its candidates. Adolph Germer, Secretary of the Socialist Party, appeared before the ACWA Executive Board in Chicago to urge them to endorse the Labor Party "because the left-wingers are rapidly getting control of the Socialist Party".⁷⁴

This more friendly approach may well have been due to the fact that the Socialists were weaker in Chicago than in New York. Germer's appeal was, for the most part, ignored by local Socialists. There were many examples of Socialist opposition and obstruction. A member of Sheetmetal Workers' Union Local 115 informed Fitzpatrick they had ordered 500 copies of the New Majority. However at the Executive Board meeting, the President Mike Cary rescinded the endorsement, and at a following meeting he claimed half the members were Socialists and did not want the paper. Another official, "Jas Ryan ", argued that if they were going to subscribe to any paper then it should be the Socialists' paper.⁷⁵

⁷³Horowitz, p. 15; Halpern, p. 52. (The effects of race and ethnicity on politics will be developed further in the chapters on Chicago.)

⁷⁴Simonson, 44, 78; Letter to "Dear Bill" dated 27 April 1919, David J. Saposs Papers, box 1, folder no. 8, State Historical Society Wisconsin.

⁷⁵Phil Broderick to John Fitzpatrick, 15 February 1919, Fitzpatrick Papers, box 8, folder 56.

Whether those blocking the Labor Party were Socialists or not is hard to determine, but they certainly found the Socialist Party convenient cover for their opposition. However, overall there is less evidence of Socialist obstruction, or lack of progressive union support, than was the case in New York. A major reason for this was that progressive unionists were inside the CFL, not outside of it as they were in New York; in the case of unaffiliated unions, like the ACW, there was a friendly relationship.⁷⁶

At the Chicago Federation of Labor meeting of 17 November 1918 a discussion on the forthcoming Mayoral elections was held. Delegates were dissatisfied with both parties; the Democrats represented "the vested interests", and of 22 Republican aldermen on the City Council, all but two had voted to adjourn, at the dictates of the Daily Tribune and Daily News. As a result of this adjournment of the meeting, labour had been unable to place its nominees on the school board. The CFL was so enraged at the denial of fair representation on the school board that it decided to recommend the formation of an "Independent Labor Party". The same meeting endorsed the "Fourteen Points" (See Appendix I), and called for the formation of parties in Cook County and in Illinois.⁷⁷

The CFL's fourteen points, based on the British Labour Party's programme, were drafted by Basil M. Manly, one time director of research for the US Commission of Industrial Relations, and Frank Walsh's successor as chairman at the War Labor Board. Manly also outlined the manifesto which became the impetus for the launching of a national labour party in August 1919.⁷⁸

The fourteen points also demanded representation of labour, in proportion to its voting strength, in all departments of government. In

⁷⁶Though it would appear that Fitzpatrick was careful to keep away from those out of favour with the AFL. John S. Martin, a business agent of the United Automobile, Aircraft and Vehicle Workers of America local 174, which was suspended from the AFL, complained to Fitzpatrick he had not received any correspondence from the CFL or Labor Party, even though members had expressed interest in the labor party. Martin to Fitzpatrick, 9 February 1919, Fitzpatrick Papers, box 8, folder 56,

⁷⁷Minutes of the Chicago Federation of Labor, Chicago Historical Society, 17 November, 1918.

⁷⁸Eugene M. Tobin, Organize Or Perish , America's Independent Progressives, 1913-1933, (New York: Greenwood Press 1986), p. 103.

other words, it was believed that the election of labour party officials into the existing structure of government would achieve labour's aims. On 29 December, the CFL, not waiting for the Federation to act, formed the Labor Party of Cook County.(CCLP) It also decided that the CFL, and the new party, should have their own weekly newspaper, The New Majority.⁷⁹

Between 750 and a 1,000 delegates, representing 165 local unions, attended the founding convention. The CCLP grew rapidly. By 4 January 1919 some 170 local affiliates of the CFL, with an estimated membership of 150,000, had unanimously voted to join and send delegates to the Party's next convention. Among the endorsers was the largest of the building crafts, the Chicago District Council of the Carpenters, representing 24,000 workers in 36 local unions. Edward Nockels reported that the first issue of The New Majority was distributed to 50,000 people, and had 2,000 subscribers.⁸⁰

Nockels, secretary to the CFL, was highly regarded by its activists. He headed a group of mainstream activists that included Margaret Haley of the Teachers' Union and Socialist carpenter Anton Johannsen. Fitzpatrick depended heavily on Nockels for the administration of the CFL and its policies.⁸¹

Support also came from beyond the labour movement, from sources some historians might find surprising.⁸² Fitzpatrick was of Irish

⁷⁹Minutes of CFL, 15 December 1918.

⁸⁰Simonson, p. 13; CFL Minutes, 5 January 1919.

⁸¹Halpern, "Race and Ethnicity", p. 33.

⁸²In particular Marc Karson has argued that Irish and Catholic trade-union officials were a major barrier to the development of a socialist or labour party. According to Karson Irish and Catholics have blocked every radical or progressive initiative taken by the US working class.

He insists: "Aided by the predominantly Catholic officers of the international unions and by the large Catholic rank and file in the AFL responsive to their Church's views on Socialism, Catholicism had helped to account for the moderate political philosophy and policies of the AFL, for Socialism's weakness in the AFL, and therefore, for the absence of a labor party in the United States." American Labor Unions and Politics 1900-18, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 284. The account concludes in 1918, which is unfortunate as this is just a month before labour made a significant attempt to build a party.

Patricia Cayo Sexton recently challenged this view; she believes that the active role played by Irish and Catholics trade unionists, and their support of socialist goals under other labels, has often been

descent, and had good relations with many Catholic and Irish organizations including Sinn Fein. Perhaps more important was his close relationship with Frank Walsh, who liaised between Fitzpatrick and the Catholic establishment. In March 1919 he asked Fitzpatrick for authority to sign his name to an article endorsing the reconstruction programme of the Catholic Church. It was produced by the War Council and signed by four bishops. In some respects Walsh believed the programme went beyond labour's fourteen points. The article was published in America, "which is the big highbrow Catholic publication". Fitzpatrick heartily agreed with the proposition. The publication was sent to every Catholic priest and every religious institution in the city of Chicago. It was also suggested that the Irish Press (official newspaper of Sinn Fein) run a picture of Fitzpatrick, together with a pro-Irish resolution passed at a stockyards union meeting, and that this would be circulated among the Irish, especially in Chicago.⁸³

The CFL also enjoyed the support of the Chicago Women's Trade Union League. Its February bulletin urged its readers to attend a public meeting on the Labor Party, to be addressed by Fitzpatrick, candidate for Mayor on the Labor Party ticket. Everyone was welcome and readers were urged to bring friends interested in knowing about the new Labor Party. The next bulletin advertised subscriptions to the New Majority through the Chicago WTUL.⁸⁴

In the chapters on Chicago the electoral experience will be analysed, but at this stage it is important to note that trade-union support for the new party was far more solid in Chicago than in New York. It also had the added strength of support from the Illinois State Federation. It was supported by the Stockyards Labor Council and a few weeks later, at its December 1918 convention the Illinois State Federation endorsed the Party. The New York Labor Party never gained

underestimated. Conversely their contribution to conservatism has been overstated. The War on Labor and the Left: Understanding America's Unique Conservatism, (Boulder: San Francisco, 1991), p. 42.

⁸³Walsh telegram to Fitzpatrick, Fitzpatrick Papers, 12 March 1919, box 8, folder 57; Correspondence between Walsh and Fitzpatrick, 12 March 1919, Frank Walsh Papers, box 8, folder 2.

⁸⁴Bulletin of the Chicago Women's Trade Union League, Vol VIII: 1-2, January\February 1919; The Bulletin, March 1919, Vol VIII: 3, Contained in Chicago Women's Trade Union League Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

State Federation support. The Seattle Party had to wait a year before it received a form of State Federation support.⁸⁵

It is clear from the above that Chicago had the best organized labour movement. The local economy was large in scale and diverse, providing possibilities for workers to exercise powerful industrial muscle. A dynamic and imaginative union movement did not waste the opportunities presented to it. With its concept of "federated unionism", it suffered little opposition from the Socialists and syndicalists. It enjoyed cooperation with the progressive unions, inside and outside of the AFL. It is not surprising that it created the most effective party and that it launched the national Labor Party in 1919. However, none of these initiatives guaranteed success, and future chapters will identify and analyze the factors that denied the CFL the political victory it sought.

SEATTLE

Washington State was strongly Republican, with a very weak Democratic tradition. Farmers received little support from the Democrats, so they and their organization, the Grange, often allied with labour. Though, for the most part, the Washington State Federation of Labor (WSFL) opposed prohibition, the Seattle Central Labor Council (SCLC) and the Grange supported it. James A. Duncan, leader of the SCLC, was an ardent prohibitionist. This was an unusual position for an AFL leader, since the Federation bitterly opposed it. Prohibition became a major election issue in most states, with referendums taking place. It was an issue that labour and many ethnic groupings felt very strongly about. It is unlikely that Duncan's position was a vote winner, however, there was strong pro-temperance sentiment in Seattle. This issue will be considered in detail in Chapter Five.⁸⁶

In 1914 Republicans swept the board in Washington State. However in the senatorial race the combined vote for Progressives and Democrats was 40,000 over that of the Republican total. However, the Republicans believed progressivism was dead and proceeded to try to roll back reforms, including the removal of the right to picket. This had the effect of uniting the opposition in the 1916 election, which was a major victory for the Washington farmer-labour forces, the Democrats,

⁸⁵CFL Minutes, 15 December 1918.

⁸⁶Cravens, p. 37 passim.

and their urban middle-class allies. Wilson and Lister swept the state by an average of 15,000 votes over their Republican opponents, although one Republican was returned to the Senate by a majority of 65,000 votes. But in 1917 issues raised by the war created divisions between labour and its middle-class allies. The Seattle Union Record declared that labour opposed the war, but the State Federation, and the Central Labor Council passed resolutions declaring full support for the war effort. The Union Record believed that "anti-war sentiment was strong in Seattle labour circles, especially among the metal trades workers". This difference of opinion over the war strained the progressive alliance.⁸⁷

Progressivism did not die out completely. The coalition broke up, but farmer-labour leaders, though believing that the war should be won, felt that to make world safe for democracy, "autocratic methods should not be adopted at home"; but even this approach was not enough to stop former allies becoming enemies. Though middle class allies were being lost, the unity of farmers and workers was intensifying. The cost of living by 1919 had doubled; both farmers and workingmen had cause for grievance. In June, 1918, the Grange and the State Federation of Labor decided to enter the 1918 elections on a non-partisan basis. In the past many farmer-labour leaders had supported Wilson as they believed him to favour labour. The Union Record considered many Democratic county organizations pro-labour because they advocated democracy, government ownership of the railroads, and "labor measures". However Seattle was not typical of Washington State politics, and contrary to the rest of the alliance the SCLC decided to back the Republicans as they had a better chance of winning. Nevertheless it was the farmer-labour nominees amongst the Democrats that had more success. This success had an important effect on the politics of the SCLC.⁸⁸

The strength of the Republican Party had pushed the SCLC to try to make progress within it. However the failure of this strategy, combined with the weakness of progressives and Democrats, made the Council amenable to the idea of a new party. When the SCLC finally turned to a labour party, the existence of the Union Record and of a whole layer of discontented farmers and other Democrat supporters gave them an ability to succeed at the polls. In some districts entire

⁸⁷Cravens, pp. 44-9.

⁸⁸Cravens, pp. 49-66 passim.

Democratic party organizations defected to the Farmer Labor Party (FLP). Unlike New York or Chicago they had inherited a ready-made electoral machine. The actual administration of electoral procedures was not directly dominated by the major parties in Seattle, and it was far easier for the new party to place its candidates on the ballot than in New York or Chicago. Chapter Five will outline this electoral system in detail.

With regard to the Socialist Party the experience of the FLP was entirely different to that in New York or Chicago. The party was not launched until June 1919, and by this time the Socialists had disintegrated. Relations were friendly with the few remaining Socialists. No doubt the weakness of the Socialists, compared to New York or Chicago, explains their willingness to cooperate with or even to join the new party. Hulet Wells, a well known Socialist Party member, joined the Labor Party as soon as the SCLC endorsed it.⁸⁹ The SCLC had the advantage of owning a daily newspaper, the Seattle Union Record, which had a circulation of some 80,000 in 1919.⁹⁰

There were three main groupings inside the Seattle labour movement, conservatives, radicals and progressives. The strongest grouping was the progressives inside the Seattle SCLC, led by James A. Duncan, the Council's secretary and Harry Ault, the Union Record's Editor. The radicals, who advocated industrial unionism and the general strike, were the smallest group but they and the progressives often found common ground.⁹¹

The radicals were important because the progressives depended on them for support against the conservatives. After the defeat of the general strike, the AFL executive council declared that only national unions could call strikes, not city bodies. With the radicals isolated, and the economy in recession, local employers did not miss the opportunity to start a drive against the unions, ending union recognition and driving down wages. Increasing disagreement between the progressives and the radicals pushed the former group closer to the conservatives, and weakened the SCLC's support for the FLP. The SCLC

⁸⁹Ibid, p. 207.

⁹⁰O'Connor, 207; Hamilton Cravens, "The Emergence of the Farmer-Labor Party in Washington Politics, 1919-1920." Pacific Northwest Quarterly, (October 1966), p. 151.

⁹¹Cravens, pp. 72-73.

did not form the new party until 30 April 1919, a time when Seattle labour had suffered a severe defeat, and was about to be ridden with factionalism.⁹²

The Conservatives of the SCLC opposed the new party, and the radicals were divided over the issue, but there was no effective opposition to the council's plans. William Short, President of the State Federation and a close supporter of Gompers, also opposed it. The SCLC progressives, who were convinced old parties could not be used, were not deterred by any of this opposition and went ahead with forming the new party. However, as will be detailed below, the party did not openly campaign under its own name until 1920.⁹³

The SCLC had come late to the idea of independent political action. The failure of the General Strike had a sobering effect upon them. By the spring of 1919, they had rejected revolution and direct action. "Ballots, not bullets and heroic stances, seemed safer."⁹⁴ As was the case in Chicago, the SCLC had the support of the bulk of the unions in Seattle, but unlike Chicago did not have the support of the State Federation. They were also in a weaker position due to the defeats outlined above. In spite of this, they were more successful at the polls than the other parties in this comparative study.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has dealt with the formation of labour parties in New York, Chicago and Seattle. The following chapters will deal with the attempts to consolidate these parties, their electoral interventions, and progress towards a national party, the Farmer Labor Party. In trying to establish strengths and weaknesses at this stage, we can already see that New York had the weakest labour party movement, due to the lack of influence of its central bodies compared with the Chicago and Seattle movements. It was also weaker in relation to the State Federation and the Socialist Party. Apart from the Socialist vote, there was little tradition of organized working-class voting power. Chicago had firmer support amongst trade-union activists, and

⁹²Cravens, pp. 80, 82.

⁹³Cravens, p. 82 passim.

⁹⁴Cravens, "Emergence of the Farmer Labor Party", p. 151.

did not face any serious opposition from Socialists, or the State Federation. It did have the problem that black voters were for the most part committed to the Republicans, and the fact that working class-political commitment was not of a consistent pattern. It lacked any ready-made political machine, as did New York, and would have to build one from scratch.

Seattle's experience was closer to Chicago's than New York's. It had a labour movement united under the leadership of one central body, there was no powerful centre outside of it. It had a successful labour press, and leaders such as Duncan commanded respect and support. There was an organic link between "federated unionism" and the SCLC. No such link, or leadership existed in New York City. Though the labour movement was weaker after early 1919, it was still able to influence progressives, Democrats, and the more radical farmers. This, combined with the loyalty of workers, the support of the Women's Trade Union Federation, and the ownership of the Union Record, provided them with a ready-made machine to use for intervention at the polls. This may well explain why Seattle was the most successful of all three at an electoral level.

Finally it is useful to reflect on the opposition from the AFL nationally in the period covered by this chapter. The AFL leadership had made its opposition to the new parties clear.⁹⁵ However in this early period of enthusiasm it was unable to stop their formation. In Seattle and New York it was able to restrict them, for a time, to a city-wide basis. This opposition and other barriers to the development of the new parties will be investigated fully in the chapters that follow.

⁹⁵In the CFL Minutes 19 January 1919 it was bitterly complained: "That for one time at least the Socialists, Samuel Gompers and the Executive Council of the AFL were in agreement in opposition to organized labor entering the political arena.. Also .. that while there were no objections to local, state and city central bodies taking whatever political action they desired, that the constitution of the AFL prohibited them from forming a national labor party."

CHAPTER THREE

FALSE DAWN

INDEPENDENT LABOUR POLITICS IN NEW YORK 1919-1920

The previous chapter described the founding of the American Labor Party. Of the three labour parties that make up this study, New York's was the weakest. The progressive unions under the influence of the Socialist Party gave only token support, and the State Federation actively opposed it from the beginning.

Nineteen-nineteen and 1920 proved to be key years for the labour party movement, containing its highest and lowest tide-marks. The New York labour party movement did not achieve very much. Nonetheless it is worth investigating, for failure can illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of a movement as ably as successes, which can obscure mistakes and failings. Analysis of the New York situation, by providing a comparison with Chicago and Seattle, will help reveal which factors contributed to success and failure in all three cases. However, before that can be done it is necessary to accurately analyze the situation in New York and the local conditions that were specific to it.

As already outlined in the previous chapter the main motivating force behind the New York Labor Party (known as the American Labor Party, ALP) was the New York based Central Federated Union (CFU). The majority of AFL unions affiliated to the CFU supported the Labor Party initiative, as did those of the Brooklyn-based Central Labor Union, the Women's Trade Union League and the United Hebrew Trades. At first sight support for the new party seemed solid enough, but within a few months the leaders of the Brooklyn Central Labor Body would turn against the child it had helped bring into the world. The Hebrew Trades played a more ambiguous role; only the progressives of the CFU and the WTUL remained loyal in the two years covered by this chapter.

The fact that the new party suffered from founders who eventually deserted or turned against it badly affected its ability to make headway in the tough world of New York politics. The two main initiators of the ALP were the central labour bodies of New York and Brooklyn. The fact that many of the officials were former supporters of Tammany caused great rejoicing amongst the Socialists who believed the

defections proved that massive radicalization had taken place amongst workers.¹

This was true; and it was quite clear that there was great dissatisfaction with the old non-partisan politics of the AFL and considerable sentiment for the new party. However the motives of the initiators was not in all cases free of self interest. Whether consciously or not, some were just going with the swell of sentiment until it was possible to reverse the new policy and return to the fold of Tammany. Some were discontented with the recent lack of patronage, and may well have had ulterior motives. Thus the Socialists who rejoiced failed to take into account that some of these leaders would become a fifth column, causing serious damage to the initiative. Other ex-Tammany supporters remained faithful to the new party, but later found themselves marginalized by an alliance of those who defected back to Tammany, with the State Federation and the AFL nationally. The Seattle and Chicago central bodies did not, at this stage, suffer from such serious internal opposition. Why was it that the progressive leadership of the New York and Brooklyn central labour bodies were unable to maintain support for the break with non-partisan politics?²

For the AFL had opposed the Labor Party initiative in Chicago and Seattle without success. One problem for the New York labour progressives was that they faced a hostile State Federation. This was not the case in Chicago and Seattle, where the central bodies' support proved more solid, with a network of supporters throughout the local unions. These encompassed both craft and progressive unions, who were united behind the central bodies. For example, in Chicago the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACW), though not affiliated to the central body, had a very amicable relationship with the CFL and especially with its leader, John Fitzpatrick. No such relationship existed in New York. Indeed, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the ACW considered itself spurned by the initiators of the new party.

In 1919 leading local officials had become radicalized, or at least were prepared to pay lip service to radical actions. However, the desire to create change does not occur in a vacuum; it takes place in a

¹Justice, 18 January 1919.

²Lawrence Rogin, "Central Labor Bodies and Independent Political Action in New York City: 1918-1922", (MA, Columbia University, 1931), pp. 34-35.

present context that has been formed by past actions. Many of the New York labour officials had a past that had ramifications for the new epoch in which they acted, including their turn to independent political action. Thus their past relationship with Tammany and their isolation from the progressive unions meant there was deep suspicion of their motives, especially by the ACW and the Hebrew Trades. The past experience of some of these officials may also explain why they were so poor at involving the rank and file in their campaign. They were more accustomed to the politics of wheeling and dealing in the corridors of Tammany and City Hall than mass campaigning. Indeed the supporters of the ALP in the WTUL complained that the bulk of work in building the new party was left to them.

However, not all the problems that confronted the new party were of an internal or organizational nature. Even when the party did get enough signatures for Thomas J. Curtis's candidacy for Chairman of the Board of Aldermen, they were blocked by the commissioner for elections -- no doubt at the behest of Tammany. Curtis was forced to have a write-in campaign, and his supporters never found out how many votes he got. This was hardly an inspiring start for the new party. It certainly showed that in New York the lack of democracy made it very hard for a new party to enter a field traditionally dominated by Republicans and Democrats. Indeed the corruption of the New York City electoral system was notorious; even a figure as powerful as William Randolph Hearst had fallen foul of it. Perhaps Edward Hannah, President of the CFU, had this in mind when he had opposed standing in elections, at the founding convention of the ALP, until the party was established. He had argued that they should first organize the districts. Events proved that his assessment was far more sober and realistic than that of those that opposed him.³

³Curtis was ruled off the Alderman ticket by the Board of Electors on grounds that his petition was out of order. New York Times, 24 August 1919; New York Call, (Hereafter Call) 19 September 1919. In the 1905 campaign for Mayor, Hearst had been beaten by only 3,474 votes out of a total vote of approximately 609,000. "But on the basis of the best evidence available, it is clear that the election was stolen from Hearst by the Democratic machine. Thousands of Hearst ballots were thrown into the East River by Tammany henchmen and replaced by ballots marked for McClellan, the Democratic candidate." Philip S. Foner, The AFL in the Progressive Era 1910-1915, (New York: International Publishers, 1980), p. 81.

It has been claimed that the craft orientated and non-militant nature of the American labour movement led to the domination of Samuel Gompers' brand of voluntarist trade unionism. Put obversely, the lack of industrial unionism made the development of a labour party impossible. The previous chapter described the proto-industrial-style unionism (federated unionism) of Chicago and Seattle; the fact that a similar tradition existed in New York has been ignored. The New York movement is often characterized as one in which AFL members adhered rigorously to the craft ethic and where any progressive unionism of any importance existed only outside of the Federation. However, the problem with this theory is not just its determinism but the fact that it does not match the reality of New York in 1919-1920. For though many New York unions were based around small workplaces, they organized on a city-wide basis. Thus city-wide strikes often took place in this period. Also there were large concentrations of workers in the port and railway areas. These organized themselves into joint negotiating bodies in the same way that trade unionists did in Chicago and Seattle. A closer look at the reality provides a different picture than would be expected from the industrial structure of New York. Therefore it is necessary to look at this reality in greater detail.⁴

NEW YORK UNIONS 1919-1920

During 1919 to 1920 New York saw more strikes than any other city; some of these strikes involved large numbers of workers. In 1919 11,346,653 days were lost due to strike action in New York State as a whole, and

⁴Selig Perlman, A Theory of the Labor Movement, (Macmillan: New York, 1928). James O. Morris, Conflict Within the AFL: A Study of Craft Versus Industrial Unionism, 1901-1938, (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1974). This impression of New York's AFL labor movement as purely craft conscious has not just been given by labor historians of the old school, such as Perlman or Commons, but for example even Melvyn Dubofsky, When Workers Organize: New York City in the Progressive Era, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968). See citations on Dubofsky in Chapters One and Two.

in 1920 10,608,483. Though for the combined period most disputes were over wages, four million days were over trade-union recognition.⁵

Nor were strikes limited to small numbers; even when workers were employed in small units they organized across their industry. These unions, made up of small branches, involved large numbers and gave strikes an industrial character. For example, the five separate unions involved in the city's printing industry formed an International Allied Printing Trades Council. It organized a strike involving thousands for eight weeks, in the face of opposition from national officials. There was an aftermath of great bitterness and local militant leaders were purged. As the above example illustrates, strikes took place not just across industry, but against the wishes of craft officials. Other workers took action beyond the single workplace. The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, representing 300,000 men, declared war on all New York builders in retaliation for the lockout of 5,500 men. Their action, which spread to other cities, forced the New York Employers Association to confer with the General President of the Carpenters.⁶

However, the most impressive of these movements was the creation of the Marine Workers Affiliation. This organization was created by the six craft unions of New York City Harbour coordinating their demands for pay and conditions, and forming a strike committee to represent the unions as a combined force. Here was an example of 20,000 skilled workers organized and behaving like industrial unionists, taking strike action across craft boundaries.

Nothing moved on the harbor for 24 hours as a result of the walkout of the boatmen which was a demonstration of the power wielded by only one section of the powerful Marine Workers Affiliation that has wielded together a powerful federation of six harbor crafts since last June.

⁵Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S Dept. of Labor, Government Printing Office, Monthly Labor Review, Vol 12, (1921), pp. 222 and 1280-1281, (hereafter all volumes will be cited as Monthly Labor Review).

⁶Monthly Labor Review, Volume 10, (1920), pp. 1506-1513 passim; Monthly Labor Review, Volume 12, (1921), pp. 31-32; CALL, 2 January 1919.

⁷New York Call, 2 January, 1919.

This was a case of "federated unionism" little different from that of Chicago or Seattle trade unionists.⁸

Militant activity was not limited to purely economic or single-trade issues. The participants were often not just in conflict with employers and local and national government, but with the AFL leadership as well. Striking railroad workers in New York State and immediate surrounds representing 150,000 men organized as the United Railroad Workers of America. Some national officials denounced the strikers as IWW's and Bolsheviks. The strike ended only after the Eastern Roads agreed to sign a note that was presented to the U.S. Wages Board. With the strike over the men called for a convention to oust their national officials.⁹

These strikes and the setting-up of cross-union organizations demonstrate that the New York labour movement of this period cannot be neatly pigeonholed into the category of pure and simple "craft unionism". Strikes generalized into national or statewide movements, often critical of their own officials. Links were built between different groups of workers; for example the Marine Affiliate had supported the rail strikers. In concluding this part of chapter three it is important to note that federated unionism was not unique to Chicago and Seattle. New York's labour had its own variant of federated unionism. The difference between New York's central labour bodies and those in Chicago and Seattle was that the former's did not control or lead the operation of federated unionism. It was this, rather than the absence of a militant or industrial tradition, that made the New York labour progressives weaker than their Seattle or Chicago counterparts.¹⁰

IMPULSE FOR THE NEW PARTY

A year later the durability of the impulse that had founded the new party, was confirmed by the 100 unions that attended the ALP's City Convention. This was in spite of a years campaign against the Labor Party by Gompers and his Tammany allies. The organizers were extremely

⁸The unions involved were: Master Mates and Pilots Association, Marine Engineers, Steam and Operating Engineers, Lighter Captains, Tidewater Boatmen and Harbor Boatmen. Call, 12 January, 1919.

⁹Call, 11 April 1920.

¹⁰Call, 10 April 1920.

gratified at the turnout, after the determined effort made by "powerful men in the AFL to wean unions away from the political organization that has been flourishing here for over a year". Among those who attended were the delegates of 200,000 city employees who had become fed up with niggardly treatment by both Republican and Democrat administrations. They had asked how they could be organized to back the Labor Party without being open to discharge by the political bosses.¹¹

Even by late April 1920 the response to a call for a statewide Labor Party Convention elicited an impressive response, demonstrating that the party still carried high regard amongst union activists. Delegates representing 350,000 workers from the Central Federated Union, the United Hebrew Trades and the Women's Trade Union League were expected to attend. The delegations included 16 painters' locals; 58 Longshoremen's locals; the Railway Clerks of New York Harbor; the Marine Engineers, Masters, Mates and Pilots; several locals of the needle trades; upholsterers, waiters, plumbers, stenographers, electrical workers and carpenters. The Plumb Plan League with 14 branches and 40 affiliated local unions agreed to send a delegation. The Protestant Friends of Irish Freedom, and groups of suffragists, also nominated delegates. Several national Labor Party figures, such as John Fitzpatrick, also planned to attend. Considering the substantial opposition to the CFU's new party, it was an pretty impressive roll-call. Clearly, there was still considerable sentiment for change in the spring of 1920.¹²

By late summer the mood remained buoyant at a nominating convention for the Fall elections. Thomas L. Delahunty, President of the Marine Workers Affiliation of the Port of New York and head of the Engineers Union, declined candidacy for Sheriff of Kings County but nonetheless delivered a keynote speech. Thus the leader of the most powerful rank-and-file organisation in New York, the Marine Affiliate, made known his enthusiasm for the party. The above examples show that broad-based sentiment existed for the party. Yet when the progressives were driven out of the leadership of the central bodies, there was little effective support for them, from trade unions that had supported the Labor Party project. How was it that the union progressives, who

¹¹Call, 28 February 1920.

¹²Call, 25 April 1920.

supported independent political action, had failed to turn the impulse into solid support?¹³

WHY THE IMPULSE FAILED TO BUILD LINKS

There was, as shown above, considerable sentiment in favour of the ALP. This came not just from a whole layer of local officials, or the affiliated unions, but also from the rank and file. For example, 800 women upholstery workers voted to support it. One problem was turning sentiment into active support. The Secretary of the New York Women's Trade Union League (NYWTUL) complained that meetings of the ALP, "left it to us women to accomplish everything and make ourselves unpopular". She continued to complain about the disproportionate amount of work delegated to the women of the NYWTUL. The work was taking up a good deal of the women activists' time. But when it came to the Fall election campaign, many NYWTUL activists were not available, due to the fact that they attended the International Congress of Working Women in Washington.¹⁴

However some did help, and Hilda Svenson reported that she had been very active in the last week of the Party's campaign. Though she did not know how many votes Curtis had actually polled, "a great deal of sentiment had been accursed [sic] among the workers". She urged all to help and give some time to build up the Party, so that "in the next campaign we could be strong enough to win something".¹⁵

Suffrage was not granted to all women nationally until 1920, though New York was not the most advanced of states on the issue, it had enfranchised women in 1918. Rose Schneiderman was excited by the possibility of working women using their votes to improve their lot as workers. Woodrow Wilson did not agree to support federal enfranchisement of women until 1918. This had created much friction between him and militant suffragists and sections of the progressive

¹³New York Times, 24 August 1920.

¹⁴Secretary's report, New York Women's Trade Union League (NYWTUL), July 1919, September 1919; President and Organizers report, NYWTUL, October 1919, Papers of the Women's Trade Union League and Its Principal Leaders: Collection IV New York Women's Trade Union League Minutes and Reports, (Published for the Schlesinger Library Radcliffe College by, Research Publications Inc Woodbridge, Connecticut, 1979), (Tamiment ref. 3045), (hereafter cited as WTUL Papers).

¹⁵Minutes of Regular Meeting NYWTUL, 10 November 1919, WTUL Papers, Collection IV, (Tamiment ref. 3045).

movement. Dudley Field Malone, the 1920 FLP candidate for New York Governor, resigned in 1917 from the Wilson administration over its delay in supporting national suffrage. Therefore, it was hardly surprising that in 1919 the NYWTUL enthusiastically supported the new party whose members had a far better record on women's suffrage than the Democrats. The League's secretary reported she had attended all the meetings of the ALP and its Executive Committee. The Party decided to hold a New Year's Feast for the foreign-born women, as it thought it would be a "nice idea" to show them the attitude of the ALP towards the foreigners. The NYWTUL believed this was a new form of Americanization; and they hoped that out of it would come a Women's Bureau of the Labor Party, which would be a connecting link between the Party and women who had not yet been reached by any of the WTUL's propaganda.¹⁶

Even after the CFU withdrew its support from the Party, the NYWTUL remained loyal. It rallied its forces for the 1920 upstate election campaign, and once again granted leave to its officials for Party activities. However, the fact that affiliated organizations such as the NYWTUL provided so much help in terms of administration and organizers covered up the underlying weakness of the Party. Maud Swartz noted that she and Frank Voght were the only members in the 5th Assembly district, and the president of the NYWTUL pondered whether "they would ever get the party across to the trade union rank and file".¹⁷

The NYWTUL's opinion was that it was difficult to involve ordinary workers in the activities of the new party. Considering that the base of the Party was so weak in New York City, it is difficult to explain the optimism that greeted statewide activities. The answer could be that exhilaration and heady atmosphere created by involvement

¹⁶Louise A. Tilly and Patricia Gurin, (eds), Women's Politics and Change, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990), pp. 4-5; Christine A. Lunardini, From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights: Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party, 1910-1928, (New York: New York University Press, 1986), pp. 129-148; Annelise Orleck, Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 110; Secretary's Report NYWTUL, December 1919, WTUL Papers, Collection IV, (Tamiment ref. 3045).

¹⁷Maud Swartz to Frank Voght, 30 September 1919, NYWTUL Correspondence, WTUL Papers, Collection IV, (Tamiment ref 3049); President to Tuscan Bennett, Conneticut, 9 March 1920, NYWTUL Correspondence, WTUL Papers, Collection IV, (Tamiment ref. 3050).

at a state level made the day-to-day routine of building the party bearable. In mid-1920 Mary Carmack McDougal was thrilled at Schneiderman's standing for senator:

"I do not see one reason in the world why you should not be elected. You would have the labor vote, and if the women of the state are really appealed to you will certainly get a woman vote which would sweep you in without the aid of anything else."¹⁸

Rose replied that the FLP convention at Schenectady had been wonderful, surpassing all expectations. It now looked as though the New York FLP was really on the map.¹⁹ This enthusiasm was out of all proportion to reality on the ground. The Party lacked experience and active workers. The evidence is that much local organization was weak. Enthusiasm for state activities diverted attention from the reality of grass-roots weakness. Its organizers depended, not on rank-and-file activity, but on that of affiliated organizations. Of course this could be a strength, as trade-union bodies could provide money, members and resources. The Socialist Party of New York clearly benefited from such support. It is important to evaluate how much strength the New York FLP derived from its union affiliates.

TRADE UNIONS AND THE LABOR PARTY

Though only a minority of all unions in NYC supported the new party, for a time the majority of those affiliated to the CFU and Hebrew Trades did so. Acting in concert they could have made quite a political impact. Proof of this was the fact that the Socialist Party, though a minority organization, made a considerable impact on the mainstream political landscape of New York. It elected a small number of aldermen to the city council, and had a representative in Congress. It played an effective role as a progressive ginger group in New York politics. The key to this strength was not just its electoral support, individual membership, or the fact that it had a daily newspaper; but the support, both financial and organizational, it received from New York trade unions. This created a problem for the new party, for it considered the

¹⁸Executive Board meeting, 30 September 1920, NYWTUL Minutes and Reports, WTUL Papers, Collection IV, (Tamiment ref 3045); Mary Carmack McDougal to Rose Schneiderman, 7 June 1920, NYWTUL Correspondence, WTUL Papers, Collection IV, (Tamiment ref 3050).

¹⁹Schneiderman to McDougal, 11 June 1920, NYWTUL Correspondence, WTUL Papers, Collection IV, (Tamiment ref 3050).

Socialists incapable of winning majority support due to their insistence on socialist doctrine. Yet many of those to whom the ALP appealed were either sympathetic to, or members of, the Socialist Party. The new party was not a revolutionary or radical party; it wanted reform through the existing state structures. It was to the left of the AFL leadership, but to the right of the Socialists. It was careful not to be identified with the more radical ideas of the Socialists or syndicalists. This was not flattering to the Socialists, but many were becoming impatient for success and saw the new party as a step in the right direction. Others saw the party as nothing more than a bourgeois progressive party. The contradiction and ambivalence that resulted from the attitude of the two organizations to each other created a barrier to cooperation.

A large delegation of Socialist trade unionists had attended the ALP's founding convention, but due to the non-committal attitude of their party, took no further active part in the new movement. Many of the unions in the clothing and furrier trades were dominated by the Socialists. Indeed, most of the unions affiliated to the Hebrew Trades were loyal to the Socialists. This situation made it very difficult for the founders of the new party, to turn union affiliations into active rank-and-file support.²⁰

The attitude of the progressive International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) illustrates this point. Though sympathetic to the new party, the ILGWU did not commit itself to anything; its attitude was one of wait-and-see. It also believed there was much suspicion of the CFU by radical unions. It was only the year before, after all, that the CFU had planned annihilation of the United Hebrew Trades. The ILGWU was also disappointed that the new party had failed to attract the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACW) into its ranks. The ACW, strong supporters of the Socialist Party, remained completely aloof from the new party, convinced it was not welcome. Though the ILGWU had a 'wait-and-see' policy, it believed that there were reasons to expect the new party to do well. The last election results had been "an humiliating setback" for the Socialist Party, and some workers were enthusiastic about the new party because of this. Edward Hannah of the CFU had stated that they would work with radicals and Socialists in the new party. That an old Tammany man should issue such a statement was

²⁰Call, 12 January 1919.

encouraging. Even James Boyle (of the Brooklyn CLU) had agreed to include every amendment suggested by the Socialist delegates in labour's political programme. The ILGWU believed this was proof that the air was "replete with change and revolution".²¹

The ILGWU's response was a mixture of ambivalence and optimism. The optimism was not fulfilled. Suspensions often remained, and few workers shifted their voting loyalties to the new party. Even those that normally supported the Socialists failed to vote for the ALP. They remained loyal to their own party, even if they were disappointed by its stagnant electoral performance. The continuing electoral strength of the SP remained a problem for the ALP. Enthusiasm for the converts from Tammany was misplaced; for though many remained loyal, the defection of the Brooklyn leadership back to Tammany, as we will see below, had disastrous consequences. Nor were all Socialists as friendly towards the new party as the ILGWU. The national executive of the Socialist Party had warned against hasty action, either for or against the new party. This was not enough to prevent growing friction between it and ALP supporters. James J. Bagley, president of Franklin union number 23, made it clear that the attitude of the Socialist Party to the ALP was resented by the CFU, CLU and WTUL; if necessary they would fight the Socialists in every electoral district.²²

Some supporters of the Socialists were friendly. J. M. Budish, Editor of the Headgear Worker, the union magazine of the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers of North America, welcomed the setting up of a "National Labor Party". He called on the Labor Party and Socialist Party to find ways of cooperating. However, when it came to the election campaigns of the Falls of 1919 and 1920, the ALP received no support from the Socialist unions; nor was there any joint campaign. Not only did the Call ignore it, but so did the union newspapers. Some even made it clear they would not be supporting the Labor Party; Debs was the only candidate for them.²³

²¹A. Rosebury writing in Justice, 18 January 1919.

²²Call, 23 January 1919.

²³"Proceedings of the 12th Biennial Convention of Cloth Hat and Cap Makers of North America, New York, 1 May 1919 to 8 May 1919", Headgear Worker, June 1919, pp.153-154.

In July 1920 the National Labor Party movement met in Chicago. Parties from several states, including New York, amalgamated with the Illinois Labor Party to form the Farmer Labor Party (FLP). There had been talk of standing La Follette, the Republican progressive Senator from Wisconsin, as the FLP presidential candidate. However, La Follette refused the nomination. Parley P. Christensen, a little-known lawyer and Labor Party activist from Utah, served in his place.²⁴

The ACW, which was quite sympathetic in 1919, changed its mind by late 1920. Its journal called for support for the Socialist Party candidates, but made no mention of the now renamed FLP. The policies decided at the national convention of the newly formed Farmer Labor Party, to which the New York party was affiliated, were used to attack the new party in the run-up to the 1920 general election. To all intents and purposes the new party was labelled as liberal. Events at the national Labor Party conference were deliberately misrepresented to berate the new party. The ACW claimed that the Committee of 48, progressives who had left the Republican Party in 1912 and remained independent, and the Farmer Labor Party had something in common, namely the fear of going out on their own. This was untrue, as the FLP had nominated candidates for the 1920 presidential election.²⁵

This did not stop the ACW from claiming the FLP could be no more than a party of protest at the forthcoming election. However, if the Labor Party would have the courage to endorse Debs, it would be a stimulus "for the building up of an INDEPENDENT political power of the American working class!" The new party was attacked for compromise, because it had included the word farmer in its name. It was also criticized for demanding nationalization, as strikes would be forbidden in industry under government control (perhaps the irony of the fact that this was also Gompers' argument against nationalization had escaped the writer of the editorial). Workers would not benefit from such plans, who owned the government was the key. The Plumb Plan was also criticized, and "besides that he (Glen Plumb, the plan's author) is closely connected with the Railway Brotherhoods." There were no words of comfort for the Labor Party at any level. The FLP stood condemned for refusing to nominate the presidential choice of ACW

²⁴Marie Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, Dan Georgakas, (eds) Encyclopedia of the American Left, (Chicago: St. James Press, 1990), pp. 215-216.

²⁵Advance, 16 July 1920.

members, Eugene V. Debs. The ACW attack on the FLP was not some isolated outburst, restricted to the pages of a union newspaper. The Call also published the article for the benefit of all. Thus "wait-and-see" had turned into open hostility in the New York Socialist press.²⁶

Abraham Lefkowitz, a leading member of the ALP, was stung into reply by what he saw as misrepresentation of the Party. He wrote defending the ALP and stating that the article had misrepresented it. He believed that FLP did stand for worker's control and not for state capitalism. He rejected the accusation that the FLP was prepared to sacrifice its platform to get La Follette to stand. (Ironically it would be the Socialists who would later ditch the demand for a labour party to persuade La Follette to stand for President.) The FLP had quite clearly stood by the principle of building the party before personality. He also defended the name FLP, pointing out that eighty per cent of the population was covered by this term, and that the party wanted to relate to all producers. Joseph Schlossberg, General Secretary of the ACW, declined to reply, but stated he had written the article to make positions clear, not to be antagonistic.²⁷

This is somewhat disingenuous, as it was clear even to a neutral observer that the factual basis of the article would not bear scrutiny. The FLP had not given up its programme to get La Follette on board, and it quite clearly was standing as an independent party. After the dispute between Schlossberg and Lefkowitz, the ACW ignored the FLP for the rest of the election campaign.

The Socialists were stronger in New York than just about anywhere else in the country. As stated in the previous chapter, they dominated the progressive unions. New York was the centre of a mass circulation Socialist Press which included the Advance, Call and the Jewish Daily Forward. Even if they did not oppose the FLP, they were a barrier to be surmounted. But, as we saw above, the attitude ranged from the apathy of the Call to the downright hostility of the Advance. Active trade unionists read and supported these newspapers. Socialists claimed to welcome the new party, but many did not lift a finger to help it, for that would have undermined the prospects of the Socialist Party at the polls. This, combined with the attitude of the Socialist press, not

²⁶Advance, 16 July 1920, 23 July 1920; Call, 23 July 1920.

²⁷Advance, 13 August 1920.

only deprived the new party of possible votes, but also of a possible trade-union base.²⁸

The fact that the New York labor movement was divided between three major factions that had little in common-- Socialists, Tammany and the Progressives-- may explain why the AFL executive felt confident to move against the Central Labor Body in New York City far earlier than it did in Seattle or Chicago. In Chicago the CFL had the support of the majority of progressive trade unionists for its policies. The few Socialists that opposed its policies were marginalized. The progressives who temporarily controlled the New York central body had no such hegemony. The Socialists were a sizeable block who owed them no particular loyalty. In Chicago the ACW was friendly towards the FLP supporters; in New York they were hostile. The CFL had its own newspaper; the New York body had none, endorsing the Call instead. The three-way split of the New York body deprived the progressives, who supported the FLP, of solid ground beneath their feet. However it was not to the Socialists that Gompers turned, to begin his assault on the progressives (at least not openly), but to the Tammany 'Old Guard' of Brooklyn and the State Federation.

THE ROLE OF THE TAMMANY UNIONISTS

The lack of unity inside the CFU, and the weak roots of the progressive leadership, led Gompers to move first against the supporters of the ALP. However he did not make a head-on assault. The very divisions discussed above meant it was not that simple. No one faction was assured dominance. To ensure outright victory it was necessary to strengthen the hands of the Tammany old guard. Gompers made no mention of this, but proposed amalgamating the two central bodies on the grounds that it would strengthen the New York labour movement. It would coincidentally strengthen the Tammany old guard. The old guard was stronger in the Brooklyn CLU, and bringing them into the CFU would outflank the progressives.

When the AFL first proposed amalgamating the central bodies in the New York Area, the Brooklyn CLU announced it would send a "strong" committee to meet Gompers, as it considered that it had been accused of inefficiency. Whether this indignation was real or not made little

²⁸James Weinstein, The Decline Of Socialism In America, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), Table 1, p. 94.

difference to the fact that they supported the reorganization plan. However, the mock tone of independence from Gompers continued. John Coughlin, President of the CLU and Tammany sympathiser, who headed the Brooklyn delegation, said that he did not want amalgamation to be used by the big leaders of the Federation to throw the city labour movement back into the hands of the old time labour 'skates' who had recently been driven out of any active part in the movement. Yet his actions ensured just that. He noted that the Brooklyn Central Labor Union took the credit for having first made an offer of consolidation two years previously when it joined hands in launching the American Labor Party. He believed that Chicago and Seattle had benefited from having larger councils, but he was wary of "old party crooks".²⁹

A few days after Coughlin's protests it was reported that the meeting with Gompers had been amicable, and that all sides agreed that amalgamation was for the best. Participants reported that Gompers had avoided controversial matters such as support for striking pressmen, the labor party and the radical spirit of the functioning central bodies that were "obnoxious to a number of old-time labor leaders".³⁰

Coughlin and Gompers had both given the impression that no attack was to be made on the present leadership of the Central bodies, or on any particular policy. But, less than three weeks later, the gloves came off when Brooklyn Central Labor Union, announced it had quit the ALP for the AFL's "Non Partisan" Plan. John P. Coughlin, president of the Brooklyn Central Labor Union announced that it was pulling out of the committee to organize the joint New York party, and that they would be supporting Gompers' non-partisan policy. This proved the Call's earlier suspicions correct; that consolidation had been a shrewd manoeuvre by the old guard to undermine the American Labor Party. Coughlin claimed that the ALP was only a paper organization and that it would be irresponsible to waste time trying to develop a new organization in such short time. It would also be foolish to fight the Socialist Party in working-class districts where it was strong.

Coughlin, who had been a general committee member of the ALP, complained that the Party did not represent "one hundredth part" of New York unions. The CLU had not left the Labor Party any worse off than it was; "it never did get in out of the cold". If it could not achieve

²⁹Call, 1 February 1920.

³⁰Call, 3 February 1920.

electoral results, a Congress would be elected which was even worse than the one in existence.³¹

Coughlin and the CLU's defection were a serious blow to the prospects of the new party, but its supporters tried to make light of it. Thus William Kohn, business agent of the Upholsters Union and a prominent member of the FLP, believed that the movement's progress would not be hampered at all; he described the defectors as weaklings and political scabs, who had done nothing for the party. Nor did he fear Gompers' attempts to persuade national union chiefs to put pressure on locals to undermine the party. Kohn believed that the growth of the party would not be affected, and that the sincere men and women of the Brooklyn unions would continue to work for it.

The Labor Party will be better off without campaign profiteers, handpicked Civic Federation 'friends of labor' and the benevolent political advice of the executive council of the American Federation of Labor.-- The Labor Party is here and making progress. Let them stop it if they can.

He was encouraged by a recent examples of changed attitudes of formerly conservative trade-union members, who at recent meetings had supported the party.³²

This was either false optimism, or an attempt to put on a brave face in response to events. For Kohn had stated that the Party was strong in Brooklyn and would survive there. However he failed to foresee that it was not just a matter of losing "official" support in Brooklyn, but that support for the Party would be undermined in the whole of the New York area. This would be the first step in driving the progressives out of any position of influence in the central labour bodies. By the end of the year Gompers had rid himself of all those who opposed his non-partisan policy in New York, and replaced them with men loyal to himself and Tammany. Though later he would discover that, for some, loyalty to Tammany was more important than loyalty to the AFL.

³¹Call, 22 February 1920.

³²Call, 24 February 1920. In particular he cited the members of Sheet Metal Workers Union Local 28 who overwhelmingly defeated a recommendation from the executive committee not to affiliate to the Labor Party.

Pressure against those supporting independent political action increased. James P. Holland stated that the New York State Federation would support the AFL's non-partisan plan, and would not favour any Socialist candidates. The State Federation would also oppose the Labor Party, because to support it would "divide the forces of labor and defeat labor's objects". The rest of 1920 saw an increasing offensive against the progressives, including the use of violence and thugs. Ernest Bohm, secretary of the CFU and Labor Party activist, was humiliated by being refused entrance to the State Federation Convention at Binghamton. He was kept out on the grounds that he was not employed in his trade. This was considered an extraordinary interpretation of the rules.³³

The progressives were also hampered by their relationship to the AFL nationally. At times they criticized the leadership, yet they could not afford to make a complete break with it. The threat of losing the AFL charter was not one to be taken lightly. A consequence of this was that they often muted their opposition, pulling their punches. This somewhat ambiguous approach derived from two realities. First, in the face of aggressive employers, a head-on fight with the union leadership could deprive them of much-needed support and resources. Secondly, they were well aware of the weakness of low-level officials, such as themselves, at AFL conventions. Thus they shrank from trying to raise national support from the AFL for the new party. At the AFL convention in Canada Lefkowitz argued with delegates not to raise the FLP on the floor of convention, claiming he would fight to the finish to prevent it being raised on the floor. He asserted that the Party existed, was making progress, and was worthy of labour's support. Nor did Lefkowitz try and raise the party at the New York State Federation that year, even though Gompers had unleashed a massive attack on the supporters of independent political action at the same convention. The right wing could argue for their ideas out in the open; the progressives very much feared the consequences of doing the same.³⁴

No doubt Lefkowitz's fears were well-founded, as the following analysis of the nature of AFL conventions by the progressive journalist

³³Call, 6, 24 March, 26 August 1920.

³⁴New York Times, 8 June 1920; New York State Federation, Proceedings 57th Annual Convention, (Binghamton, 24-26 August 1920).

Heber Blankenhorn shows. Blankenhorn emphasized the bureaucratic nature of the AFL convention when he compared the 1919 United Mine Workers Convention with its AFL counterpart. He described the delegates as men from the pitheads, rudely dressed, lean and smoking cob pipes:

Their names are mostly English, Scotch, [sic] Irish or Welsh and they are notorious readers---This Convention is no more like the A. F. of L. Convention at Atlantic City than a regiment in the field is like the Stock exchange. These delegates,' said a British labor leader---seem all to come from jobs where they dispose of their own time.' That an A.F. of L. Convention is made up almost altogether of paid union officials, astounded the British delegate whose own Trade Union Congress is half composed of rank and file.³⁵

Blankenhorn's observation that the AFL convention was dominated by those in the full-time employ of the AFL, unlike the UMW convention where the rank and file predominated, was confirmed by the latter's passing of a resolution calling for the founding of a labour party. No such thing could or would happen at an AFL national convention.

Lefkowitz preferred not to fight for the official endorsement of the AFL, as the most likely outcome, official condemnation, would do great damage to the infant party. This may have been tactically correct, but it meant that arguments against the party were left unopposed. It also made it difficult to win new recruits. However from the safety of their New York fiefdom the progressives did sometimes launch attacks on the non-partisan policy of the AFL.

Using the Reconstruction Committee they issued a communication, stating that labour had no friends in either Democratic or Republican Parties, and should support an Independent Labor Party. They argued it was only in the United States that workers wasted their enormous political strength on the two enemy parties, and that organized labour was despoiled of its right of free speech, free press, collective bargaining, free assembly, freedom to organize, and if necessary to strike. They ignored a request by Gompers that they should organize a non-partisan rally, and instead requested that the AFL donate \$10,000 to the Labor Party campaign state and city-wide. They told Gompers they agreed with his characterization of Republicans and Democrats as

³⁵"Miners on the War Path", undated report on Miners 1919 Convention, Blankenhorn Papers, box 4, folder no 6, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

bankrupt and would therefore be supporting independent labour. They noted that years of rewarding friends and punishing enemies had achieved nothing for workers in New York apart from higher rents. This most provocative letter was signed by William Kohn in his capacity as Chairman of the Reconstruction Committee. Compared to the normally timid approach of the CFU leadership, this was an act of bravado that probably only served to enrage Gompers further. Only a month earlier they avoided taking Gompers head-on over non-partisan policy, passing a resolution asking him if the policy was behind the times. They had not wanted to give Gompers further cause for complaint.³⁶

At no time did the progressives oppose the amalgamation of the central labor bodies. Gompers had the advantage of clear strategy and policy; he soon would use the joint strength of the Brooklyn and New York conservatives to defeat the New York progressives. Yet, as outlined above, the progressives had no clear strategy in reply. They did not seem to care that right-wing officials were denouncing and deserting them. There was no preparation for what was quite obviously a coming onslaught. Unlike the Socialists or the supporters of Tammany, they had no clearly defined power base and they made no attempt to build one. Their ideological position was also weak. They did not campaign boldly for the labour party idea inside the AFL, but restricted themselves to cleverly worded resolutions. For the most part they trod carefully with regard to the AFL leadership, but even this was inconsistent, and they occasionally issued provocative statements. This lack of ideological clarity and strategy made it difficult to rally support. Another factor in their ineffective preparations may have been that they genuinely underestimated the strength of Gompers' side. Whatever their motives, the failure to build an effective defence against the AFL conservatives cost them dearly.

DEFEAT OF THE PROGRESSIVES

In early December the newly amalgamated central body met to elect a new executive committee. This proved to be a conclusive defeat for the progressives. Gompers and AFL aides were elated as John Sullivan, executive member of the International Union of the United Brewery, Flour, Cereal, and Soft Drink Workers Union of America and Treasurer of the old CFU, defeated Edward I. Hannah, the previous president, for the

³⁶Call, 14 February, 20 March 1920.

presidency of the new organization. John P. Coughlin, president of the Brooklyn Central Labor Union, defeated William Kohn. William F. Kehoe, secretary of the district Council of New York Teamsters, defeated Ernest Bohm. Only two progressives were elected on to the executive committee; Thomas J. Curtis, President of the Tunnel and Subway Contractors Union, and M. Feinstone of the United Hebrew Trades. However, Feinstone was supported by both factions. The winners were conservatives from unions like the Teamsters, Sheetmetal, Bartending and Electrical Workers. On average progressives received between 40 and 45 per cent of the vote; Lefkowitz got 282 votes, but to win, a vote in the high three hundreds was required. It was not the case that they had been massively outvoted -- the margin at times was narrow -- but it was enough to completely remove the progressives from any influence in the council.³⁷

The Call offered its analysis the next day, noting that the old guard had a far more effective machine than the progressives. The longshoremen had provided a block vote of 20, rushed in on the last day. Fifty radical unions had not bothered to send delegates. The Socialist view was that the progressives' lack of programme had failed to persuade the independents present to vote. This explanation as to why there been such a poor response by the radical or progressive unions, most of whom were influenced by the Socialists, seems rather weak. The language is abstract, with its talk of programmes. Of course the Socialists were quite capable of abstract propaganda, but in the build-up to the assault by the conservatives, the Call had warned how serious the issues were. Here was a major attack by the old guard on the progressives in the union movement, and the Socialists had done little or nothing to mobilise radicals to defend the CFU leadership against the attack of the right. The analysis is that of a hand-wringer standing on the sidelines. However it is possible that the Socialists were guilty of more than just hand-wringing.³⁸

HEBREW TRADES

Reaction had almost a complete victory at the CTLC. Surprisingly, the United Hebrew Trades got a representative on the new committee. However, it was the Hebrew Trades who were responsible for the 50

³⁷Call, 4 December 1920.

³⁸Call, 5 December 1920.

missing radical unions. It was well known the Hebrew Trades supported the Socialists and the Labor Party initiative, yet without its supporters present it had not suffered the fate of the other progressives and radicals. Indeed, if its delegates had turned up to support the progressives, their vote would have made an important difference. They were an important part of the radical and progressive tradition in New York.

The Hebrew Trades organized unions mainly formed by the Socialists during the early part of the 20th Century, and consisted of needle trades workers, bakers, butchers, grocery clerks, with some Jewish painters and carpenters. They were the backbone of the Socialist movement in New York at the time, and usually supported Socialist Party candidates at elections both with resolutions and money. They were organized into the United Hebrew Trades for unified action. This body was not affiliated with the AFL although the unions composing it were.³⁹

Lawrence Rogin noted that these unions rarely sent delegates to meetings of the CFU. Thus the progressives got on with more or less passive support from the Jewish Unions, though Hebrew Trades delegates did normally attend for elections. However, on the occasion of the elections for the newly amalgamated central body they had not been present, even though the importance of the meeting was well known. It was the opinion of progressives present that even those who had attended had not solidly supported the progressive ticket. Lefkowitz was convinced that the Jewish unions had sold out to the conservatives. The only proof he had of this was the fact that Morris Feinstone, president of the United Hebrew Trades, was elected to the executive committee almost unanimously, although he was a member of the Socialist Party.⁴⁰

Lefkowitz believed that if the Jewish unions had supported the progressives they could have won. He had a strong case, as there were only 56 votes between victory and defeat. The Jewish Unions' vote could have made all the difference. Neither Rogin, Lefkowitz or the progressives of the time were aware of the contents of Gompers'

³⁹For further details of Jews in the New York labour movement see Jacob Rader Marcus, United States Jewry: The East European Period, Volume 4, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993). For specific details of the Hebrew Trades see Marcus, pp. 200-202; Rogin, p. 32.

⁴⁰Rogin, p. 33.

correspondence, if they had been, as we will see, they would have been able to confirm their suspicions.⁴¹

A letter from the labour editor of the New York Jewish Daily Forward congratulated Gompers on the reorganization of the central bodies. The author made it plain that he accepted Gompers' argument that the reason for the rough nature of the central labour body meetings was that the New York bodies had been divided for too long, taking different lines on the same issues, and vilifying each other. Thus when they finally met the tension naturally exploded.⁴²

It is unlikely that the writer was unaware that the real cause of the "explosion" was the violence of pro-Gompers and Tammany thugs at the amalgamation meeting. This was front-page news in the Forward's sister English language newspaper the Call, which reported that the Gompers machine, loaded with the city's reactionary elements in the trade-union movement, had flattened out the progressive element in the Central Federated Union. A block of 60 teamsters, longshoremen and "black element" (reactionaries) among the printing trades had physically threatened delegates, including Edward I. Hannah; another liberal was told he would be thrown out the window. Officials of the Central Federated Union were so disgusted at the organization's action that they had tendered their resignations. The progressives had been outnumbered 110 to 40. It was declared that the ALP would no longer be supported, and that the delegates to the AFL convention would support Non-Partisan Policy.⁴³

H. Lang, labour editor of the Forward, made no mention of this violence in his letter nor of the withdrawal of support from the ALP, but he claimed that the Jewish Labour Press was behind Gompers on the issue, and that the forming of one New York body was a dream come true. Written before the election of the new committee, the letter suggests that Gompers supporters in New York must have known in advance that the "Jewish Labor Movement" was in full support of the changes, and no doubt prepared to reward them. Lefkowitz's suspicions had been well-

⁴¹Rogin, p.34.

⁴²H. Lang to Gompers, 21 October 1920, Letters From Office of President, American Federation of Labor Records: The Samuel Gompers Era, (Microfilming Corporation of America, 1981), reel 104.

⁴³Call, 22 May 1920; Rogin, p. 22.

founded. Whatever the motives of the Hebrew Trades and the Socialists, the outcome was to isolate the progressives and end central body support for the new party. This was a deadly blow from which the Party would never recover. The Hebrew Trades on its own had not sunk the progressives-- the initiators were those loyal to Tammany and Gompers-- but its abstention had fatal consequences for the supporters of independent political action.

The progressives did not give up trying to build the Party during this year-long offensive, and they tried to defend themselves as best they could. The forces of Tammany were not unopposed; Henry R. Linville, president of the Teachers Union, put up a spirited counterattack. He accused Brady of falsifying an official legislative record. The accusation was sent out in a statement to 300 CFU affiliates. Brady countercharged Linville with falsely accusing him and wanted those who accused him expelled from the CFU. Little resulted from this dispute, no doubt due to the fact that the progressives were being overwhelmed by the old guard's offensive. Tammany's influence was felt long before the final electoral defeat of the progressives. Letters were received from union branches demanding that the CFU should have nothing to do with the FLP. Also a vote of thanks was passed to Mayor Hylan for obtaining three weeks vacation for city employees. This was a deliberate snub to the progressives and public sector workers as is clear for reasons already outlined above. It is hard to gauge the extent of the reaction to Tammany's attack, but the Call reported that a meeting of Women Upholsterers, trade unionist's wives, and Labor Party women had condemned Brady and affirmed support of the ALP. They also planned to organize 10,000 women into the Labor Party.⁴⁴

During the period of the offensive, and at a time when official support was removed from the New York Labor Party, the progressives announced the launching of a Statewide Labor Party. This time they were

⁴⁴Call, 25 May, 24, 26 June 1920. Letters were from Corresponding Secretary of New York Photo Engravers Union 1 (Brady's Local), New York Electrotypers Union 100, Paper Cutters Union 119. Personal protests were delivered from William Delaney and Thomas Clancy of the Longshoremen's District Council. In spite of this and stiff opposition, Lefkowitz reported back from the FLP state convention to the CFU; Call, 24 July 1920.

prepared for trouble, having "enough machinists in attendance at Schenectady to prevent a mob of outsiders from seizing control".⁴⁵

Meanwhile the victorious conservatives set about removing all union recognition from the ALP. John J. Mulholland, secretary of the Metal Trades Council, claiming to represent 150,000 workers, issued a leaflet demanding that all AFL affiliates sever links with the party. The leaflet cited the rigged CFU meeting as authority, and claimed that the policy was contrary to the AFL. However, whatever the effect of the Hylan for Mayor Campaign, Tammany had one of its worst election years ever, losing ten Aldermen and only keeping control of the Board of Aldermen by a narrow majority of three. The New York Times proclaimed it as "Near A Collapse For Tammany Hall".⁴⁶

The progressives had lost all positions of influence in the New York central body, and the Labor Party had lost its official recognition. The progressives were isolated; the Socialist Party had not mobilized its forces to defend them. All of this weakened the new party, and later we shall see that this caused further losses of support. The Party had not got off to a good start; its depth of trade-union support had been weakened even before it entered a major election campaign.

OUT ON THE STUMP

In 1919 the Party had been unable to get its candidates on to the New York ballot papers. However by early 1920 it had launched a New York State Labor Party. Considering that it had achieved very little in New York, this seemed somewhat ambitious. In the 1920 election it did manage to get its candidates on the statewide list, but four candidates for municipal justiceships were barred from the ballot. Required to obtain 3,000 signatures, they had gathered 4,000 for each candidate, but were disqualified because the signatures had not appeared "on the last registration list". The decision was given by John R. Voorhis, Chairman of the Board of Elections, who claimed that the petitions may have been fraudulent, that some were written in the same hand, and that some appeared to have been copied from registration lists. He intended to forward them to the District Attorney. However, apart from this one setback, the Party did manage to field candidates for Senate, the House

⁴⁵Call, 28 May 1920.

⁴⁶Call, 28 May 1920; New York Times, 6 November 1920.

of Representatives and Governor. The elections of 1920 were the first real test of how successful the Party had been in gaining support beyond union affiliations. The most prominent candidate was Dudley Field Malone, a former collector of the port of New York, standing for Governor.⁴⁷

Meanwhile O'Connor of the Longshoremen called for support for Harding. However the bulk of the New York old guard supported the Democrat candidate for Governor, Al Smith, and Gompers' general policy. Thus the Party was opposed not just by Tammany and Republicans, but by union officials on a national and local basis. The election results proved to be very disappointing apart from Malone's New York City vote, and the congressional vote of O'Leary. Indeed the vote turned out to be even worse than Rose Schneiderman expected. She believed she had polled between 50,000 and 75,000 votes in the State and that Malone's vote in the city was close to 175,000.⁴⁸ Unfortunately the actual results were even poorer; Parley P. Christensen the Farmer Labor national candidate got 18,413, a mere 0.6 per cent of the presidential vote cast in New York; in comparison the Socialist candidate Debs received 203,201, seven per cent, of the votes cast. Dudley Field Malone's vote ran 50,000 ahead of Parley P. Christensen's at 69,908, with less than 9,000 coming from outside NYC. Rose Schneiderman also ran ahead of Christensen, but she polled only 27,934 votes. The Socialists took many liberal and discontented votes, but in spite of this Malone got 52,000 votes in the City of New York. It was believed that Schneiderman had done well amongst women garment workers and in the East Side. Why did Malone get a vote far in excess of his comrades?⁴⁹

It could have been due to the fact that he was a well-known local politician. However, it could equally be due to the fact that he had an effective campaign machine, one that came about almost by

⁴⁷New York Times, 20 June, 22 October 1920; Call, 30 July, 9 August 1920.

⁴⁸Call, 6 August 1920; Letter from Schneiderman reporting on election campaign, 19 November 1920, NYWTUL Correspondence, WTUL Papers, Collection IV, (Tamiment ref. R3050).

⁴⁹Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, 1976, p. 286; Harry B. Sell, "The A.F. of L. And The Labor Party Movement of 1918-20", (MA, University of Chicago, 1922), p. 142.

accident. The Women's Independent Campaign Committee, which had been formed to oppose Senator Wadsworth, got behind Rose's campaign. It also supported Malone because he had resigned from the Democrat administration over Wilson's failure to keep his word on suffrage. A WTUL activist, Geneva M. Marsh, described the enthusiastic campaign organized by these women.

Women speakers visited the piers in New York, the Brooklyn Navy Yard, factories in all parts of the city and the most promising street corners. Meetings were held at noon as well as in the evening. Large quantities of literature were distributed, including some excellent leaflets outlining the program of the Farmer Labor Party-- towards the end of the campaign Malone and Schneiderman buttons were also distributed.

The Women's Committee was made up of women interested in politics from the liberal viewpoint. It included writers, teachers, settlement workers and a group who had come over from the old militant suffragists. These willing supporters gave every assistance they could toward helping the Party. They were especially well qualified to do this work, having long experience in campaigning for suffrage they were trained speakers versed in the psychology of "political appeal to the people". Women new to politics, not members of any organization and some with no experience of campaigning at all, had also made "fine agitators".⁵⁰

It is hard to gauge how much was achieved by their intervention, but it is probable that extra votes were won by this joint effort of militant women and progressives. Another example that a well-known political figure backed by effective organization, could do well, was the result in the 18th Congressional district (see table A, below), where Jeremiah O' Leary got 25 per cent of the poll. This was perhaps the most successful result for the ALP. The Democrats won the district with only 12,169 votes; O'Leary's vote was 9,998 and the Socialists 5,668. If the Socialists had stood aside for O'Leary, it is possible there would have been a FLP congressman in the 18th District.

⁵⁰ Geneva M. Marsh, "Campaigning for Senator with Rose Schneiderman", *Life And Labor*, (December 1920); Lunardini, p. 129.

Table A: Election Result 18th Congressional District

Democrat	Republican	FLP	Socialist
12,169 (31.2%)	11,148 (28.6%)	9,998 (25.7%)	5,668 (14.5%)

O'Leary's vote contradicts the assumption that the FLP returns in New York were laughable. The key to Malone's success was his stand on women's suffrage; in O'Leary's it was his stand on Irish freedom. Well-known throughout New York for his campaigning on the issue, he was discontented with Democrat policies for not opposing the British over the issue of Irish freedom. This spurred O'Leary to stand on an FLP platform. The district had a large Irish population, and O'Leary had the advantage of being both well-known in Irish circles, and well connected with many of the community's organizations. It almost certainly provided him with an effective electoral machine.⁵¹

Though the overall vote was disappointing, the above experience does demonstrate that where a campaign was well organized, and candidates well-known, the party did perform more effectively at the polls. It also demonstrated that women, the Irish and progressives in general could be won to the politics of independent labor.

CONCLUSION

Considering that the New York Party was weakened by lack of official union support and a weak electoral machine, it could be argued that it had done surprisingly well. It had also suffered from a city hall that had kept them out of the local elections, and a Socialist Party that was still a substantial third-party force. The problem for the new party was how to stop being the fourth party, rather than becoming the second or even first.

⁵¹Congressional Quarterly Guide to U.S. Elections, p. 743; Shannon, p. 158; John Patrick Buckley, The New York Irish: Their View of American Foreign Policy 1914-1921, (New York: Arno Press, 1976), p. 11, pp. 182-184 passim.

Unlike New York, the Seattle Labor Party faced no such barriers; the Socialists were weak and, after the 1920 election, the FLP could declare itself a second party. However, though it might be said with hindsight that the vote was not disastrous, and perhaps could have been used to build the beginnings of a new party, contemporaries did not feel that way. To face up to these disappointments and to sustain the Party required some form of a stable base, either of individual membership or union support. However, as we have already seen, the Party had already lost its official union support and had not built an active membership. The loss of union support was a major factor in the Party's inability to build an effective membership. For example the defeat of the progressive pressmen by the conservatives saw them removed and replaced with reactionaries. Similar action was taken in the Carpenters' locals. These conservative victories inside unions which had supported the Labor Party further weakened the progressives of the New York central labor bodies.⁵²

The new party failed to establish its own newspaper and had to depend on the Call for coverage. This meant that for the most part even its successes were ignored. This had serious consequences; for it meant the Party had no clear independent voice. It had to depend on the AFL union machine and other affiliates to spread its organization. When it lost the support of these organizations, it was left high and dry with no way of extending its support beyond the layer of minor officials in the New York labour movement. It was one of the Party's most central activists, Lefkowitz, who described it as a party of minor union officials. He believed that, given a little more time, it could have gone back from the "central body into the local unions and gotten the support of the rank and file". The problem with this strategy was its reliance on the union machine. The starting-point was the central body, and even when Lefkowitz and his comrades were in control of the central body there were many barriers, with some local union officials blocking progress.⁵³

Perhaps activists like Lefkowitz were prisoners of their own past experience, used to passing resolutions inside the unions and passing on the results to members. Having gained control of the central body, they overestimated the power it gave them to involve the rank and file.

⁵²Rogin, pp.30, 35-36.

⁵³Rogin, p.36.

Using minor union officials, and the women of the WTUL, for administration and electioneering blinded the progressives to the reality of their shortcomings. When the struggle was on the up-and-up, as it was in 1919, this did not matter. The conservatives had their hands full dealing with insurgent workers; it might even have suited them to let militancy find an outlet on the political field. This situation gave the progressives the upper hand; however, once the struggle subsided the conservatives were able to use the weight of a long-established union machine against the progressives. They had powerful allies: the AFL national leadership, leaders of the International unions and the political strength of Tammany.

In a situation such as this, the progressives needed a power base from which to defend themselves. They had tried to use the central body as one, but it proved to be an unreliable weapon. The Socialist unions offered little support and, having failed to build any independent foundation, the progressives were easily defeated. The progressives had failed to sink any lasting roots into the insurgent spirit of 1919. They had failed to bridge the gap between the impulse for a new party and actually establishing one.

Tammany was quick to learn the lesson of this episode. For a brief while officials loyal to it had switched to the new party. It could not take union officials' loyalty for granted; it had to be more sensitive to the aspirations of these officials. Those who had organized the defeat of the progressives at the CTLU were given rewards. Holland was found a \$5,000 a year post on the Board of Standards and Appeals. Costello and Coughlin were rewarded with minor positions. These were jobs which had been temporarily withheld. A whole number of officials who supported the ALP ended up in the Tammany fold.⁵⁴

⁵⁴Rogin, pp.34-35.

CHAPTER FOUR

ONE STEP FORWARD: THE BIRTH OF THE LABOR PARTY, CHICAGO 1919-1920

Chicago was the first of the three cities to form a labour party, and the first to be involved in a major election campaign. At first sight, as illustrated in Chapter Two, the initiators of the new party had all the advantages of Seattle, and none of the weaknesses of New York. The CFL leadership had a long tradition of progressive activity and a secure base of support among local unions. However, the party did not fare as well as its Seattle counterpart, but did better than New York. In the 1920 general election the new party did very poorly at the polls, a blow from which it never really recovered.

Thus a strongly organized labour movement with an effective leadership did not guarantee success. Considering that the CFL leadership had a far stronger base for its initiative than the other two cities, why did it not achieve more? This chapter intends to discover why the CFL leadership was unable to turn its backing for the labour party into broad support at the polls from Chicago workers. Of course, the failure of the CFL's initiative was not just a matter of a lack of will. When it launched the party in 1919 the economy was booming and unions growing. By the time of the 1920 election the union movement faced many difficulties and was being forced onto the defensive. Chicago politics were far tougher than the Seattle variety; and city bosses did not shrink from exploiting ethnic and "racial" divisions to block their rivals. Nonetheless in 1919 the new party's Mayoralty campaign was the most successful ever for independent working-class politics.

In assessing the strength of the new party it should be kept in mind that electoral results are not everything. Large numbers of workers, immigrants and women did not vote in the elections covered by this thesis. Nor is it realistic to judge a party that was only three months old purely by the criterion of the number of votes obtained. However, the fact that electoral success was not immediate may have disillusioned many of the party's most optimistic supporters. This being the case, the question arises as to why union membership

outnumbered the votes cast for labour's party; and why the largest working-class vote for Mayor did not prove to be the beginning of greater things? To answer this question it will be necessary to assess the strength of union support for the Cook County Labor Party (CCLP). Highlighting the key features in the development of the CCLP will further develop the comparison with Seattle and New York.¹

UNION STRENGTH

Chapter Two outlined the depth of union support. At a formal level the majority of Chicago locals supported the new party, but even at this level there had been opposition. Though the CFL claimed to represent over 300,000 workers, it did not claim to be in communication with them all. The main link was with local officials and delegates to the central labour body. Edward Nockels admitted that the federation had never reached more than 5000 union members on any proposition because it did not have the machinery. He wanted the New Majority to become that machinery. Unfortunately the Majority never gained the circulation or reputation of the Seattle Union Record or New York Call. Thus, for the most part, the message never extended beyond the 5,000 activists cited by Nockels.²

The Call never gave committed support to the New York Labor Party, but the reasons for its success and for that of the Record were similar. Both existed independently of the AFL, although both were endorsed by their respective central labour body. Though they had substantial union support, they did not depend on this alone; both had a circle of highly committed support outside the unions. In the case of the Call its support consisted of Socialist Party members. The Record's widespread circulation and respect among progressives provided the labour party with a solid base of support. In both cases union members took and sold the newspaper, but neither solely depended on this form of distribution. In addition both were well established before the

¹Charles Merriam and Harold Gosnell, Non-Voting: Causes and Methods of Control, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), pp. 46-47, 250 *passim*; Charles Merriam, Chicago: A More Intimate View of Urban Politics, (New York: MacMillan, 1929).

²The New Majority, 4 January 1919. (Hereafter cited as Majority)

labour party initiative. The Majority had no such prior tradition. It was the result of the transformation of the CFL's news sheet into a newspaper at the same time as the forming of the CCLP. That was not necessarily a reason for failure, but it helps to explain the problem it had establishing itself. Without a broader political tradition to build on, its distribution depended mainly on union branches.

Unions are not political parties. They combine workers of various or no political allegiances. The radicalization of the period spurred unions to support the CFL's political initiatives. This was done as a matter of block affiliation, not individual conversion. Those wishing to oppose the new policy may have felt unable to block the impulse for a new party at the CFL meetings. But there are other ways of obstructing policies that are out of character for some officials. The establishment of the party newspaper depended on local union branches. Some were very enthusiastic and did their best to promote the paper, but others did their best to block it. In this they were aided by the AFL constitution, which prohibited payments to outside or political organizations. Opponents operated delaying tactics, such as the holding of referendums, or raising the problems of cost. Some made a nonsense of the issue, arguing that subscriptions should be made to all political newspapers.

Where local officials were supportive, hundreds or even thousands of copies were ordered; where they were not, none were. The CFL also tried to encourage individual subscriptions; but overall the circulation was never substantial. In an attempt to increase circulation, and to overcome the reticence of some union locals, Robert Buck was replaced as Business Manager by W. Z. Foster. However the organizational change made little difference and the party continued its decline.³

The New Majority's circulation did rise at times of major strikes, such as those in the stockyards, steel and rail. All this leads to the conclusion that the Majority depended on the rise and fall of union activity. This at times spontaneously expanded the papers' readership, but did not provide a wider base of committed political support. Unfortunately industrial fortunes did not always rise at the

³Majority, 31 July 1920.

same time as elections. As the party's strategy was based on winning elections, this was a serious handicap.⁴

The Majority related to workers' struggles, and gave extensive coverage of strikes, collections for workers and trade-union news. It emphasized that only in its pages could readers find the "truth" about strikes, corruption, Russia, and the two parties. Roger Horowitz argues that the failure of the party to establish itself in the workplace, and then link this to political activity in the community on a class basis, was the reason for its demise. Though the party appealed for workers to vote for their class interests and support the CCLP, its activities failed to raise issues which directly related to workers as a class. The party did not introduce "questions of production or workplace relations" into its political campaigns. Instead, it simply reproduced those "boundaries" of urban politics that emphasize the distribution of goods and services" which so facilitated the hold of the major parties over the working class. As a result, Horowitz maintains that the CCLP had no official position on major class battles in the Chicago area, and did not engage in activity in support of striking workers, other than to run in elections.⁵

There is some merit in this explanation, based on the theory and work of Ira Katznelson. Katznelson argues that the space between work and home in urban life created a split consciousness. Because of the manner of class formation in the US in an earlier period, he believes that this has made the founding of a labour party, "if not excluded a priori", very difficult.⁶ Ironically, Katznelson, who has written and co-authored many books against exceptionalism, appears to be providing

⁴The Majority of 24 April 1920 reported that in the first year the print run of the Majority had been 5,500. A week before the report it was 17,500. Circulation was spasmodic, increasing during strikes and declining afterwards.

⁵Roger Horowitz, "The Failure of Independent Political Action: The Labor Party of Cook County, 1919-1920", (Bachelors Essay, University of Chicago, 1982), p. 1.

⁶Horowitz's view is based on reading Ira Katznelson, City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the US, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981). Quote from Katznelson's more recent work on the subject, Ira Katznelson, Marxism and the City, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 272-4 passim.

yet another example of it in a new guise. However, Katznelson's belief in split-consciousness is a useful theory and has much in common with Marxism, and can be extended to concretize theories of dual or split consciousness. The Marxist theory of "dual consciousness", and Katznelson's theory allow for a far more concrete reality. Firstly, workers are capable of having more than one idea in their head at any one time; secondly their lives are divided between community and workplace. Workers can be loyal to a class organization at work that overcomes community differences; yet in the community belong to political organization that is based on these very differences. Often in the workplace unity is forged between different groups of workers out of necessity, while needs in the community can lead to the opposite. This dichotomy flows from the reality of a society where politics and economics are divided. Democracy stops at the factory or office gate; its place is in the community. Thus the difficulty that faced Fitzpatrick and his followers was how to overcome the divide between the two.⁷

Horowitz is correct in asserting that the CFL and CCLP failed to overcome that divide, and that one reason for that failure was the reformist politics of labourism, which meant that the CCLP remained confined in the urban boundaries dictated by politics, not just in the geographical sense, but in the sense that issues concerning production were excluded. In sum, a labour party does not raise the issue of workers' control. If this is all there is to be said on the matter, then there is no need to look further for explanations of the party's failure. However, though Horowitz's use of Katznelson's theory does explain a great deal, it does not answer all the questions raised by our comparison.

The Labor Party in Seattle had far more electoral success than in Chicago, but related even less to workers' economic struggle, and was even more reformist. Secondly, labour parties by definition are "reformist" -- i.e. they operate inside the parameters set by existing

⁷For a Marxist exposition of "dual consciousness" see Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics, (London: Merlin Press, 1983; orig. 1968), p. 71-3 passim; however, the Marxist theory does not see consciousness as static or fixed. There is not an impenetrable barrier between levels of consciousness, but a complex and changing relationship that is affected by class conflict. John Molyneux, Marxism and the Party, (London: Pluto Press, 1978), pp. 148-150 passim.

political institutions. They do not challenge urban trenches, but accept the geographical and political boundaries as they actually exist. That is, they operate within the geographical constraints of electoral democracy. The contradiction posed by the separation of the workplace and the electoral arena is a problem that every labour party faces. Yet in spite of this divide many have succeeded. Indeed it is not necessary to look outside the USA to find an example of such success. The success of the Minnesota Farmer Labor Party, and to a lesser extent that of the Washington FLP, prove the case. None of these examples succeeded by forsaking reformist politics.⁸

This has a direct bearing on our understanding of the Chicago situation. Horowitz underestimates how much the CCLP tried to relate to the struggle. Moreover, he fails to grasp the essence of the CCLP as a working-class party, even though it often rejected the language of class. It also negates the need to search for other central causes. It is not Katznelson's theory, or theories of dual consciousness to which I object, but the use of theory which does not adequately take concrete circumstances into account.

The actual politics of the Cook County Labor Party were not based on a revolutionary understanding of class, or directly on struggle. However, it is not the case that the Party did not relate to class or workers' struggle. In a way the Party completely mirrored the division between politics and the workplace discussed above. At election time it discussed municipal issues, but it did take those issues to the workers, holding meetings aimed at workers and standing candidates linked to them. More importantly, the Majority did raise support for striking workers.⁹

Thus, Robert Buck organized a Labor Party meeting to raise support for striking rail workers; and even more noticeably the Majority gave the steel strike massive coverage. Of course it is true

⁸Hamilton Cravens, "A History of The Washington Farmer Labor Party 1918-1924", (MA, University of Washington, 1962), passim. Richard M. Valelly, Radicalism in the States: The Minnesota Farmer Labor Party and the American Political Economy, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), passim.

⁹Commission of Inquiry, Interchurch World Movement, Report on the Steel Strike of 1919, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920) , p. 36.

that the edges were often blurred. The Majority did not always make it clear if it was the voice of the Party, of the CFL, or simply of its own editorial board. However, it was clear that the Majority supported the Party and the CFL. Those unions that refused to do so, did so because they argued it was not non-partisan. The pages of the CFL's newspaper gave support to strikers, advertised their meetings, and told the "truth" about the strike. For this they received letters of gratitude from those involved in organizing the strike.¹⁰

However, the firmest link between the new party and workers was the fact that most of its activists were also local union officials. As in New York, it was a party of the lower layer of trade-union officials, bolstered by a few officials in the full-time employ of the AFL. It also had the added strength that the Illinois State Federation at this stage fully supported the new party, and the majority of United Mine Workers (UMW) locals in the state also endorsed it. Thus it had an organic link to the working class of Chicago and beyond. This certainly made it stronger than New York's ALP. There is no doubt that the divide between workplace and community in Chicago was an important factor. Yet Seattle, using an almost identical strategy had a degree of electoral success, so why not Chicago? To answer the above question we will have to go over the same ground covered in the preceding chapter on New York, and the following chapter on Seattle: namely how the party operated, how it sought electoral support, the role of women, progressives, the effect of the main party machines and ethnic division. Also the extent to which support or opposition of those in the movement such as Socialists and the AFL helped or hindered the project will be considered.

Chicago was no different to New York and Seattle when it came to women's and progressive support. As previously stated, the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) supported the new party and used its monthly bulletin to advertise the activities of the labour party. Also some of its leading organizers played a prominent role in helping the party. However, the CCLP was not as dependent on the WTUL as was the case for the New York's ALP. This was due to the fact that the CFL and the CCLP had arranged a far more methodical organizing centre for its activities. The launching of the Majority and organizing the national

¹⁰Majority, 4 Oct 1919; Chicago WTUL Bulletin, Vol VIII, no. 1-2, February 1919.

Party, plus the personal interest of Nockels and Fitzpatrick, ensured that CFL activists took the party more seriously than many in New York had. When it came to the progressive unions the CFL had a far better relationship with the ACW than their New York counterparts. Fitzpatrick had a very good relationship with Hillman, who not only spoke on his platform but even donated money to the party's funds.¹¹

PROGRESSIVE AND LIBERAL SUPPORT

The response from liberals and progressives in Chicago was mixed. Some prominent individuals did support the new party and were active in supporting the Mayoralty campaign.

However, it was not the case that the CFL, or the Labor Party nationally ever managed to get the majority of organized liberalism behind it. As previously mentioned, the CFL did not play the leading role in progressive political activity as the Seattle Central Labor Council (SCLC) had done. At times it got limited support from some of the progressive magazines. Frank Walsh gave financial support, but for the most part operated from behind the scenes.

However, a whole number of minor progressive figures and organizations did support the CCLP. Fitzpatrick, for example, was invited to address the Physicians' Fellowship Club of the Northwest Side. Professor Frederick H. Bramhall, of The University of Chicago's Political Science department, declared for Fitzpatrick as did Margaret Dreier Robins leader of the national WTUL. Mary McDowell the director of the University of Chicago settlement house, also pledged her support to the campaign. The campaign was also supported by civic workers. The Majority produced a list of prominent citizens including two doctors and a professor. They had joined the party and issued statement aimed at professional and business men and women.¹²

In the Fall election campaign of 1920 William Hard, a high-brow liberal magazine writer, "came off the fence" and went on a speaking tour for the FLP in the Chicago area. There was also minor support from the Municipal Voters League, who endorsed six labor candidates; the Daily News also endorsed three. However, none of this compared to the depth of progressive support the Seattle movement had in this period.

¹¹Majority, 1 March 1919.

¹²Majority, 22, 29, 1919; Philip S. Foner, Women and The American Labor Movement, (New York: The Free Press, 1982), p. 129.

In Seattle the most successful candidate had been the progressive Robert Bridges, Chicago had no well-known progressive candidate of similar stature.¹³

Though some in the Chicago Socialist Party wanted a good relationship with the new party, the reality was that on the ground relations remained bitter and hostile. Socialists often made sectarian attacks on the new party; and Fitzpatrick replied with equal vehemence. Some local Socialists had already left for the Labor Party; others split to the left joining the new Communist organizations. The remaining rump could not afford to drop their electoral intervention for fear of criticism from the left. Not only was the Socialist Party bedevilled by splits during this period, but many of its members were either in prison or faced trial for their anti-war activity. Also they were concerned with the barring of their elected officials in New York State. The Socialist press at this time was full of these events, with campaigns organized to free the prisoners or reinstate representatives. There is little evidence that any coherent thought was given to how Socialists, who were besieged from all sides, should relate to the new labour parties.

The Socialist Party in Chicago was not as influential as the party in New York, but far stronger than the Seattle party. Those that remained loyal to the Socialist Party continued with their electoral activity, and relations between them and the CFL became increasingly acrimonious. The CCLP was only months old when the CFL leadership felt the need to pour scorn on the Socialists. James Duncan of Seattle addressed the CFL and hoped that the CCLP would be successful "and suggested that the Socialist Party swallow its pride and go along with the Labor Party". A delegate from the Machinists Union Local 478 replied that he had been associated with the Socialist Party for 25 years, that it had made some mistakes but it would continue its work and would not step aside for anyone else.¹⁴

Fitzpatrick replied that he had offered to speak on Socialist Party platforms in the past, even for candidates endorsed by the State Federation, and had been "served with an injunction by the Socialist

¹³Majority, 24 January, 23 October 1920; Daily News, 29 March 1919, cited in Stanley Shapiro, "Hand and Brain: The Farmer Labor Party of 1920", (PhD, University of California, 1967), p. 117.

¹⁴CFL Minutes, 19 January 1919.

Party prohibiting him from speaking for their candidates--" If this was not enough Nockels took a further swipe, stating they were having a hard time getting on ballot papers, but they would succeed:

That for one time at least the Socialists, Samuel Gompers and the Executive Council of the AFL were in agreement in opposition to organized labor entering the political arena to speak for labor.¹⁵

The acrimony did not diminish with time, for when the CFL discussed the 1920 presidential campaign, a delegate from Bakers Union No 2 said he thought workers should vote for Eugene Debs. Nockels and Fitzpatrick replied that by "referendum a majority of labor in Chicago had decided to support the Labor Party." Fitzpatrick also stated that when he and Victor Olander had tried to stand on Socialist platforms in elections the SP had enjoined them not to. They had no quarrel with the SP, but they were opposed to the two old parties, and would support the Farmer Labor Party (FLP). Indeed by mid-1921 things had got so bad that Robert Buck claimed he had found Socialists trying to wreck his efforts from within.¹⁶

Electorally in the first year the Socialists trailed behind the CCLP in Chicago, but later in 1920 they improved their position. In New York they had been a serious barrier; in Seattle none at all, in Chicago the situation was far more complicated. At this stage we can certainly assert that they were not a major problem in the early stages of the new party, and made little difference to the result of the 1919 Mayoralty campaign. Neither was there a block of Socialist unions that could or wanted to deprive the CFL of money and resources; but in the 1920 election campaign the Socialists displaced the CCLP as Chicago's leading workers party.

¹⁵CFL Minutes 19 January 1919.

¹⁶Majority, 9 October 1920. Buck addressed a letter to Walsh marked -Highly confidential- "The Federated Press at my instigation as chairman of the Executive Board, has found it necessary to dismiss Laurence Todd, who is now trying to wreck our organization, in conjunction with Charlie Irvin of the New York Call and some others"; Buck to Walsh 2 June 1921, Walsh Papers, box 10, folder June 1921, New York Public Library.

ORGANIZING THE PARTY

The organizers of the new party did not believe in caution or a gradual building of the party. They declared that "The Labor Party is a young giant, or it is nothing." It would win in April, there was no time to talk about slow growth. The men who had won the war could win the city. This was the perspective of a party barely two months old. This raising of the stakes did nothing to prepare supporters for defeat. Some voices, though, argued the need for a long-term approach. Which message influenced supporters most is hard to judge, though it was the more upbeat declarations that got prominence. Perhaps carried away by the heady atmosphere of early 1919, supporters believed that a Party that organizationally hardly existed could win Chicago on its first attempt. Party leaders were well aware that there were 3,000 voting precincts in the city, and that unlike the other parties they could not afford to pay poll watchers.¹⁷

However, CFL activists believed they could cover the voting precincts by arranging a "political picket line" on the election day. The CFL endorsed a resolution that all organized workers take election day off to ensure votes were cast and counted honestly. Though this plan was blazoned on the front page of the Majority, there is no evidence that more than a minority of workers ever took part in it. The party was only a few months old and had not established itself in time for the election. Indeed by 26 March 1919 the party had only received per capita payments for 59,482 members, and not for the 300,000 claimed at its founding. If it is taken into account that the per capita fee was a block payment by unions, then we can conclude that active membership was probably far less than this figure, and that the optimism was not based on an organizational reality.¹⁸

However, not all plans were as wishful as the picket line of the ballot and, in spite of the heady rhetoric, the Party did try to methodically build ward organizations. Unions were encouraged to distribute the Majority. The Stockyards Labor Council (SLC) bought half

¹⁷Majority, 15 February, 29 March 1919.

¹⁸Majority, 22 February 1919. The Majority reported that 25 locals were committed to strike on the Mayoral election day. Majority, 15 March 1919.

of the first run, while the teachers purchased 5,000 copies and milk-wagon drivers and truckers another 5,000. Yet by 12 April 1919 it was reported that the paper had only 4,336 subscribers.¹⁹

Between 16 January and 1 February 1919 over 20 ward branches were established; this increased to 27 by 22 February. By the time of the election the party was able to stand candidates in all but two of Chicago's 35 wards. The main incentive for ward building was the pending Municipal election campaign. This explains the rapid pace at which ward organization was created; and it should be kept in mind that many of the wards were only weeks old when the election took place. This rapid growth raises the question as to how it was possible for such rough-and-ready organization to do as well as it did. This question will be answered by outlining the CCLP's campaign for the Mayoral election, and also by providing an analysis of the election results.²⁰

THE CAMPAIGN

The Cook County Labor Party did not enter the primary elections; instead it entered directly the city election of 1 April 1919. It urged workers to abstain from the primaries, and afterwards triumphantly proclaimed that 100,000 had stayed away from the polls. It is most probable that the abstention of the CCLP from the primaries was a disadvantage, but it was a decision born of necessity. For, as we saw earlier, the party was still trying to complete its ward organization.²¹

By late February the Majority's campaign was in full flow for the April election. Its priorities were distinctly different to those of the two main parties. Workers were urged not to take part in the primaries. The second major concern was that labour should take a holiday to picket the polls, to ensure that votes were honestly cast and counted. The opposition labour faced was the incumbent Republican Mayor and a split Democratic Party. Nockels believed that the main candidates were Fitzpatrick and Thompson. He was right about the latter

¹⁹Majority, 12 April 1919.

²⁰Majority, 22 February 1919; David Fickes Simonson, "The Labor Party Of Cook County, Illinois, 1918-1919", (MA, University of Chicago, 1959), pp. 26-27.

²¹Majority, 1 March 1919.

but wrong on the first. Even the two divided Democrat candidates outpolled Fitzpatrick. He believed the real choice facing workers was between these two "main candidates". Thompson was a puppet of the Gas Company as was his main opponent Sweitzer. Fitzpatrick called them the gas-house twins.²²

Roger Horowitz has stressed that the 1919 municipal programme of the Labor Party for the Mayoral campaign was a contemporary version of the 1894 Chicago People's Party programme. Aligned with the Populist People's Party, the Chicago organization was controlled by the Chicago labour movement. Horowitz emphasises that the 1919 campaign concentrated on "cleaning up Chicago". It won support from civic reform elements by advocating the municipal ownership of utilities and transport, a democratic school board, improved working conditions, better sanitation, just taxation and liberal use of referendum, initiative and recall. Horowitz believes that there was a dichotomy between the aspirations raised in "Labor's Fourteen Points" and the actual politics of the campaign, and that the more radical demands for nationalization and democratization of industry had been dropped from the campaign. Thus he surmises that the Party had "failed to raise issues which directly related to workers as a class".²³

It is true that the municipal programme was a narrow one, but the actual campaign did not strictly adhere to it. Chicago labour leaders, and their supporters, used militant and class terms at many of the big campaign rallies held in Chicago. Of course there was a massive gap between the militant rhetoric offered by the campaigners and the solutions actually proposed, but, as we shall see below, it was not irrelevant to the experience of Chicago workers. It was also a rhetoric far to the left of that used in the 1920 James Duncan Mayoralty campaign in Seattle.

Fitzpatrick used his platform to highlight the poverty of workers and the brutality of the police against those who struck to change conditions, linking his campaign to issues that were important to union activists. During 1917-1919 the CFL organized mass recruiting drives in meatpacking and steel, and Fitzpatrick did not fail to draw the links between the political and industrial. He attacked the excessive profits of the "Meat Kings" at the expense of the workers in

²²Majority, 22 February, 1 March 1919.

²³Horowitz, pp. 24, 29.

the packing business. This was a prelude to the further intensification of an organizing drive in the Stockyards in June 1919. He challenged his opponents to state if they had a programme to ameliorate a situation where profits came out of the stomachs of workers. If the Labor Party was put into power, it had a programme that would rapidly relieve "oppressed" workers. Fitzpatrick pulled no punches; he attacked the anti-labour record of everyone of his opponents. Most of his fire was concentrated on Thompson; he told how he had bullied striking streetcar men into submission and especially mentioned his use of police against striking women garment workers. Fitzpatrick addressed the Labor Party of Cook County on the "Steel Situation". The CFL were determined to get unorganized steel workers into the AFL. Fitzpatrick and W. Z. Foster played a prominent role in the campaign, and the Majority gave the campaign extensive coverage.²⁴

The Majority stressed that the election battle was between big business and labour: "United Capital would meet United Labor" at the ballot box. Here was a rhetoric far more militant and class-conscious than the progressive or "Americanist" tones of the Seattle Union Record. Neither Lincoln or Marx were invoked, but the language was closer to Marx's than Lincoln's. Of course the rhetoric was more militant than any proposed solution; it would be the state legislature that would carry out immediate reforms, not workers' revolution.²⁵

Frank Walsh spoke on Fitzpatrick's behalf during the campaign. He defended the Russian Revolution and called for "Hands Off Russia", for an end to all kings and a free Ireland. When it came to the situation in America he remained just as radical in his critique. High profits, low wages, poverty and inhumane conditions were attacked. The situation could only be resolved by workers' control and industrial democracy. However, by industrial democracy he meant co-operation between employer and employees. Workers would be given an equal voice with that of the employer, not overall control. However, perhaps as an antidote to the radical speeches of the campaign, the Majority published just before election day appealed to voters to help prevent revolution. This could only be done by letting labour put over its constructive programme.

²⁴Majority, 8, 15 March 1919; Notice of Cook County Labor Party meeting 13 March 1919, Fitzpatrick Papers, box 8, folder 58, Chicago Historical Society; Halpern, pp. 33, 47.

²⁵Majority, 15, 29, March 1919.

Those who opposed the Labor Party were stoking the fires of revolution. This was a far more conciliatory tone than that of a few days earlier.²⁶

NOT ALL ICE CREAM AND BARN DANCES: WOMEN AND THE CAMPAIGN

The campaign did not restrict itself to issues that concerned those involved in industrial conflict. It also specifically set out to win the support of women. The Fourteen Points of Labor adopted by the CFL demanded complete equality of men and women in government and industry, with the full enfranchisement of women (women already had the vote in Illinois by 1913); and equal pay for men and women doing similar work. With the advent of the municipal election, this clause was used to urge women to join in the campaign. An appeal was made to every trade-union woman, and to the wives, mothers and sisters of male trade unionists. They could help elect the ticket that would protect every home by ensuring fathers had a sufficient wage to make child and wife labour unnecessary. Appeals were made not only to women's trade unions, but also to women's auxiliaries of unions, including those of the Milk Wagon Drivers', Post Office Clerks', and Switchmen's Unions. With demands for better street lighting, buildings, plumbing, and recreation facilities it was argued that the municipal platform was a platform for women. Margaret Dreier Robins specifically endorsed Fitzpatrick for Mayor. Long before it had been the order of the day he had supported women's enfranchisement and had helped women to industrial, economic and political equality. He was a man who could get things done, having organized the provision of food for 50,000 people during the 16-week garment workers strike.²⁷

For the most part the Majority addressed women as mothers and as consumers who were sometimes workers. Women that did not respond to plain political argument could be cajoled into agreement by the "hilarities" of barn dances and card parties. Clare Masilotti enticed support by giving away free ice cream in her store. However, it was not all ice creams and barn dances. The women's division with its campaign

²⁶Majority, 15, 29 March 1919.

²⁷Majority, 4 January, 1 February, 29 March 1919; Louise A. Tilly and Patricia Gurin, (eds) Women's Politics and Change, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990), p. 201.

committee raised a number of serious issues and did a substantial share of the canvassing. Agnes Nestor and Margaret Haley were amongst those put on the executive committee. Elizabeth Maloney of Waitresses Union no 484 was appointed Chairman [sic] of the Women's Campaign Committee. Ida Fursman was one of the most prominent aldermanic candidates of the whole campaign. In particular she raised the issue of wages for teachers; she believed the current wage to be so low that "better women" could not be induced to become teachers."²⁸

As these examples demonstrate, there is no doubt that the CCLP tried very seriously to involve women in its campaign. Its two female candidates were very prominent, and a whole number of prominent women activists supported the Party. Women were responsible for collecting a third of signatures on candidates' petitions, and in the 26th ward distributed 20,000 election leaflets.²⁹

However it was far easier to get women activists involved in canvassing than it was to get working-class women to register for the vote. Morton L. Johnson, the Party's secretary, estimated that 200,000 Chicago citizens who were entitled to vote were not registered. He believed many were the wives, daughters and other relatives of working men, as well as working men themselves. He believed that the majority of women who did vote were from other than the working classes. In the West Side there were a vast number of women, the relatives of working men, who did not even know they had the right to vote.³⁰

This view is supported by Charles Merriam's study of Non-Voting: Causes and Methods of Control. Though an extra effort was made to register these citizens, the task would have been immense for a new and untried party. It is also the case that the far larger and experienced main parties had also failed to get these people to register. Professor Merriam discovered that the number of females not registered to vote was larger where rents were lowest.³¹

²⁸Majority, 1, 22 February, 8 March 1919.

²⁹Simonson, pp. 65-68; Majority, 8 March 1919.

³⁰Majority, 8 March 1919; Johnson's estimation is confirmed in Tilly and Gurin, p. 160; note that the difference between male and female registration rates (percentage of adults registered) for Chicago wards in 1920 ranged from 15 to 33 per cent.

³¹Charles Merriam and Harold Gosnell, Non-Voting: Causes and Methods of Control, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), p. 46.

The unions were strongest where they could relate to workers as a collective. In 1920 women were a far smaller percentage of the workforce than they are today. Of the 1,231,468 persons gainfully employed in Chicago only 311,615 were women, that is 25 per cent of total workforce. The percentage of women who were wage labourers was 29.2 per cent. Thus women were less represented in the workforce and under represented in the unions; the organic link was weaker. It was not just a matter of labour's attitudes but of women's position in society overall. This explains why the approach to women voters was mainly a community-based one, and why the response of women was weaker in spite of some very good reasons as to why they should have supported the new party.³²

UNIONS, WARDS AND VOTERS

The decision to stand for the city municipal elections on 1 April had created a focus for building the ward organizations. For the city-wide contest the Party had chosen an ethnically balanced slate of Fitzpatrick for Mayor (Irish), John Kikulski (Polish) for city clerk, and Knute Torkelson (Swedish) for city treasurer. Kilkuski was president of Local Union No. 546 of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America, and a leading union organizer in the Union Stock Yards for the Stock Yards Labor Council (SLC). Torkelson was a member of the left-wing Carpenters and Joiners Local Union No.181. However the slate extended beyond union officials with the nomination of Morris N. Friedland for Municipal Court judge. Friedland was an attorney in the City Hall Square, well known in legal circles, but he had not been active in the labour movement. William E. Rodriguez, an ex-Socialist Party member, was nominated for judge of the Superior Court. He had served three years as alderman for the 15th ward, and was well known politically and for his support of labour.³³

³²Merriam and Gosnell, pp. 29-49; Chicago Daily News Almanac, quoted in Simonson, p. 65. Twenty-four per cent of Fitzpatrick's vote was cast by women (based on election figures in Majority, 5 April 1919).

³³Majority, 15 February 1919; Rick Halpern, "Race, Ethnicity And Union in the Chicago Stockyards, 1917-1922", International Review Of Social History, 37 (1992), p. 33; Horowitz, pp. 31-32.

The majority of aldermanic candidates were also prominent local union officials. The 26th ward chose as their aldermanic candidate T.F. Neary, a member of the Teamsters for 20 years and resident in Chicago since 1879. The 29th ward stood Martin P. Murphy, president of the Stockyards Council, for alderman. Ida M. Fursman, president of the Chicago Teachers Federation was nominated for the 27th Ward. Clara Masilotti was nominated for the 19th Ward; though an owner of a florist's shop, she was well-known for her leading role in the 1910 garment workers strike amongst male and female Italians. The ward had a substantial Italian population.

But not all the candidates were trade union militants, in the 17th Ward Henry Anielewski, a Polish journalist and socialist was the candidate. In the 11th ward, a carpet and rug contractor, who still considered himself a union man, was the candidate. Even the briefest of surveys of the lists of candidates and ward officials that appeared weekly in the Majority shows the majority to be trade-union activists. This direct link to organized workers explains why a new party was able to win such a respectable vote in its first outing. In other words, where the organic link between the Party and the local population was strong, it proved possible to win workers away from the old parties. This also proved to be a weakness, for it meant that those responsible for running union locals on a day-to-day basis had to wear two hats. At times when there was no union activity this was not a major problem, but at times of pay claims or strikes both hats could not be worn at once. Usually it was the political hat that was discarded, but in the run-up to the election of April 1919 this was not the case.³⁴

Up to 1 April 1919 ward organization was all important. The campaign that followed was for the Constitutional Convention, and for that district organisation was required. The party changed its organization accordingly, amalgamating wards into districts. Though not the only reason, this interruption of ward routine must have contributed to the weaker condition of the wards by the time of the municipal elections of 1920. By 14 February 1920 the number of aldermanic candidates definitely standing had been reduced to 16; and this was further reduced to 15 when a candidate died of pneumonia. The reduced number of candidates, and the inability to defend them against disqualification, is evidence that the wards were far weaker after a

³⁴Majority, 8, 22 February, 8 March 1919.

year of activity. What had created the situation where the Party was weaker after its first year of activity?³⁵

After the Mayoral election of 1919 the activities the CCLP shifted to campaigning on the forthcoming Constitutional Convention (Con Con). The Party provided a special programme for a new state constitution. Much of it was not incompatible with traditional progressive demands, though it did concentrate on how these affected organized labour. The programme demanded that 50,000 people could petition to place constitutional amendments on the ballot at regular election time. Juries for injunction cases, Home Rule for Cities, taxation on "Swollen Fortunes", old age pensions and Home and Farm Loans were also proposed. Perhaps the measure most directed at workers was that of "Democracy in Industry". This proposed the reorganization of mining, manufacturing and mercantile industries, putting such industries upon a co-operative basis, including the right of employees to elect representatives on boards of directors. Much emphasis was given to explaining the importance of Con Con to workers, with a stress on the need to curb the power of big business and the judiciary. Though the Constitutional Convention was the main campaign of the CCLP, the Majority did cover other issues. Much was made of the need to open trade with Soviet Russia as a means of reducing unemployment. Front-page coverage was given to the national steel strike and the recruiting campaign in the stockyards.³⁶

The campaign for Con Con was a complete failure, and no labour candidates were elected. However, little attention was paid to the defeat and the emphasis turned to the founding of the National Labor Party. Now the propaganda issued took on the militant tone of the earlier period; denouncing the "plutes" and "autocrats" that dominated the two-party system. Workers had suffered at the hands of a Democratic administration; little better could be expected from the Republicans. It was imperative that workers now had their own national party. The rhetoric moved far to the left of that used in the Con Con campaign. Labour was starting an "Open Drive On Plutes", and the workers were preparing to take over in a peaceful manner, and by legal means, the industries of the nation and run them in the interest of those who produce its wealth. Rather disingenuously, the Majority attempted to

³⁵Majority, 14 February 1920.

³⁶Majority, 5, 12, 19 July, 4 October 1919.

boost the campaign by claiming that Samuel Gompers had come to the assistance of the Labor Party. This claim was based on a rather loose interpretation of a speech outlining the AFL's non-partisan policy.³⁷

Two weeks later they had to admit that even though the logic of Gompers' doctrine led to advocating a labour party, in fact he was against it. If Gompers' speech had been confused and contradictory, it was no more so than the New Majority's attempt to present him as a supporter. No doubt there was an element of deliberate irony in all this, but it was an irony that assumed all readers understood the intricacies of AFL policy. It was at best confusing, at the worst inward-looking and a diversion from main issues. The editorial page was given over to attacking Gompers and the AFL's political policy, yet there was little propaganda in the paper as to why a labour party should be supported.³⁸

The criticisms of Gompers then developed into a major row between him and the CFL. During the whole of March this became the main concern of the Majority, even though there were two labor candidates due to stand in the aldermanic elections. Apart from reproducing the municipal platform with added emphasis on public ownership of all utilities, propaganda for the party was almost non-existent.³⁹

The pending Fall elections, which included congressional and local county positions, saw the Majority return to more outward-going matters. Candidates campaigned not just on the municipal platform, but on planks contained in the National and State Labor Party programmes. Once again Frank Walsh was drafted into service, stating that he believed the Labor Party could win. The old parties were hopeless and a party of the workers was inevitable. The Majority launched its campaign, even before the national party had nominated its candidates, with the slogan "All Power to the People". It emphasised that the Party was the workers' own party; financed by workers, and in the interest of "workers of factory, farm and office."⁴⁰

³⁷Majority, 22, 29 November 1919; 14 February 1920.

³⁸Majority, 28 February 1920.

³⁹Majority, 14 February 1920. For example one issue of the Majority in March 1920 dedicated the whole front page and several inside pages to the argument with Gompers.

⁴⁰Majority, 19, 26 June, 3, 10 July 1920.

At its national convention the Labor Party became the Farmer Labor Party (FLP) and nominated Parley P. Christensen for President, and Max Hayes as his running mate. The Majority became the organ of the national party. With the pending General Election it concentrated on national issues at the expense of local ones. The platform of the FLP was reproduced, with an emphasis on "Americanism" combined with a call for an end to Imperialism at home and abroad. The democratic control of industry and a bill of rights for labour were also advocated. For the rest of the campaign the Majority carried reports on the progress of Christensen but few solid arguments as to why workers should vote FLP. Indeed the paper seemed to find the most persuasive arguments for voting labour in the pages of the Nation. It reproduced an article that half-heartedly recommended a vote for Christensen or even Debs, not because either could win, but because it might create a political realignment in the future. The Majority was inspired to reprint the article by the argument contained in it that a vote for Cox or Harding was a wasted vote. The "old party wheeze" that a vote for a third party was a wasted vote had been stood on its head. It was almost as if a magic formula had been discovered. In the final days before the election the New Majority turned itself into an election poster for Parley P. Christensen with the slogan "We seek to free the workers of farm and city from the old party political shackles of Wall Street". Another article, also from the Nation, on exactly the same theme as the previous one, was reproduced. Meanwhile the front page optimistically declared that the FLP was going over the top and sure to win three senatorial seats. Meanwhile the actual campaign for Cook County posts had been relegated to the smallest of articles.⁴¹

In the transition from being the newspaper of the CFL and the CCLP to the national organ of the FLP, the Majority lost its way. Local issues were still covered but they were submerged in a wealth of national news. The other main news was the argument between Gompers and the CFL. The paper had lost its "local feel", and at this stage could have been written almost anywhere. It lacked the character and strong ideological content of either the Seattle Union Record or the New York Call. Lacking any consistent ideology, the Majority's content veered from class rhetoric to municipal reform. At times it declared it was

⁴¹Majority, 24 July, 23, 30 October 1920; article from The Nation, 4 September 1920, reproduced in the Majority, 18 Sept 1920.

not a party based on any one class, almost as if it was shrinking away from its own militancy. The Call was clear that it believed in socialism; it had an ideology that could find resonance within the culture of workers loyal to it and the SPA.

Though the Record was not socialist it was also more coherent. Though it supported strikes, it always believed that progressive control of the state, local and national, would remove the necessity for such action. With both the Call and the Record the readers felt they were at the centre of local political activity. The Seattle FLP had concentrated on issues and a platform that came out of the local situation; little heed was given to the national platform or candidates. Yet the national candidate did better there than anywhere else. The Seattle FLP was no better or worse than Chicago in the way it related to workers struggles. The fact that Seattle had gone down to industrial defeat before Chicago saw the Record drop its syndicalist ideas in exchange for political reform. Thus its campaign for the labour vote was always on a more restrained basis. When Chicago had first started campaigning, the steel workers and the packinghouse workers had not been defeated. The CFL still hoped to go on the industrial offensive, organizing the unorganized in those areas. Thus propaganda had to contain militant rhetoric to encourage activists and workers involved in these struggles to build the unions. At the same time the political aim was one of leading a progressive alliance to victory at the polls, rather than workers' action. This explains the inconsistency of the Majority's propaganda. Such an inconsistency must have confused many of its supporters.

GAUGING PARTY SUPPORT

The nature of three major campaigns and the founding of the FLP has been outlined above; and the actions of the CFL, party activists, and the Majority, have been described in detail. This raises the question: to what extent did this activity influence the rank-and-file member of the union and beyond? This section concentrates on gauging the depth of support that the Party was able to win.

The CCLP was capable of holding large public meetings, rallies and picnics for the various electoral campaigns with which it was involved. Six thousand attended a ratification meeting for Fitzpatrick, addressed by Governor Lyn Frazier of North Dakota and the Non-Partisan League. An appeal at the meeting raised \$3,600, much of it in Liberty

Bonds and War Stamps. This was exceeded only a few weeks later when 8,000 heard Walsh speak at a Labor Party meeting. An appeal at the meeting raised \$4,800. But it was not just the big-name speakers who spoke to large numbers; John Kikulski spoke to large numbers in English and Polish, especially in the areas adjacent to the stockyards, and in the Polish Northside. In the 29th ward Martin P. Murphy, president of the SLC and candidate for alderman, spoke to a Labor Party meeting of 250. Stanley Borzinski, of Local 658 of the Butcher Workmen, addressed the meeting in Polish. Even though the Party was evidently weaker after the spring 1919 defeat, it was still capable of holding large meetings. Thus in the September thousands attended a Labor Party picnic to hear Glen Plumb outline his plans for the railways. Duncan McDonald, President of the Illinois State, Federation presided. Even the electorally ill-fated Con Con campaign organized some respectably sized meetings. In District 4, 2000 attended a Labor Party meeting. This was a district that contained 50,000 workers. It was also claimed that all at the meeting pledged themselves help the party campaign. Though Parley P. Christensen was unable to win many votes in Chicago during the 1920 presidential election, he did attract thousands, including women and children, to a "monster picnic" that opened the FLP general election campaign.⁴²

ACTIVE UNION SUPPORT

The large meetings addressed by the big names, or the support of prominent local progressives, were hardly enough to explain the hard core of support that the Party had gained. As was the case in Seattle, but not in New York, the base of that support was the trade-union movement of Chicago and beyond. It has already been made clear above that there was a discrepancy between the formal support offered by the local unions and actual delivery. There was some opposition; some local officials supported the Socialists, some the Democrats; and one publication, the Unionist, attacked the CCLP and supported Gompers' non-partisan policy. However the opposition was not substantial enough to block the CFL's determination to build a party. The supporters of the Unionist produced 400,000 copies of their newspaper for the election. It meant the CFL had to spend time and energy refuting the paper, and trying to stop its production. Union status was withdrawn

⁴²Majority, 1, 8, 15 February, 13 November 1919; 28 August 1920.

from the Unionist by the CFL. Though no organization or section was able to drive a wedge through the CFL's strategy in the way that the Tammany backed officials had in New York, the pro- Gompers Unionist must have boosted those trade unionists who supported the official AFL position.⁴³

The roots and influence of Fitzpatrick and his supporters in the local movement went too deep to be overturned by such opposition. An additional strength was the endorsement of the FLP by the Illinois State Federation. The Party was also boosted by the unanimous support of Illinois miners. Delegates representing 95,000 organized mine-workers voted to endorse the FLP. There was a big debate as to whether dues should be compulsory or not; in the end, it was agreed that they should be voluntary. The miners' vote demonstrated enthusiasm for the FLP, coupled with fear of upsetting the AFL establishment. The absence of a compulsory levy may have deprived the Party of much needed financial support. However, on the positive side, many miners' locals provided much-needed electoral success in districts where they predominated, and raised money on a voluntary basis. Though most of these districts were outside of Chicago, their success and donations were a constant encouragement to the CCLP. It kept up the spirits of activists involved in a party that had few electoral victories, allowing them to point to FLP councils and mayors in these outer districts.⁴⁴

Overall the level of official union support was far more impressive than New York and even Seattle. For Chicago could bring out the "big guns" on its campaign platforms; Sidney Hillman, Duncan McDonald and John Walker all spoke on Fitzpatrick's behalf. Union support did not just remain on an official or formal level; many of those who officially endorsed the party gave practical help, while other trade unionists gave unofficial support. Thus the Carmen contributed their labour temple for the first mass meeting of the Labor Party in Chicago. At a national level, an unofficial gathering of rank-and-file railroad craft workers meeting in Chicago, representing 400 lodges, objecting to a wage settlement, also endorsed the party. They

⁴³Minutes Typographical Union Local 16, Typographical Union Local 16 Papers, Volume 14, pp. 222-225, Chicago Historical Society; Simonson, pp. 41-43.

⁴⁴Majority, 8 March 1919; Report of Illinois Miners' Convention at Peoria 23 March 1920, in the Majority, 3 April 1920.

supported the Plumb Plan, but also demanded that the rank and file be allowed to vote on the election of all AFL officers and decide its policy by popular vote.⁴⁵

The unions also provided the bulk of financial support, although it was never enough for the Party's or Majority's needs. At one CFL meeting \$6,951 was pledged for the Mayoral campaign, including substantial donations from the Teamsters Joint Council, Brick and Clay Workers Council and Stockyards locals. The fact that the Teamsters alone had given \$3,000 speaks volumes about the depth of union support (in comparison it should be recalled that in New York the Teamsters had literally led the assault against the Labor Party). Nor was it just during election campaigns that donations were received. The ACW donated \$3,000 to fund the Majority outside of any electoral activity. However even for the 1919 Mayoral election campaign by 5 April 1919, only half of the money required for the campaign had been raised.⁴⁶

The solid trade-union base of the Cook County Labor Party could not guarantee success at the polls or provide unlimited funds. But it did provide enough to give the party a stability and longevity that its comrades in New York were never able to achieve. Considering the solid support it did have at the very beginning, perhaps its initiators could be forgiven their optimism. There is evidence that trade-union support went far beyond formal resolutions, or just local officials. Union members did respond to the campaigns. All the members present at the Coffee, Butter and Egg Salesmen's Union Local no 772 joined the party after hearing a speaker from the CCLP, and took membership forms for those who were absent. Two hundred workers attended a meeting on the Labor Party at the headquarters of "the Jelke Butterine Workers". At the Wrigley Gum works a straw poll gave Fitzpatrick 694 votes, Thompson 411 and Sweitzer 447. Sentiment must have been quite strongly in favour of the Labor Party for William Johnston, President of the Machinists to claim that the great bulk of his membership would favour a labour party that year. Laurence Todd of the Federated Press thought that this was indicative of the "second thoughts" of a growing number of trade-union officials in Washington. The numbers who resented Republican and Democrat nominees for refusing to have labour as a full partner in any

⁴⁵Majority, 8 February, 1 March, 4 October 1919.

⁴⁶Majority, 22 March, 5 April 1919, 12 June 1920. (The amount raised by the April was \$26,783.69).

campaign was growing. No doubt this was politicking by Johnston, but he must have believed there was substantial feeling for third party activity to make such a threat.⁴⁷

THE PARTY AND BLACK CHICAGO

Though the party had the black AFL organizer John Riley on its executive, and stood a black candidate, propaganda aimed at the sizeable black population of Chicago was conspicuous by its absence. William Robert Wilson ran in the mainly black second ward, and it is possible that propaganda specifically aimed at blacks was produced here. Wilson's opponents were black, and it may have been considered that the fact that Wilson was also black was sufficient counter-argument. Black butchers set up a Colored Club of the Cook County Labor Party in the spring of 1919. Fitzpatrick sat on the Negro Workers Advisory Board, and his supporters in the packinghouses successfully recruited many black workers. But the political work put into winning blacks to the Labour Party bore little comparison to the effort put into the trade unions. At election time, for example, the CFL systematically worked at winning trade-union support for its political ambitions. A resolution called on every delegate to get the "Committee of 21" to visit their local to promote the New Majority.⁴⁸

In Chicago the majority of blacks had allied themselves to the Republican machine. However, this should not be seen as unconditional loyalty. For in 1923 over half of the black vote was convinced to desert the Republican Mayoral candidate on the grounds that he was hostile to the faction of the Republican party which gave special recognition to blacks in terms of jobs and special favours. Black

⁴⁷Majority, 22 February, 1 March, 31 July 1919.

⁴⁸Majority, 15 March, 11 October 1919; CFL Minutes, 5 October 1919; James R. Barrett, Work and Community in the Jungle, Chicago's Packinghouse Workers, 1894-1922, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), p. 209; E. McKillen, "Chicago Workers and The Struggle To Democratize Diplomacy 1914-24", PhD, Northwestern University, 1987), p. 176.

voting strength in the North had increased tremendously before the First World War; and although in 1920 blacks were only four per cent of Chicago's population their alliance with the Republican Party in the twenties did at times prove to be crucial, as was the case in the 1919 Mayoral election.⁴⁹

At a national level there was no substantial counter-argument by black organizations to the political position of Chicago's African-American community. In 1912 W.E.B. Du Bois had at first supported Roosevelt's third-party movement, but Roosevelt defeated a resolution demanding equal rights for Negroes. This had disaffected many blacks with third party politics. It was not until the La Follette campaign of 1924 that Du Bois and his circle supported a third-party campaign. However, the majority of blacks in Chicago remained allied to the Republican machine. It was not easy to break this voting tradition in the Chicago of 1919-1920, and the Cook County Labor Party was ill-equipped to deal with it.⁵⁰

The problem was not that the CFL and the Majority were opposed to unity with blacks, but the failure to understand how to relate to Chicago's black working class. The belief that there was "no negro problem" was held for the finest of motives. All problems could be solved by united union action, but then the problem arose that not all African-Americans would accept the invitation to join the union. A large proportion of Northern-born blacks did join the union, but little progress was made among thousands of Southern migrants working in the stockyards. Who was to blame for this recruiting difficulty? At the best the CFL believed it was due to the naivety of blacks misled by employers and their own community misleaders. The problems of discrimination that blacks faced on a daily basis from employers, landlords and some sections of the AFL, were not dealt with. For the

⁴⁹Hanes Walton Jr, The Negro in Third Party Politics, (Philadelphia: Dorrance and Company, 1969), p. 48; Charles Merriam and Harold Gosnell, The American Party System: An Introduction to the Study of Political Parties in the United States, (New York: Macmillan, 1950), pp .16, 121-125; Dianne M. Pinderhughes, Race and Ethnicity in Chicago Politics: A Reexamination of Pluralist Theory, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), Table 4.5, p. 84.

⁵⁰Walton, pp. 51-53.

most part there was no consistent propaganda in this area, and the issue was left to those in charge of recruiting blacks to the unions.⁵¹

At times the Majority deluded itself into thinking that it could easily win black support. For example, it quoted Pastor John Haynes Holmes of the Community Church in New York, addressing a Chicago meeting on behalf of the NAACP, who said that the Labor Party of the US would have the solid backing of blacks who had been suppressed by both the old parties. He called for black equality, with the abolition of all segregation, artificial and legal. But, as has already been demonstrated, national organizations did not determine black voting behaviour in Northern cities. The Defender and other local Black Chicago organizations had deep roots and influence in Chicago that meant that the writ of the NAACP did not run there in political terms. Black Chicago was solidly Republican throughout the 1920s and well into the 1930s. Except during the July race riot, and the packinghouse crisis, articles directed to the black community were rare in the Majority.⁵²

The black community had its own press, although only two of these newspapers were consistently anti-union. One of these was the Negro Advocate, whose virulent denunciations of the stockyard unions attracted little black interest. A more significant newspaper, the Broad Ax, ignored labor organization activity. The less influential Chicago Whip was far more sympathetic towards CFL activity, and carried a regular column by black AFL organizer John Riley. However, by the 1921-22 packinghouse strike it had taken to ignoring union campaigns, even by black organizers. The most influential newspaper in black Chicago was the Defender. If the Majority thought blacks could be counted on as natural supporters, the Defender thought otherwise. Its attitude towards the unions was ambivalent, and will be discussed further below. This newspaper, with its entirely black readership, had far more influence in the black community than the Majority. During Fitzpatrick's election campaign the Defender supported Bill Thompson, and blacks voted overwhelmingly for him. At Thompson's re-election the

⁵¹Halpern, p. 36; In the Majority, 3 December 1921, Fitzpatrick attacked the "false leaders" of the black community.

⁵²Majority, 6 March 1920; William J. Grimshaw, Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine, 1931-1991, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 27.

Defender was triumphant, claiming they were the only major newspaper to support him. Proudly they quoted the local Chicago Daily Journal headline "NEGROES ELECT BIG BILL". Thompson thanked the Defender and black Republicans for their support, but denied that he had "given undue recognition to the Colored people". However care should be exercised in estimating black support for Thompson or the Republicans. Though black voting in the 1919 Mayoral election was overwhelmingly Republican, 40 per cent voted for other parties; of these 24 per cent voted Democrat.⁵³

By the general election of 1920 the Defender had not lost any of its loyalty to the Republicans. There was much jubilation over Harding's victory, and further cheer at the fact that the Republicans had made a breakthrough in the South. There was no mention of the FLP in its election analysis, but it would be wrong to assume that the Defender was anti-labour. It often was critical, but taking circumstances into account it was remarkably balanced on the issue. It often reported labour's activities with much enthusiasm, in 1918 it trumpeted "LABOR DAY PARADE LARGEST IN HISTORY". No exact figures were given, but a division of 10,000 carpenters had marched, and it was claimed that "Members of the Race were represented in many of the unions."⁵⁴

Neither did it have a rose-coloured view of the unions. As demobilization in the spring of 1919 saw returning black and white servicemen seeking work, the Defender warned that organized labour

⁵³Dianne M. Pinderhughes, Race and Ethnicity in Chicago Politics: A Reexamination of Pluralist Theory, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), Table 4.1, p. 73. It is impossible to evaluate from Pinderhughes where the remaining 16 per cent of the black vote went. She states that her figures do not total 100 per cent because of third-party candidates. In 1919 the Democrat Mayoral campaign was split and she makes no mention of this. However it is unlikely that Fitzpatrick got a major share of the black "third-party vote". For the Majority of 5 April 1919 gave Fitzpatrick's vote in the predominantly black second ward as 564; Thompson received 15,569. The Independent Democrat candidate got 16 per cent of the Chicago vote. It would appear that in this respect black Chicagoan voting was similar to the general population.

Defender, 5 April 1919; James R. Grossman, Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 175-176, 231-235; William M. Tuttle, Jr., Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919, (New York: Atheneum, 1970), pp. 202-203;

⁵⁴Defender, 7 September 1918; 6 November 1920.

needed negroes more than they needed it. The AFL had helped to keep blacks out of jobs and barred them from unions. The Defender did perceive a change in attitude; in one Northern state the AFL had dropped the bar, and further change was possible though not probable. Labour could become a powerful new class, ruling not only industry but the country. However, it concluded, AFL discrimination undermined that potentiality.⁵⁵

That summer's AFL Annual Convention went on record as favouring the admission of black wage earners into their ranks. The Defender welcomed this as the greatest forward step the organization had made since its inception. It exonerated Gompers from all blame, saying that if he had not had to deal with the Bourbon South he would have got rid of the objectionable whites only clause. The article ended on a more sober analysis, noting that out of the 700 delegates at the convention, only 60 were "from our side of the fence". The bulk of these were from Southern unions formed by railroad employees. Though this was a far cry from complete representation of blacks in the union world, they still saw it as a step forward. This was the Defender's view before the hot summer of 1919 exploded with race riots, steel and stockyard strikes. After that the Defender became more cautious and circumspect in its attitude to labour and class.⁵⁶

At the same time that the Defender was welcoming the AFL's "change of attitude", the Stockyards Labor Council (SLC) intensified its recruiting campaign. On Sunday 6 July thousands of black and white workers met in an outdoor rally. The New Majority triumphantly proclaimed: "If the colored packinghouse worker doesn't come into the union, it isn't the fault of the Stock-Yard Labor Council." J.W. Johnstone, secretary of the Stockyards Labor Council, welcomed the "checkerboard" crowd, and Kikulski addressed the meeting in Polish, emphasising the need for co-operation between blacks and whites, if the union was to achieve 100 per cent membership. A speaker from the Urban League was followed by several black trade-union speakers who outlined the benefits of trade unionism. C. Ford, a black organizer for meat cutters in St. Louis claimed that there was no special colour problem, it was no different to the Irish or Russian problem. The Stockyards

⁵⁵Defender, 26 April 1919.

⁵⁶Defender, 21 June 1919.

Labor Council wanted to open the door of union membership to black workers, but if they "didn't stampede through it then they only had themselves to blame". No reference was made to the problem of some of the AFL unions that still practised exclusion in the stockyards. Though the SLC was sincere, and numerous attempts were made to recruit African-Americans, most who enrolled in the unions were Northerners. The task proved to be far harder than envisaged by the Majority's enthusiastic reporting.⁵⁷

It was not until the race riot broke out in late July that the issue of "Race" made the front page of the Majority. It blamed the meatpackers (the employers) for the riots; they had discriminated against union men, sacked them and replaced them with non-union black workers. They had subsidized black politicians and religious leaders to propagandize against the unions. Notwithstanding all this, it was claimed that the unions still managed to recruit large numbers of black workers. The Majority complained of police interference in the SLC's attempt to organize a joint demonstration of black and white workers on 6 July. The Majority believed that the bosses had told the police that the blacks were armed and would attack the whites. The police succeeded in forcing the unions to form two separate demonstrations, one black, one white, though the final rally was integrated. The Majority argued that union leaders tried to prevent the race riot, claiming "that neither black nor white union men participated in the rioting, despite the lying accounts published daily by the kept press". Locals of several black unions passed resolutions calling for unity and an end to strife. The next week the WTUL passed a resolution calling on black workers to join the union and offered every possible assistance in the organizing of black workers.⁵⁸

As soon as the crisis passed, so did the Majority's concentration on the race issue. The crisis also explains why the Defender became more moderate. Only a few weeks previously it had suggested labour might rule; now it stated that capital had rights that labour must respect. Workers should seek improvement in a dignified and lawful manner. Though striking iron and steel workers were mostly lawful, their actions could encourage lawlessness. Though blacks were not strikebreakers, if the AFL did not recognise their increasing

⁵⁷Majority, 12 July 1919; Halpern, pp. 36-37, 42.

⁵⁸Majority, 9, 16 August 1919.

importance to the economy they would be forced to form their own separate unions. Maybe this threat was intended to force the hand of the AFL with regard to recruitment, but it also reflected the fears and disillusionment of much of Chicago's black population. This did not remain the last word on the issue. A year later an editorial argued that "our workmen" should join unions wherever they could, since there had been a change of attitude and the barriers to black recruitment were beginning to be removed. A week later the Defender propounded a policy that even the most conservative AFL member would agree with; the importance of stopping the influx of foreign labour. Union men, black and white, were urged to remember they were employees not employers, to take orders not give them, and to give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. The Defender had become more conservative in its approach to the "Labor Question".⁵⁹

This more conservative viewpoint put its ideas more in line with orthodox AFL policy, and at odds with the policies of Fitzpatrick and his CFL progressives. Ironically this isolated the Defender from those unionists who genuinely wanted to break down the AFL's racial barriers. For a brief while in 1919 the Defender had moved ideologically closer to labour's progressives. Now they moved closer to labour's conservatives. Of course the trajectory had been caused by objective conditions, the failure of the steel strike and the Chicago Race Riot. Whether the progressives could have halted the shift to the right or not is a matter of conjecture, but perhaps a more systematic approach and analysis of the "colour problem", might have split some of the Defender's readership away from its conservative leadership.⁶⁰

This was not an impossible task, for several thousand black workers did join the unions and a small number the CCLP. The Defender was not hostile to blacks joining the unions, and sections of the CFL also understood the need for unity between black and white. The tragedy was that the approach to African-American workers based on the ideology of "there is no colour problem" undermined efforts to achieve that unity. Though this economic approach was in some way progress for trade unionists, the New Majority was not just a trade-union newspaper, it represented a political party. It was the political approach to

⁵⁹Defender, 2, 4, 9 October 1920.

⁶⁰Defender, 9 October 1920.

black workers that was sadly lacking. Thus very little was done to break black Chicagoans from their commitment to the Republican Party.

LABOUR AT THE POLLS

The election of 1 April 1919 gave 55,990 votes to Fitzpatrick, or just over eight per cent of the votes cast. Compared to the victors' vote of 37.6 per cent or the main Democrat vote of 34.5 per cent, it was not that impressive. However, Thompson's plurality was very small, a mere 21,622, though labour could hardly claim to be the main cause of Thompson's close shave or the Democrats defeat, for the Democrats were split. The Independent (Democrat) candidate had got 16 per cent of the vote. If only 3.2 per cent of the Independent vote had stayed with the official Democrat candidate, Thompson would have lost. Therefore the black vote was an important factor in Thompson's victory. If the CCLP had taken just 12,000 black votes then the Democrats would have won, and labour could have claimed to hold the balance of power.⁶¹

Labour failed to be a decisive factor in the election (though it should be kept in mind that some workers were unable to vote due to lack of residential qualification). A more appropriate measure of labour's effectiveness is to compare the result with previous working-class party interventions in the Mayoral election. In Chicago that meant the Socialist Party, whose highest vote ever had been 25,883 in 1911. In 1919 the Socialist vote remained static at 24,079. Thus the total of working-class votes of 81,557 was the highest ever. The intervention of the CCLP had increased the working-class vote by over three times. If the CCLP had used this fact as a major part of its election analysis, perhaps it could have convinced its supporters that modest but important gains had been made. Considering that the CCLP was only months old and had not taken part in the primaries, it was a creditable result. Indeed the Socialist Party, with years of tradition and experience, had not been able to match it.⁶²

Analysis of the vote shows that the key to the vote was the working-class nature of the wards and their proximity to workplaces. Fitzpatrick's vote average 8.1 per cent, but it was higher in working class wards. Thus he got 16 per cent in the 29th ward (adjacent to the stockyards), but only two per cent in the second. In sixteen out of

⁶¹Majority, 5 April 1919, Simonson, pp. 74-76.

⁶²Simonson, p.78.

thirty-five wards he received more than 8.1 per cent. These included the traditionally Democratic working-class fifth, 29th, and 30th wards, all located in the areas of the stockyards where many new immigrants lived. As some workers in these wards were not enfranchised or registered (see above) to vote, the result may have underestimated the support for the CCLP. The party had done well in wards that were mainly working-class, with substantial immigrant populations and Democrat majorities. These were also areas where the party had held large rallies and effective campaigns.⁶³

The most successful aldermanic candidate was Ida Fursman, the only Labor Party woman to remain on the ballot, who polled 5,212 votes, far more than any other CCLP aldermanic candidate. Only in 10 wards did the Party get less than 7 per cent; this occurred for the most part where there was no aldermanic candidate, or where ward organization was weak.⁶⁴

THE AFTERMATH

The Mayoral election of 1919 proved to be the high point of labour party voting in Chicago. It was not just voting numbers that declined; union support and finance followed the same trajectory. There were one or two exceptions where individual candidates did well, but the general trajectory was downwards. As outlined above, ward organization was disrupted for the Constitutional Convention elections. The campaign failed; Life and Labor believed that the CFL and the Illinois State Federation should have concentrated on electing just one or two prominent candidates. However, it should be kept in mind that Fitzpatrick and Walsh were extremely fearful that similar legislation to the Kansas Industrial Bill, which had made striking to all intents and purposes illegal, might be introduced in Illinois. The poor result probably reflected the fact that such a threat was not seen as an imminent by most of Chicago's workers.⁶⁵

⁶³Simonson pp.81-82; Kantowicz p. 142.

⁶⁴Democratic objections forced Clara Masilotti off the ballot paper, and she ran as a "write in" candidate. Simonson, pp. 69, 83-84,

⁶⁵Life and Labor, October 1919; Olander to Walsh, 27 May 1920, Frank Walsh Papers, box 9, folder 17-31 May 1920. For a description of the Kansas Industrial Relations court, see Henry J. Allen, The Party Of The Third Part, (New York: Harper and Brothers 1921).

The ability to stand in the yearly municipal elections declined, as did ward organization and union support. This was paralleled by serious defeats in the stockyards and steel. No doubt Gompers' strong stand against independent politics and his advocacy of a militant non-partisan campaign in early 1920 deterred many union activists from maintaining their commitment to the new party. It is also probable that the resources and exertion required for day-to-day trade union survival reduced active support to passive loyalty. Many union constitutions forbade the use of funds for political purposes. This explains the gap between those who supported the Party officially, and those who actually gave money. The former number was far larger. By the election of 1920, in spite of the launching of a national party, the Party had little of appearance of an organization that was forging ahead. Parley P. Christensen, the FLP presidential candidate, was not as well-known as Fitzpatrick in Chicago. Eugene Debs, the Socialist Party candidate was far better known. It all added up to humiliation at the polls, with only 4,381 voting for the FLP candidate. Only a year earlier the FLP had outstripped the Socialists at the polls in Chicago; now the tables were turned. However there was little for the Socialists to celebrate either. Debs had got 13.20 per cent of the vote in 1912. In the 1919 Mayoral election the joint CCLP\Socialist vote had been 11.58 per cent: now it was only 6.67 per cent of the presidential vote. But for the FLP it was even worse, for its share was only 0.59 per cent of the vote.⁶⁶

ETHNIC AND CATHOLIC VOTING

Some historians, such as Marc Karson, maintain that the Catholic Church has had a conservative influence on sections of the working class. In particular workers of Irish, Polish and Italian descent have been considered a barrier to independent political activity. Chicago, as shown earlier, was a city where Americans of "native origin" were in the minority, and the Catholic Church accounted for over half of regular church-goers. It is also the case that the Irish had substantial influence in the Democratic Party of Chicago, and to a lesser extent so did the Poles and Italians. However it is not the case that between 1919 to 1920 these groups were straightforwardly pro-

⁶⁶Majority, 4 December 1920; Edward R. Kantowicz, Polish-American Politics in Chicago 1888-1940, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 108, 120, 143.

Democratic, anti-Republican and anti-independent politics. Moreover, before 1919 it was even less the case. In 1915 Thompson received a substantial share of the Catholic vote. But his subsequent behaviour and election campaigns lost him much of this support, especially from Poles who resented his "anti-League of Nations" rhetoric. Ethnic attitudes towards the main parties and the trade unions were not always that different from the rest of the population nationally.⁶⁷

In national elections, ethnic voting patterns in Chicago did not differ from national trends to the same extent as they did in local elections. In other words, local party loyalties did not automatically transfer to national candidates. Also, as Edward R. Kantowicz noted, in his study of Polish-American Politics in Chicago, though many Poles came from peasant background and were unskilled, unions in the stockyards did recruit the newcomers. At times between 10 to 15 per cent voted for Socialist candidates. Though the Socialist Party never built a mass base in "Polonia" this fact was not particularly unique to Polish areas of Chicago.⁶⁸

A substantial number of Poles consistently supported the Democrats. The Democrats' opposition to prohibition was interpreted as support for Catholicism. Church leaders also preferred the Democrats because of the growing anti-Catholicism of Republicans. However it was also the case that Poles, like any other Americans, were more interested in national elections than local ones, and, to a lesser extent, were affected by national trends at general elections. Thus many Poles voted for Roosevelt and Debs in 1912. The issues of monopoly and the bitterness felt at the strife between worker and employer affected them just as much as any other worker. This was demonstrated by the number of Poles who voted for the Socialists at the General Election of 1912. Kantowicz noted:

⁶⁷Marc Karson, American Labor Unions and Politics 1900-18, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958) stresses the conservative influence of Catholic trade unionists on the politics of the AFL. Patricia Cayo Sexton, The War on Labor and the Left, (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1991), refutes Karson's case.

Harold F. Gosnell, Machine Politics: The Chicago Model, (University of Illinois Press, 1939), p.101. For further detail of labour's international politics in Chicago see E. McKillen, "Chicago Workers and Diplomacy", (full cite above).

⁶⁸Kantowicz, pp. 26-28.

The Socialists, despite the usual opposition from the Catholic church and the Polish nationalist leaders, gained almost 11 percent of the Polish vote, comparable to Debs' 12.5 percent city wide. In some Polish precincts around the steel mills of South Chicago, the Democratic vote dipped to 30 percent and the Debs' tally rose to nearly 20 percent.

There was no automatic Polish allegiance to the Democrats, for in 1912 Poles had been suspicious of Wilson. In 1916 war conditions swung them behind him, but in 1920 the tide of "normalcy" saw them give Harding as almost as much support as Cox.⁶⁹

Nor was it just at a national level that a substantial number of Poles voted Republican. In the 1915 Mayoral election the 45.90 per cent who voted for Thompson played their part in electing a Republican. However, Thompson so alienated his Polish supporters with his views on the League of Nations that in 1919 his share of their vote dropped to below 14 per cent. Fitzpatrick got 16.15 per cent of the Polish city-wide vote, double the percentage of the electorate taken as a whole. Fitzpatrick did particularly well in two wards near the stockyards, with 27.57 per cent of the Polish vote in the fourth, and 18.74 per cent in the 29th. In the former this was more than 13 per cent above his average ward vote, and in the latter 10 per cent. In the 17th ward only 8.8% of Poles voted for Fitzpatrick, yet it was here that the CCLP stood the Polish journalist Anielewski. This suggests that Poles did not vote purely on ethnic lines, as Fitzpatrick had performed better in wards without Polish candidates. In other words, for many Poles class was a more important factor in voting behaviour than national origin.

Of course the majority of Poles had voted Democrat, but in 1919 this was not inevitable. Firstly Thompson had squandered large numbers of Polish votes; secondly Polish voting patterns at general elections were almost as flexible as the rest of America. Finally a substantial minority of Poles were more influenced by working class issues than the Catholic Church. Indeed, in some instances they were more loyal to working-class organization than the rest of the population around them. Neither was it the case that Fitzpatrick and his lieutenant Kilkuski were a special case; for Debs was not a Catholic, nor had he organized

⁶⁹Kantowicz, pp. 43, 50-51, 102, 117-120.

Poles in the Chicago area, yet as we saw above in some areas he had got 20 per cent of their vote.⁷⁰

THE IRISH

The Irish had strong associations with the Democratic Party in Chicago; and in wards where Irish predominated they usually made up the majority of its committeemen. However the Republicans had their share of Irish activists too, on the City Committee it was a close race between the Irish and native Protestants as to who dominated. With a quarter of the committeemen each, it was the Irish who had a narrow edge. In the Democratic Party the Irish drew strength from alliances with other Catholics, such as Poles and Italians. This alliance should have made the Party invincible; if it had not split in the 1919 Mayoral election the total of united Democrat votes would have been 50.53 per cent, far in excess of Thompson's 37.61 per cent.⁷¹

However, it would be a mistake to assume that Chicago voting patterns were solidly Democratic by 1919. Catholic voters were not a monolith, nor were they voting fodder for any particular party. Indeed, only four years earlier, as noted above, Thompson had got a majority that had included many Catholic voters. Between 1915 and 1919 many Polish voters had swung away from the Republican Party, or at least from Thompson in particular. For some Irish the pendulum briefly swung the other way in the same period. Increasingly there was disillusionment with Wilson's foreign policy. The League of Nations and Wilson were not prepared to challenge the status quo of powers like Britain; this was a barrier to self-determination for Ireland. In Chicago, Irish-American meetings drew crowds of between 40,000 and 70,000, ready to attack Wilson's administration if it failed to grant self-determination to Ireland. Fitzpatrick and his supporters were well aware of growing Irish discontent and campaigned vigorously around the issue of self-determination during the election for Mayor.

In the stockyards a meeting of 8,000 voted unanimously to demand recognition of the Irish Republic. A black butcher workmen's local passed a similar resolution. Walsh had also procured Irish support, placing an article in favour of the Fitzpatrick's Mayoral campaign in America, a weekly Catholic review. The Irish Press of Philadelphia also

⁷⁰Kantowicz, pp. 139, 143.

⁷¹Gosnell, Machine Politics, p.45; Kantowicz, p. 143

had an article on the campaign, accompanied by a picture of Fitzpatrick. Walsh believed it was a paper that appealed to the real fighting Irish, and arranged for a thousand copies to be sent to Chicago.⁷²

Relations between the CCLP and various Irish groupings were extremely friendly. Fitzpatrick was prominent on the platforms of the Friends of Irish Freedom. The Chicago Local Council of Friends of Irish Freedom endorsed the action of the Farmer Labor Party for having included in its platform a plank arguing for recognition of the Republic of Ireland. De Valera also endorsed the Labor Party. Thus there is no evidence of unremitting hostility from Irish Nationalists or the Catholic Church. Indeed, if there was any hostility it was often reserved for Wilson. However, friendliness towards the FLP did not necessarily transform into votes. Those Irish who were concerned with the Nationalist cause were seeking great-power intervention on Ireland's behalf. The Democrats were refusing to provide it, and the fledgling FLP, though willing, lacked the wherewithal to do so. The logic of this, according to the Friends of Irish Freedom, was that the Republicans were the best party for Irish Independence but "unfortunately most Irish voted Democrat".⁷³

The New Majority's analysis of the 1920 Presidential vote claimed that the Nationalist Irish had voted Republican to revenge themselves on Wilson. Less than a quarter of Chicago's population voted Democrat in that year's Presidential election. It is known that the Polish disproportionately voted Democrat (50.45 per cent in all), but this was a major drop from the 70.59 per cent who voted Democrat in 1916. Thus the Polish figures prove that many of Chicago's Catholic voters switched allegiance in 1920. The switch may have been greater amongst the Irish as they were far more dissatisfied with the Democrats' foreign policy than the Poles. Thompson had alienated many Poles with his statements on foreign policy, but had cultivated pro-Irish sentiment and, as we saw above, many Polish voters withdrew their support from him. Yet this did not translate itself into an anti-

⁷²E. McKillen, p.93; Majority, 8, 15 March 1919; Walsh to Nockels, 25 March 1919, Walsh Papers, box 8, folder 4.

⁷³John M. Flynn, Secretary Chicago Local Council of Friends Of Irish Freedom, to Fitzpatrick, 9 August 1920, Fitzpatrick Papers, box 9 folder 64, August 1920; McKillen, p. 232.

Republican trend to the same extent at the Presidential election. This suggests that Poles were just as much affected by national issues as most Americans. True, a narrow majority remained loyal to the calls of Church and Nationalist leaders, but a substantial number were prepared to ignore this advice, and at times this meant voting for independent labour politics. It is clear that immigrant or Catholic workers were no more hostile to the FLP than workers of different origin or religion. Indeed, in some areas the opposite was the case. Thus the failure of the Party had more to do with its general inability to win workers as a whole than with its appeal to specific religious or ethnic groupings. However, this was not the case with black workers where the failure had far deeper and more specific roots.⁷⁴

CONCLUSIONS

Though labour's vote in Chicago was not as impressive as in Seattle the Mayoral result was still a reasonably good start. The vote was also more substantial in areas where the unions were strongest, especially districts next to the stockyards. But to enthusiastic supporters with high expectations it appeared less than satisfactory. The vote could possibly have been higher, but many factors militated against it. The opposition to Fitzpatrick was more insidious than Duncan faced. He ruled the CFL, but when it came to the local level this was not always turned into real commitment. Local union officials could sit on their hands and do nothing, or formally support the Party, but refuse financial assistance on the grounds of the AFL constitution. After all, even the fervently pro-Labor Party Illinois miners were reluctant to break union rules and raise an official levy for the party. The pro-Gompers newspaper, the Unionist, had more resources than the New Majority and was able to issue vast numbers at election time. The Majority did not have the reputation that the Seattle Union Record had, and never managed to become a daily newspaper. Thus the CFL for the most part never spread its influence far beyond the circle of activists it had contacted in past. The political machines that the CCLP faced were in their own way every bit as strong as Tammany. The CCLP did not face one powerful party machine but two. Unlike the

⁷⁴McKillop states (p. 225) that the Irish voted against the Democrats, but does not provide direct evidence. Kantowicz pp. 20, 123.

Seattle experience, none of the major parties disintegrated. The Seattle FLP only had to face a well-organized Republican party, having won over much of the Democrats' membership and resources. Chicago and New York never gained such an advantage. Even though the Democrats split for the 1919 election, the damage was not enough to give labour a walkover. Both wings gave labour a tough fight in the districts where they predominated. The new Party also lacked experience and activists. Where there was effective campaigning results were good. If the Party had been capable of more input across the whole of Chicago, it might have been able to get even more votes. Nonetheless the Party's first effort had achieved reasonable results, and in areas where the unions had influence, had done even better. This raises the question as to why the CCLP was unable to make a sober analysis of the situation and use it as a foundation to build on?

Subsequent elections under the FLP banner saw its share of the vote decline. Rather than a sound foundation to building a new party, the 1919 vote was a prelude to decline. Several factors explain this. As argued above, the strength of the Party was its organic link to organized workers. In concrete terms that meant those local union officials who were loyal to the party. It was they who turned trade-union loyalty of the workers they represented into political support. However the loyalty of these officials was first and foremost to the union. When time needed to build the party conflicted with union demands it was the latter that came first. This was not always a political decision. For many it was a pragmatic decision forced on them by the need to defend union organization. But for W. Z. Foster and his allies industrial unionism was far more important than building the CCLP; whatever the motive, syndicalist and progressive trade unionists behaved in a like manner for different reasons. The obligations of party officials to union duties reinforced the sectionalist aspect of trade unionism at the expense of the political.

At the same time Chicago's "federated unionism" was unable to include most of the unskilled. The CFL did try to compensate for this by having organizing campaigns in Steel and Meatpacking. This diverted resources and personnel away from building the Party. This overdependence on the workplace and the lack of any community-based machine meant that at times of struggle the Party was left to fall into disrepair. It is not true that the New Majority ignored these workplace struggles; it carried massive coverage on these disputes, and sold

extra copies to the participants. When it came to African-Americans it was not the case that the CCLP ignored them as workers, it was in the field of community politics and civil rights that the party failed. This was a sort of unconscious syndicalism by those who believed in political action.

Fitzpatrick challenged such syndicalism in its more open form, for instance forcing Foster to put Labor Party propaganda in the Steel Bulletin. However, it was often the case that trade union activity and politics remained separate. The progressives were aware that a stronger union movement would help overcome divisions in the working class and help build the FLP. This was proved in practice by the CCLP's better results in wards where unions and community coincided. Unfortunately the unions' campaigns to extend and generalize membership were defeated. Of course the defeats were partly the result of the narrow craft unionism of the national leaders of the AFL, but that does not change the fact that these defeats weakened Chicago Labor. Enormous effort and expense had been put into industrial campaigns that affected far more workers than the April electoral campaign. The electoral defeat of 1919 had been followed by an industrial one. In Seattle the defeat of the General Strike had seen a substantial number of workers look to electoral alternatives. Syndicalist priorities were undermined, not by ideology but by the reality of the situation. Having failed to make electoral capital out of the 1919 election, industrial defeat did not propel Chicago workers further along the road to independent political activity. That road already appeared to be closed. One defeat had reinforced another.

In Seattle the electoral road opened in the wake of the industrial defeat. Bitterness at defeat was channelled into the desire to win justice at the polls. As the following chapter on Seattle will demonstrate, local conditions there combined to make a belated electoral intervention very successful. In Chicago, labour was aware of its electoral weakness, but failed to win an industrial battle that could have strengthened it politically. In 1912 and 1919, working-class parties had been able to win significant minority ethnic support. This vote was concentrated in areas where organized workplaces predominated. In wards next to the packinghouses and steel mills, community and workplace merged giving labour a stronger political impact. By the end of 1920 unionization had suffered a serious setback in these areas, and labour's vote dropped. With Chicago's labour weakened by industrial and

electoral defeats, its ability to appear as a credible alternative also weakened. Nor was it the case, as shown above, that Chicago's Catholics were hostile to the CFL and the CCLP. Indeed some were more likely to vote for labour than the "general" population. But with prospects for change diminishing in 1920 for some Irish and Poles, overseas national aspirations became more of an imperative. On a world stage, in spite of its internationalism, the CCLP had even less to offer. Therefore industrial defeat was a serious blow, not only to trade-union organization, but also to the possibility of spreading workers' independent politics. Perhaps at a more fortuitous time Fitzpatrick's vote could have been the beginning of a growing movement, but events conspired to see a "good start" stall and lead nowhere.

CHAPTER FIVE

A LONG AND WINDING ROAD: SEATTLE 1918-1920

Seattle was the last of the three cities in this study to form a labour party yet, in electoral terms at least, it was the most successful. In the Fall of 1920 the party averaged 31 per cent of the vote in King County, the electoral area for Seattle, pushing the Democrats into third place. One major historian of the Farmer Labor Party (FLP) in Seattle and Washington State, Jonathan Dembo, has concentrated on the reasons why the FLP could not transform itself into a party capable of winning a majority. He cites splits in the trade-union leadership, the problem of the alienation of Catholic or anti-prohibition voters, amongst others, as major reasons for electoral failure. At the same time, he gives less credence to factors such as unemployment, and the open-shop campaign, as causes of electoral failure. These arguments will not be dealt with in specific detail at this point; rather a question will be raised that he has left unanswered: why did the FLP in Seattle do so well?¹

The answer to this crucial question will also throw light on the situation in Chicago and New York. The reason for success was not just a matter of the will-power of local activists, the weakness of the Democratic Party aided those trying to build a new party. However if a labour party had not been formed the votes won by the FLP would have been distributed amongst the remaining parties. This chapter will evaluate how it was possible for Seattle labour activists to take advantage of the situation and win a sizeable vote with a party that had existed only a few months. The chapter also considers factors beyond the control of labour in creating success, and also explanations as to why it did not do even better.

¹Jonathan Dembo, *Unions and Politics in Washington State 1885-1935*, (New York: Garland Publishing Co, 1983), pp. 205-208 *passim*.

Though the SCLC was the last of the three city central bodies to form a labour party, it was no stranger to independent political action. It had a tradition of supporting union men for local council and other municipal elections. Even before the first FLP candidate had stood, Seattle had incumbent labour councillors. Part of the reason for this success was the specific nature of Seattle municipal elections. Since 1911 elections had been organized on a non-partisan basis, meaning that candidates stood as individuals rather than party nominees. Parties were not allowed to campaign for, or finance, candidates for mayoral or council elections. However it was no secret who organized labour or big business supported. Also the procedure for nomination was far easier than those of New York or Chicago; thousands of signatures were not required to get on the ballot. This meant that Seattle labour candidates did not suffer the kind of obstruction faced by New York and Chicago candidates.²

From 1918 onwards labour candidates also had the support of a daily newspaper, the Seattle Union Record. However this was not the same as supporting a party candidate. Local issues and the candidate's relation to the community were the key factors in these elections. It was not until the mayoral and council campaigns of 1920 that labour stood its first truly independent candidates. However the electoral machine that campaigned for them was not the FLP but the King County Triple Alliance - an alliance of Farmer, Railroad Brotherhoods, and SCLC organizations. Those committed to building the King County FLP dominated the KCTA. However they did not operate independently of the KCTA, preferring to wait for the Washington State Federation of Labor's (WSFL) endorsement of the FLP.³

Ironically, the most successful central labour body in electoral terms, was the last to see the importance of building a party at grass-

²William John Dickson, "Labor in Municipal Politics: A Study of Labor's Political Policies and Activities in Seattle", (MA Thesis University of Washington, 1928), p.19; R.D. McKenzie, "Community Forces: A Study of the Non-Partisan Municipal Elections in Seattle", Journal of Social Forces, January, March, May, (1924), p. 9.

³Hamilton Cravens, "A History of The Washington Farmer Labor Party 1918-1924", (MA, University of Washington, 1962), pp. 82-97; Dembo, p. 251.

roots level. It was not until the Fall of 1920 that the labour party became flesh and blood in Seattle. The State Federation's rejection, in 1919, of plans to form a statewide party meant that the SCLC had delayed the building of the new party. Instead they contented themselves with working for their aim inside the KCTA. Though they failed to win any positions in the School Board or Port elections, the results encouraged them to enter the mayoral and council Elections in early 1920. The main thrust of the campaign was SCLC Secretary James Duncan's candidacy for Mayor. The SCLC and the KCTA supported Duncan and other labour candidates. However there was not complete unity. Robert Hesketh, a conservative council incumbent, refused the KCTA endorsement. The Associated Industries, the major employers' organization in Seattle, and advocate of the open shop, praised Hesketh and his allies and offered their support. Hesketh wanted to distance himself from Duncan and his more radical supporters, objecting to their militant ideas and their commitment to prohibition. Whatever the differences between Duncan's supporters, Hesketh, and the other council incumbents, the Union Record treated all the candidates as equal and campaigned for them all as labour and people's candidates.⁴

The centrepiece of the campaign as far as the SCLC and Record were concerned was to get Duncan elected as Mayor, though not under a labour party banner. However, Duncan was more clearly identified as a political labour candidate than any previous union candidate. Hesketh, for example, was not just regularly supported by the SCLC and the Union Record, but even by Hearst's paper the Post Intelligencer, and by the more conservative Times. Duncan did not get the same favourable treatment. The Seattle press attacked him as unpatriotic and for allegedly not having supported the War. Newspaper articles linked Duncan with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and predicted that Duncan's election would lead to the "Bolshevisation" of Seattle with repeated general strikes, class war and the nationalization of women. In spite of all this Duncan polled 34,053 votes - the largest total that any defeated candidate for Mayor had ever received. The victor, Hugh Caldwell, received 50,850 votes, the largest vote ever for a winning candidate. Contradictorily this was hailed as a massive electoral achievement, or crushing defeat, depending on the commentator's viewpoint. The more conservative Hesketh got over 38,000

⁴Dembo, pp. 252-254; Cravens, p. 96.

votes and a place on the council, as did another labour candidate, Oliver T. Erikson. Why had Duncan garnered a substantial vote, but finished behind the two winning labour council candidates?⁵

Duncan complained that the trade unionists around Hesketh had deliberately not pulled their weight. If this was the case then they had influenced 4,000 votes at the most. Even if the votes had gone to Duncan he would still have gone down to defeat, albeit with a larger vote. However, before analyzing the reasons for defeat, it is necessary to consider how Duncan and his allies mobilized their vote. For though it was less than Hesketh's, it was in percentage terms more substantial than Fitzpatrick's vote for Mayor in Chicago, or Dudley Field Malone's total for governor in New York. Duncan had defeated the Associated Industries (AI) candidate for Mayor, Fitzgerald, in the three-horse primary. True, the press were split between Fitzgerald and Caldwell, but they united in their opposition to Duncan, who only had the support of the smaller circulation Union Record. Duncan had won in the primary because the opposition was divided, but against a single candidate he was unable to emerge victorious. However, the question remains as to how he did so well? To answer this, the next section will consider how the campaign was fought.

THE CAMPAIGN

The response to Duncan's candidacy by the mainstream press and the AI was a massive wave of red-baiting. A vote for Duncan was an anti-American Vote. Indeed the baiting had started before Duncan's announcement to stand. It had begun in the Fall when the KCTA had stood candidates for the School Board Elections. The AI had launched a campaign against political action. The Record described it as using the "Americanism" tactic. The AI warned loyal Americans not to be misled by reds, and urged them to register to vote and, if necessary, get naturalized. The Record responded by also urging voter registration.⁶

On the 27 October 1919 the Record reported labours' response to this employers' offensive. The SCLC had formed a "TRUE AMERICANISM CLUB". The club challenged the idea that "autocratic capital" or any

⁵Union Record, 3 March 1920 (hereafter cited as Record); Industrial Worker, Seattle, 9 March 1920; Dickson, p. 53.

⁶Record, 21 October 1919.

section of the public had a monopoly on patriotism. The "True Americanism " campaign looked back to the Declaration of Independence and the ideals of Jefferson and Lincoln. Members would pledge themselves to take part in the "government of our country and insist on honesty in its political affairs". They would campaign for just compensation for the efficiency gained in shops, schools and factories, defending themselves against industrial autocracy. They would fight for an industrial system under which all would have equal opportunity and none special privilege. Education, tolerance, understanding and liberty were also important. However, loyalty to the USA did not mean they would approve and defend industrial autocracy or any other evils that existed "within our country".⁷

It was stated that 300 officers of Seattle unions had endorsed the above program. The Club urged workers to unite in political action, filling offices with people who understood the real meaning of "True Americanism". Thus the response of the SCLC to the AI's offensive was not based on class terms, or on the need to build a labour party, but on a "true" definition of "Americanism". This was not a call for workers' control, but a call for equal opportunity and honest government. It certainly could not be equated with Bolshevism, and was not as radical as the programme of the FLP. Indeed it was ambiguous enough for the Republican Governor of Washington, Louis F. Hart, to add his name on the "True Americanism Club" membership roll, even as he prepared to use troops against striking miners. This campaign was the centrepiece of the SCLC efforts right up to the elections. District 10 of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) was particularly enthusiastic about the Americanism campaign, placing large advertisements in the Record, and holding large rallies on the issue. The Record reported that 4000 attended one rally, with a thousand of

⁷For a general overview of the employers offensive, Americanization and the workers' response see: James R. Green, The World of the Worker: Labor in Twentieth-Century America, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989; orig. 1980); Robert K. Murray, Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1955); Robert H. Zieger, America Workers, American Unions, 1920-1985, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986).

those present joining the club. Ten thousand buttons were produced to help boost support for "True Americanism".⁸

In the middle of the campaign the Centralia tragedy occurred. A union hall in the Washington town of Centralia was fired on, as an American Legion parade marched by. IWW members returned fire killing four marchers. This led to the arrest of several Wobblies, and the lynching of the IWW war veteran, Wesley Everest. The effect throughout Washington was electrifying, many were convinced that bloody revolution was about to start. The Record tried to present what it believed to be the truth about the Centralia incident. This was too much for the federal government, which moved in and seized the Record's plant. The Record survived by moving to a friendly local printer, but its circulation, the number of editions per day, and actual size of the paper were cut. It also lost valuable advertising revenue.⁹

Centralia was a turning point. Much middle-class progressive support became frightened of hitherto working-class allies. The working-class progressives who had already shifted to the right were losing former allies. That did not stop the Record from wooing them even harder, waving the Stars and Stripes on its editorial page. The Record declared it was the flag of their country, which was the best on the face of the globe. It was their ambition to have the best and most honest officials serve such a great country: "That is why the Triple Alliance was formed." No gang of profiteering anarchists were going to take the flag away from labour's progressives. It was stirring rhetoric, but nothing to frighten liberals, and perhaps not sufficient to encourage those who did not believe America was the most democratic country in the world.¹⁰

The Record hardly had time to catch its breath between the Centralia crisis and labour's intervention in the School Board and Port elections. John A. McCorkle, Triple Alliance candidate for port

⁸Record, 1, 3, 4, 5, 11 November 1919.

⁹Record, 12, 13, 14 November 1919. For the full story of the Centralia tragedy see Tom Copeland, The Centralia Tragedy of 1919: Elmer Smith and the Wobblies, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993).

¹⁰Record, 21 November 1919; Dana Frank, Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919 - 1929, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 110; Cravens, pp. 91-92.

commissioner, told a packed Grand Theatre that he accepted that "True Patriotism" was a platform issue, and went on to define true Americanism as free speech, free assemblage and a free press. He went on to attack the bankrupt condition of the two old parties. McCorkle referred to the need for a new party, but considering he was a founder member of the Seattle FLP, the party's profile was not that prominent. The Record, urging support for labour's School Board candidates, boasted "ALLIANCE NOMINEES ARE AMERICAN BORN". However, the next day it struck a more class-conscious note, producing a special Sunday edition to appeal specifically to teachers. Though the Alliance did not win any positions on the School Board, its candidates averaged over 18,000 votes with the winners averaging over 27,000. The Record also noted that 30,000 registered voters had not bothered to go to the polls. Since it was the Triple Alliance's (TA) first major election campaign, and considering the atmosphere of anti-labour hysteria and the shutting down of the Record's plant, it was a reasonable result. Duncan's rallying call that the vote was nothing to be demoralized about, and that they should be determined to win the port elections, was not unrealistic. A few days later the Record reported that the TA had made further advances. McCorkle had not won, but he had narrowed the gap between the TA and the victor. McCorkle had won 17,773 votes, compared to the business-backed candidate's 22,345.¹¹

On the 13 January 1920 the Record announced that Duncan had filed for Mayor. He stood on a non-partisan platform pledged to defend publicly owned utilities. The next day the paper praised the introduction of Prohibition, and men like Duncan who had worked for it. Duncan told a 200-strong meeting of members of the Co-operative of Food Producers that if he had been Mayor at the time of the Seattle General Strike, it would not have been necessary. They rewarded him with a unanimous endorsement. Duncan also challenged the other candidates to a debate on Americanism, but neither agreed to appear with him. In response to opposition claims that he had opposed America's war effort, Duncan replied that once the USA had entered the War he had argued that workers must unite behind the President. It was true that Seattle labour had tried to prevent war, but once it had started differences were forgotten. Short also defended Duncan, claiming he would be a

¹¹Record, 29, 30 November, 3, 6, 11, December 1919.

"good business Mayor for all the people", unlike other candidates who would be good business Mayors for businessmen only.¹²

The next day the Record proudly reproduced Duncan's war record from the Times. The articles that had appeared during the war praised the SCLC on raising the Stars and Stripes on their flagpole, and for Duncan's urging of workers to get behind the President. Proof was also provided that he had purchased Liberty Bonds and War Savings Stamps. Meanwhile the "True Americanism" campaign continued; Record readers were informed that if Lincoln had been alive he would have supported the TA.¹³ The Record greeted Primary day with the banner headline "Vote as Lincoln Would", and listed all candidates endorsed by labour. Duncan defeated the AI favourite, but was beaten into second place by Caldwell, who received 28,518 votes to Duncan's 26,040, and Fitzgerald's 21,419. In the Council elections Hesketh polled highest amongst the labour candidates with 33,454. However, whatever the analysis of the vote, Duncan was in the final round, and the campaigning started again. Momentum was built up by announcing that Region no 1 of the Private Soldiers and Sailors Legion extended their endorsement to Duncan. William Short addressed the 4,000 who attended a Duncan rally. All the other labor candidates attended the rally, apart from Hesketh who was clearly boycotting.¹⁴

With Fitzgerald out of the race it was not enough to keep repeating the same "True American" message. More importantly, the business vote which had split in the primary now united behind Caldwell. New tunes were needed, and they soon appeared. Attempts were made to woo Fitzgerald's former supporters. The SCLC sponsored a De Valera rally in Seattle, and Duncan sat on the platform. Like the CFL in Chicago the SCLC was identifying itself with the cause of Irish freedom. Siren noises were also made at business; the Record proclaimed, "Businessman Is For Duncan". The article announced that M.A. Griffin, Manager of the Mutual Laundry, was voting for Duncan. He knew Duncan as a friend and was convinced he was a good man for the business of running the city. The article made no mention of labour

¹²Record, 13, 14, 20, 28 January, 10 February 1920.

¹³Record, 11, 12, 16 February 1920.

¹⁴Record, 17, 18, 21, 23 February 1920.

politics, nor of the fact that the Mutual Laundry was a labour-run co-operative.¹⁵

The Record presented Duncan as the respectable candidate, reporting that the police at Headquarters had given him sustained applause. However, many smaller articles appeared noting union and women's organizations' support for the campaign, but these were not the main emphasis of the pro-Duncan propaganda. As far as the Record was concerned, prominence was given to the need to clean up municipal government, and to Duncan's appeal to business. This could hardly be described as a particularly radical form of labour politics. Nor did the issue of race play a prominent part in the campaign, but Duncan's final campaign meeting took place at the Afro-American Hall "where leading colored citizens assured him of a virtually solid vote from the people of their race". African-Americans were less than one per cent of Seattle's population, and whether their leaders could deliver this vote is questionable.¹⁶

ORGANIZING THE CAMPAIGN

Though the campaign had made little mention of class struggle, and none of the Labor Party, the votes won came from voters who were part of the organized working class, and those who lived in the working-class districts of Seattle. Although the campaign had not emphasised the workplace or class politics, it was still a class-based vote. Even if Duncan and his followers had not made it a matter of extreme class polarisation, the opposition certainly had. Duncan's claims of moderation had cut no ice with them, and they had continued to treat him as a dangerous anti-war radical. It was quite clear where the divide between the candidates lay; it was not a matter of ideology or rhetoric, it was in their support. Only the Record supported Duncan; the rest of Seattle's press supported Caldwell. One was the candidate of business, the other of labour. It is unlikely that the Record's attempt at respectability won many voters. So how was it that in spite of such vilification, Duncan was able to do far better than labour candidates in Chicago and New York? After all, they had not run class-

¹⁵Record, 24, 25, 27 February 1920. Harvey O'Connor, Revolution in Seattle, (Seattle: Left Bank Books, 1981), p. 207.

¹⁶Record, 27 February, 1 March 1920; Frank, p. 18

based campaigns either. The answer is not to be found in the ideological nature of the campaigns, but in the local leadership's ability to build an effective campaigning machine, and the strengths and weaknesses of the opposition. In Chicago Mayor Thompson controlled a powerful electoral machine, and the Democrats had strong influence amongst some sectors of the Chicago working class. With blacks supporting Thompson, and some immigrants either supporting or forced to support the Democrats, the Cook County FLP found it difficult to appeal beyond a minority of class-conscious workers. In New York the American Labor Party (ALP) encountered the problem of union leadership split between progressives and Tammany. In the end it was the Tammany forces, with Gompers' help, that came out on top.¹⁷

Incomparison to New York and Chicago, winning electoral support was a lot easier for Duncan and the SCLC. Firstly, the Democrats were a spent force, and secondly, the Republicans had moved so far to the right that some progressives in their ranks were not unfriendly to labour. Duncan and other labour candidates did not have to face any Socialist opposition, the Socialist Party (SP) was too weak in Seattle to stand candidates. The electoral process in Seattle, with its non-partisan organization system, was also more open. In Chicago the change to a non-partisan system came much later, and it failed to prevent the domination of the established party machines. Further Duncan's campaign, though it had detractors like Hesketh, had been supported by the official labour movement of Washington State and Seattle. Even the conservative William Short had supported it. Thus conditions were more favourable, but nonetheless the vote did not fall into the labour movement's lap; it had to be earned. The Seattle labour movement was better organized than its counterparts in New York or Chicago. The ALP had no newspaper of its own. Chicago did establish a newspaper, but it was a weekly and it never achieved a sizeable circulation. The Seattle Union Record had a longer tradition and had been a daily since 1918. Unlike the New York Call, it was committed 100 per cent to the Labor Party from the very beginning; the fact that it had not been tied to the Socialist Party meant that it was seen very much as a paper of a broader labour and progressive movement. Thus there existed before the building of the party a ready-made propaganda machine. Of course, on

¹⁷Cline, Denzil Cecil, "The Streetcar Men of Seattle: A Sociological Study", (MA, University of Washington, 1926) pp. 131-132; McKenzie, p. 23; Dickson, pp. 53-58.

its own the Record would not have been enough, but there is no doubt that it was central to the whole campaign. It did not simply print propaganda, it provided information on how and where to vote, the location of meetings and where help for precinct organization was needed, etc. It was a very practical aid to raising votes. However, without organization on the ground it would have been unlikely that the Record would have been so successful in its urging of a labour vote. After all, the bulk of the Record's funding was raised by union donations. The unions and the Record were an essential partnership. This partnership was an important contribution to the success of the Duncan election campaign. Also central to the gathering of the vote was the grass-root organization that existed to carry out the campaign at the district and precinct levels.

As stated earlier, the SCLC delayed the practical building of the FLP until they could obtain WFLA endorsement. Although the FLP did not at first operate as a clearly defined and separate body, it did form a King County FLP Committee which included the Pomona Grange, the SCLC, and the Railwaymen. The party was made up of labour, unions, granges and precinct parties. It was affiliated with the King County Triple Alliance and operated as a division of the county organization. Individuals who pledged themselves to the aims of the Labor Party were allowed to join. Originally it had been agreed to let only AFL unions affiliate, but this was changed to include the rail brotherhoods and all other unions not so affiliated. Thus the Labor Party did not operate openly as an electoral machine, but under the cover of the KCTA.¹⁸

The KCTA first built its electoral machine to intervene in the School Board Elections, organizing 65 precincts by late September. However no mention was made of the link between the organization of the precincts and labour party politics. Nonetheless labour, and its newspaper, gained experience of electioneering through the medium of the KCTA. Attempts to register workers for the election were thwarted by the fact that electoral offices only opened from 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., hours when most workers were on the job. With wage cuts and growing unemployment, it was unlikely workers would take time off to register. The Record campaigned over the issue and reported triumphantly the Mayor's agreement to open registration office until

¹⁸Record, 4 April 1919, 21 July 1919.

9:00 P.M. to enable workers to register. This was not the end of obstructive tactics used to prevent registration. First-generation Americans were prevented from registering by demands that they produce their parent's naturalization papers. This would not be rectified until late in 1920, too late to benefit the TA or FLP. However, success had been achieved on the issue of opening hours, and more people registered as a result. Thus, the Seattle labour movement was able to influence the conduct of voting far more effectively than the Chicago and New York movements, which suffered various obstructions from the electoral authorities.¹⁹

Organized labour was central to the campaign. A general meeting of Seattle's Boilermakers called on its members to make their cars available for use on election day. The Women's Card and Label League held an auto-parade to support KCTA candidates. Though the schools campaign failed to elect any candidates, valuable experience had been gained, and the Record was still hopeful that McCorkle could win the port election only a few days later. This election was to take place between 1:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M. on Saturday 6 December 1919; most workers worked Saturday morning, and some all day. Boilermakers Union no 104, the largest union local in the world, stopped work at 1:00 P.M. and instructed all its members to take part in watching at the polls. Though McCorkle did not win, he narrowed the gap between the KCTA and the victor by several thousands compared to the school elections.²⁰ McCorkle's vote represented progress for labour, and added to its credibility. The effort put in by labour had paid off, helping to create enthusiasm for the Duncan campaign.

Duncan's campaign for Mayor was also organized under the auspices of the alliance. His own Hope Lodge of the Machinists Union endorsed him almost unanimously; only one worker opposed him, and this was on the grounds that Duncan not a member of the Socialist Party. Late January and February saw a number of local unions pledge support to Duncan, including the 3,000-strong Carpenters Local 131 and the influential Boilermakers Local no 104, as well as a broad range of union locals such as the Teamsters and Locomotive Firemen and Engineers. The Building Trades Council also endorsed Duncan. Women of

¹⁹Record, 26 September, 5, 6, 7 November 1919.

²⁰Record, 29 November, 1, 3, 6, 8 December 1919.

the Seattle Card and Label League formed a Women's Duncan Campaign Committee; many were wives of leading Seattle trade unionists.²¹

Duncan beat Fitzgerald in the primary and a campaign was organized for the run-off. The task now become far harder as he faced the united opposition behind Caldwell. The SCLC and the KCTA had been involved in four months of electioneering, and there were only two weeks to the rerun. However the SCLC recommenced its campaign with enthusiasm, picking up further support from the unions. The Laundry and Dye Workers Union endorsed Duncan, and its business agent gave the use of his own bus for the campaign. All paid officials of the Mill Carpenters Local no 338 were put at Duncan's disposal. Duncan, like Dudley Field Malone in New York, attracted the support of progressive women. However, the reasons were somewhat different. Malone got support because of his stand on Women's Suffrage, Duncan for his support of Prohibition. Mrs Mary Walker, Chairman of the Woman's Duncan Campaign Committee, explained they were supporting Duncan partly in recognition of his pioneer work for Prohibition.²²

Though the FLP had not campaigned openly, remaining submerged inside the Triple Alliance, the bulk of the activists involved were from those unions that supported independent political action. Women were organized separately, with the hard core supplied by the 100 or so activists of the Women's Trade Union Card and Label League. Of course it should be kept in mind that the unions were already weakened in Seattle, due to unemployment and open-shop campaigns.²³

Although the campaign was union-supported, and William Short of the State Federation spoke in favour of Duncan, it was not a party campaign. As outlined above, the ideological thrust was not of labourism but of Americanism. The voters were not asked to support a party, but James Duncan. The campaign's strength had been the Seattle unions. To risk stating the obvious: trade unions are not political parties; they unite people of different political views, around limited aims. Nor is membership fully voluntary. It might not be compulsory, but workers join unions to protect their wages, conditions and job security, not for ideological reasons.

²¹Record, 20, 27, 29, 30 January, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9 February 1920.

²²Record, 21, 23, 26, 28, February 1920.

²³Frank, pp. 89-90.

Membership in a political party is voluntary in every sense and it unites people on shared political views and aims, and propagandizes for those views and aims. It is quite clear that by the Spring of 1920 the Seattle Labor Party had not defined what being a member of a labour party meant, either in ideological or practical terms. Its strategy was to work inside the existing union machine, and to hope to capture it for labour party activity. This meant that the Duncan for Mayor Campaign was not spearheaded by those who believed in the ideology of labourism, but by the more conservative elements of the trade-union movement, who mounted an ideological campaign of "True Americanism". Of course the people campaigning on the ground were committed, for the most part, to independent labour politics. However, the respectable Duncan campaign did not assuage conservatives like Hesketh who did their best to distance themselves from, or even undermine, the campaign. It also means that Duncan's campaign of the spring of 1920 failed to create any permanent independent political culture of any substance. Its emphasis was getting Duncan elected. It could be argued that even as an electoral strategy the cart was being put before the horse.

It was not until the 1920 general election that the FLP campaigned under its own name. The key to this was the fact that Duncan and his allies had managed to capture, not the Washington State Federation of Labor, but the statewide Triple Alliance. This was then turned into the Farmer Labor Party, almost by sleight of hand. Thus at no time was the FLP built as a result of the mass political conversion of workers, but by the capturing of the union machine. Of course this was no different to the British experience, except that the AFL leadership proved to be far harder to convert.²⁴

Though the 1920 WSFL convention rejected Gompers' Non-Partisan Policy, it did not endorse the FLP. Not feeling strong enough to take a decision on how to intervene in the 1920 general election, the question

²⁴ The British Labour Party was brought into being by converting the leaders of the national unions, not by converting the working class. Members of the Independent Labour Party spent many years agitating in the unions, and amongst the rank and file, before the Labour Representation Committee was formed in 1900. It is possible that it was exactly this strategy that the Seattle activists believed they were following; unfortunately they lacked the years of experience of developing a socialist culture that the ILP had. See Henry Pelling, Origins Of The Labour Party:1880-1900, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), Chapter X passim.

was passed on to the Triple Alliance. This was not a victory for the FLP but an opportunity for independent political action. It also meant that the hopes of those who wanted an officially union-backed labour party had been kept alive. The fight for a labour party had moved to another arena.²⁵

To decide which candidates labour and progressives would support, four conventions assembled in Yakima in mid July: the Triple Alliance, Railwaymen's Welfare League, the Non-Partisan League (NPL), and the Committee of 48. The TA was the biggest of these with 250 delegates attending. The first few days saw a series of confusing conflicting decisions, as the different conventions failed to agree. The NPL had decided by 20 to 10 to enter the Republican primaries. However the TA endorsed the third party by 149 to 57, in spite of a brilliant speech against by Short. The Committee of 48 also backed the third party. The Railwaymen also decided to enter Republican primaries. Anna Louise Strong felt that sentiment was for the new party, but was also aware that due to expediency some NPL and TA officials still wanted to enter Republican and Democrat primaries.²⁶

The split was not a political one but a tactical one; the division was in terms of how best to intervene electorally, for when it came to a politics there was complete unanimity; all four organizations had adopted the same platform. It was agreed that the question of affiliation to the FLP would be put to a referendum. The secretary of the WSFL, L. W. Buck, boosted the FLP publicly, urging independent political action and non-involvement with the other parties. The mood swung in favour of the FLP when the NPL reversed its original decision to only enter Republican primaries. Local organizations could support the FLP if they wanted to, or where they had already failed in Republican primaries.²⁷

The decision of the NPL gave the new party added momentum. Short gave up his opposition and called for its support at the Washington State Miners' convention. This made Buck even bolder in his support, and he called for a \$100,000 war chest for the FLP. Triple Alliance State Chairman David C. Coates claimed that months of hard work had paid

²⁵Record, 2 July 1920.

²⁶Record, 22, 24, 25 July 1920.

²⁷Record, 23, 28 July, 2 August 1920.

off and that interest in the FLP had mushroomed statewide. The new party had got the break it wanted, but by a rather circuitous route. Nonetheless it demonstrated that there was strong antipathy to the AFL's old non-partisan road. However it was not actually the WSFL that had endorsed the FLP, but the Triple Alliance. This proved to be a major weakness.

FORMING THE PARTY

A union referendum decided by 6,862 to 174 to end the TA in favour of the FLP. Coates, Chairman of the TA, claimed that the FLP had 20,000 members statewide. Most probably this had been achieved by transforming TA membership into a party. Perhaps not wishing the readership to get too carried away with the tide in the FLP's favour, or perhaps to reassure the more conservative officials, the Record noted with pride that Babsons, a confidential bulletin for employers, analyzed the FLP at Chicago as conservative; in contrast to the British delegates, they were hard-headed rail-workers, miners and machinists who knew what they wanted. But Short, worried by the speed of events, and about losing control, made it clear that the State Federation Campaign fund was separate from the FLP fund announced by Buck. However Short could do nothing to stop the momentum to build the party.²⁸

Coates announced a State FLP convention and asked the old TA locals to rename themselves FLPs. However the Committee of 48 and the NPL kept their own identity, but acted in concert for the elections. It would appear that the TA had captured itself, but it did mean that in urban areas it could begin to build clear party organization. Though it was not the WSFL directly that was endorsing the new party, the capturing of the TA, and the alliance of the farmer and progressive organizations, gave the state FLP strength and credibility. The New York party builders had not only failed to get state federation support, but were unable to find the alternative route taken by the Seattle activists. The coalition was invaluable. It made it very difficult for Short to openly oppose the party. Indeed Short even agreed to go on a speaking tour for the FLP.²⁹

Now for the first time there was open organization of the King County Labor Party. Phil J. Pearl, a former Socialist Party activist,

²⁸Record, 16, 17, 19, 20 August 1920.

²⁹Record, 20, 21, 23 August 1920.

was elected chairman of the new organization, and Stuart A. Rice its secretary. They installed themselves in the old TA offices in the Labor Temple. From its new position of strength the SCLC felt able to publicly rebuke any union organization endorsing candidates of the old parties. It urged all its affiliates to endorse the new party and to work for FLP candidates. This time the SCLC took far more rigorous action in pursuing the general election campaign. The union organizing committee of the King County FLP, formed a corps of "Seven-Minute Men" to address every local union meeting that took place up to the election.³⁰

The ideology of the campaign was different in tone and content to that of the Duncan mayoral fight. "True Americanism" took a back seat as the more orthodox FLP policies, based on Labor's Fourteen Points, were advocated. The victory at Yakima had given the progressives the confidence to relegate the policies of the conservatives of the SCLC to the background. The progressives had emerged unscathed from the effects of the red scare that followed the General Strike and Centralia. They had regained control of the SCLC's political orientation. "True Americanism" had been the conservatives' response to the anti-alien hysteria of the red scare. The progressives, their newspaper, and most of their radical allies had survived the initial onslaught; there was no longer a pressing need to make concessions to "Americanism".³¹

As the SCLC prepared itself for the election, the state wide convention of the FLP nominated Robert Bridges for Governor, C.J. France for Senate, and James Duncan for sixth congressional district. Duncan was the only trade unionist of the three. Bridges a progressive was well-known for his work on the Seattle port commission. France who was less well known, was also involved in the port commission. Bridges was widely known and commanded great respect, Duncan was also well known, but perhaps not for reasons to his advantage. The FLP presidential candidate, Parley P. Christensen, was barely known in Washington, and this affected his performance in the Seattle polls. Though the campaign was clearly a labour party campaign, emphasis was placed on the personality of Bridges and his fine reputation as a

³⁰Record, 30 August, 2, 4 September 1920.

³¹Record, 9 September 1920

commissioner for the port of Seattle. However once again the unions were the bedrock of the campaign machine.³²

THE FARMER LABOR PARTY CAMPAIGN

Short called for support for "Bridges and the ticket", and for unity up to the election. If we read between the lines, it is obvious that Short was more enthusiastic for Bridges than he was for the FLP. He could not say this openly, and was obliged to formally support the whole ticket. However, for those not initiated in the secrets of Washington labour politics, the Record's bland way of covering up differences made it appear that all was well.³³

However the grass roots were far more enthusiastic, and Carpenters' Local 131 suggested that a trophy be awarded to the local that most successfully recruited members to the FLP. Later 131 announced it had formed a FLP club, with open meetings every Thursday evening, excellent entertainment, and the best political speakers. A "Railwaymen's Branch" of the FLP was also formed; however, for the most part activities and fund raising were carried out directly under local union auspices. Union involvement in the campaign was diverse, and when the result of 131's competition was announced the three winners were the Auto-Mechanics, Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, and the Stage Employe's [Sic].³⁴

Volunteers were sought for the campaign, and Green Lake district claimed it had involved a 100 activists. District organization for the King County FLP campaign was formed with a separate Women's organizing committee. Seattle was divided into 25 districts, each with a manager. The district boundaries would be observed for "the women's work" and financial purposes. Managers appointed precinct captains; and each district was responsible for distributing literature, raising money, holding meetings and canvassing. A mass meeting of streetcar men endorsed "All FLP candidates" and pledged themselves to work for the campaign. To avoid constitutional wrangling they had adjourned the formal meeting and convened as a mass meeting. An FLP club was formed at the University; 50 students elected officers, and covered the

³²Record, 15 September 1920.

³³Record, 24 September, 1920.

³⁴SCLC Minutes, 15 September, 6, 20, 27 October, 10 November 1920.

University district with literature in the run-up to the election. The Record devoted a whole page to explaining how a ballot paper should be filled in; and the SCLC gave permission to business agent Charles Doyle to organize automobiles on election day. They would be decked with pro-FLP banners, made out of a \$100-worth of muslin donated by working men.³⁵

Two days before the election the Record led with a massive front-page headline urging "Vote Bridges and the Third Party Ticket". Just like Short, the Record believed that Bridges was the party's main asset. The cult of the personality was less evident on the editorial page, which led with why Washington was going Farmer Labor. Just in case the banner headlines had created over-confidence, the next day's editorial warned readers not to be complacent; they needed to turn out at the polls.³⁶

CAMPAIGN ISSUES

The FLP campaign platform was not a radical one, and was not dissimilar to progressive demands of the previous decade. It reflected labour's specific concerns, with calls for free speech, the right of free assembly, and all other rights guaranteed under the constitution. It also called for the repeal of the Criminal Syndicalist Act, and the release of all those imprisoned under it. The right to collective bargaining and to strike unhampered by injunction was demanded as well. It also asked that labour be given a "just share in the management of industry", though what this entailed was not explained. A State Labor Department was advocated, broadening the powers of the Labor Commissioner, "for the purpose of efficiency and economy, and extending and strengthening of laws enacted for the protection of the workers." These demands were specific to labour, but certainly were not couched in radical terms of workers' control. The rest of the platform dealt with a variety of issues which, at least in Seattle, would have broad appeal and popularity with many progressives. These included: public ownership of public utilities and natural resources under democratic management; election reforms and home rule for cities; proportional representation; and support for the Bone Dry Law, a traditional progressive demand in Washington State. Better support for schools.

³⁵Record, 20, 21, September, 20, 23, 27, 28 October 1920.

³⁶Record, 1, 2, November 1920.

especially in rural areas, with more democratic control and management was advocated. The most radical plank in the whole platform was opposition to compulsory military training.³⁷

As discussed above, the platform was not in the same vein as the Duncan for Mayor campaign; it was far less defensive, with the emphasis on a programme of moderate reform that appealed to workers and beyond. It reflected a political shift leftwards, created not by a higher level of workers' struggle, but by the fact that Duncan and his allies had temporarily got the upper hand in directing labour's politics in the State Federation, and in Seattle in particular.³⁸

William Short, the WSFL President, did not mention the FLP's platform as he addressed its mass rallies. Instead he concentrated on defeating his enemies and electing Bridges. Thus he directed all his fire at the Republican Governor, Louis F. Hart, attacking him as an enemy of labour and a friend of the employer. Hart had undermined or opposed legislation that would have benefited labour. Short gave two reasons for voting for Bridges: the first was that he would make the best governor; the second that if he was not elected, the worst possible governor would be voted into office. Bridges, Duncan and France made far more wide-ranging speeches than Short. They attacked excess profits in industry, whilst one-third of all families did not earn basic subsistence. Bridges offered his support to rail-workers, and attacked the Esch-Cummins Bill which returned the railroads to private ownership.³⁹

Bridges attracted far more votes than Duncan or France. However he had an advantage. His opponent Hart had made many enemies; and John C. Lawrence, a prominent Republican and former member of the public service commission, publicly announced he would vote for Bridges. Lawrence called on Republicans and Democrats to unite behind Bridges.

³⁷Record, 9 September 1920. (The Prohibition Laws allowed several exceptions. Alcoholic content of drinks was restricted to half a percent. Individuals could use intoxicating liquor obtained before the law was passed for personal consumption. Non-intoxicating ciders and fruit juices could be prepared at home. Bone Dry Law advocates wanted these concessions removed.) James H. Timberlake, Prohibition and the Progressive Movement, 1900-1920, (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 180.

³⁸Record, 9 September 1920.

³⁹Record, 22, 27 October 1920.

This was a well-needed boost for Bridges, for it was a period when some of Seattle's middle class ran a vehemently anti-Japanese campaign. The Anti-Japanese League had successfully persuaded the Seattle city administration to refuse licences to many Japanese businesses. The main criticism the opposition threw at Bridges was not the platform of the FLP, or his support of rail-workers, but that he leased land to Japanese farmers. A below-the-belt campaign labelled the FLP the "Japanese Labor Party". The propaganda the FLP had to counteract was not an attack on the platform it so proudly reproduced in the Record everyday, but the accusation that Bridges and the FLP supported Japanese immigration.⁴⁰

This was embarrassing for the Seattle labour movement. After all, Duncan on many occasions had opposed Japanese immigration, on the grounds that docile labour was being deliberately introduced to cut wages. However, Duncan was in favour of better relations with the Japanese; and organized labour gave little assistance to the Anti-Japanese League. Some unions accepted Japanese members. Bridges held a more complex position, believing that there should be free movement of peoples between countries. However, he qualified this by adding that this should be of economically independent people. He was opposed to large corporations importing people wholesale into the country for the purposes of reducing wages. He was also opposed to arousing racist feeling by denunciation and discrimination. Bridges was "not a hater of any race", and did not believe "that natives of any country, irrespective of race, color or religion should be discriminated against". Bridges therefore stood by his leasing of land to the Japanese. This put the FLP in a difficult position; it did not want to offend Bridges, but many unions favoured exclusion of the Japanese. The Record responded with a convoluted argument, not based on any anti-racist principle, but rather claiming that Bridges was only complying with the law as it stood. The law gave the Japanese the right to carry out business and hire land. Since many other businessmen leased land and had commercial dealings with the Japanese, why had Bridges been singled out? The Record believed that because Bridges was such an effective candidate, the only way his opponents could defeat him was to raise the red herring of his leasing arrangements. Therefore if the

⁴⁰Record, 16, 26 October 1920. For the Japanese community's response in Seattle to this "nativism" see Frank, pp. 170-171.

issue was really about the Japanese leasing land, those raising the issue should campaign to change the law. The Record did not say how it would react to such a proposal.⁴¹

This was hardly an inspiring or principled defence; and the issue did not go away. When Parley P. Christensen arrived in Seattle, the press relentlessly pressed him on the Japanese issue. Afterwards at a rally of 2,500, with thousands more locked out, Christensen ignored the Japanese issue and delivered a speech far more radical than any of the local candidates. He attacked Junkers and Kaisers whether in Germany or the USA. The League of Nations, he charged, was nothing but an international bankers' soviet. Instead he called for an international parliament of all countries, with both victor and vanquished sitting at the table. Christensen condemned the waste of military expenditure and denounced Palmer as Pontius Pilate. His speech was far more radical than any made by Duncan, Bridges or France. This was partly due to the fact that his was a national platform, but it was also more in keeping with the national programme and tradition of the FLP. The Seattle party's platform came out of Yakima and the alliance with progressives and more moderate union officials. Christensen had no similar restraints.⁴²

As the campaign drew to a close, the Record increasingly concentrated on Bridges. They were sure he could win. Readers could have been forgiven for thinking it was a Bridges' campaign, not a Farmer Labor Party one. Though committed 100 per cent to the FLP, the Record was campaigning in a similar manner to Short; concentrating on the election of an individual at the expense of the party.⁴³

WOMEN AND THE CAMPAIGN

The King County FLP took the winning of women's vote very seriously indeed; as mentioned above a women's committee had been formed. Five women candidates were included on the party's list. King County FLP was so proud of this fact that it claimed it had become known as a "woman's campaign". The Record's women's section contained

⁴¹Record, 11, 12, 16 October 1920; Douglas Roscoe Pullen, "The Administration Of Washington State Governor Louis F. Hart, 1919-1925 ", (PhD, University of Washington, 1974), pp. 238-240.

⁴²Record, 27 October 1920.

⁴³Record, 1 November 1920.

election news for women almost every day, and every major FLP rally had a prominent woman trade union-speaker on the platform. Miss Ritza Freeman was put in charge of the women's division of King County to conduct special propaganda for women. Born in America of Russian parentage, she was connected with the University of Chicago settlement, and had served George Creel in the Food Administration. She made it clear she was not a "direct actionist", but believed in political democracy.⁴⁴

Miss May Frazee stood for Superintendent of King County Schools; a former "political independent", she endorsed everything for which the FLP stood. Though she had studied at both Chicago and Washington Universities, she had spent the past five years in King County. Her message was not particularly aimed at women. Her demands were for better resourced education, better pay for men and women teachers, and that the state should fully fund every child's education. The money to provide this should be provided by taxing wealth. May Duffy stood in the 43rd District for the State Legislature. Her platform was a living minimum wage for women of the state. Another active campaigner for a higher minimum wage for women was Gladys Small, candidate for the 45th District. She was a business agent for the Lady Barbers Union, and well versed in how state laws affected the wages and conditions of employed women and children. Mrs Minnie K. Ault, wife of E.B. Ault, Editor of the Record, stood for the 46th District. She had been a business agent in the Book Binders union for five years and was president of the Women's Card and Label League. She demanded political and industrial equality for men and women. Her campaign agent, Kate McMahon, had been active in the printing unions and the Triple Alliance. The Record's women's page argued that the death of 270,000 babies before the age of one was an important reason for sending C.J. France to the Senate and for electing all FLP candidates. As the campaign drew to a close, the main reasons why a woman should vote FLP were given as a living wage, "justice for our boys", and "a Bone Dry State".⁴⁵

⁴⁴Freeman had been attracted to Seattle because "liberals" were going to put up a great fight, and also because C.J. France had a good chance of being elected. Record, 28 September, 1 October, 1 November 1920.

⁴⁵Record, 29 September, 8, 22, 26 October 1920.

THE ELECTION RESULTS

The FLP stood candidates for statewide, county-wide and district elections. In King County Robert Bridges collected 39,034 votes for Governor, the highest vote for any FLP candidate in King County. However, as the poll for Governor was a high one, this represented only 36 per cent of the vote.

Table A: Vote for Governor.⁴⁶

	Republican	Democratic	FLP
King County	53,081	15,292	39,034 (36%)
State Vote	210,662	66,079	121,371 (30.4%)

Table B: Duncan's Vote in King County
(First Congressional District)

Republican	Democratic	FLP
46,528	10,386	23,950 (29.59%)

Bridges was a very popular and well-known candidate, but this does not fully explain the reason for his success in King County, since his statewide average was less, at 30.4 per cent. Thus Bridges had performed extremely well in King County. Indeed it was one of the rare posts where the Republicans had not got the majority of the vote. In contrast James Duncan got a congressional vote of 29.59 per cent. This was slightly lower than the average FLP vote in King County, but by less than one per cent. Duncan's percentage of votes cast was higher than Christensen's average of nearly 25 per cent in King County, but only 19 per cent statewide.⁴⁷

King County was divided into districts for the purpose of electing representatives to the state legislature. The FLP had concentrated on districts in the Seattle area. Here the vote varied from a high of 43.64 per cent in the 41st District, to a low of 18 per

⁴⁶Tables A and B compiled from Abstract Of Votes, State of Washington: General Election November 2, 1920, (Washington State: Secretary of State, 1920).

⁴⁷Abstracts and Pullen pp. 69\70

cent in the 47th (see Table C below). Though the FLP did not carry any district in King County, the result in the 41st took them closest to it: here the Republicans won the 41st with 45.72 per cent. An extra two per cent of the vote would have given the FLP the seat. This was not the case elsewhere, where an extra 10 or 15 per cent would still have denied the FLP victory. Nonetheless they had replaced the Democrats as the second party, city and statewide. Still the Republicans had outvoted the FLP and Democrats combined.

Table C: FLP's State Legislature Vote in 41st and 47th Districts. ⁴⁸
(Two candidates per party)

District	Republican	Democratic	FLP
Forty-one	9,667	2,297	9,196
	9,553	2,170	9,152
Forty-seven	12,731	2,504	3,410
	12,772	2,473	3,364

One approach to analyzing the FLP's vote is to ask why was it not substantial enough to gain victory. It could be argued that objectively it was unrealistic to expect a new party to win in its first major election. However, having said that, the policies of any party affect its ability to appeal to voters. That being the case, is it possible that certain policies of the FLP cost it votes? It has been argued that the FLP, and Duncan in particular, with their high-profile support of Prohibition and Protestantism, alienated the Catholic and Irish vote. There is no doubt that an Irish worker, or any worker who liked a drink, may well have been repulsed by Duncan's missionary zeal. However the Irish population in Seattle was relatively small; and Prohibition had not featured as a major issue in either Duncan's mayoral campaign or the General Election of 1920. Prohibition was simply not a major issue in Seattle in 1920 full-stop. This is not to say there were no opponents of Prohibition; those who worked in the brewing trade in particular were outspoken in their opposition. Though for ardent opponents there was an added problem, as all three parties in

⁴⁸Compiled from Union Record, 13 November 1920.

Washington State claimed to support Prohibition. Progressives in the Republican Party, and even the Democratic Party urged their leaders to strengthen Prohibition measures. Thus Duncan and the FLP's view that alcohol was an evil was not a monopoly; and it left the voter with little choice. Therefore it is unlikely that the FLP's policy, or Duncan's views on Prohibition, was a major factor preventing them from winning the election.⁴⁹

If Duncan had alienated those who liked to drink, he most certainly alienated those who did not like strikes. Far more than any other candidate, Duncan was associated with the SCLC and the General Strike. Duncan had lost the mayoral election by 50,873 to 34,053. The conservative Robert Hesketh had achieved 4,000 votes more than Duncan in his aldermanic campaign. The difference in votes won between the two men was not enough to have changed the final outcome of the mayoral election, but it may reflect the fact that Duncan was closely identified with trade-union militancy. The fact that Duncan was not in Seattle at the time of the General Strike made little difference to those who accused him of syndicalism and Bolshevism. When compared with other leading union or FLP candidates, his background is radically different. Bridges was well-known and respected as Commissioner for the Port of Seattle. He had no labour background, but was a progressive Democrat. C. J France was President of the State Committee of 48. Hesketh, a conservative trade unionist, was well known in municipal politics, and for his opposition to Duncan. Therefore it could be argued that Duncan represented a hard-core labour vote in a way that the rest did not. Bridges was an exception, Duncan was the rule in that he received a vote close to the FLP average. The fact his vote was slightly lower might have been due as much to his high profile on strikes as to his views on Prohibition. Of course it could have been both. In any case it was Duncan's connection to the General Strike which the press made the main issue.

In his thesis, William John Dickson questions whether labour voted as a block, noting there were 100,000 voters at municipal

⁴⁹Norman H. Clark, The Dry Years: Prohibition and Social Change in Washington, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965), p. 142; Dembo, p. 251; Frank, pp. 17-19; M. L. Krause, "Prohibition and Reform Tradition in the Washington State Senatorial Election of 1922", (MA, University of Washington, 1963), pp. 61-62.

elections. He then states that there were 35,000 trade unionists in Seattle and assumed half were married. This meant a potential 52,000 votes. If each unionist influenced one friend, the total rose to 87,000. Since not all voted Dickson reduces the final estimate to 55,000. Theoretically labour could have dominated Seattle elections, but this was not the case. Thus Dickson surmises that labour's impact in politics was less than its actual weight in trade-union terms.⁵⁰

There is a major problem with this supposition. Dickson's estimate of the possible union vote is wildly inaccurate. It is most unlikely that by the end of 1920 that there were 35,000 working trade unionists in Seattle. The Associated Industries (employers' organization of Seattle) had won all its seventeen strikes by early 1920. Organized gas workers, printers, tailors, cleaning and dye workers, carpet workers, bookbinders, and workers throughout the building trades industry lost the closed shop. Workers in the shipyards had already suffered major defeats and wage cuts.

The Chamber of Commerce estimated that 85 per cent of firms belonging to the Associated Industries had closed shops in April 1919; in October 1920, the Associated Industries claimed the numbers nearly reversed: 75 per cent had liberated themselves from unions. A tiny 9 per cent of Seattle labored in union shops. The giant of the Seattle AFL had been brought to its knees.

Mass unemployment had made the defeat of labour possible. Even those who remained at work suffered wage cuts. Thus the unions had lost members and income.⁵¹

Dickson's possible 55,000 votes was a gross exaggeration. That a trade-union organization with a density of nine per cent of the workforce gathered 30 per cent of the vote, sustains the argument that the labour vote was higher than could be expected, not lower. Of course many of the unemployed were ex-trade union members who remained loyal; many, however left Seattle to find work. This failure to take into account objective realities leads to over-exaggeration of the possibilities for success, and then of the extent of failure. Thus

⁵⁰Dickson, p. 79.

⁵¹Washington State Bureau of Labor, Twelfth Biennial Report, (1920), p. 1056, quoted in Frank, pp. 101-102; Dickson, p. 79.

Jonathan Dembo in his study believes the defeat of Duncan in the mayoralty campaign was due to "the failure of the conservative unionists", many of them Catholic, to support him. However, as demonstrated above, the difference between support given to conservative trade unionists, and to Duncan, was not a decisive factor in the Mayoral election. Nor can we be certain that Duncan's vote was lower due to his militancy and prohibitionism. Hesketh was a regular contestant in council elections; this fact could explain his higher vote. So even if Duncan had not alienated Irish and Catholic conservative trade unionists, and gathered their votes, he would still have lost the election. The key factor in labour's failure to get an even higher vote in 1919-1920 is more likely to be the weakened condition of the Seattle union movement than the opposition of conservative unionists or Catholics.⁵²

To demonstrate his theory of the importance of religious and ethnic divides in Seattle voting patterns, Dembo leans heavily on the work of Denzil Cecil Cline, whose study of "Streetcar Men in Seattle" provides a contemporary analysis of how they voted. This was a white, mainly Protestant workforce. Using a sample of 103 streetcar men, Cline compared their voting habits with the average population of Seattle. Dembo notes that 68.1 per cent of the streetcar men voted for Duncan, he ignores the fact that 76.5 per cent of those that actually voted did so for Duncan. Cline did not do any systematic work on why workers had voted the way they had, but he did conduct some casual interviews with a minority of them. Two reported they were against voting for Catholics and so supported Duncan. Another had voted against Duncan because he was "English". Dembo ignored the comment of one worker who stated he had voted for Duncan because he was a labour man. Dembo concludes with a final example of a worker who said that he had not voted for Duncan because there were plenty of good Americans in Seattle without going to England to get a man for Mayor. There is no evidence that the man was Irish, but Dembo used this example as proof that "one can easily attribute such motives to Irish-American voters". It is a strange use of Cline's work, for the study has little systematic information on ethnicity, religion or attitude. The only substantial references to prejudice is that of Protestant anti-Catholicism.⁵³

⁵²Dembo, p. 256.

⁵³Dembo, p. 256; Cline, pp. 145-148.

Cline's work is not a quantitative survey of attitude, only of voting patterns. But all this misses the point; the strength of Cline's work is that it shows a clear link between union membership and voting behaviour. Over 76 per cent of streetcar men voted for Duncan, compared to 39.9 per cent of the population at large. Cline discovered that there was a constant uniformity of how car men voted, so for example 82.9 per cent voted for La Follette. The most important insight of Cline's thesis is that union solidarity translated into political commitment in the case of the car men. Dembo, however, ignores this central theme and prefers to use the thesis as evidence of anti-Duncan sentiment. It is true that streetcar men gave Duncan a slightly lower vote than they did to La Follette, or even non-labour candidates for Mayor. However, they still gave him substantial support.⁵⁴

How can this lower vote be explained? Indeed if Dembo is right in arguing that Duncan had alienated Catholics and anti-Prohibitionists, he should have out-polled La Follette amongst an all-Protestant and occasionally anti-Catholic workforce. To answer this puzzle it is necessary to find the reasons for the voting behaviour of the streetcar men. Cline could not unearth definite evidence as to why the car men voted the way they did, but one important factor he found was related to union organization. He interviewed members of the executive board of the union who claimed it was traditional that before any major election, men would attend the union office to discuss the merits of the candidates. The union officials decided who was most favourable to labour, and would make this view known to those who enquired. A regular system of propaganda was carried on before election day by activists interested in securing the election of a particular candidate. "This propaganda is so subtle that many of the men do not realize that it exists". The subtlety of this campaigning may be over-exaggerated. Officials may have wished to avoid accusations of interfering with their members' political freedom.⁵⁵

The campaigning was not always subtle. During the 1920 FLP campaign union officials held mass meetings to endorse the FLP. Union officials claimed they played a major role in swaying the voting intentions of their members. Only a small number were regularly involved in union activities, but "before an election, they act as

⁵⁴Dembo, p. 256; Cline, pp. 132-133.

⁵⁵Cline, pp. 150\151.

leaven for the general body of car men." Car men were also committed to municipal ownership, as their own industry was owned by the Seattle public. The SCLC and the car men's union had united in a campaign to achieve this. Though only a minority, including union officials, read the Record, its progressive beliefs, especially its support for municipal ownership, were in keeping with the views of much of the membership. Therefore the progressive ideas of the Record, Duncan, the SCLC and the FLP fitted the experience and views of the politically active minority of the car men. This being the case, why did Duncan fare least well amongst the candidates solidly supported by the car men? (Though it should be kept in mind that the majority supported him.) A minority of car men may have been prejudiced against him, but as the majority were Protestants, his religion could not be the key factor.

The relationship of the streetcar union to Duncan and the SCLC is more likely to be the problem. Duncan was closely identified with the Seattle General Strike. The car men had joined the strike, but after two days, a national official ordered them back to work. Although local officials promised they would rejoin the strike, they never did. This may well have created tension between the car men's officials and the SCLC. Thus the smaller vote for Duncan may have reflected an embarrassment felt by some car men officials over the general strike. Nonetheless the union gave Duncan substantial support, and was active on behalf of the FLP in 1920. In conclusion, it is worth noting that Cline's contemporary survey of the car men demonstrates that well organized and politically motivated unionists can affect working-class voting behaviour.⁵⁶

Unfortunately we lack similar detailed inside information on workers' voting behaviour in other unions. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that in other well-organized areas union activists exercised an important influence. In many regards the experience of car men was not typical of other Seattle workers. They did not suffer the massive job cuts that affected the metal trades and carpentry. The difference over how they voted for Duncan shows they were affected by the failure of the General Strike, and perhaps were not completely immune to anti-Duncan propaganda. However, more important is the loyalty they showed to union-endorsed candidates.

⁵⁶Cline, p. 50.

Chapter Two noted that Seattle was a far more homogeneous society than New York or Chicago, with 73 per cent of its population described as native white. For the most part the city's "old immigrants" did not cluster in clearly defined ethnic neighbourhoods. However, due to housing discrimination, the tiny black population were restricted to two "racially mixed" neighbourhoods. Thus in electoral terms ethnic groupings had no major influence. That is not to say that these groups were not used as political footballs during election time, as the example of Bridges and the Japanese affair outlined above clearly demonstrates. The Japanese issue, and labour's embarrassment with it, may well have cost the FLP votes, but then the SCLC and the WSFL were well-known for their advocacy of Japanese exclusion. Ironically it was Bridges, who was the most principled on the issue, who received the highest vote of any FLP candidate. It is possible that the issue cost Bridges votes, but even if he was perceived as a firm supporter of the Japanese, he was still able to win a considerable amount of working-class support. The Seattle Labor Party did not aim special propaganda at different ethnic groupings, though on one or two occasions it received support from elements within the Black and Japanese communities. Whatever the failings of the FLP on this issue, it did advocate political equality for black and white, even while opposing unrestricted immigration. It is unlikely that in Seattle in 1920 this was a tremendous electoral handicap.⁵⁷

It is difficult to evaluate the effect of gender on the outcome of labour's vote, as election results are not available categorized into male and female. However the Seattle FLP, as outlined above, made greater efforts to win women's votes than even the progressive SCLC had done. Most of this propaganda was directed to women as housewives, or mothers, though the issue of women's and children's wages and working conditions were raised. The party was proud of how many women candidates it stood. It seriously organized women for the campaign, with women agents, organizers and so on. Though we cannot tell how many women actually voted, we know how many FLP supporters voted for women. Voting figures show that whether a candidate was male or female made absolutely no difference to FLP supporters. In district 45, for example, where the FLP stood male and female candidates, each received exactly 1,125 votes. In every district where candidates were mixed,

⁵⁷Frank, pp. 17-19.

there was no identifiable difference in the vote. A woman standing for a county wide-post received 30,019 votes compared to 30,359 votes for a male candidate. There is no sign of discrimination by FLP voters.

CONCLUSION

The Seattle SCLC created a Labor Party far later than its counterparts in New York and Chicago. Before 1920 industrial action had taken priority over the political. Only the defeat of the General Strike pushed the progressives into taking political action. However, they were still slow in creating the new organization. This was partly of their own choosing, in that they did not want to launch the party without State Federation backing. However, it was also due to the fact that the right wing was able to block that backing until the summer of 1920. Thus the first major excursion of Seattle labour into electoral politics was not as a labour party, but as sponsors of the Duncan non-partisan mayoral campaign. This campaign was not carried out by a party, but by the local Triple Alliance. The ideology of the campaign, "True Americanism", was directed by the right wing. The right wing in this period had got the upper hand due to the open-shop onslaught on the unions. A "Committee of 15" had been formed by the local full-time officials of International unions to try and stop the open-shop campaign. The Committee of 15 undermined the status of the SCLC, making itself the centre of coordinated union activity. Their method of fighting back was not militant action, but a defensive effort to conserve union resources. Plans for industrial reorganization of the unions, "The Duncan Plan", were shelved, as Seattle unions resorted to the time honoured tactics of sectionalism and boycott. The confidence of the progressives and radicals was undermined by the failure of the General Strike; to a large extent they sat back and watched the power of the SCLC being usurped by the Committee of 15. The tactics of the Committee were not particularly successful. As outlined above, union density plummeted. Yet as labour's powers diminished the progressives in the SCLC were able to take the initiative away from the conservatives. The victory of the progressives in the Triple Alliance enabled them to take away the initiative from the more conservative local officials of the International unions.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Friedham, The Seattle General Strike, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), pp. 159-160.

This was not due to a sudden flowering of militancy, but to an increasing disillusion of many union activists with the two-party system. The growing weakness of the unions increasingly focused attention on the need for political reform. They reasoned that if the threat of injunction could be removed, and the right to collective bargaining could be guaranteed by government, then the unions would be better placed to defend workers' conditions. Not only did the two established parties not offer any positive protection, they also used the state to back the employers and attack the unions. There was a progressive tradition in Washington State and Seattle that overlapped both Democrats and Republicans, but by mid-1920 it was clear that neither party was going to advocate a progressive platform. This sentiment was not unique to Seattle, but the strength of progressivism combined with the weakness of the Democrats was not paralleled in New York or Chicago. In these cities the Democrats had strong electoral machines that did not crumble in 1920. They suffered the Republican backlash of that year, but remained intact. In Washington and Seattle the Democrats collapsed even before the election took place. This was the background that made it possible for the SCLC to put its new party at the head of a progressive and labour movement in 1920. Rather than question why did labour do so poorly, this chapter has asked how it was possible for such a weakened movement to do so well. Was the key its prestige as leader of the General Strike?

It is difficult to answer such a question. Of course, the strike was a failure, and the FLP and Duncan did not campaign on its tradition. Duncan made it clear that if he had been Mayor, the strike would never have happened. He and many FLP supporters made it clear that they advocated political action, not direct action. Many of the keenest supporters of the strike were not interested in political action, going as far as denouncing it and Duncan. Others tried to set up an alternative central labour body because the SCLC was too obsessed with political action. They received little support from the mainstream of the SCLC itself, and were easily defeated. In terms of the SCLC it was Duncan's view of labourism that prevailed.⁵⁹

Therefore it is hard to judge to what extent the strike affected political consciousness in Seattle. It is likely that the

⁵⁹Report of Agent 106, 4 May 1919, Conan Broussain Beck Papers, box 1, folder 1-2, University of Washington, Seattle; Friedham, p. 48.

backlash against labour, after the General Strike and the Centralia incident, won the movement just as many friends as it lost. Even those who may have objected to militancy were no doubt surprised at the level of reaction. Even conservative and moderate sections of the trade unions came under attack. Thus the need for political solutions to labour's problems, from both moderate or progressive viewpoints, converged. In other words, political action was preferable to further strike action. More conservative trade unionists, excluding the rail brotherhoods, were prepared to go along with the labour party idea. This was demonstrated by the progressives' success in winning the Triple Alliance at Yakima. It is possible many were tired with the reaction of the 1919-1920 period. But in reality weak labour had been made to look powerful by a conservative press. Perhaps this gave it a credibility and feasibility as a political opposition. Many may have seen labour as a necessary counterbalance to the "interests".

The SCLC was well placed to be able to respond to such a mood. It had a long tradition of working with progressives. It had a well respected newspaper, experience of electioneering, organization and resources. It is also probable that in 1920, contemporaries did not perceive the extent to which it had lost membership and resources. It still appeared as a powerful partner. Whatever the reasons, it was labour that was at the centre of the progressive rebellion in Washington State in 1920. In other words, the decision to form a labour party coincided with the mass discontent of progressives in the two major parties.

It was the Democrats who suffered most, losing whole county organizations and leading members. Bridges in particular was a major catch; he refused to have anything to do with non-partisan politics, preferring to back the new party. C.J. France, President of the State Committee of 48, also came over. With the bulk of the unions in the TA agreeing to back the party, any opposition to the new party by conservative trade unionists bordered on futility. Indeed it was necessary for them to be seen as supporting the new party. Short, against his own inclinations, was forced to campaign for the party. Thus the advantage enjoyed by the Seattle FLP in 1920 was that it had the genuine support of the SCLC and the indirect support of the WSFL.

At a grass-roots level many of the local unions, such as the Carpenters Local 131, District 10 of the UMW, the Streetcar Men and many more, gave imaginative and enthusiastic support. Here was a broad

coalition, with a well-organized core of union activists at its centre. The campaign message reflected the coalition. It was not a particularly radical one, even in FLP terms. The more radical, but less well-known, Parley P. Christensen polled far below the other FLP candidates. That he was less well-known is probably the key factor in his poor performance. In the better organized King County his vote was 7 per cent higher. Nonetheless, the press did everything it could to present the FLP as pro-IWW and Bolshevik. To what extent the public took any notice of this propaganda is hard to evaluate. A large majority of those who voted for the FLP must have rejected it as nonsense; some might have been encouraged to vote for it because of this. However it is important to keep in mind that, however mild labour's platform, and however extreme the propaganda against it, those who voted for the FLP were well aware of at least one reality: the new party was based on union organization. So though the party's platform was politically in keeping with progressivism, and not based on clear class interest, the vote for it was polarized in class terms.

However, there was a weakness in the FLP's activists' strategy; it had for the most part concentrated on winning the official union machine. It had not spent time disseminating propaganda for the ideas of the FLP. Its electoral success was not due to the widespread ideological conversion of workers, but to winning control of WSFL political policy. Conversion to its creed was made from above, not below. The winning of official union support gave the FLP leadership a ready-made coalition and electoral machine. The problem was that what could be won by resolution, could be taken away by the same method. The new party was vulnerable to the actions of the conservatives who still controlled the WSFL. Those who very much wanted to build a party had understood the need to get official trade-union support, but in doing so they had sacrificed any independent party-building activity. The failure to build the labour party at grass-roots level, combined with the absence of total election success in 1920, undermined the future of the party.

If the party had won major posts in 1920 the conservatives and the WSFL might not have turned against it. However, expecting a new party to win in its first election outing is somewhat unrealistic. Even if it had won every Democrat vote it would have remained in almost every case second to the Republicans. To win, it needed Republican voters, but the Grand Old Party in Washington had firmly presented

itself as the party of order in relation to labour unrest, unashamedly nativist, and enthusiastic for Prohibition. To win Republican votes the FLP would have had to advocate or emphasise the very kind of policies that Dembo claimed cost them the election. Democrat and FLP votes combined could not defeat the Republicans; it is unrealistic to ask why they did not win in 1920. A far more productive question is why such a successful start failed to establish an ongoing political presence for labour? In part this chapter has already begun to give an answer, that is developed further in Chapter Eight.

Compared to New York, the Seattle FLP was firmly rooted in the official labour movement. Chicago had even stronger roots with the unqualified endorsement of the Illinois State Federation of Labor. It was not just a matter of official endorsement; many at the centre of the SCLC were able to enthuse their union branches into FLP activity. For example, McCorkle had the backing of Carpenters Local 131, Martin Flyzik the support of District 10 of the miners. Boilermakers 104 gave resources and assistance to the campaign. The party could use union offices and resources. None of this was available to the New York party. There the union progressives lost their influence in the central labour body at an early stage, and with it official endorsement and resources. The progressives at the centre of the SCLC had firm roots in the "federated unionism" of Seattle. They had substantial support in the local movement, and were not easily undermined by conservatives. They did not have the problem of a strong Socialist competitor; and they had the tradition of a popular progressive newspaper behind them. They also had the experience of labour intervention in municipal politics. None of these factors applied to the New York union progressives.

However some of these factors did apply to the Chicago movement. Fitzpatrick and his allies had firm roots in the official movement at state and city level. Indeed, Fitzpatrick's influence ran deeper than Duncan's in his state federation. Paradoxically, the fact that the Chicago labour movement's industrial muscle was stronger than Seattle's might explain the less cohesive political intervention by the CFU. Of course Chicago was more ethnically diverse than Seattle, and powerful party machines opposed labour. While this cannot be ignored, there still remains the problem that often the unions were not able to put their weight fully behind the new party. This was not necessarily a matter of syndicalism. The problem was the amount of time taken up

defending sizeable union organization. In Seattle many union branches had been reduced in size; many had even become mere shells. It is possible that this gave the remaining local officials the time required to agitate politically. Many Chicago officials had no such luxury in this period. There is no doubt that the defeat of the General Strike gave political action a boost in Seattle. In Chicago political action was defeated in advance of industrial action, and the city's labour movement fought an industrial and bitterly defensive struggle for several more years. The Seattle labour movement was not capable of such a fight in the same period.

However this still leaves the question of why Chicago did not do as well in its first election campaign as Seattle. Accepting that Chicago faced stiffer competition from the main parties, and to a lesser extent the Socialists, the new party also faced the problem of entering a major election only a few months after its formation. In Seattle, labour prepared itself with interventions at a whole series of municipal elections before entering the general election of 1920. It had a well-established record of political progressivism, especially with its newspaper the Union Record. The Chicago movement produced its political newspaper only months before its first major election campaign. Perhaps a more established political tradition a year or so before the election would have delivered a larger vote. The fact that progressivism was stronger in Seattle than in Chicago gave the former an advantage that the latter had to manage without. All things considered, the Chicago movement was stronger than that of New York. But its electoral results were not enough to convince those looking for an alternative in 1920 that a vote for the FLP was not a wasted one. In contrast, the Seattle party had, by the general election, a whole series of impressive results.

CHAPTER SIX

NEW YORK FARMER LABOR PARTY AND SOCIALIST PARTY UNITE: A SUICIDE PACT?

INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTION IN NEW YORK 1921-1924

Whatever the assessment of the New York Farmer Labor Party's (FLP) electoral performance in the 1920 General Election, many contemporaries saw it as disastrous. Dudley Field Malone, the most successful of the FLP's candidates, left the party and did not stand on its platform again. The general election of 1920 was the end of the New York FLP as an effective organization. In the Fall of 1921 the party stood only a handful of candidates in municipal elections. By mid-1922 it lost its independence and was effectively taken over by the New York Socialist Party.¹

Between 1922 and 1924 the Socialist Party replaced the progressive trade unionists in leading the attempts to build a labour party in New York. In the pursuit of building a third party it went into an alliance with the FLP. Therefore, in this chapter, the Socialist Party of New York (SP) becomes central to the continuing story of independent political action. For reasons which will be detailed below, the New York Socialists shifted to the right, allying not only with the FLP but also with some sections of the AFL leadership. The Socialists stressed the importance of working with labour and other progressives. This was done at the expense of the Socialists' own profile and organization. So great was their desire for unity that they abandoned their own daily newspaper, and handed to Fiorello La Guardia a congressional seat they had every chance of winning. Though winning tens of thousands of votes for La Follette in 1924, they received nothing in return. They had, to all intents and purposes, committed suicide. This sacrifice did nothing to help the FLP, which sank without trace. What caused the Socialists to change their attitude towards the FLP? Why did the FLP fail in spite of this

¹Nathan Fine, Labor And Farmer Parties In the United States 1828-1928, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), p. 397.

additional help? These and other questions will be considered in this chapter.

For the left, and many workers, 1919 had been a year of optimism with its massive strike wave and the founding of the National Labor Party. For a brief while everything seemed possible. At the very least, the leaders of the labour party movement in the three cities thought they could create an alternative to the AFL's non-partisan policies. However the grounds for such optimism were short-lived. The wartime consensus of the War Labor Board did not extend to the postwar period. Employers did not want the government to continue to intervene in disputes between industry and labour, nor did they want consultation with unions, but rather the right to manage without interference from government or unions. Thus the protection unions received from a Democratic Administration was lost. Worse was to follow; not only did the unions suffer an offensive from the employers, but also from injunctions against strikers; the arrests of militants, and mass unemployment. These factors led to a decline in strikes and union membership. Even unions with mildly progressive or conservative aims were forced onto the defensive as employers refused to recognize them or imposed wage cuts.²

Of course none of this negated the argument for a labour party. On the contrary it strengthened it, for it proved that the Democrats were not the workers' friends. Industrial defeat could also raise political consciousness. In Seattle the defeat of the General Strike had made independent political action an imperative for much of the labour movement. The leaders of the new movement were not slow to point out that the actions of the Wilson administration proved that Democrats were just as hostile to the working class as Republicans. There was much substance to this argument. However, many workers who wanted to protest against the anti-working class measures of the Wilson administration felt that the FLP, denied AFL national support, was not a credible alternative. Only in Seattle was a coalition of progressives and unionists substantial enough to profit from disillusion with the Democrats. In most other cities, especially New York and Chicago, it was the Republican Party that benefited from the backlash. Industrial defeat turned into its political counterpart.

²Melvyn Dubofsky, *The State and Labor in Modern America*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), pp. 70-71.

The New York Farmer Labor Party (FLP) had entered the 1920 election without the official endorsement of the New York central labor bodies; the Socialist and progressive unions had given no practical support at all. Apart from a few union locals, and some union officials, the only official body that had supported them was the New York Women's Trade Union League. After the 1920 election even this limited support was withdrawn. It was a situation where the working-class and trade-union movement were in retreat. These were the bleak circumstances in which the New York FLP had tried to establish itself. Its poor electoral showing further increased its isolation.

In early 1921 the FLP reorganized itself. Jerome T. De Hunt, president of the New York Harbor District Council of the Railroad and Steamship Clerks, representing some 20,000 men, was selected as the chairman of the city committee. Indicative of the growing isolation and weakness was the attempt by the party to find new allies. Nathan Fine wrote to Frank Walsh asking him to meet De Hunt, to discuss cooperation "with men such as yourself". Walsh was unable to make a commitment due to the pressure of work and illness. He never gave the same level of support to the New York labourites that he gave to those in Chicago.³

Not only was the party unable to obtain new progressive support, it also began to lose the support already gained. The Women's Trade Union League had been the party's most solid supporter, but by early 1922 it distanced itself from the FLP. The New York Women's Trade Union League (NYWTUL) had problems of its own; the Central Trades and Labor Council (CTLC) leadership exacted revenge on it for associating with labour progressives. It is not clear if the CTLC intended to bar the NYWTUL from its meetings for good, or just teach it a lesson. But in early January 1921 Maud Swartz and Miss Coffin were refused entrance to the regular meeting. However, on 7 March 1921 they were reseated at a regular meeting.⁴

³Walsh to Fine, 27 January 1921, Frank Walsh Papers, box 10, folder January 1921, Manuscripts Room, New York Public Library.

⁴New York Women's Trade Union League Bulletin, March 1921 in the Papers of the Women's Trade Union League and Its Principal Leaders, (Published for the Schlesinger Library Radcliffe College by Research Publications Inc Woodbridge, Connecticut, 1979), (hereafter cited as WTUL Papers), Collection IX, WTUL Publications. Secretary's report January 1921; Secretary's report 7 March, WTUL Papers, Collection IV, NYWTUL Minutes and Reports.

The threat of being barred from the CTLC must have been an extremely disquieting one in a period of extreme difficulty for the organization. Between 1921 and 1922 the depression caused "many organizations they had mothered " to fall away. In this situation they could ill afford to lose the official support of the AFL central body in New York. These factors combined to relegate the FLP to being a low priority in the mind of NYWTUL activists. The Party was unable to offer concrete support to the NYWTUL, indeed it was just another burden. Once the party lost official AFL support, cooperation with it meant antagonizing conservative labour leaders and losing even more resources. In June 1922 a poorly attended regular meeting of the NYWTUL voted eleven to eight against supporting united independent political action by the FLP and SP. The loss of CTLC recognition had led to the Party losing the support of the NYWTUL. Its isolation was almost complete.⁵

Yet at the nominating convention for the 1921 municipal elections the FLP turned down a resolution on cooperation with the Socialists. Such an alliance, leaders argued, would damage the FLP. However solidarity was shown towards the Socialists, as the convention condemned the Board of Aldermen for refusing to seat elected Socialist Aldermen Algernon Lee and Edward Cassidy.⁶

Though greatly weakened, the New York FLP still produced a platform for the elections. This included a call for health clinics and maternity centres, and for the re-examination of all immigrants re-entering the city as a health measure. An elected and paid Board of Education, with teachers participating in the determination and development of education methods, was called for. It also demanded that the government recognise Russia immediately, condemned the betrayal of free speech, and demanded an investigation into the Ku Klux Klan. Demands for housing to be made a public utility, and for transportation to be taken into community ownership and democratically run were also included.⁷

THE ROAD TO UNITY

⁵Annual report for March 1921-1922; Minutes of Regular Meeting, 27 June 1922, WTUL Papers, Collection IV, Minutes and Reports.

⁶Call, 8 September 1921.

⁷Call, 8 September 1921.

In spite of the Party's extensive platform for municipal reform, it only stood three municipal candidates. None of them were as well known as a Malone, Schneiderman, or O'Leary. Jerome T. De Hunt was nominated candidate for Mayor; Ben Howe, author of a plan for cooperative or credit union banks, for Controller; and Abraham Lefkowitz, Vice President of the Teachers Union, for President of the Board of Aldermen. Several hundred delegates, including 20 women, attended the meeting to launch the FLP's election campaign. However, for the most part, the New York Times and Call studiously ignored the campaign.⁸

Final proof that the game was up came with the FLP's election results. They were so poor that the New York Times did not report them. Meanwhile W. F. Feignbaum attempted to raise the spirits of Socialists. He argued that the Socialist vote, averaging 100,000 statewide, was the only credible result, and that unity with tiny groups like the FLP was not the answer. The FLP had received only 2,000 votes for Mayor and 4,000 for the President of Board of Aldermen. However his argument that the FLP vote was insignificant was not lost on the comrades of the Labor Party; it proved to be their last independent election intervention. However, the factors that had combined to make the FLP weaker were not discriminatory; they began to weaken the Socialists too. Six months after Feignbaum's dismissal of unity with the FLP, the New York Socialists went into alliance with them.⁹

THE SOCIALISTS

Though the Socialists went into decline nationally, in New York City their electoral performances from 1919 to 1921 were still substantial. Though the New York SP suffered considerable losses of membership, the number of votes obtained still remained respectable. In 1920 the New York Socialists had completely ignored the FLP. This did them little damage in a partisan sense, since the New York Labor Party vote proved to be insignificant. However by 1921, though the Socialist vote was still significant, it was stagnant. New York Socialists began

⁸New York Times, 8 September 1921.

⁹Call, 23 November 1921.

to realize that they were no longer an expanding force, and they began to reappraise their attitude to the FLP.¹⁰

The New York Socialists' factional struggle with those who had formed Communist Parties had affected their attitude to the FLP. As the left-wing seceders were forming new parties in 1919, the Socialists, having lost their most radical element to the Communists, took a swing to the left. They put all their effort into campaigning for Debs in the 1920 presidential campaign, giving little thought to an alliance with the Farmer Labor Party. However the result of the campaign was disappointing. Nationally Debs polled 915,302 votes, the largest vote he had ever received. However, it was only 3.5 per cent of votes cast, compared to 6 per cent polled in 1912. The electorate was far bigger than in 1912, as women voted in all states for the first time. Though a remarkable achievement for Debs, the 1920 vote marked electoral decline for the Socialists.¹¹

The 1920 election result was a watershed for the Socialists. Nationally many became aware that they were no longer advancing and that in many areas organization had collapsed. Although the New York Socialists' vote was better than elsewhere, they could not escape the growing feeling of crisis. A debate on the way forward for the Socialists dominated the Call's party page. The paper tried to shrug off the results in New York as the result of hard times that could be overcome by more work. This argument did not fit the national situation. The New York Socialists still needed to provide a radical solution, even if they felt New York could overcome its own difficulties.¹²

It was the Socialists' Ninth Annual Convention in Detroit that signalled the change of direction for the New York Party. National membership had fallen to 17,000, 10,000 down on the average for 1920. Something had to be done to stop the loss of membership. Hillquit, from New York, moved the resolution that ended the Party's swing to the left and launched it on a trajectory back towards the right. The party was

¹⁰David A. Shannon, The Socialist Party of America, (New York: MacMillan, 1955), p. 165; James Weinstein, The Decline Of Socialism In America, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), p.327.

¹¹Shannon, pp. 150-157. For full details of the split between Socialists and Communists see Shannon, Chapter VI *passim*.

¹²Weinstein, p. 275.

to waive its "traditional policy of aloofness" and seek possible co-operation to beat the old parties. The aim was to create a federated unity of labor organizations, each keeping its own identity, but uniting for electoral purposes. The British Labour Party was cited as an example to illustrate the proposal. However the national executive were committed only to canvassing the opinion of other labour organizations and then reporting to the next annual convention. In spite of the slow pace of proposed change, the Call proclaimed that the resolution would end the Socialists' isolation. Hillquit's proposal won unanimous acceptance.¹³

The change in policy came too late to make any major difference to the New York Socialists' activities that year. By early July 1921 the NYSP had made its main nominations for the municipal election. No allowances had been made for the FLP. For most of the campaign neither isolation, nor the call for unity, was referred to. Indeed, during the election the Call remained partisan as ever, proclaiming that the "opportunity is great". It believed the party could advance to the position they had occupied in 1917.¹⁴

During July the Call carried much news of Socialist electioneering, but none of the FLP's. Occasionally it briefly mentioned the "federated labor" plan, and it reported that the National Executive Committee had discussed the idea at its September meeting. With workers' organizations under attack, and the depression severe, there was a need for all labor organizations to cooperate. It might have been this executive meeting that prompted the New York Socialists to repeat their unity proposal to the local FLP. For in the midst of an important election campaign, the New York Socialists started to take the issue of federation, and of their own decline, seriously.¹⁵

In the run-up to the election, the Socialists increasingly subjected themselves to criticism. During October the previously unthinkable question, "Is the Socialist Party Dead?", was answered by John F. Martin, editor of the Auto Worker. The Communists had repeatedly raised the question, and Martin agreed it was an issue that had to be taken seriously. He also admitted that some workers and

¹³Call, 27, 28 June 1921.

¹⁴Call, 11, 12 July 1921.

¹⁵Call, 1, 22 September 1921.

bosses hoped the answer was yes. However, he concluded, after a rather inconclusive and vague article, with a negative answer. There was still news to cheer the faithful - 8,000 had attended Socialist rallies in Brownsville. However, the Call's mind was no longer solely on the Socialists' activity. It sensed that the election results would not be that different from previous ones, and that new strategies would be required. It began to look forward to the development of a labour party. Thus in the middle of an election campaign it noted that the painters' union had endorsed the FLP. William Kohn thought that Johnston, of the International Association of Machinists (IAM), was moving in a similar direction. Those opposed to Gompers might unite into one similar organization on the same lines as the British Labour Party. Kohn believed it was highly likely that Johnston would follow this strategy. However the Call continued to ask its readers to vote the straight Socialist ticket and ignored the FLP candidates.¹⁶

When the election results came they were bad news for Socialists and Republicans alike. The Socialists lost their aldermanic seats in a Tammany landslide. Mayor Hylan got a record majority, but the Republicans did keep a grip of the state legislature. The massive swing to the Republicans in 1920 had been reversed, but the Socialists also suffered from the resurgence of Tammany. The Call complained that there was an added reason for Socialist defeat. In the races they had won in the past, they usually had fought a three-cornered fight. This time, opposed by fusion candidates, with either Democrat or Republican standing down, they had lost in straight fights. Though the Socialist vote was respectable, it was slightly down on the year before. The Call claimed that this was because it was not a general election year. This was true, but the loss of the aldermanic seats added to the sense of decline, and the Socialists were forced to answer claims that their vote had collapsed. They admitted they had suffered a reverse, but blamed the added problem of fusion (the standing down of a main party candidate and recommending a vote for the opponent). Nonetheless they came second in 12 assembly districts. They polled about 50,000 votes city-wide, a larger vote, the Call claimed, than before the war. Whatever the truth of this claim, it was not enough to stop the floodgates of doubt from opening.¹⁷

¹⁶Call, 10 October 1921, 4 November 1921.

¹⁷Call, 9, 11 November 1921.

Criticisms poured in. W. M. Feignbaum took on the task of refuting them. He noted that the FLP, and the smaller left-wing organizations, had received 7,000 votes at the maximum. The Socialists had got a total of 100,000. He looked beyond the labour vote to the high vote for Hylan, which, he argued, proved that workers had not yet learnt to vote for themselves. Therefore, there were no easy solutions or gains to be made by uniting with others. Members should carry on with the hard task of making the Party worthy of working-class support.¹⁸

Unfortunately for Feignbaum, hard work was not enough to arrest the decline. The party organization in the fifth Assembly District changed from weekly to fortnightly meetings to save expenditure on rent. Simultaneously the party organization of the 7th Assembly District, in the Bronx, met to discuss the election and to practise self-criticism. The poor election results gave impetus to the shift towards unity and independent political action. Increasingly the tide of Party opinion was turning towards the need for co-operation and a change in strategy.¹⁹

Ida Crouch Hazlett, a leading New York member, believed that the new Socialist Party programme meant they should no longer be bigoted, but be prepared to work with labour. Additional prominence was given to the need for unity when Victor S. Gauthier, a member of the General Executive Board of the IAM, put the case on the editorial page of the Call. He raised the problem of the open shop offensive, and labour's need for a political alternative to resist it. He believed it was a tragedy that the labor vote was split between so many parties. However, only four organizations mattered: the Socialists, the FLP, the Committee of 48 and the Non-Partisan League. Gauthier believed it to be the duty of the AFL to unite these groups; after all, they had totalled three million votes in the 1920 presidential election.²⁰

The IAM tried to persuade the AFL to carry out this task under a limited six-point programme. The programme called upon state and federal official to abide by the constitution and allow freedom of speech, and demanded the public ownership of utilities and resources, a

¹⁸Call, 23 November 1921.

¹⁹Call, 24, 28 November 1921.

²⁰Call, 7, 11 December 1921.

general amnesty for political prisoners convicted under wartime acts, the regulation of credit, an end to the use of injunctions against labour and the elimination of private detective agencies. This proposal was a prototype of what would become the Conference for Progressive Action (CPPA), sponsored by the Railroad Brotherhoods and the IAM. In one sense it was identical to the federated plan of the Socialists. Potentially, it was a precursor to a labour party. Of course the Socialist plan still maintained that organizations would keep their institutional and political independence. For those who supported such a plan, the next step was to overcome the disunity with the FLP.²¹

As stated earlier, the FLP had rejected the Socialists' previous advances, but this was before the disastrous election results. Now its supporters had nowhere else to go, and increasingly the Call carried news of individuals who had been prominent in the FLP cooperating with the Socialists. The CTLC delegated Thomas J. Curtis, the first Labor Party electoral candidate in 1919 and a Vice President of the State Federation, to the Call Labor Conference Circulation Committee. This body was set up to extend the influence of the Call in the official labour movement. The Call grandly interpreted the CTLC's endorsement as meaning that unions representing 750,000 workers in New York City were behind the paper. But the support was worth more than rhetoric as the CTLC agreed to a fund drive among union affiliates.²²

The Socialists' shift to the right was paying dividends. Old friends and even old enemies were responding to their unity call. Of course the CTLC would not agree to independent political action (at least not in a party sense). However, it had dropped its hostility to the Call and given it the opportunity to gain much needed finance. The Call gained extra union sponsors. In addition to the usual progressive or needle trade unions, it received support from some craft unions. It gave the ailing Socialists a sense of substance that having elected officials (aldermen) had provided in the past. The fact that some of the sponsors were unionists like William Kehoe and John P. Coughlin, who had defeated the progressives, did not bother the Socialists at all. Sponsors also included defeated union progressives such as

²¹Ibid.

²²Call, 3 February 1922.

Lefkowitz and Curtis. The sponsorships also aided the Socialists in their drive for "federation".²³

It is worth asking why these Tammany enemies of the Socialists were supporting the Call again. Some of them, in the past, briefly supported the Labor Party, probably because there was a powerful current in its direction. When the tide ebbed they had turned against it. Now, for different reasons they wanted to show their independence from Tammany. The past year had seen an onslaught by the bosses against the unions during which they received little support from city government. There was even talk of bringing in statewide anti-strike legislation. They needed to influence the legislature against such attempts. To do this they needed to appear militant, calling demonstrations and threatening workers' action to prevent such laws. The Call was an ideal vehicle for carrying news of the campaign. They were making left-sounding noises, albeit temporarily, as the Socialists moved right. These opportunists were only too pleased to work with old enemies and to use the Call. They were not sincere; ironically the Socialists were. It appeared as if the turn to the labour movement was paying dividends.

However, unity with AFL officials was only one strand of the Socialists' strategy. There was still the matter of unity with the FLP to be pursued. FLP reticence on the issue disappeared. Perhaps the Socialists' shift to the right impressed the remnants of the New York Labor Party. Whatever the reason, those remaining could no longer ignore the perilous nature of their position. All opposition to cooperation with the Socialists melted away by the spring of 1922. A national decision of the SPA's 10th annual convention further smoothed the path to unity. It went beyond its previous policy of just canvassing opinion, deciding state groups could "federate". This meant they could affiliate with farmer labour organizations, but must keep their independence and integrity. This meant not participating in Democratic or Republican primaries. Nor should the programme of any group with which they federated conflict with the ideals and aims of the SP.²⁴

The New York Socialists wasted no time. On 24 May 1922 they held a joint conference with the New York FLP that called for a joint

²³Call, 13 March 1922.

²⁴Call, 2 May 1922.

campaign of Socialists, FLP and unions in the Fall election. Though proud of their unity action, little was done to accelerate the process. Events would have to wait for the New York State Socialist Party convention to endorse the action. There was no mistaking who was the junior party in the new venture. The Socialists' convention went ahead and nominated its main candidates for governor and other statewide positions. A few nominations were left open for joint agreement with the FLP. The way was cleared to unify the electoral intervention of the two organizations.²⁵

However, the new-found unity did not get the blessing of the Call's recent friends, the leadership of the CTLC. William F. Kehoe, secretary of the CTLC, wrote to Gompers complaining that a number of New York Labour Leaders had signed the call for "an official labor non-partisan " political convention. Kehoe objected to this plan which meant strong backing for independent political action. He sent a letter informing every signer that they were not empowered to take such action. Gompers took no action, apart from asking the signers their reaction to Kehoe's protest. Kehoe's protest had not affected the callers of the convention, but it did alert the New York labour movement to the fact that the CLTC was not supporting the initiative.²⁶

The unity convention took place on 15 July 1922. Over 300 delegates representing 250,000 union members and 200,000 FLP and Socialist voters attended. The two organizations formed a joint committee to head the new initiative. At first it decided to call the party the Independent Labor Party, but later decided to name it the American Labor Party (ALP). Delegates decided to bar the Communists from participating by a vote of 204 to 15.²⁷

Because of election laws the name of the new party could not appear on ballot papers. The old titles of Socialist and FLP had to be used. The new party would also work inside the Conference for Progressive Political Action for an independent party. A distinct platform was formulated for the new party. It commenced by stating that

²⁵Call, 25 May, 2, 3 July 1922.

²⁶Call, 7, 12 July 1922.

²⁷Call, 15, 16 July 1922. Minutes of convention called by the Joint Committee for Independent Labor Political Action, New York, 15 July 1922, American Labor Party Minutes, 1922-1924 Folder, Tamiment Institute.

workers by hand or brain faced a crisis: unions, free speech and liberties were under attack, especially from "the open shop drive". The two main parties were controlled by the invisible "monied" interests. Therefore workers had to "destroy old parties". A long list of demands that were typical of FLP or even progressive policy followed. There was nothing particularly radical about the platform, though it did oppose USA intervention in Haiti, San Domingo, Mexico and Russia. It also supported the ongoing miners' strike and called for the release of all political prisoners. The platform ended with proposals to increase democracy by measures such as referendum and recall, proportional representation, and the putting of constitutional amendments to referendum. The newly formed ALP sent out a call for trade unions to back a labour party on the British model to the national committee of the CPPA.²⁸

Ironically, the Socialists now promoted an identical progressive programme for which they had criticized the FLP in the past. There was no mention of Socialist control of the state, or workers' control in industry. The call for the repeal of Esch-Cummings meant demanding the return of the railroads to government control, exactly the policy they had criticized the FLP for making in the past. The Socialists still maintained their own programme, but they had dropped their radical critique in the pursuit of unity.

Though supported by the Socialists, the reconstructed ALP was far weaker than the party formed in 1919. It did not have the support of the CTLC, the WTUL, or even as many unions as before. The Socialists were also weaker. The original party had formed at a time of growing militancy and trade union membership; now it was relaunched in a situation of few strikes and declining union membership. The strikes that did take place were defensive, against wage cuts or to keep union recognition. Though the economy had recovered, in many sectors unemployment remained high. Thus it was in far more difficult circumstances than at the time of the original launching of the ALP in 1919 that the Socialists turned to a strategy of labourism.

This late conversion would not revive them, nor their new allies. If there had been an opportunity to establish a labour party in New York it was in 1919, not 1922. It is possible that in 1919 Socialist support might have established a substantial minority

²⁸Call, 17, 18 July 1922.

presence for the party; it possibly would have elected at least one congressman. It is also likely the defeat of progressive forces in the central labour bodies might have been prevented. The Socialists had amalgamated with the shadow of a labour party movement. They would have to find more powerful forces to realize their aims.

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Suddenly doors closed to the FLP activists were opened. The facilities of the clothing workers unions that had been cool to the Party in 1920 were now made available. Financial support and meeting rooms were provided. A women's organizer was appointed, and speakers despatched to union meetings.²⁹

The new party did win some substantial union endorsements. For example, delegates of the Amalgamated Sheet Metal Workers Local 28, representing 2,000 men, unanimously voted to affiliate. They also directed their delegates to raise affiliation at the trades council. The largest Typographers' local in the country also gave its support. A few weeks earlier the International Typographers 67th Annual Convention placed itself on record as favouring the formation of a "political Labor Party". The resolution had not mentioned the FLP or the ALP, but this was enough to encourage 400 members of Typographical Union number six to endorse the ALP. The Local also rejected the AFL's policy of "reward your friends and punish your enemies".³⁰

The Railwaymen's Non-Partisan League of Kings County endorsed several ALP candidates in Brooklyn, including De Hunt in the 10th Congressional District. They also invited De Hunt to address a rally at the Brooklyn Lyceum and invited the Socialist candidate to speak. However this was not a complete break with non-partisan politics, as they also endorsed Democratic candidates. The journal of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers was even more circumspect, stating it would not choose between Socialists, FLP and Workers parties (Communists); instead it advised its readers not to vote for the two main parties but to vote as workers.³¹

²⁹Call, 12, 15 Aug 1922.

³⁰Call, 17 August, 16 October 1922.

³¹Call, 17, 18 October, 5 November 1922.

Having no intention of breaking with non-partisan politics, the CTLC still felt under enough pressure to endorse 31 ALP Candidates. They also endorsed 64 Democrats and 13 Republicans as "fair to Labor". The decision was based on questionnaires returned by all candidates. In the 12th Congressional District they gave equal support to Socialist candidate Meyer London and the Democrat Samuel Dikstein.³²

However, the 31 labour nominations did nothing to soothe the tension between the two warring sides in the New York labour movement. For the nominations were not distributed even-handedly. Only one "Socialist-FLP" candidate obtained endorsement in the Tammany labour stronghold of Brooklyn. The leading CTLC officials there were not prepared to let bygones be bygones and they refused to endorse de Hunt. James J. Costello, chairman of the Brooklyn Committee, said this was because De Hunt had spread reports that the body was "purely political", encouraging seven or eight unions to leave it. Thus in Brooklyn the bulk of those nominated were Democrats, with a few Republicans.³³

Though Abraham Lefkowitz was among those endorsed, he still raised the inconsistency of non-partisan method of backing candidates. Many "Socialist-FLP" candidates were marked as not favourable to labour, yet Democrats and Republicans were deemed to be such. He believed this was ludicrous, for the ALP candidates stood on a pro-worker platform, while the others stood for the parties of big business.³⁴

Meanwhile De Hunt wrote to Costello and Kehoe refuting the charge that he had persuaded workers to quit the Brooklyn committee. In spite of the controversy, Labor, the campaign magazine of the Rail Brotherhoods, gave De Hunt a warm recommendation for congressman. Gompers went beyond the CTLC by personally endorsing Meyer London for the 12th Congressional District. In addition the party got support from those Jewish organizations that normally supported the Socialists. Poale Zion of Greater New York called on all Jews to vote for the ALP

³²Call, 20 October 1920.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

and the Jewish Forward issued a special edition to support the federated election campaign.³⁵

Nonetheless, union backing for the ALP was less than the previous time around. However, this time not all the party's candidates faced opposition from the CTLC as in 1920. Nor was it the case that the Socialist support was 100 per cent. The Socialists did not drop their identity, which was reasonable enough under the federated agreement, but they did not give the newly formed ALP much publicity either. For days on end no news of the ALP appeared in the Call, and most references were to Socialist Party candidates and policy. Without its own regular publication, and ignored by the mass circulation press, the ALP's profile remained low. The ALP had only a handful of non-Socialist candidates standing, all for minor posts. No FLP candidate stood for a major position such as governor. Since the defection of Dudley Field Malone and the WTUL, no well-known member of the FLP was available to be put forward.³⁶

The Call did give the ALP some limited publicity with news of its rallies, though the keynote speakers were usually from the SP side of the alliance. The balance shifted even further towards the Socialists when De Hunt, candidate for the 10th congressional and described as a pioneer of the ALP, joined the Socialists. Edward F. Cassidy, the Socialist candidate for Governor, headed an all-Irish list of speakers in support of Ben Howe, a leading member of the New York FLP, in the predominantly Irish and German 18th Congressional District. Ironically this major effort by the Socialists to help the FLP in this district was too late by two years. In 1920 the FLP candidate Jeremiah O'Leary would have won but for the diversion of 5,000 protest votes to the Socialists.³⁷

The ALP's nominees met to ensure uniform presentation of the new platform to the voters. FLP members took part in several major meetings and street rallies organized by either the ALP or the Socialist Party. Three thousand supporters attended the new party's first major rally at the Lexington Theatre. Hillquit told the assembled

³⁵Call, 26, 31 October, 4, 5, 7 November 1922.

³⁶Call, 4 November 1922.

³⁷Call, 5 November 1922; Congressional Quarterly's Guide to the U.S. Elections, p.743; Shannon, p. 158.

crowd that if the ALP succeeded in New York then a labour party would become an accomplished fact nationally. The main speakers included leading SP members, though Lefkowitz did speak.³⁸

In Brooklyn 5,000 attended the ALP rally. De Hunt was the first to speak; not surprisingly he made the rail strike the thrust of his speech. The Party made clear its commitment to striking workers, promising that both Socialists and the FLP would give their fullest support to striking rail workers, as would trade unions affiliated to both parties. They reasoned that action by Attorney General Daugherty against the strikers showed the need for independent political action. The ALP condemned the judicial assault on rail workers, and called for an assault on the ballot box.³⁹

The inexperience of the FLP adhering to electoral procedures led to further difficulties. In the 22nd and 23rd Assembly Districts of New York County the FLP had not filed the names of candidates; therefore voters had to write in the names. Unfortunately for the FLP, problems like this created an appearance of incompetence that the more experienced Socialists did not suffer. Electoral success, however, eluded both the Socialist and FLP wings of the new alliance.⁴⁰

THE END OF THE BEGINNING

The election proved a massive landslide for the Democrats; this undermined the Socialists. Meyer London, perhaps the most prestigious candidate, failed to win, and Cassidy's vote for Governor was 20,000 down on the 1920 result. In the 18th Congressional District the Socialist-FLP fusion candidate got only 2,376 votes. In 1920 the FLP vote alone had been 9,998, and in addition the Socialists got 5,668. The Call's editorial noted that swing was still away from Harding. It also believed that the delay in "organizing" the ALP was decisive. This excuse was rather weak, as the two parties had amalgamated in July, and most of the candidates had been nominated before then.⁴¹

³⁸Call, 7 September, 20 October 1922.

³⁹Call, 7 September, 16, 20 October 1922.

⁴⁰Call, 19 September 1922.

⁴¹Call, 9 November 1922; New York Times, 9 November 1922; Congressional Quarterly' Guide to US Elections, p. 743.

Within a few days the explanations became a bit more sophisticated. By claiming that Cassidy's vote was not typical, due to the landslide for Al Smith, and by comparing the total votes received with the 1921 result, an extra 8,000 votes were claimed statewide. This was a clever use of a comparison that was, at the best, self-deception. For only two years earlier, in 1920, the Socialist vote in New York County for Governor had been 34,220; an additional 19,848 had voted for the FLP candidate, giving a total labour vote of 54,068. Now a fusion candidate had got 20,376 in the same area, less than half the previous vote.⁴²

The other participant in "federation", the FLP, fared even worse, failing to get the 25,000 votes required to be on the ballot in the future. They provided only an extra 6,887 votes towards Cassidy's total. None of the original FLP members won a seat, though De Hunt received a respectable 6,532 in Brooklyn's 10th congressional district; Howe managed only 2,376 at the scene of Jeremiah O'Leary's 1920 near triumph. Abraham Lefkowitz got 2,659 in Manhattan's 13th congressional district. Each of these candidates came third. Very little had been gained by uniting with the Socialists. In reality the results had delivered the second, and this time fatal, blow to the ALP. The funeral would not take place for another two years.⁴³

The Call, and the ALP minutes of this period, are remarkable in that there is no serious analysis of the defeat. It is impossible to believe that leading Socialist Party members like Oneal and Hillquit were unaware of the scale of defeat; but they had another vehicle to achieve their aims, the CPPA. The FLP could give them a few extra votes at its conventions, and perhaps be the hook that could pull in the forces of Fitzpatrick and his supporters in Chicago. The empty shell of the FLP was a convenient way of furthering the unity offensive of the Socialists. It also provided a few extra delegates at labour conventions, and perhaps a more respectable face to show to conservative trade unionists. If they were not sincere about the ALP, they were sincere in their desire that the CPPA should become the basis of a third party. During 1922, unity with the FLP was only part of the

⁴²Call, 10 November 1922; New York Times 9 November 1922. (See Chapter Three above on New York for state of Socialist vote in 1920).

⁴³Call, 8 December 1922; New York Times, 9 November 1922.

Socialists' strategy; the other part was their involvement with the CPPA.

The CPPA had been formed in early 1922; the Call claimed its conference met to discuss forming a labour party. Although the AFL did not oppose the CPPA, neither did it officially back it. Therefore it was a quasi-official body led by the International Association of Machinists and the Rail Brotherhoods. The link between the two was, of course, the fact that the IAM organized the Rail Shopmen, and that both had suffered badly since the railroads had been returned to private ownership.⁴⁴

During 1921 and 1922 the rail-roads cut wages several times and in some areas tried to bring in non-union workers. Strikes by the railworkers had been met with intransigence by the employers, who often turned to the courts to stop solidarity action. The use of the courts, and the failure of any sizeable section of Congress to stop the passage of the Esch-Cummings Bill, drove the conservative brotherhoods towards political action. In reality, by political action the leaders meant a more aggressive form of non-partisan activity. However, at times, in order to sound more threatening, the leaders, especially William Johnston, spoke in third-party terms. Johnston often threatened that the plans of the CPPA would lead to a party on the lines of the British Labour Party. The aim of this threat was to persuade progressives in the two main parties that if they did not provide more support then labour would go it alone. It also served to draw in more militant workers and progressive groups such as the FLP, Socialists, Non-Partisan League and Co-operatives. The vague promise of a third party, at a future date, could persuade the members of such organizations' to be active on the CPPA's behalf.⁴⁵

A whole series of defeats inflicted on the miners, railmen, and other union organization in general, had the effect of disillusioning many with the AFL's non-partisan stance. Neither of the main parties had intervened to support workers against the onslaught. At the same time workers were not in the confident mood they had been in in 1919. They had been forced onto the defensive, but, in spite of this,

⁴⁴Dubofsky, pp. 97-99; Call, 20 February 1922.

⁴⁵Dubofsky, pp. 97-99; Call, 20 February 1922.

sections of labour desired political change. In other words, the desire for change was not based on workers' activity and growing confidence, but on resentment and enforced apathy.

However, this was not the analysis of the Socialists. They could see only the radical side of the equation. To them the advent of the CPPA was proof not only of the desire for a third party, but of the fact that substantial sections of the union leadership were being driven by events to deliver one. In one sense they were aware of the weakness in the situation, as they argued that the movement could succeed only if a substantial section of the official union movement backed the project. The Socialists and their allies were not strong enough to take the initiative on their own. They had to work inside the CPPA to win it for independent political action. So the New York Socialists were not dependent solely on their FLP allies inside the ALP; the Conference for Progressive Political Action was also central to achieving their aims. The ALP's importance had already been diminished by its electoral performance. It had not brought about the hoped-for resurgence in the Socialists' fortunes. Thus the CPPA became more central to the Socialist strategy of creating a third party, while conversely the ALP became less important.

When the CPPA first convened, the New York Socialists believed that forming a labour party was uppermost in the minds of delegates. Only a day later they were compelled to recognise the opposite; the majority of delegates had voted against a new party and for a policy of rewarding friends and punishing enemies. In other words this was a non-partisan policy identical to that of the AFL, albeit more actively pursued. Oneal and Hillquit made it clear that the SP would not enter the old party primaries. The 16 Rail Unions had stood as a unit against those wanting independent political action. Local branches would be allowed discretion as to how the policy would be put into practice. Hillquit criticized the convention declaration as not showing any way forward. Nonetheless, he declared that progress had been made, due to the fact that the various organizations had met together in Chicago. In the space of two days the Socialist approach became more sober. It regretted that a party had not been formed, but accepted that it was likely that the majority of the larger unions' members would not join such a party.⁴⁶

⁴⁶Call, 20, 21, 22, 23, February 1922.

For a while the Socialists' enthusiasm for the CPPA was muted. However the disappointing election results of 1922 spurred both the Socialists and the CPPA into fresh activity. Victor L. Berger, Wisconsin Congressman-elect, believed a new national labour party was in sight. He was going to the CPPA convention in Cleveland that December to argue for the establishment of a new party independent of the two old ones. Morris Hillquit in New York could detect the same trend and spoke at the Rand school on the "The Coming American Labour Party". He believed that workers were drifting towards independent political action.⁴⁷

Once again the New York Socialists prepared to argue for a labour party and an end to partisan policies at a CPPA convention. De Hunt and Gerber supported them, as delegates, on behalf of the ALP. Once again the Socialists were to be disappointed as the third party was turned down by 64 to 52. All railroad unions voted against it. Socialist Party delegates, the needle trades and typographers voted in favour of it. The Socialists supported the barring of the Workers Party (the Communists) from the convention. The defeat did not dismay Hillquit and ONeal, who both believed the impetus was still towards a labour party, though it would be a long and hard road.⁴⁸

The attitude of the Socialists towards the CPPA was beginning to create tensions between them and the FLP nationally. ONeal felt the need to defend his actions and beliefs. He was particularly hurt by the accusations, made by the Chicago labourites, of returning to old party boundaries. He admitted opposing the third-party resolution in committee, but claimed to have supported it on the floor. He believed substantial union support was required before a third-party initiative could be taken. A breakdown of the roll-call, he argued, proved his case and showed the futility of putting the question. Most unions had voted against it. Those who had supported launching a labour party, such as the Typographers and the ACW, were not new recruits to the idea. ONeal believed it most likely that these organizations would not go along with a decision not supported by the majority of unions. The SP was still opposed to standing in the main parties' primaries. The

⁴⁷Call, 28 November, 6 December 1922.

⁴⁸Call, 9, 13, 14, 15 Dec 1922.

task ahead was to build their respective organizations so they could contribute towards the founding of a third party in 1924.⁴⁹

However in New York there was almost complete accord between the cadre of the FLP and the New York Socialists. The New York labourites faithfully supported the Socialists in every twist and turn they made inside the CPPA. They did not follow the FLP members who walked out in disgust when the CPPA rejected third-party politics. The two organizations clung to each other, both believing that the CPPA was the key to creating the new party.⁵⁰

THE FINAL LAP: 1923-1924

The years 1921-1922 saw an improved relationship between the CTLC and the Socialists, but with the return of Al Smith as Governor, the spirits of the Tammany old guard began to rise. Smith had been careful not to take their support for granted, and wooed them with many promises. Indeed, his proposals on compensation laws, labour injunctions and opposition to the Lusk Committee (an anti-red investigative body) even generated a favourable response from original supporters of the ALP such as Thomas J. Curtis and Henry R. Linville. Curtis described the proposals as very progressive, stating that as far as he was aware, it was the best message ever from a Governor to a State Legislature.⁵¹

In such circumstances it was difficult for the Call to remain silent. Although it had not supported Smith, it was heartened by the proposals in his message. It suggested he prove his sincerity by releasing Jim Larkin, and sent a telegram to Smith demanding he release all state political prisoners. Smith replied that he would investigate their situation. However, it was far easier to persuade Smith to release political prisoners, in the post red-scare climate, than it was to get real reform through the New York State Legislature. Smith delayed before finally releasing the prisoners, casting doubt over his sincerity and briefly giving credibility to the Socialists' amnesty campaign. The issue however, and the delay in responding, was not

⁴⁹Call, 20, 21 December 1922.

⁵⁰Weinstein, p. 272.

⁵¹CALL, 4 January 1923.

sufficient to stop the relationship between the leadership of the CTLC and State Federation from growing even closer.⁵²

Even when Smith dragged his feet over issues closer to State Federation's heart, though it caused discontent, the alliance remained intact. James Holland of the State Federation, for example, was angry that pro-labour bills had been sidetracked. Though the State Legislature had been in session for three months, it had not taken any favourable action. Holland claimed that many in the legislature owed their seats to the non-partisan policy of the Federation. Though the Socialists had handled the situation quite well, they were not able to drive a wedge between the CTLC and State Federation leaders.⁵³

The increasingly good relationship between the old guard and Smith undermined the limited support the CTLC had given the Socialists. The CTLC's support for the Call proved to be a brief marriage of convenience. The Socialists, however, believed that the CPPA could overcome local AFL opposition to third-party politics, even though the CPPA had rejected this path. They based their hope on the concession made at the CPPA convention. Not wanting to completely alienate their more radical allies, the CPPA had resolved that State Conferences could be called. These miniature versions of the CPPA would decide at a local level how to intervene in elections. Theoretically, this left the door open to third-party politics at the state level. Oblivious to the fact that the New York State AFL was dominated by those opposed to all independent political action, the New York Socialists grabbed enthusiastically at this possibility.⁵⁴

Hillquit, convinced they could win over a state convention of the CPPA to supporting "federated" action, spelt out the strategy for the months ahead at the ALP's Second Convention. Even though the 230 delegates present decided to form a statewide labour party, they would wait for the state CPPA to act. The 92 large unions affiliated to the ALP would work towards winning the State Federation's May convention to political action. The number of supporting unions was, in fact, less than when the original ALP had been launched in 1919. With hindsight

⁵²Call, 5, 6 January 1923, 6 April 1923.

⁵³Call, 5, 6 January 1923, 6 April 1923.

⁵⁴Minutes of Second Annual Convention of The American Labor Party, New York, 25 February 1923, American Labor Party Minutes; Call, 25, 26 February 1923.

Hillquit's rationale and sincerity seems questionable. Nonetheless in early 1923 he was genuinely optimistic. This optimism was not so much based on the reality of the situation in New York, as on national events. The fact that the conservative Rail Brotherhoods were at the centre of progressive political action proved to him that the offensive against labour was forcing even the most conservative leaders leftwards. It was not necessary to have great powers of prophecy to predict that in 1924 the two main parties would stand presidential candidates unacceptable even to the Rail Brotherhoods. They would be forced to realise the logic of independent political action. It was only a matter of time before the more backward New York leadership would follow suit. The CPPA nationally had created an opening in which the Socialists could make progress towards a new party. They would not force the issue, but would wait until they could convince a majority of New York unions to their side.⁵⁵

Convinced by Hillquit's reasoning, the ALP voted to stay in the CPPA, rejecting a united front call from the Workers Party as insincere. Convinced of the need not to frighten their more conservative allies by taking any precipitous action, they decided against sending a delegation to the national FLP convention, initiated by the Chicago labourites, which was to take place on 3 July 1923. They resolved to work inside the CPPA to persuade the Rail Unions and others of the need to build a new party. The lack of large union support made such action premature. As an affiliated member of the CPPA they had a duty to explore every possibility of building statewide through that body. They shared the hopes and desires of the FLP but opposed its methods.⁵⁶

New York FLP members, though "loyal" to the Party, also believed it would be unwise to attend the Chicago conference. It could imply they were withdrawing from the CPPA. Thus the Socialist Party strategy of waiting for the CPPA leaders was supported, not only by their creation of the ALP, but also by the New York FLP. This meant

⁵⁵Call, 24 March 1923; Minutes of Second Annual Convention of The American Labor Party, New York, 25 February 1923, American Labor Party Minutes.

⁵⁶Call, 21 May, 27 June 1923.

that in reality the New York FLP was more loyal to the aspirations of the New York Socialist Party than the FLP leadership in Chicago.⁵⁷

No doubt the Socialists believed that the Chicago FLP was a failure compared to their own party. However the New York Socialists, unlike Fitzpatrick and his supporters, were not a decisive factor in either the city or state central bodies. Perhaps together they could have created a pole of attraction, but with the Chicago forces abstaining from the CPPA, and the Socialists investing all their efforts in it, they could not agree. This is not the place to detail the failure of the Chicago initiative, but there is no doubt that if the Socialists had supported the 3 July Convention, not only would it have been more effective, but it might not have been captured by the Workers Party. With the two most powerful labour centres of progressive and Socialist politics divided over the strategy for independent working-class politics, it was impossible to launch a serious national alternative to the conservatism of the AFL leadership.

The New York Socialists soon discovered that this conservatism was not as easy to shift as they predicted. In the month that Fitzpatrick and his supporters were embroiled in a fiasco with the Communists, the Socialists also suffered a major setback. At the end of July the long awaited convention to launch a statewide CPPA took place. Three hundred and sixteen delegates, representing half a million workers and 100,000 Socialists, gathered at Albany. The precarious position of the Socialists was made obvious from the start. The Socialist and ALP delegates had to wait on the pavement, as the 16 sponsoring Railroad Brotherhoods discussed who they would admit. Although they eventually were admitted, the Workers Party was not so fortunate, and was barred. Later on the Socialists were, to all intents and purposes, expelled from the convention. Yet when the coup de grace was delivered, the Socialists innocently claimed that it was a matter of great surprise. Perhaps some of the rhetoric delivered at the Convention caused them to forget the embarrassment of waiting out on the pavement for an hour. Thomas F. Ryan of the Conductors was cheered when he said in "ten years we would have a Ramsay MacDonald here". Those doing the cheering were members of the Rail Brotherhoods and organizations affiliated to the ALP; there was very few delegates from

⁵⁷Minutes of General Council, 21 June 1923, American Labor Party Minutes.

any other source. This should have rung alarm bells for the more alert. The placing of leading Socialists on various committees probably reassured them that everything was going well.⁵⁸

Hillquit requested on behalf of the majority of the organization committee that the CPPA Conference be put on a permanent basis. The speech was followed by a sudden and unexpected two-hour attack on the Socialists by the Rail Brotherhoods leaders. They accused the Socialists of trying to gobble up the convention. The Socialists refused a request that they should withdraw. At 1:15 A.M. the Railmen voted to disown the convention which they had actually called, deciding to reconvene on their own. The result was that no organization was set up. Incredibly, Hillquit declared that a labour party was still inevitable.⁵⁹

The basis of his optimism was explained in a Call editorial. It was the insistence of conservative union leaders that labour operate through the old parties' primaries that caused the split. As far as the Socialists were concerned, there could be no compromise on independent political action. However, the Socialists had refused to put the matter to a vote. The union leaders responded by retreating to an isolated position, refusing all cooperation with political and labour forces. Though the situation was not going well in New York, the Socialists still believed that nationally there was a drift to independent political action. This was not completely fanciful. In Minnesota the Rail Brotherhoods supported the Farmer Labor Forces; and even Labor, the national newspaper of the Rail Brotherhoods, supported them.⁶⁰

A few days later the Call offered further analysis on what had transpired at Albany. One problem was that not all unions had been invited. The paper believed Tammany had taken fright at the warm response to Hillquit's speech and had led the attack on the Socialists. The sudden change of mood could be explained only by the agitation of Tammany. The fact that many unions were not represented made it easy to turn the convention into a railwaymen's non-partisan political convention. It was argued that the attack had been led, not by trade unionists, but by upstate Tammany politicians. The facts of the Calls'

⁵⁸Call, 30 July 1923.

⁵⁹Call, 30, 31 July 1923.

⁶⁰Labor, 14 October 1922.

analysis are not in dispute. The problem with this analysis is that it failed to address the problem of how to break the railmen from non-partisan politics. No doubt Tammany played a scurrilous role, but the railmen were committed to involvement in the old party primaries, and the Socialists to standing independently. These two strategies were diametrically opposed. It was this incompatibility that had led to the breakdown, not just the conniving of Tammany. The Socialists' analysis failed to deal with the depth of the problem. The only solution offered was to wait for national events to push things their way.⁶¹

Forced to enter the 1923 municipal elections without the mass weight of labour behind them, the Socialists had to content themselves with the fiction of the ALP; except that the ALP, or even the FLP, could not appear on the ballot paper due to electoral regulations. In the last election the organization had been listed as Socialist- FLP. Now the ALP had to sail completely under the Socialists' banner. None of this stopped the Socialists from behaving as if they were responsible for a fully fledged labour party. They carefully passed resolutions that did not raise too many issues, sticking "wisely" to those issues that directly affected New York men and women. The two main issues they concentrated on were housing and traction. They believed without doubt "that every organization in the ALP will heartily endorse them". The shift to the right did not stop with the kind of reformist campaign they had criticized the FLP for in years gone by. In their effort to turn themselves into a mainstream labour organization they prepared to divest themselves of the Call, the only English-language Socialist daily in New York. It has been suggested that this was due to financial difficulties; however no attempt was made to raise funds to save the Call. If the reason was financial, then the Socialists sacrificed their only English newspaper without a fight. The change was presented as a great political opportunity. Instead of being the voice of the New York Socialists it was to be the voice of labour. If this was meant to be the solution to financial problems it turned out to be a very ineffective one.⁶²

⁶¹Call, 2 August 1923.

⁶²Call, 7, 28 August 1923; Bernard K. Johnpoll's, Pacifist Progress: Norman Thomas and the Decline of American Socialism, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1987; orig. 1970), p. 38, makes no mention of the overall strategy of the New York Socialists in this matter. He cites only financial reasons. This ignores the fact that the most

As they prepared to hand over the Call to a stock company of New York Trade Unions, the Socialists criticized the national FLP for being dormant between election campaigns, allowing organization to disintegrate and then requiring rebuilding for each campaign. In addition they noted that it lacked an "official newspaper". No doubt the irony of the situation escaped them. They believed that the new labour newspaper would be an official newspaper for the ALP in New York. So great was their determination to create a third party that they were prepared to sacrifice their only English mouthpiece. The problem they failed to envisage was that the trade unions, even Socialist and progressive ones, did not have the commitment to politics that they themselves had.⁶³

Even before the new paper appeared, the amount of news about the Socialists began to decline. On 1 October 1923, the New York Leader was inaugurated with two pages of sports news and a dully presented page of official union news. Its attacks on the Workers Party were not something new; the Socialists and the Call had considered it a hostile grouping that was a fair target. What was new was the uncritical reportage of AFL policy. Gompers' views were regularly published without criticism, although he was taken to task for not supporting the CPPA. George P. West, special correspondent for the Leader, favourably quoted William Johnston's view that the CPPA did not conflict with the non-partisan policy of the AFL. At the same time Johnston claimed he believed that a party was "coming", but they would have to win the support "of the labour movement as a whole". West's article made no mention of the contradictory logic of Johnston's position.⁶⁴

However, the AFL convention took such a reactionary stance on the issue of a labour party that West was forced to analyze the

important activity of the NYSP at this time was gaining influence in the CPPA. The motivation was first and foremost political; financial reasons may well have reinforced the argument for liquidation.

⁶³Call, 24 August 1923. On 28 August 1923 the Call announced a change of ownership to "Labor Press Association Inc" a joint stock company of trade unions. This was declared as a step towards making it a real paper of the working-class movement. Progressive unions such as the ILGWU, ACW and Teachers held shares. New York State Socialists also had representatives on the board. Norman Thomas was appointed Editor-in-Chief and Heber Blankenhorn made managing editor. The paper now appeared under the title of New York Leader. Johnpoll, p. 39.

⁶⁴New York Leader, 1, 4 October 1923.

situation seriously. He noted that conservatives on one side, and radicals on the other, had crushed "Progressive Fabians" at the AFL's Portland convention. Even Johnston of the CPPA and the Machinists had joined in the 12 to 1 vote against a labour party. John H. Walker of Illinois, a founder member of the FLP, spoke against the party. This one-time Socialist endorsed the conservative Matthew Woll as well as Gompers on the issue. Woll in turn had linked William Z. Foster and the Communists with the Labor Party. Max Hayes, representing the Typographers, made a principled speech in its favour; he was rewarded with a nasty personal attack from Walker. Woll predicted the downfall of the British Labour Party once it got into government. As far as the AFL was concerned, a labour party was further away than ever.⁶⁵

This was too much even for the now more moderate New York Leader and it mildly rebuked Walker, stating he should not have been taken in by the Communists. A labour party was essential to dealing with the questions of the mines and railroads. Such criticism of AFL leaders was the exception rather than the rule. The new attitude of the Leader towards the AFL and its leadership did not go unnoticed by its readers. The editor admitted he had many letters attacking the paper's view on AFL. He agreed that AFL leaders, such as John L. Lewis of the miners union, had wrongly attacked progressives, but that they must continue to work inside AFL. This defence was somewhat disingenuous, as most readers of the New York Call had been accustomed to working with or inside the AFL, as had the Call. It was the increasing emphasis on the "official" side of the AFL, and the decrease in political criticism, which was the real issue.⁶⁶

Though a major backer of the "new" paper was the non-AFL Amalgamated Clothing Workers, it was not a solid advocate of a labour party. Its members were split between support for the Socialists and the Communists. The ALP and the FLP were additional supplicants for the ACW's support. The ACW solved the problem by supporting all working class parties while opposing the Republican and Democrats. Joseph Schlossberg, the Editor of Advance and Treasurer for the Leader, made this position clear. He praised the latter paper but argued it was mistaken to advocate voting for any one particular party. He claimed he had always abstained from telling his members to vote for any one

⁶⁵Call, 10 October 1923.

⁶⁶Leader, 11, 20 October 1923.

party, though he had urged voting for working-class candidates. He wanted to make it clear that though he was treasurer of the Leader, he did not wish that to be taken as endorsement of the paper's political line. Perhaps Schlossberg had a bad memory, for in 1920 Advance had attacked the FLP and declared that Debs was their candidate. However at this stage the ACW still enjoyed good relations with the Workers Party, and perhaps wanted to avoid any conflict with them by being too closely involved with the Socialists and The ALP.⁶⁷

Indeed the ILGWU, which put far more effort into supporting the Socialists and the ALP, was involved in a serious faction fight with the Trade Union Education League (TUEL) and its Communist supporters. The ILGWU leadership was determined to purge the union of the TUEL and by implication the Communists. This might also explain their enthusiasm for the ALP; it was a useful left cover for their purge of the Communists. Of course the Socialists had always had a good relationship with the ILGWU, and the case was the same for the ACW, but it was the non-AFL union that was cooling towards them. It was the ACW that had more weight in the New York labour movement. With its central role in the reorganized Leader, the ACW's view was all important. This explains why the Leader's campaigning for the ALP and the Socialists was somewhat muted compared to the propaganda the Call had always provided at election time.⁶⁸

The New York Socialists entered the 1923 elections in an extremely weak position, with reduced membership, no partisan newspaper, and not even the wholehearted support of the ACW. Even their attempt to get broader forces behind them achieved very little. The Leader formally, but not very enthusiastically, called for an ALP vote. The ALP did not exist as far as election rules were concerned -- only the name of the Socialist Party could appear on the ballot papers. In spite of all this, the Socialists claimed to be optimistic and grasped at the few straws of comfort that were available. Much was made of the fact that the Citizens Union had endorsed a handful of ALP aldermanic candidates. No mention was made that they had also endorsed a far larger number of Republicans. The Leader was proud that the Citizens

⁶⁷Advance, 23 July 1920; 26 October 1923; Weinstein, p.308.

⁶⁸Justice, 21, 28 September 1923; Edward P. Johanningsmeier, Forging American Communism: The Life of William Z. Foster, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 206.

Union had endorsed Socialist Candidates; it claimed that the fact that non-socialists were endorsing them was the sign of a breakthrough. All this proved that the ALP was worth supporting (a rather illogical deduction as the article had been about the Socialists).⁶⁹

Unfortunately the breakthrough never came. There were no banner headlines in the Leader to herald election day. The main coverage of the election was about Tammany. It was Jacob Pancken, a well-known Socialist municipal judge, who got the best results for the Socialist\FLP alliance, with 35,000 votes for Greater New York City Associate State Judge. The Leader's editorial had to admit that the rest of the results were disappointing. Not a single Socialist or ALP candidate won an aldermanic or assembly seat. They claimed the best policies and arguments, but these did not win elections. Rather, the Leader noted, party machines, subtle flattery, handshakes, kissing babies, cupidity and transporting voters to the polls did. They would fight on. There may have been much truth in all these explanations, but these factors were not new to New York, or anywhere else. They had not stopped the Socialists doing better in the past.⁷⁰

The poor election results were rapidly followed by a another blow. Without any prior warning the editorial of the Leader declared, "LEADER SUSPENDS WITH THIS ISSUE". It claimed that though it had doubled circulation from 10,000 to 20,000, the cost of maintenance was still too high. No warning had been given of the crisis, or attempts made to raise the money. It was obvious that a daily political newspaper was not a priority for the Leader's trade-union owners. The Call had run for 15 years; the Leader had not lasted 15 weeks. The Socialists were not strong enough to step back into the breach and relaunch the paper straight away. Now they had no electoral representatives or daily English-language newspaper in the whole of New York. Putting the Call in the hands of the labour movement had proved a serious error. Taking into account Schlossberg's attitude, the central role of the ACW may have been particularly damning. By mid-January 1924 the Socialists managed to launch a new English-language newspaper, but this time it only came out weekly. Named after the British Labour Party organ of the same name, the New Leader was full of articles on the

⁶⁹Leader, 30, 31 October 1923.

⁷⁰Leader, 6, 8 November 1923.

British Labour Government. It was also firmly back in the hands of the Socialist Party.⁷¹

Reduced to a weekly newspaper, and reeling from their worst election results for over a decade, the Socialists tried to keep up their morale and encourage their new allies. At the first General Council Meeting of the ALP after the election, Joseph D. Cannon, with masterful understatement, declared that those who failed to give the situation a thorough analysis might find the outlook not so encouraging. That they had elected none of their candidates in New York City, and very few elsewhere, could lead to a pessimistic train of thought. However, he was encouraged by the fact that in spite of a passive campaign they had polled over a hundred thousands votes. (The figure was obtained by adding up every single Socialist vote cast.) They had not put one single paid speaker in the field. The organizations at the meeting must do more than send delegates to the Council; they had to spur their organizations into activity. Marie B. MacDonald, organizer of the ALP, gave a report which raised more problems than it solved. As well as lethargy created by post-war reaction, there was also the hostile activity of the Communists. They had support from many of the clothing unions and the Hebrew Trades. But a campaign for support amongst the Workmen's Circles had to be delayed until the troubles with the Communists had subsided. A decision that no group affiliated with the American Labor Party can belong to a political party not affiliated to the ALP had caused the withdrawal of two "Communist Organizations". Some 40 unions were affiliated to the ALP, but the majority of these were needle trades locals, with the ILGWU predominating. This was a limited and narrow base of support.⁷²

In what was a presidential election year, and the prelude to the La Follette campaign, the prospects for the Socialists and their ALP organization did not look good. Nonetheless, James Oneal believed that it was still forging ahead. The "magnificent showing of the British Labour Party" had inspired the Socialists. In addition election returns at state and national level indicated that a substantial block of American voters supported independent political action for labour.

⁷¹Leader, 12 November 1923. The new weekly appeared on 19 January 1924.

⁷²General Council Minutes, 24 January 1924, American Labor Party Minutes.

Thus it was on the basis of vicarious success rather than any concrete achievement that the Socialists looked forward to the events of 1924.⁷³

The ROAD TO LA FOLLETTE AND OBSCURITY

If the actual strength of the New York Socialists and the ALP had been the criterion for launching an independent presidential campaign in 1924, it would not be unreasonable to state that the campaign would never have happened. Of course the Socialists were well aware that they lacked the strength to launch such an attempt - that is why they had refused to join in attempts to launch a national third party. Even after their rough treatment at Albany at the hands of the Railway Brotherhoods and Tammany, they remained committed to the CPPA. This was in spite of the fact that the forces who controlled the statewide CPPA were opposed to independent political action. The odds of any major force inside the New York labour movement supporting an independent campaign were remote. The CTLC was once again strongly allied to Tammany, and the State Federation to Governor Al Smith. But the chance of a campaign taking place was not just dependent on the balance of forces in New York. National events soon would change the odds.

When Magnus Johnson, gubernatorial and senatorial candidate of the Minnesota FLP, had addressed the ALP's convention the previous Fall, he had warned that the third party would be strong enough to stand its own presidential candidate in 1924. This action would be dependent on the Democrats and Republicans running "standpatters" in the 1924 presidential election. The New York Times had mocked Johnson and his "small fry" as romantic rebels with delusions that they could break things open. Johnson's assessment turned out to be more accurate than that of the Times' editor. For the decision of the Democrat and Republican conventions to nominate "standpatters" was unacceptable to the most conservative sections of the AFL and the Rail Brotherhoods, and Johnson's prophecy was fulfilled.⁷⁴

Coolidge was already unacceptable to the Rail Brotherhoods for his actions against the rail strikers and his support for the Esch-

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴New York Times, 1, 2 October 1923; Richard M. Valelly, Radicalism in the States: The Minnesota Farmer Labor Party and the American Political Economy, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), 41.

Cummins Bill. They did not expect much better treatment from Davis. At first the Railmen had hoped that William G. McAdoo would be the Democratic candidate, but due to his involvement in the Tea Pot Dome scandal he was unable to win a majority. La Follette had already failed to get the Republican nomination. The CPPA felt it had no alternative but to ask La Follette to stand. La Follette's acceptance letter arrived at the CPPA convention on 4 July 1924, but he made it clear that he stood as an independent, not as a candidate of a third party.⁷⁵

For the Socialists this was a mixed blessing. For several years they had been saying that the reality of the US political system would force conservative labour to break with the two main parties. In one sense they were proved right, in that La Follette was an independent candidate, but he did not represent a third party. The Socialists had attacked him on numerous occasions for not breaking with the Republicans; they had also made it plain that they would not go along with non-partisan politics. Indeed, just before the CPPA 4 July Convention the American Labor Party, and its affiliated groups, overwhelmingly passed a resolution committed to an independent party of labour, composed of industrial, agricultural and professional workers.⁷⁶

The Chairman of the ALP, De Hunt, made the intentions of the Executive Committee clear. In the event of the CPPA convention not adopting this policy, the delegates of the American Labor Party and its affiliated groups would have no further function in the convention. Reality turned out to be the complete opposite; the Socialists fully capitulated to the La Follette bandwagon.⁷⁷

The capitulation at the CPPA convention was presented in a heroic light. The Socialists had prevented the attempt to steamroller the convention into immediately endorsing the La Follette nomination.

⁷⁵Philip S. Foner, History Of The Labor Movement In The United States Volume 9: The TUEL to The End of the Gompers Era, (New York: International Publishers 1991), pp. 339-345; Kenneth Campbell MacKay, The Progressive Movement of 1924. (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), pp.112-114.

⁷⁶General Council Minutes, 24 June 1924, American Labor Party Minutes.

⁷⁷Minutes of the General Council, 24 June 1924, American Labor Party Minutes.

Hillquit had persuaded the conference to defer its decision until 4 pm. The very next day he had seconded the nomination of La Follette. He praised La Follette's labour record as nothing to be ashamed of, but believed the real achievement was the new alliance that had come together. He believed it spelt the beginning of a new political movement, of which the great masses of organized labour were the backbone. A convention was to be called the following January to "permanently crystallize these forces into a lasting movement". However heroic Hillquit's action had been, the fact is it contravened the policy of the ALP. This did not prevent the Party from concurring without dissent. In other words, they had ignored their own insistence on independent political action.⁷⁸

The basis on which they abandoned that commitment was that Hillquit had delayed the nomination of La Follette by a few hours and gained a promise of a convention in the future. This would take place after the election campaign was over. Hillquit had certainly played an invaluable role in selling the package to any Socialists and labourites in his own camp who might be dubious about the La Follette bandwagon.

The Socialist Party did not wait to see which way the AFL would jump. Delegates at its 12th National Convention voted, by 115 to 17, to endorse the action of the CPPA. A minority opposed, arguing that they were prepared to cooperate in building a labour party, but the promise to form a party the following January was too vague to justify not nominating their own candidate for president. Debs was not at the convention, but had sent a telegram stating it would not be wise to nominate a Socialist candidate for president under the circumstances. The telegram contributed to making the decision almost unanimous. Once the decision was taken, Debs gave his full support, and announced that the Party would have thrown away the greatest opportunity of a lifetime if it had made an independent nomination. The New Leader claimed that it was not dropping the banner of independent labour politics. On the contrary, several million organized workers were associated with the Socialists in holding the banner aloft. They were stepping back a pace or two to meet the main army of labour, so that they could march forward together.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Organizers report to General Council 30 July 1924, Minutes of the ALP General Council, American Labor Party Minutes.

⁷⁹New Leader, 12 July 1924.

Nearly a thousand members of the Greater New York Socialist Party met to endorse the La Follette candidacy, with only a few dissenting votes. The ALP also announced its intention to back the La Follette campaign. As a constituent part of the CPPA the ALP would nominate a full ticket, but then step down in places for the CPPA candidates. Not everyone in the ALP agreed with the new policy. FLP member Robert Ferrari declined the ALP nomination for the 13th Congressional District. Since the La Follette campaign was not a third party, he believed he was left with a choice between isolation or fruitful cooperation with a congenial political group. Therefore he decided to back Coolidge. He was particularly scornful that it was the Socialists who had nominated him, as they had "declined in principle and deteriorated in action". However amongst leading FLP and ALP members Ferrari was an exception; the rest enthusiastically supported the campaign. Lefkowitz and Nathan Fine served on the statewide La Follette Campaign Committee for the FLP; De Hunt and MacDonald sat on it from the ALP.⁸⁰

The AFL leadership did not respond as rapidly as the Socialists and the CPPA, but by 5 August, having received rough treatment at both Republican and Democrat Conventions, the Federation issued an appeal supporting La Follette. The executive made it clear that this was support for an individual, not a third party. They were free from obligation to any party machine. Neither Republicans nor Democrats provided a platform that labour could support; the La Follette platform with its end to the evil of injunction was one they could support. The logic of events had dictated support for independent candidates, as the two old party political organizations had lost all vestige of claim to the support of the American people. Perhaps realizing that the implication of his attack on the old parties could be interpreted as support for a third party, Gompers backtracked by adding: "The future may bring a rejuvenation of one of the great political parties with a return to honesty, morality in the public service, idealism and high-principled action, but for that we shall have to await the event." The

⁸⁰New Leader, 19 July 1924; Times, 25 July, 6 August, 7, 8 September 1924.

campaign was to be non-partisan in the manner of all previous campaigns.⁸¹

In theory non-partisan politics meant independence from the two main parties, but in practice it usually meant support for the Democrats. For some AFL officials in New York state and city, it meant a very close working relationship with the Tammany Democrats. A few officials did support the Republicans, but for the most part it was the close relationship with Tammany that underlined the hostility to independent political action. These officials had been very keen to block the progress of the FLP, and had gone into alliance with Gompers to do so. No doubt he was gratified at the support he got from these officials. What appeared to be loyalty to Gompers and the AFL in 1920, was revealed as loyalty to the Democrats and sectional interest in 1924. It was not even the case that the AFL wanted the New Yorkers to drop support for Al Smith and Mayor Hylan. They could still support them.

It was only the Democratic presidential candidates that they were to oppose. Tammany's commitment to the Democrats was so total that the leadership of the CTLC, and the State Federation, refused to back the official AFL La Follette Campaign. This meant that Gompers had to suffer the embarrassment of the leaders of the AFL's largest state and city central bodies opposing AFL policy. Ironically it also meant that those who had rebelled against the AFL in favour of independent politics, now called on its members to obey Gompers. The opposition of the union officials to AFL policy had serious repercussions for the La Follette campaign in New York.

The initial momentum of the campaign gave the appearance that the labour movement, Socialists and liberals, had all united under the auspices of the CPPA. At Albany 45 presidential electors were nominated representing every section of the movement. Members of the Progressives, Socialists, ALP, FLP, Trade Unions and the WTUL were on the list. The committee for the campaign was even broader, including members of the NAACP, the United Hebrew Trades, Fiorello H. La Guardia, and numerous representatives of the Railway Brotherhoods. It was

⁸¹Appeal for La Follette campaign from Executive Council, 5 August 1924; Press release 17 September 1924, American Federation of Labor Records: The Samuel Gompers Era, (cited hereafter as AFL Records), Speeches and Writings, reel 119, (Microfilming Corporation of America, 1981);
New Leader, 9 August 1924.

proclaimed that all the forces that would find their way into a labour party had been welded together in the campaign. At first sight it looked very impressive. The promise of labour's endorsement had certainly united the majority of liberals and progressives behind an independent campaign. This was something the FLP had never been able to do.⁸²

Unfortunately New York labour was not as united as the picture painted by the Socialists. The CTLC sent letters to affiliated unions advising withdrawal from the city-wide CPPA convention, claiming that the city-wide division of the CPPA lacked the authority to call such a convention. The La Follette headquarters insisted that the meeting would go ahead, playing down the importance of the opposition by arguing that the CTLC's action was a trivial matter that could be straightened out. The La Follette forces did not believe that the CTLC wanted to kick over the programme of the AFL. The opposition, it claimed, was a result of a misunderstanding.⁸³

At first it appeared that the La Follette supporters' assessment was correct, for the CTLC endorsed the AFL's election campaign at its next meeting. The only vote against was that of the Longshoremen's delegate. Afterwards several longshoremen visited the La Follette headquarters to protest that they were not supporting Davis or Coolidge. John Buckley, head of Local 856 of the Longshoremen's association, claimed: "Nine tenths of our men are voting and working for La Follette, and all are particularly bitter against Dawes. No former officers of our organization who are now holding political jobs can deliver our rank and file."⁸⁴

Labour support for the campaign was further strengthened at the State Federation meeting at Schenecatady. Once again only the Longshoremen opposed, with James P. Ryan, of the Longshoremen speaking against. Formally, the CTLC and State Federation were now overwhelmingly supporting the progressive campaign.⁸⁵

⁸²New Leader, 23 August 1924.

⁸³Times, 18, 19 August 1924.

⁸⁴Times, 22 August 1924.

⁸⁵Times, 29 August 1924.

Yet the ink was hardly dry on the reports of these decisions when a number of AFL officials and bodies began to oppose the campaign. At a national level, Berry, president of the International Printing and Pressman's Assistants Union, announced that the AFL could not bind members to voting for La Follette. The AFL had not committed itself to any party or candidacies; thus he would support the Democrats and Davis. As the election drew nearer opposition intensified. On 7 October the executive of the Building Trades Council of New York City decided to endorse the Democrats for state and national tickets. The Brooklyn Council came to the same decision. James P. Holland, President of the State Federation of Labor, was more cryptic in his opposition to La Follette. He stated that Gompers could not control labour and swing its vote to La Follette, and that no one, including himself, could do that. Labouring men would vote for whom they individually wished. He also attacked Coolidge, clearly hoping labour would vote Democrat.⁸⁶

Worse was to follow. On 31 October the Times front page proclaimed "CITY LABOR COUNCIL WITH 700,000 VOTERS SWITCHES TO DAVIS". A number of CTLC officials did not believe La Follette could win, and felt his campaign would aid Coolidge and Dawes. They praised Davis's record and endorsed him, claiming that the shift was in response to constant demands by members to support Davis and not La Follette. However the Times article was misleading; it was not a full meeting of the CTLC that had taken the decision. The call had been signed by a number of leading officials of the CTLC. It was not an official decision of the CTLC, but was used by the Times to give that impression. One of the signatories, Curtis, had made the transition from supporting the FLP to backing the manoeuvres of Tammany in the CTLC.⁸⁷

Defections from La Follette to the Democrats continued when "officers" of the New York City Allied Printing Trades Council and the New York State Printing Trades Council endorsed Davis. A spokesman for the city print council stated that no member of labour in their right mind would support Coolidge and Dawes, but a vote for La Follette would split the opposition and let them in. He went on to claim that Davis had a good record on labour issues. The Times gleefully used these example to portray labour as badly split. It gave the impression that

⁸⁶Times, 29 August, 9, 22 October 1924.

⁸⁷Times, 31 October 1924.

the decisions had been taken by the unions as a whole, or were clearly official policy. In most cases the anti-La Follette forces represented individuals or groups of officials. Rather than oppose the La Follette campaign at open delegate meetings they had bided their time, and had made their opposition known later. As leading figures in the New York labour movement their opposition could not be taken lightly. Whatever the official status of their opposition, it appeared to many that labour was badly split and unable to deliver its vote to La Follette.⁸⁸

The fact that those who had in the past opposed Gompers over independent political action were now supporters of the AFL's electoral stance did not necessarily endear them to the AFL leadership. For Gompers was not supporting a third party, just the La Follette presidential ticket. Some of the new loyalists were also supporting Socialist, ALP and progressive candidates. The "rebels" were refusing to back La Follette, but they were supporting many Democrats that Gompers wanted to see elected. In particular Gompers had a close relationship with Al Smith.⁸⁹

No doubt with this in mind, J.P. Coughlin of the CTLC, wrote to Norman Thomas, Socialist candidate for Governor, asking him to step down. He feared that if the Socialist vote increased Smith's chance of re-election would be doomed. Whether he believed this or not does not matter; it was a useful way of presenting the Socialists as the splitters. Gompers had no intention of taking firm action against the rebels, but he did make it clear that the rebels did not represent CTLC policy.⁹⁰

Gompers told the press that the CTLC statement of support for Davis was issued neither by the CTLC, or by its executive board, but had been produced at a rump meeting. Six of the fourteen present at the meeting had refused to sign the document as it was in violation of the direct instructions of the Central Labor Council. Thus the statement only represented the machinations of a few individuals. Gompers had recently warned "freedom-loving citizens" to watch out for such dirty tricks. Gompers dealt with the crisis in New York by arguing that it was of no importance. In one respect this was little different to the

⁸⁸Times, 1 November 1924.

⁸⁹Conference 28 July 1922, AFL Records, Conferences, reel 122. Gompers met Al Smith to persuade him to stand for Governor.

⁹⁰Leader, 18 October 1924.

way the labour La Follette campaign had dealt with the problem. It was not just Gompers who rebuked those not carrying out AFL policy. Johnston, the President of the IAM and Chair of the CPPA, denied that New York City labour was split over the La Follette campaign. However his denial was not backed up by any evidence.⁹¹

The executive council of the Longshoremen's union rebuked the New York City Council of Longshoremen for defying AFL election policy. Anthony J. Chlopeck, president of the International, believed the request was "bunk" got up by the Chairman of the United States Shipping Board, T.V. O'Connor, ex-president of the Longshoremen. O'Connor believed labour should support the Republicans. Timothy Healey, president of the International Brotherhood of Stationary Fireman and Oilers, left his sickbed to visit La Follette and assure him his members were backing him "almost to a man". He claimed that the CTLC's support only represented a few Tammany men, and that there was no real sentiment for Davis in the organization.⁹²

Clearly there were serious divisions amongst the New York trade union-leaders over the election. Apart from expressions of disapproval, little was done to discipline the rebels. Indeed Gompers had already left himself an escape clause in the event of being unable to enforce the endorsement of the La Follette campaign. At the Atlanta Convention, he had stated that the Federation of Labor was made up of organizations enjoying full autonomy and that the central body could only make a recommendation. Gompers was not always so liberal on the enforcing of AFL decisions on political activity. The AFL executive often threatened the disaffiliation of bodies that ignored its will, or even withdrew the salary of dissidents.⁹³

Those campaigning for La Follette in New York had the handicap of a substantial opposition. Nonetheless they were carrying out official AFL policy. This enabled them to build a more effective campaign for an independent presidential candidate than they had previously been able to. It is also the case that the CTLC was formally committed to La

⁹¹Gompers' press release, 1 November 1924, AFL Records, Speeches and writings, reel 119; Times, 12 October 1924.

⁹²AFL News, 25 October 1924; Times, 3 November 1924.

⁹³Times, 19 August 1924. See Chapters Seven and Eight for details of AFL action against John Fitzpatrick and James Duncan for opposing AFL political policy.

Follette's candidacy. It was not until the very last week that its officials abandoned the campaign. Thus the CTLC nominated 12 speakers to aid La Follette; most of the speakers nominated remained loyal to the campaign.⁹⁴

For the first time in several years the ACW put its national support behind candidates in a general election, asking its 140,000 members to back La Follette. They declared that the actions of the CPPA in endorsing him was a big step forward in workers' consciousness. A few days later delegates from 127 unions attended a meeting to launch the New York City campaign. However, the bulk of finance promised was from the needle trades.⁹⁵

The campaign was given an added boost by Fiorello H. La Guardia, who forsook the Republican ticket for the progressive party campaign of La Follette. The Socialists, the ALP and its FLP allies all agreed not to oppose La Guardia. In return La Guardia accepted the fact that the Socialists would nominate him on their list. A La Follette Clerical Workers Progressive League carried out extensive propaganda amongst clerical workers in the city. These included bank clerks, insurance clerks, stenographers, typists and accountants. The League distributed literature specifically aimed at clerical workers. As well as urging a vote for La Follette, leaflets stressed the need for white-collar workers to join unions. Much was made of the fact that La Follette had fought for higher wages for Postal Employees and Federal Clerks and that he stood for the workers of hand and brain. In comparison, Davis had repeatedly opposed organized labour and Coolidge had vetoed the bill increasing the salaries of Postal Clerks.⁹⁶

A women's welcoming committee was set up for Mrs La Follette, which included Socialists and progressives. Although the NYWTUL supported the campaign, it was not supporting the ALP but the non-partisan effort. Thus it supported La Follette for president and Al Smith for Governor. The NYWTUL played a central role in organizing a La Follette Women's Division in New York City. It distributed propaganda

⁹⁴Times, 8 October 1924.

⁹⁵Times, 11, 21 August 1924.

⁹⁶Times, 8, 10, 28 September 1924; Johnpoll, p. 45; La Follette Snr., Papers, 1844-1925, box 207, Campaign Folder, Manuscripts Room, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

to attract women, not just as voters, but as workers. A Women's Division leaflet appealed to women who laboured, "with hand or brain in office, factory, school or home". The women's campaign offered cheaper rents, food, clothing and heating. Finally it promised a better life for women and their children with clean and honest government.⁹⁷

Dudley Field Malone also returned to independent politics, speaking in support of La Follette on the All Party Progressive League Platform. On 18 September the campaign organized a massive rally at Madison Square Garden. An estimated 20,000 were present; thousands who could not get in, due to lack of space, heard the speeches relayed on outside speakers. Norman Thomas, Socialist candidate for Governor, got the opportunity to address the vast crowd prior to La Follette.⁹⁸

WEAKNESSES OF THE CAMPAIGN

A major problem for the campaign in New York was the constant need to refute the propaganda of the union officials supporting the Democrats. La Follette's headquarters denied that the labour vote was affected. They argued that the local executives concerned did not reflect rank-and-file opinion, and that straw polls amongst workers put La Follette ahead of the Democrats in New York City. They claimed that unions representing 450,000 members in New York City supported La Follette. It was not just the progressive unions of the needle trades that supported La Follette, but also members of the largest print-workers union, the Big Six (the largest Typographers local); the Barbers' Union; thirty six locals in the painters' group; the Electrical Workers Union; as well as many others. However Teamsters, Transit Workers, Building Trades, Longshoremen and Marine Workers were absent from the published list of supporters. The absence of the first three organizations is hardly surprising, as their leaders were well-known for their hostility to third-party activity. It is more difficult to assess the importance of the missing Marine Workers, as no reason was given for their absence; in the past they had supported the FLP. Though they may not have been hostile to La Follette, it is an

⁹⁷Women's Division Leaflet, La Follette Papers, box 207, Campaign Folder; Schneiderman to Nancy Cook, 18 September 1924; La Follette-Wheeler Campaign Committee to Maud Swartz, 23 October 1924; WTUL Papers, Collection IV, Correspondence, (Tamiment ref. 3055).

⁹⁸Times, 22 October 1924. Leader, 18 September 1924.

indication that the campaign was not maximizing its potential support.⁹⁹

If the splitters were as insignificant as the La Follette camp claimed, it is surprising that so much time was taken up refuting them. As the campaign drew to a close the big names were wheeled out to do the attacking. Burton Wheeler attacked the Tammany labour leaders at a New York Rally. Arthur Garfield Hays, progressive candidate and state chairman of the third party campaign, and Norman Thomas also attacked the Tammany labour men and Governor Smith. Thus in the closing stages of the campaign La Follette's supporters concentrated their fire on an internal opposition of AFL conservatives.¹⁰⁰

An added weakness was the lack of substantial financial support. As previously stated, the bulk of campaign money was promised by the needle trades. AFL unions did not have a tradition of raising vast sums for electoral campaigning. By 1924 the unions were also weaker in terms of membership and finance. Many members had been involved in long drawn-out strikes and suffered wage cuts. The ACW had survived major lockouts, and by the time of the election its weekly newspaper had been reduced to fortnightly publication. The Socialists no longer had a daily newspaper. Nonetheless there were other weekly newspapers campaigning for La Follette. The railworkers' magazine Labor carried out a vigorous campaign on his behalf. The AFL national newsletter also carried news of the campaign. Justice, the weekly newspaper of the ILGWU, campaigned enthusiastically for La Follette, as indeed did most official union newspapers. The New York mass circulation Jewish Socialist press also supported the campaign. Thus the support of the trade unions inside and outside the AFL cannot just be calculated in terms of the money donated to the main campaign.

The New York Socialists were weaker than ever, but for the duration of the campaign they had acquired temporary allies. They were also the most important centre of Socialist strength nationally, which may contradictorily have created further weaknesses. Leading local members such as De Hunt went on national speaking tours for much of the campaign, thus depriving the ALP of some of their most prominent

⁹⁹Times, 2 November 1924.

¹⁰⁰Times, 3 November 1924.

members. De Hunt also had a substantial trade-union base and his absence must have undermined local effectiveness.¹⁰¹

THE RESULT

La Follette received 281,527 votes in New York City. The Socialists claimed that half of these were placed in their column on the ballot paper. This was a slight exaggeration: 133,024 of La Follette's votes were cast on the Socialists' ballot, and 148,503 on the 'Progressives'. Whatever the breakdown, the city vote for La Follette was 20.14 per cent. This was 3.5 per cent above the national average and nearly 6 per cent over the New York State average. In no borough did La Follette get a majority. His best results were 100,746 in Kings (Brooklyn) and 86,664 in New York County. Coolidge's plurality in New York City was 136,240, garnering 626,111 to Davis's 489,871. There is no doubt that the Socialists, trade unionists and progressives had made quite an impact on New York politics. They had achieved a vote higher than Coolidge's majority. However the Socialist candidates fared very poorly. Standing for Governor, Norman Thomas received only 44,852 votes from the whole of New York City. Nearly 40 per cent of this came from Brooklyn. New York County provided only 12,652 votes.¹⁰²

Thomas's poor showing was not a freak; he had been too busy campaigning for La Follette to push his own candidacy. Often he agreed not to mention the Socialist campaign when on La Follette's platform. In almost every congressional district where the Socialists stood, they polled half or less than in 1920. Ironically, the only district where the vote held up was the 20th Congressional, where the Socialists polled 42.7 per cent. However it did them no good, as the victor was La Guardia for whom they had stood down. In fact when Hillquit stood in 1920 he had obtained a slightly higher share of the vote (42.8 per cent) but was not elected as he faced a fusion candidate. The fact that the Democrats and Republicans remained divided in 1924 gave La Guardia a majority of some 3,700 votes. The Socialists had made a major contribution to the strength of the La Follette vote, but in doing so they had neglected their own profile. Their allies had benefited from their intervention, but the Socialists had gained little in return. The

¹⁰¹Leader, 1 November 1924.

¹⁰²Times, 30 November 1924.

Socialists were the only part of the alliance genuinely committed to independent political action, but now, weaker than ever, they would not be able to stop their allies from deserting the cause. Too weak to take any initiative on their own, they would have to return to ploughing their lone electoral furrow.

CONCLUSION

La Follette's New York City vote was two per cent more than he won in Chicago, but 17 per cent less than in Seattle. That New York did better than Chicago is somewhat surprising, as the CFL had remained united for the La Follette campaign. The fact that one in five voters broke with the main parties is quite impressive. This raises an interesting point: New York was as ethnically diverse as Chicago, but had delivered a higher progressive vote. Indeed unions that represented "foreign" workers, such as the needle trades, had played a central role in supporting the campaign and delivering their members' vote. How could this be explained?

Though there are several differences between New York City and Chicago, the one that is most relevant to this question is the existence of a strong Socialist tradition in the City. The Socialist tradition in Chicago was weaker. It can also be reasonably assumed that if the New York's official labour bodies had united behind the La Follette campaign, the vote could have been even higher. However the chapter on Chicago, which follows, will demonstrate that electoral success is not just a matter of official trade-union support, but of political organization. It is also the case that larger workplaces and more industrial-style unionism does not guarantee political results. Though New York's La Follette vote was less than Seattle's, the difference between the two cities was less pronounced than the case had been for the presidential election campaign of 1920. Kenneth Campbell MacKay noted that the La Follette vote increased in urban areas generally, and in New York State particularly. In fact the vote was even higher in New York City. It would seem that the factors of urbanization, a Socialist tradition, and trade-union organization combined to give New York greater political success than Chicago. As Chicago was also urban, and had a strong trade-union tradition, it was political tradition that was the key difference between the two cities. These factors and issues will be considered further in the following

chapters on Chicago and Seattle.¹⁰³

¹⁰³Johnpoll, p. 45; Times, 30 November 1924; Leader, 8 November 1924; Svend Petersen, A Statistical History Of The American Presidential Elections, (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1981), pp. 275-280; MacKay, The Progressive Movement of 1924, pp. 219-227.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TWO STEPS BACK: RED FLAG TO WHITE FLAG: CHICAGO 1921-1924

In May 1924 John Fitzpatrick announced, at a fur workers' convention, that he had given up hope on political activity. Instead he praised the union label campaign, offering it as the way forward. He briefly mentioned the FLP, but only for the purpose of attacking factional behaviour. The speech lacked the coherence of Fitzpatrick's earlier contributions. No doubt he found the sudden change from insurgent trade unionist to AFL loyalist, denouncing independent political action, a painful experience. How was it possible that a man who had been a thorn in Gompers' side for so many years was mouthing banal craft routinism as a political way forward? The answer is not to be found in the psychological make-up of Fitzpatrick, but in the experience of the CFL and the labour movement he led. The transformation of Fitzpatrick was also the transformation of the politics of the Chicago labour movement.¹

This chapter deals with that transformation, and in the process explains the factors that caused Fitzpatrick's dramatic surrender. This surrender also meant the end of the Cook County Farmer Labor Party (CCFLP). Fitzpatrick and the CFL's commitment to building a third party ended almost immediately before the Robert La Follette Presidential campaign began. This had repercussions for both the campaign and independent political action in general. This chapter will focus upon three major themes: the collapse of the CCFLP; Fitzpatrick's and the CFL's surrender to AFL policy; and finally the experience of the La Follette campaign.

In the previous chapter on Chicago it was observed that the high point of electoral success for the Cook County Labor Party was the Fitzpatrick Mayoral vote of 1919. Though Fitzpatrick out-pollled the Socialists, the vote was not sufficient to give the new party credibility. In electoral terms the Party was still-born. The Party

¹Fitzpatrick Speech 12 May 1924, Report of the Proceedings of the Sixth Biennial International Fur Workers Convention, American Labor Union Constitutions and Proceedings, reel 50, p. 8, (New Jersey: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1977).

never recovered from the inability to challenge the established party machines. From the peak of 1919 the trajectory for the CCFLP was steeply down-hill. Electoral returns diminished until they were almost non-existent. At the end of 1922 the CCFLP suspended most of its electoral activity, intending instead to conserve its strength for a big push in the 1924 election campaign.

In the 1924 Presidential election campaign a third candidate, Robert La Follette, did achieve a substantial vote that was far higher than any other independent labour candidate had ever obtained in Chicago. Ironically this limited success was achieved at a time when the Chicago Federation of Labor had completely abandoned independent politics. The Chicago party had briefly performed better than its counterparts in New York, but it never became a second party as the FLP had in Seattle. Though the New York party did poorly, it managed to sustain electoral activity right up to 1924 by uniting with the Socialists. In Chicago the antipathy between these two parties meant that no such lifeline was available. In addition the Chicago Socialists were far weaker than their New York counterparts and, for the most part, performed poorly at the polls. Thus, between 1921 and the demise of the Party in May 1924, there is little of importance to say about the CCFLP.

This being the case, why devote a large section of this chapter to the activities of the CCFLP? If man does not live by bread alone, neither do parties live entirely for elections. The CCFLP was the vehicle through which the CFL chose to pursue its goal of independent political action. The fact that the Party was not electorally successful did not undermine the CFL's commitment to building a labour party. It did this in the face of both voter apathy and fierce opposition from the conservatives within the AFL. Yet the CFL ironically abandoned this strategy at a time when sections of the unions were moving towards a more independent form of politics. Thus the CFL's relationship to the CCFLP is central to answering the questions why the CFL abandoned its commitment to independent political action, and how this affected the Chicago labour movement's intervention in the La Follette campaign of 1924.

The failure of the 1920 FLP election campaign, locally as well as nationally, forced FLP activists to assess the reasons for their defeat. Fitzpatrick concentrated on organizational explanations, and forced through changes of personnel and organization. Some of these

changes, the national secretaryship in particular, became a time bomb, ticking away, and finally blowing up in his face in late 1923.

Fitzpatrick believed that the "greatest handicap" in the 1920 General Election campaign had been the fact that the FLP Illinois state secretaryship and national secretaryship were combined. This, he concluded, meant that neither the national or state branch had the services of a full-time secretary. His solution was to propose that Jay G. Brown become the national secretary, and that Frank J. Esper relinquish his national duties and concentrate on the state branch.²

Brown was a very able organizer, former International President of the Timber Workers Union and a former secretary of the National Committee to Organize Iron and Steel Industry. He was also a close friend and colleague of W. Z. Foster. Brown's appointment would become one of the causes of the split between left and right in 1923, but this was not foreseen in late 1920. Esper did not take his removal lying down. He protested against Fitzpatrick's plans, making no reference to Brown, even though Fitzpatrick's case was that he was a more efficient organizer. Esper did not give any political reasons for his opposition but based his case on organizational matters.

Esper argued that the combining of the Illinois and national organizations were "one of the greatest assets" in the campaign. The Illinois Farmer Labor Party had been the main source of funding for national expenses. He singled out only one county branch for criticism, that of Cook County. It had a permanent secretaryship, yet had not paid one cent to the state or national organization. Fitzpatrick's motion would mean opening up a national headquarters, duplicating all costs of administration. Esper's protest was in vain, and by early December, Brown as National Secretary was on a committee to push organizational work throughout the country.³

Thus the main explanation given for the failure of the 1920 general election campaign was organizational. The theme found echo in rallying call of S. T. Hammersmark, secretary of the CCFLP, to the Cook County FLP membership. Now was the time to build party organization.

²Resolution 30 October 1920, Fitzpatrick to FLP national committee, Fitzpatrick Papers, box 9 folder 66, Chicago Historical Society.

³Edward P. Johanningsmeier, Forging American Communism, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 146-147; Letter to National Committee, 2 November 1920, Fitzpatrick Papers, box 9 folder 67; The New Majority, 1 January 1921.

There was the impending threat of a new constitution for Illinois; this would include anti-labour measures. They had to organize quickly to kill the proposed constitution. However when Hammersmark resigned the secretaryship in June 1921, the Party was almost non-existent.⁴

The new secretary, Gifford Ernest, believed that fighting unemployment and the open shop should be the main thrust of rebuilding the Party. Where ward organization did not exist, the county organization would direct the campaigns. Whether the issue was the Constitutional Convention or unemployment and the open shop, the New Majority did not give these matters major coverage in the first few months after the Fall election. Editor Robert Buck, and to a lesser extent Fitzpatrick, believed that internationalism was the key to winning over workers, especially those from a East European or Irish background.⁵

The front page of the New Majority often led on the crisis in Ireland; inside articles protested at US Russian policy. There were still many articles on issues of local concern, but these were usually the smaller items. Fitzpatrick was heavily involved in campaigning for Irish Freedom. He believed that if the FLP was seen as the most principled organization on the issue, then it could break the Chicago Irish from the main parties. Fitzpatrick told the Irish that only the FLP was "four-square for the recognition of the Republic of Ireland". He urged a boycott of English goods and a support of the FLP as the way forward. But it is worth noting that as the year progressed, the balance between international and domestic issues changed. Increasingly the paper led with domestic issues, and put international issues on the inside. This was not a change of principle, but a change which took into account the threat that labour was facing.⁶

For by late January the ferocity of the open-shop campaign and the threat of unemployment had grown. The New Majority exposed the secret open-shop plans of employers' associations. The "Lincoln

⁴CCFLP letter, 15 June 1921, Fitzpatrick Papers, box 10, folder 73.

⁵For further details of Chicago workers and foreign policy see E. McKillen, "Chicago Workers and The Struggle To Democratize Diplomacy 1914-24", (PhD, Northwestern University, 1987)

⁶New Majority, 26 Feb 1921. The change of emphasis from international to domestic is worth noting, as a misreading of McKillen could lead to identifying the CFL's political intervention solely with international issues.

Birthday Number" presented "Abe" as a union man who supported the right to strike. Of more significance was the report of the Chicago Federation Of Labor meeting held the week before. The CFL intended to take "aggressive" action against the open shop. For the most part this meant educating workers about the threat of union busting, and recruiting and holding on to members. The New Majority was to play a major part in this activity, carrying news of the campaign to union members. The railroad workers' conflict with the Rail Labor Board also became a front-page issue.⁷

Concerned at the growing threat of unemployment, Fitzpatrick turned the CFL meeting of 21 February 1921 into a special delegate conference on the issue. Unemployment could become a threat to union organization. One solution advocated was trade with Russia. It was also concluded that the New Majority was the best way of educating workers of the need to fight unemployment and the open shop. Indeed the threat became even more serious as the Meatpackers (the employers) moved to reduce wages and get rid of the 8-hour day. Twenty-five thousand stockyard workers attended a union meeting to protest at wage cuts. Every week the New Majority led with the attacks suffered by rail workers, printers, stockyard workers, miners and builders.⁸

As these attacks grew in intensity the ability of the FLP to intervene diminished. By the spring of 1921, the situation was so serious the CFL devoted a major part of its meeting to the future of the New Majority. Robert Buck claimed that the finances were so parlous that publication might have to be suspended. He was bitter that W.Z. Foster had resigned as business and circulation manager. This, he claimed, forced the acceptance of advertising as a form of revenue. Buck also complained that the unions affiliated to the CFL were not sincere in pushing the paper. He refuted claims that poverty, or the need for referendums before subscribing, were valid excuses. He also rejected the argument that the inability of members to read English affected sales. He believed that dedicated non-English speaking trade unionists would do their duty and subscribe. The unions should help such members to understand the paper. The only solution that resulted from Buck's complaints was the CFL's offer to work with the New

⁷New Majority, 8 January, 12, 26 February 1921; CFL Minutes, 6 Feb 1921.

⁸CFL Minutes, 20 March 1921; New Majority, 19 March 1921.

Majority's staff to find ways to induce unions to take subscriptions. The debate had been lengthy, the solution short and simplistic. In reality, it was yet another call for increased support, based on will-power and no different to previous attempts that had failed.⁹

BACKS AGAINST THE WALL

The issues concerning the New Majority were for the most part the same as the concerns of the Cook County FLP. The issue of unemployment was used to canvass door to door in the 27th precinct. But there were no reports of activity in any other precinct. Reports came from the joint county and Illinois branch secretary, and not from activists. Reports in the New Majority claimed that interest was being shown in the county party. Quarterly conventions were reported as well attended, but no figures were given.¹⁰

Internal correspondence painted an entirely different picture. In April 1922 Gifford Ernest wrote to the Executive Committee of Cook County FLP, urging that they meet as the last meeting was "non quorate". On the very day that the Cook County Primaries took place, due to difficulties in getting quorate Executive Committees, the Delegate Convention authorised the committee to select a committee of five. A letter invited all Executive Committee members to meet and appoint the new committee. The apathy could not be explained by the calibre of candidates standing: they included Ed Nockels for Sheriff, Hammersmark for County Clerk and Gifford Ernest for County Superintendent of Schools. These candidates were well-known in the Chicago labour movement, yet even the Executive Committee showed little interest in the campaign. Was this a matter of obstruction or apathy?¹¹

It was most unlikely to be either. The cause was the same as that outlined in the previous chapter on Chicago. The Party's key activists were also leading activists in the trade unions. As the unions were under attack these activists were needed to organize their defence. The Stockyards strike of December 1921 was defeated, and by

⁹CFL Minutes, 20 March 1921.

¹⁰New Majority, 16 July, 1 October 1921.

¹¹Letter Gifford Ernest to Executive Committee CCFLP, 5 April 1922, Fitzpatrick Papers, folder 81 box 11; Letter Gifford Ernest to Executive Committee CCFLP, 11 April 1922, Fitzpatrick Papers, folder 81 box 11.

early 1922 the packing plants were effectively operating as open shops. In response to the bosses' offensive the CFL organized, at the beginning of 1922, a massive anti-open-shop campaign. This was not based on strike action, but propaganda which culminated with a demonstration in late April. Fitzpatrick was concerned that it should be a massive event that would deter the employers from taking any further anti-union action. This was not a favourable time for organizing such action. The movement was reeling from defeat after defeat. In July that year, due to a lack of enthusiasm, the CFL decided not to organize a Labor Day Parade. Therefore to ensure that the demonstration, succeeded a massive propaganda and educational campaign was organized. Leading activists such as Fitzpatrick, Hammersmark and Arne Swabeck were centrally involved in the campaign. These were the same activists centrally involved in promoting the CCFLP.¹²

The concentration of resources on the demonstration paid off, with "scores of thousands" marching. The Chicago press was divided on the total numbers, but between 50,000 and more than 100,000 were reported to have participated. The massive turnout was a tribute to the efforts of Fitzpatrick and his colleagues. Of course it was easier to unite labour on the issue of defending union organization. There is no sign that this activity fed back into building the CCFLP. If it did there was no evidence of it in the Fall election results.¹³

Of the 19 districts where they could field candidates for the Illinois Legislature, they only stood in three. The six candidates got a total vote of 6,086. Of these 3,105 had been won in the 25th district. The Socialists did far better. In several districts a single Socialist candidate out polled the total FLP vote. To all intents and purposes this was the end of the Cook County Farmer Labor Party, though it remained in formal existence a while longer. The first reaction was that although Chicago was the "most difficult kind of a field" for the FLP, they still should have done better than a "measly 6,000 votes". Attempts should be made to revive the Chicago labour movement's interest in the Party for the 1923 city elections. By mid-January 1923 this was considered too ambitious. The Party decided to forgo intervention in the 1923 City elections in order to fight and train for

¹²New Majority, 7 January, 29 April 1922, Halpern p. 57.

¹³Round up of Chicago newspaper reports in the New Majority, 6 May 1922.

the 1924 elections. This decision marked a major retreat, yet the usual reports claiming that membership was growing, and that conventions were better attended, still continued to appear. No actual figures were ever given to back up these claims. Was it a matter of self-delusion or even outright lying? The Party was clearly weaker and less effective than ever.¹⁴

The key to the better attendance lay with the Workers Party (the Communists). At the October 1922 Cook County FLP Convention they had sent 12 delegates from unions; another 10 non-Communist union delegates attended. This represented a total of 17 unions with 9,000 members. Cook County contained the majority of the CFL's membership, yet only a tiny fraction of these were represented; it demonstrates how weak the Party was. As the political interest of the Communists moved away from abstention to involvement in the FLP, so the size of Cook County Conventions grew. However, even with increased Communist participation, in June 1923 the delegates only represented 25,000 union members. To say that national politics was now the driving force behind the existence of Cook County FLP is not to demean the activists involved. Many of the Communists involved had a tradition of working with Fitzpatrick and the Chicago progressives. Nor were their reasons for promoting the party very different from Fitzpatrick's. It is extremely difficult to explain why Fitzpatrick, having persisted with the CCFLP for so long, dropped it so very quickly. The explanation does not lie entirely in Chicago. However it is not the intention of this thesis to look in detail at the national events that led to the collapse of the FLP, and the formation by the Communists of the rump Federated Farmer Labor Party. It is the repercussions that followed this fiasco that is of concern here.¹⁵

Fitzpatrick had intended to build a national progressive coalition inside and outside the AFL. The Cook County party gave him an

¹⁴Chicago Daily Tribune, 9 November 1922; J.G. Brown, National Secretary of the FLP, reporting in the New Majority, 2 December 1922.

¹⁵New Majority, 14 July 1923. Attendance at CCFLP in a report written November 1923. Reproduced in James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism: Selected Writings and Speeches 1920-1928, (New York: Prometheus Research Library, 1992), p. 160.

The role of the Communists and the forming of the FFLP is detailed in full in Theodore Draper, The Roots of American Communism, (New York: The Viking Press, 1957) and James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism, (cited in full above).

independent base for this project. Fitzpatrick's need for the CCFLP was similar in some ways to the tactics of the New York Socialists, which kept the American Labor Party (ALP) alive to pursue their aims. (Ironically they supported the CPPA, and Fitzpatrick opposed it. In 1924 the bigger irony would be that both dropped their insistence on a third party before backing La Follette.) It was the Cook County Party that organized national conventions, and delegated Fitzpatrick to Illinois State Party gatherings. It provided him with a base independent from the AFL national leadership, which constantly put him under pressure to abandon his progressive aims. As Fitzpatrick intended to relaunch the FLP in mid 1923, it was no time to abandon the CFL's own party. Neither was Fitzpatrick prepared to abandon the FLP in favour of the CPPA. He had welcomed the launching of the CPPA. But growing disenchantment led to the FLP nationally withdrawing from the CPPA in early 1923. The reason for leaving was the failure of the CPPA to break with non-partisan politics.¹⁶

When the CCFLP requested that the CFL set up a committee to consider united working-class political action, Fitzpatrick took this as an opportunity to relaunch the FLP on a broader basis. This was in contrast to the decision of the national executive of the FLP a year earlier to reject a unity proposal from the Socialists. Fitzpatrick now called on all labour, farm and political groups to attend a national convention to participate in forming a "program for unity of political effort by the workers". It was clearly an attempt to build on the failure of the CPPA to support independent political action. Although the talk was of unity, the July convention was described as a national convention of the FLP.¹⁷

The attempt to build influence on a national scale was doomed from the very beginning. In spite of their earlier calls for unity, the Socialists were not prepared to take part. They were scared of

¹⁶New Majority, 24 February, 17 March 1923.

¹⁷Report of the FLP of Cook County Quarterly Convention, January 1923 in the New Majority, 20 January 1923; Letter, 9 November 1921, Jay G. Brown to Otto Branstetter National Secretary of the Socialist Party, Fitzpatrick Papers, box 11, folder 77. Brown informed Branstetter that the majority of the national executive felt there should be greater unity and closer cooperation between progressive groups. However, they felt that the prejudice that had been built up against the Socialist Party militated against any formal agreement. Fitzpatrick had been one of the Executive that had opposed formal unity by a narrow majority of one.

frightening off more conservative trade unionists in the CPPA. These trade unionists either found the CPPA too radical, or alternatively were satisfied with it; and therefore saw no reason for supporting a third party.

In a contradictory sense the existence of the CPPA was evidence of a radicalizing of trade unionists, in particular the Railroad Brotherhoods, but it also served to isolate Fitzpatrick and his allies. It became a focus for those disillusioned with the inactivity of the AFL. This meant that rather than the FLP being the focus of opposition, the initiative passed to the often conservative railroad unions. It also meant that the one of the major centres of left-wing trade unionism, New York City, refused to join Fitzpatrick's initiative. There the progressive unions preferred to work inside the CPPA, whatever its limitations. As trade-union sentiment grew for independent politics, the Socialists' and progressive unions' strategy in New York had serious repercussions. It meant that the only organized force prepared to back the relaunching of the FLP was the Workers Party. With the Socialist unions boycotting the national FLP convention, Fitzpatrick was outvoted by the Communists and lost control of his own initiative.

DESERTION AND SURRENDER

The capturing of the FLP by the Communists forced Fitzpatrick and his allies to disown the new party. Nationally it was a serious setback, but the consequences were even more disastrous for the Cook County FLP, leading to Fitzpatrick deserting a party he had defended through thick and thin. Gifford Ernest, the long-time secretary of Cook County FLP resigned, but stayed as secretary of the Illinois Branch. Meanwhile his wife, Ruby H. Ernest, a committee member of the Illinois party, sponsored a resolution demanding the resignation of J. G. Brown for his support of the July convention. To strengthen the attack she got William Kohn of New York to support the resolution. Only six members of the National Committee of the FLP voted for Brown's removal; and 19, including Fitzpatrick, opposed it.¹⁸

The Ernests were not quite finished. The Illinois state executive issued an ultimatum that Brown resign by 25 November 1923. The National Committee rejected the demand and Brown accepted their decision. The state executive committee seceded in protest. The

¹⁸New Majority, 3, 10 November 1923.

executive of the Cook County FLP refused to follow the seceders. This caused Ernest's supporters to resign from the Cook County Executive Committee. The County Chairman, David A. McVey, and Fitzpatrick severed all connections with the Illinois branch, and set up a provisional body in its stead. The atmosphere become so bitter that the party executive passed a resolution barring from office and conventions Party members who owed allegiance "to any group or organization in active conflict with the Cook County FLP". Whether or not this was aimed at the Communists or the supporters of Gifford Ernest is not clear.¹⁹

What was clear was that the Communists and the progressives of the CFL were split. The progressives still supported the CCFLP but opposed the notional FFLP. The CFL overwhelmingly rejected Swabeck's (Painters union delegate and Workers Party member) attempt to interpret independent political action as being beyond the remit of the CCFLP. Communist attempts to change the course of independent political action did not succeed at the CFL, as they were in a minority.²⁰

It was not the Communists who had split the Illinois party or attempted to divide the Cook County branch. It was Ernest and his supporters who did so in the belief that Fitzpatrick and the executive were too soft on the Communists. They were trying to stampede Fitzpatrick into taking a hard line against the Communists. Thus the CCFLP was not just split in two, but in three. The progressive or non-Communist supporters were divided among themselves. From the beginning the AFL executive had tried to stop CFL support for the new Party. But, with the majority of progressive trade unionists delegated to the CFL supporting the Party, and its endorsement by the Illinois Federation of Labor, Fitzpatrick had refused to come to heel. Now his supporters were in disarray. The difficulties caused by the failure of the 3 July Convention and the ensuing splits must have demoralized even the most determined. Whether it was by conviction, or loss of will-power, some of the Party's founder members, including the Illinois State Federation, withdrew support and began to persuade Fitzpatrick to do the same.

The abandoning of the FLP by the State Federation was a crucial blow; and it gave Gompers the leverage he needed against Fitzpatrick

¹⁹Majority, 1, 8, 22 December 1923.

²⁰CFL Minutes, 16 December 1923.

and the FLP. Walker made no concessions to the fact that had been an FLP activist. At the AFL national convention he launched a major attack on those supporting the FLP, declaring that if as much energy had been put into supporting AFL policy as building the FLP, more would have been achieved. Only a small number of delegates voted for the Labor Party; and they were defeated by a 12 to 1 margin. The success of Walker's attack was proof that Fitzpatrick and the FLP were effectively isolated. The realization of this fact is the most convincing explanation of why Fitzpatrick dropped his party-building activities like a hot brick. Walker disowned his past support for the party with little difficulty, due to the fact that Fitzpatrick and the progressives capitulated to the conservatives. The Communists became the scapegoat for the actions of Walker and Fitzpatrick.²¹

It took a leading Communist, James P. Cannon, to clearly analyze the mistake that had been made. The Communists had broken the united front with the progressives by splitting away to form the FFLP. The progressives, terrified of being labelled Communist, united with the reactionaries. Cannon believed that the "Gompers Machine" had been unable to beat the Communists and progressives combined. The Communists had allowed themselves to be isolated, and reaction had been given a boost. The same threat of isolation drove Fitzpatrick into the hands of the conservatives. Cannon's analysis was borne out by subsequent events. At the State Federation Convention, Fitzpatrick personally denounced resolutions because they were moved by the Communists. That the resolutions contained policies the CFL had always supported,

²¹New York Leader, 10 October 1923. Reports on 1923 AFL Annual Convention in the New Majority, 13, 27 October 1923.

Walker had already taken his decision to abandon the Party. He told Bert Jewell he did not believe it was good for labour to continue with the FLP. The executive of the Illinois State Federation had also decided to give up supporting the FLP. Gompers was overjoyed and wanted to publicise the decision as widely as possible. Gompers did not have to wait long; the following October delegates to the AFL convention were treated to the spectacle of the Illinois State Federation president attacking the CFL's policy of independent political action. Minutes, 22 June 1923 "Conference on Illinois Politics", American Federation of Labor Records: The Samuel Gompers Era, Conferences, reel 122, (Microfilming Corporation of America, 1981), (Hereafter cited as AFL Records).

including a labour party and amalgamation of the unions, made no difference.²²

But why did Fitzpatrick make no attempt to rescue any of his policies from the wreckage? Of course he could justify his attack on the Communists by noting their treachery at the 3 July conference. However, Walker had already decided to abandon the cause well before this meeting. Fitzpatrick was under intense pressure to abandon his progressive stance before his conference was "hijacked". Therefore the defection of Walker would have affected Fitzpatrick before the Communists had hijacked his conference. The Communists may well have provided, albeit unwittingly, the pretext for Fitzpatrick to retreat, but alone they could not be the reason for it.

Fitzpatrick had stood up to enormous pressure from the "Gompers Machine" over the previous 5 years. After several years of threats, the AFL executive stopped paying half of Fitzpatrick's salary. Though Fitzpatrick regretted this, he was of the opinion that the CFL would be able to carry the expense. This action by the AFL did not at first cause Fitzpatrick to retreat. He ignored this serious warning shot.²³

The key to his surrender was the fact that he could no longer depend on the Illinois State Federation for support. After all, he had gone ahead with the convention several months after losing his wages. He had been undeterred by the lack of electoral success. But now the faction fighting from both left and right, the financial drain of running the New Majority, and the deprivation of AFL funds, all combined to sap his will. The removal of support by the Illinois State Federation was the last straw. Fitzpatrick was aware that Gompers had threatened to remove his salary for years, but had not acted. Once Gompers knew the State Federation was not in full support of Fitzpatrick, he had struck. It was the threat of personal isolation

²²Report of the CFL delegation to the Illinois State Convention, New Majority, 13 October 1923; Keiser, pp. 196-197; Johanningsmeier, pp. 200-201; James P. Cannon, pp. 158-160.

²³Gompers informed Fitzpatrick of the discontinuance of one half of his salary. The reasons given for the most part were financial. However, it was also stated that the AFL could only afford to pay those fully under its direction, and that Fitzpatrick's time was taken up with much CFL business. Therefore because funds were limited, it was best that AFL funds go to those carrying out central directions; partial payment for the Chicago CFL Headquarters was also terminated. Letter Gompers to Fitzpatrick, 25 April 1923, AFL Records, Vote Books, reel 17.

from the national and state union machines, spreading to the CFL, that caused Fitzpatrick to ally with the conservatives. The role of the Communists should not be over exaggerated. No doubt their actions on 3 July did not help matters, but the main problem that day was that many left and progressive trade unionists, encouraged by the Socialists, stayed away. The Communists were not so much the cause of the retreat as an excuse. Their sacrifice provided the blood to cement unity between former enemies.

The Illinois Convention's decisions were a major watershed for the Cook County FLP. The 1922 elections had seen the Party go into abeyance, but promise to return for the 1924 elections. The convention ensured this was a promise it would never keep, firmly nailing the lid on the Party's coffin. The key to its continuing activity had been the support of the CFL -- as long as that remained it could keep up a formal existence. This it did for a few more months. On 18 May 1924 Fitzpatrick personally delivered the final blow. Reading a long statement, he stated that there had only been one genuine FLP in existence: that had been sponsored by the CFL. He described his own candidacy as a "burnt offering". He was, in the right circumstances, prepared to make such a sacrifice again. They had held the flag alone long enough. Fitzpatrick noted that the situation was now confused, with numerous political organizations trying to exploit the political hopes of workers and farmers. It was, he argued, a situation of hysteria and mania for control. This situation left the CFL with no choice but to cease all FLP activities and to throw in its lot with the AFL. Two delegates spoke against, but the decision was carried overwhelmingly. The FLP of Cook County was well and truly dead. It had not survived as long as those in New York and Seattle. It would play no role in the 1924 general election, not even as cheer leader for La Follette.²⁴

Fitzpatrick had been the initiator and defender of the CFL's political policy. Now that he had abandoned these principles he had little to put in their place. For years he had ridiculed the AFL's non-partisan policy. He could hardly be enthusiastic about a policy he had derided for so long. He also had stayed aloof from the CPPA, and now he was in conflict with the Communists. Apart from the fact that he would no longer oppose the AFL's policies, he had little else to offer.

²⁴CFL Minutes, 18 May 1924.

Though he had no way forward, he certainly did not compromise on bending to the will of AFL orthodoxy. No trace was left of the one-time insurrectionary policies of the CFL. The New Majority was renamed Federation News.

However a change of name was not enough. Robert Buck, its editor, was unhappy with the extent of capitulation. He was no supporter of the Communists and accepted that the FLP had to be put on hold for some time. What he could not stomach was full acceptance of the AFL's non-partisan policy. Using the pages of the Majority, he made it clear that the CFL's acceptance of non-partisan policy and the FLP's suspension of activity were two different things. He believed the Party and its leaders had not abandoned their principles. They were still committed to independent political action, but were simply making a tactical withdrawal. However, Buck was wrong. The Majority was a newspaper of the FLP and the CFL, and the CFL would now insist that it "adhere strictly to the policy of the AFL". The policy of the AFL was total opposition to a third party, not waiting for a suitable time in which to launch one. Buck had no option but to resign. With Buck gone, there was nothing to stop the CFL's newspaper from making a massive shift to the right.²⁵

On 16 August 1924 the Federation News appeared. Its change of title and policy was a direct result of the CFL adopting the AFL's non-partisan Policy: "The New Majority has gone - long live the FEDERATION NEWS". With it had gone all aspirations to independent political action. However, this did not mean not supporting the La Follette campaign. Even before the change, the New Majority had been full of news of the La Follette campaign. In the past it had criticized the CPPA for not committing itself to a third party. Now the CFL's organ was an enthusiastic supporters of a campaign that gave no guarantees of a new party. In the past they had criticised the Socialists, but now they were in a united front with them. (Except the Socialists had kept local candidates and party organization)

However the Federation News' enthusiasm was not uniformly reciprocated by the CFL as a whole. Some labour party activists, such as Buck, abstained. However, several activists were heavily involved in the campaign. It is true that Fitzpatrick did not play as prominent a role in the 1924 campaign as in previous elections. But the CFL and

²⁵New Majority, 7 June, 5 July 1924.

Federation News went beyond token support. As will be seen, sections of the CFL enthusiastically supported the campaign.²⁶

THE CHICAGO ROAD TO LA FOLLETTE

In early 1923 the FLP had broken with the CPPA. But the CFL's support for the CPPA's La Follette campaign in 1924 did not come completely out of the blue. Fitzpatrick had been closely identified with the FLP's break with the CPPA. He was not so closely associated with the return to the fold. However, signs of a thawing of relations between the CPPA and the CFL, and even the FLP, were obvious by early 1924. The Illinois branch of the FLP agreed to meet with the Illinois Conference for Progressive Action. They also agreed to send delegates to the national CPPA convention in Cleveland on 4 July, and to discuss backing La Follette's candidacy. The elected delegation included Fitzpatrick loyalists and Cook County activists such as David McVey, Robert Buck and Lilian Herstein. Surprisingly, Fitzpatrick was not on the delegation but he accepted the post of State Chairman of the FLP. Clearly he had not yet decided to burn his political boats. The joint Illinois conference did not come to any agreement, but relations remained friendly and the FLP did not withdraw.²⁷

The fact that the FLP, nationally and at county level, made it clear it would not be standing in the 1924 election removed any further obstacles to possible unity. This happened at the same time that the CFL agreed to return to the AFL's non-partisan policy. Yet the CFL delayed until 17 August 1924 before endorsing the La Follette Campaign. Johnstone of the Painters Union, and the Workers Party, spoke against endorsement, but the policy was adopted by 132 votes to 18. The slowness in adopting the policy may not have been due to apathy but to

²⁶E. McKillen claims that the CFL and Fitzpatrick were lukewarm about the La Follette campaign (see McKillen cited above). Her claim is based on Keiser's treatment of Fitzpatrick (Keiser, p. 147). He notes that Robert Buck did not judge the campaign to be genuine independent political action. Keiser claims that the Labor Party men of Chicago could not follow the labour conservatives in supporting La Follette. The only proof he gives are letters from Buck to Fitzpatrick. No replies from Fitzpatrick to Buck are cited; thus Buck's motives are ascribed to Fitzpatrick. Keiser makes no mention of any other "Labor Party men".

²⁷New Majority, 26 April, 10 May 1924.

caution. In the aftermath of factional fighting it is likely that Fitzpatrick wanted to present the policy as being that of the Illinois State Federation. Delegates to the CFL would not lightly oppose State Federation recommendations. Thus the issue was not presented as endorsing La Follette, but as supporting the State Federation's political policy.²⁸

The delay in endorsing the campaign was not mirrored by the CFL's newspaper. From the very beginning it was full of enthusiasm. It did not wait for AFL endorsement to rally behind the CPPA's candidate for President. It also gave the impression that a labour party would result from the campaign. Extensive coverage was dedicated to reporting the CPPA's and La Follette's platform. From the first announcement of La Follette's standing, to the day of the election, the CFL's newspaper remained a fervent campaigner for "fighting Bob". The New Majority, even with a new editor, ran ahead of the AFL and CFL in supporting La Follette. Whatever the delay, by mid-August both the state and city federations were supporting the La Follette campaign.²⁹

On 25 August the CFL's Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee moved into action. Fitzpatrick and Nockels were both present. Fitzpatrick explained that the AFL wanted every possible effort made to ensure the campaign's success. The committee formed a corps of speakers. Finance would be raised and shared between the CFL, AFL and La Follette Committee. They concurred with the State Federation by not encumbering the La Follette ticket with any other candidates. Registration cards would be issued to volunteers to encourage commitment. Whatever the outcome of the campaign the CFL clearly intended to take it very seriously. Though Fitzpatrick did not stand as an Illinois Elector for La Follette, Nockels and W.E. Rodriguez did. This meant that the CFL was represented by heavyweights, as was the defunct FLP of Cook County.³⁰

The most active organizer for the CFL's campaign was Anton Johannsen. A leading anarcho-syndicalist, Johannsen believed that workers should own and operate all industry. He was part of the progressive bloc inside the Carpenters union, which in 1919 had been

²⁸New Majority, 24 May 1924; CFL Minutes, 17 August 1924.

²⁹New Majority, 12 July 1924.

³⁰New Majority, 30 August 1924.

enthusiastic campaigners for the Labor Party. He threw himself with tireless energy into the campaign, stirring the CFL to action, visiting affiliated unions, organizing big meetings and parades. Johannsen's centrality undermines the contention that those who had supported the CFL's independent political action in the past did little for the campaign. It is also surprising that it was Johannsen, a long-time friend of W. Z. Foster, who was leading the campaign.³¹

Johannsen reported that local unions were responding well to the request for financial contributions. Organizing meetings were inspiring events with leading political speakers addressing large numbers of volunteers. Enthused, they were drawn into plans for canvassing on the day of the election. A large number of delegates, including Johannsen moved a resolution that all local unions should declare a holiday on election day. Unions should do everything to convince workers and their families of the importance of election day, persuading them to spend as much of the day as possible overlooking the polls. The resolution was carried. Here was excitement similar to that which heralded the CFL's first independent political electoral intervention. The campaign did not let up as the election neared. In the final weeks of the campaign the CFL held yet another spirited organizing meeting. Johannsen addressed representatives from every ward in Chicago. The local Chairman of the Cook County La Follette Wheeler campaign committee spoke, and messages of support from La Follette, Wheeler and Gompers were read out. Immediately before the election the Federation News led with the AFL's call to redouble efforts during the final days of the campaign.³²

By the end of the campaign the CFL had been instrumental in raising \$11,215.80 for La Follette. Of this sum \$7,949.00 had been directed to the La Follette headquarters. The amount raised does not compare unfavourably with the \$12,791.89 raised in donations for Fitzpatrick's 1919 campaign. It must also be kept in mind that the CFL

³¹Richard Schneirov, Union Brotherhood, Union Town: The History of the Carpenters Union of Chicago, 1863-1987, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), pp. 96-98; New Majority. 4, 11, 23 October 1924.

³²Report to CFL 19 October, in Federation News, 23 October 1924; Federation News, 25 October, 1 November 1924.

was much weaker by 1924, in terms of both membership and finance. The figures show that the CFL was seriously committed to the campaign.³³

It is more difficult to assess Fitzpatrick's personal contribution, but there is no evidence that he tried to undermine the campaign. In some areas the opposite is the exact truth. He was prominent amongst the sponsors of the "Fola La Follette Unit" (Fola was Robert La Follette's daughter). The unit was made up completely of labour women in honour of Fola La Follette's support of striking women household linen workers in 1921. Women workers were reminded that Fola had stood on the picket lines in that dispute. Of course, compared to the major parties, the funds and resources received by the La Follette campaign were minuscule. However, in Chicago, the unions were major contributors.³⁴

Unlike the New York Campaign, there was no major opposition within the CFL to its support for La Follette. Also the Illinois State Federation was firm in its support for La Follette; and the central bodies remained united in their support. In Chicago itself unions, considered conservative in New York terms, supported the campaign. The Non-Partisan Political Committee contained representatives from the Teamsters, most of the building trades, as well as the unions usually considered progressive. The Building Trade Council endorsed La Follette and Wheeler. They set up a committee of seven to organize an effective campaign. The Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) was particularly enthusiastic about the campaign. When La Follette came to Chicago in October he addressed a crowd of 11,000. Afterwards there was a parade of 4,000 on which "Garment Workers predominated". This included 700 "Bobs" -- women garment workers who wore their hair in a bob to demonstrate support.³⁵

The Chicago union movement was united in its support for the La Follette campaign. Thus there was little real meat for the Chicago Tribune to chew on in terms of disunity, and it had to content itself with abstract claims of division. It claimed that the Building Trades had kept aloof from the campaign, but this was a reference to the

³³Financial reports in Federation News, 22 November 1924; New Majority, 5 May 1919.

³⁴Federation News, 1 November 1924.

³⁵Report of CFL meeting of 7 September 1924 in Federation News, 13 September 1924; Tribune, 12 October 1924.

national situation. If there was any serious opposition inside the CFL to the campaign, or dragging of feet, the Tribune did not discover it. Unable to point to any serious splits in the unions, it claimed the campaign was supported mainly by the naturalized and needle trades workers. This was entirely different to the situation in New York, where the Times had a field day exploiting divisions in the New York labour movement. The Tribune used the New York reports in an attempt to undermine the Chicago campaign. However, the Federation News and Gompers were not forced to waste their time counteracting an internal opposition, as was the case for La Follette's supporters in New York.³⁶

One publication of the Chicago Progressive movement was hostile to the La Follette campaign. That was the Chicago Defender, the influential black newspaper. Though it was the case that Du Bois and the NAACP supported the third candidate, the Defender did not. Instead it enthusiastically campaigned for Coolidge and Dawes. Since the 1920 election its suspicion of the CFL and independent political action had not dissipated. The Defender felt that "white union leaders" had let them down and cited a case of striking "coloured waiters" as an example. The CFL promised support to the strikers, but according to the Defender none was delivered. The strikers were defeated and replaced by whites. This incident had actually taken place in 1903, when Fitzpatrick had been the AFL organizer for "coloured waiters". Fitzpatrick refuted the allegation at a meeting to unionize black workers. He told the 600 in attendance that white union labour had refused to work in the sacked strikers' stead, but the bosses used scab labour to defeat the strike. Fitzpatrick attacked "the false leaders of the negroes" who had used this story to keep blacks out of the unions ever since. This was obviously an attack on the Defender. Of course it was true that sections of the AFL in Chicago did exclude black labour. However, it is also true that Fitzpatrick and many of his supporters did try to recruit black workers into the unions. The problem ran very deep, and both sides could provide their horror stories. However the New Majority did not retaliate. It consistently refused to denounce black workers as strike breakers, laying the blame at the employers' door. The fact that blacks were used to replace white workers in the meatpacking industry in 1905 and 1921 was not dragged out as a defence. However, apart from economic arguments for unity, mainly at times of

³⁶Tribune, 2 November 1924.

crisis, the Majority did not regularly provide special propaganda for black workers. The La Follette campaign in Chicago, and the CFL's newspaper, made no effort to target propaganda at blacks, or involve them.³⁷

Though La Follette's denunciation of the Ku Klux Klan had impressed the NAACP, it had little impact on the Defender. It still preferred Coolidge, who had made no mention of the Klan, portraying him on the front page paying tribute to Booker T. Washington's statue at Tuskegee. The next week it devoted similar star treatment to General Charles G. Dawes, Coolidge's running mate. The Defender was well aware that Dawes was detested by union labour and justified its endorsement. The defence was not that impressive. It defended Dawes against the La Follette campaign's accusation that he was anti-union on the basis that not everything the unions did was desirable. The Federation News made no mention of the Defender's campaign. It can be assumed that they felt safer leaving the black vote uncontested, or that as a result of past experience there was little that could be done to win it.³⁸

THE RESULT

La Follette came third in Chicago, narrowly behind Davis, but way behind Coolidge who out-pollled the Democrats and Progressives combined (see table A below). In a few wards La Follette narrowly beat Davis, but in most cases he came third. In the urban areas of Cook County, La Follette had polled 17.95 per cent of the vote, slightly higher than in the country towns and Illinois state as a whole. (See Table A). However

³⁷Defender, 26 March 1921; Majority, 3 December 1921. For black organizations' attitude to third-party campaigns see Hanes Walton Jr., The Negro in Third Party Politics, passim. (Philadelphia: Dorrance and Company, 1969). For information on blacks and strikebreaking see William M. Tuttle, Jr., Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919, (New York: Atheneum, 1970), pp. 112-156, and James R. Barrett, Work and Community in the Jungle, Chicago's Packinghouse Workers, 1894-1922, (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1987), passim.

³⁸Defender, 20 September, 4, 18 October 1924; David P. Thelan, Robert M. La Follette and the Insurgent Spirit, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976), p. 188.

this urban vote was two per cent less than La Follette had garnered in urban New York City. The Illinois vote of 17.5 per cent was higher than the New York State vote of 14.6 per cent, but both figures were substantially lower than the 35.8 per cent La Follette vote of Washington state.³⁹

A comparison with New York City suggests that the Socialist Party made a difference to the vote there. But in the state of Illinois the support of the State Federation, and the tradition of FLP voting, gave the La Follette vote the edge over New York State. These figures are of course very general, and do not take into account geographic and class breakdown. If we disaggregate the vote into different wards in Cook County we discover notable differences (see tables B and C below). In table B most of the results are slightly above or around the average, whereas in table C the vote is well above the average. These wards, where La Follette received support well above his state and city average, were located in the most working-class areas of Chicago. At the "back of the yards" and South Chicago. The wards in table B have been selected on the basis that they had sizeable Polish populations in the 1920 general election. Unfortunately Kantowicz does not provide a ward breakdown for the 1924 Presidential election. He noted that 14.41 per cent of Poles who voted in Chicago did so for La Follette: this was more than three per cent below the average vote. Thus in wards where Poles predominated it is likely that La Follette's share of the vote was reduced. However Poles were only 11 per cent of Chicago's overall population, so this does not entirely explain the result. More Poles voted Democratic at 47.87 per cent compared to 21.96 per cent of the city average. However this was less than 50 per cent of the Polish community. This meant the majority of Poles had not voted Democrat. It could be argued that the Polish vote for La Follette was surprisingly high. In two Polish wards La Follette had polled as high as 18 or 19 per cent. Even the average of 14.41 per cent was higher than the Polish vote previously given to Socialists or FLP; it was second only to the showing of Theodore Roosevelt. However it cannot be denied that Poles

³⁹Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, (Washington DC: 1976), p. 287.

had given less support to La Follette than the city's population as a whole.⁴⁰

The explanation of this difference is not just that the majority of the Polish press ran a virulent campaign against La Follette. There had been nothing unique about that: all major newspapers had opposed the campaign. However, propaganda that La Follette had been pro-German in the War, and was still a supporter of the German point of view, may have hit a raw nerve amongst Poles, more so than almost any other section of US society. That being the case, it is remarkable testament to those Poles who were prepared to ignore nationalist arguments and vote for a reform candidate. It is not the case that the Poles voted as a coherent bloc in the 1924 election. Over 37 per cent had voted Republican. It would not be until 1928 that the Polish vote became a solid block, with nearly 80 per cent voting for Al Smith.⁴¹

However, in Chicago as whole, the Democrats did very poorly; in most places their vote was only narrowly ahead of the progressives. The figures do not suggest that the progressives cost the Democrats the election. They had taken slightly more votes from the Republicans than from the Democrats. Also, Coolidge's vote outnumbered both parties combined. Thus La Follette's intervention was not the cause of the Democrats' rout in Chicago.

Table A: City and Cook County vote.⁴²

	City	Country Towns	Total
Coolidge	561,584	104,776	666,360
Davis	208,512	15,767	224,279
La Follette	168,476	24,804	193,280
Total Vote	938,572	145,347	1,083,919

⁴⁰Edward R. Kantowicz, Polish-American Politics in Chicago 1888-1940, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 122-124.

⁴¹Kantowicz, pp.123-124.

⁴²Compiled from Chicago Tribune, 6 November 1924.

Table B: Wards in Cook County where Polish Voters Predominated. (La Follette's percentage share of vote cast shown in brackets.)⁴³

Ward No.	Democrat	Republican	La Follette	Total
4	2,826	19,989	2,355 (9.3)	25,170
8	4,446	14,887	4,323 (18.3)	23,656
11	4,313	5,569	2,238 (18.5)	12,120
16	4,500	8,854	3,731 (21.8)	17,085
17	3,869	13,890	3,316 (15.7)	21,075
27	4,379	8,314	3,357 (20.9)	16,050
28	4,162	10,145	4,213 (22.7)	18,520
29	6,642	10,997	5,274 (23.0)	22,913

⁴³Compiled from Chicago Tribune, 6 November 1924.

Table C: Wards in Cook County where La Follette polled above average.⁴⁴

Ward No.	Democrat	Repub.	La Follette	Total	La Foll. Share %
15	7,113	12,586	6,456	26,155	24.68
23	5,119	7,707	4,172	16,998	24.54
24	4,040	5,057	2,840	11,937	23.79
34	3,540	4,806	4,139	12,485	33.15
35	1,813	8,941	4,206	14,960	28.11
43	2,204	7,889	4,435	14,528	30.52

CONCLUSION

It was in the urban areas of Illinois that La Follette performed best. His city vote was 17.95 per cent, as against a country vote of 17.06 per cent. Both the CFL and the State Federation supported the campaign. Garment workers unions inside and outside of the AFL were enthusiastic supporters. The campaign had organized under the auspices of the Illinois State Federation, the CPPA and the progressives of the La Follette campaign. Unlike New York, the Socialists were unable to establish a separate list. A vote for La Follette had to be placed on the Progressive ballot. On average, one in five voters cast their ballot for La Follette, and in some areas it was one in three. It should also be kept in mind that many workers did not vote in US elections.⁴⁵ As an insurgent voting movement this was not insignificant. Of course it was not as successful as the Bull Moosers in 1912, but Roosevelt and his allies had split the Republican party, thus managing to obtain much of its resources and membership. The La Follette campaign of 1924 did not split either of the main parties.

Nonetheless, the campaign did not live up to expectations. In the early days of the campaign Chicago and New York newspapers had held

⁴⁴Table compiled from Chicago Tribune, 6 November 1924.

⁴⁵See discussion of Merriam's study in previous chapter on Chicago.

straw polls showing La Follette in second place, or even in the lead. New York City reported La Follette a couple of percentage points ahead of Coolidge. This would have given him a popular majority of just a few thousand votes. After a large La Follette rally in mid-October, a poll claimed his support in West Chicago had risen to 49.93 per cent. The same poll put Coolidge at 40.78 per cent and Davis at 9.93 per cent. The Tribune claimed this showed that Democrats were flocking to La Follette, but warned that the West Side figures could not be generalised to the whole of Chicago. At one stage the pro-Republican Tribune feared the Democrat vote would collapse. (The paper preferred the anti-Republican vote to be split.)⁴⁶

The Tribune's relief when the polls finally began to indicate that La Follette was beginning to fall behind was barely hidden. A massive front page headline proclaimed "FORECASTS GIVE CAL VICTORY". The national polls were indicating a big majority for Calvin Coolidge and put La Follette well behind at last. Thus, it was only a week before the election that the Tribune finally felt confident of victory.⁴⁷

So why was the early potential of La Follette's campaign not realized? As stated above, La Follette lacked a party machine. In Chicago, this meant depending on the unions and some progressives. The two main party machines in Chicago remained intact; there were no major defections to the progressives. However in 1924 this was also the case in Seattle and New York. Yet Chicago, with the stronger trade-union tradition, fared worst. It was not beset by the awful splits that occurred in the New York movement.

However, this formal appearance exaggerates the real strength and hides weaknesses. In the political field the Chicago movement was far weaker than that in New York or Seattle. In Seattle in 1920, independent political action had pushed the Democrats into second place. In New York the Socialists had established a serious third-party profile, albeit a small one. They had used it to keep the tradition of independent labour politics alive. In Chicago the Socialists were far weaker. They were not able to force the FLP supporters into any kind of alliance. When the Farmer Labor Party of Cook County died, it died alone. For the most part its former members still refused to join with

⁴⁶Tribune, 14, 17 October 1924.

⁴⁷Tribune, 26 October 1924.

the Socialists. In reality, by 1922 if not earlier, the FLP of Cook County was defunct. The high point of the 1919 election result had not been substantial enough to convince workers of the possibility of independent political action.⁴⁸

The CFL was well aware that its strategy was not working, but in the first few years it endeavoured to spread industrial unionism across Chicago. This meant that many of the more syndicalist-minded activists concentrated on this activity at the expense of the political. It may not have always been a conscious choice. Besieged by employers and courts determined to weaken the unions, real choice was too limited to be tangible. To create a class conscious working class that did not retreat into ethnic or sectional boundaries, it was necessary to involve all workers, irrespective of colour or origin, into the unions. Fitzpatrick and the CFL tried to do just that in 1919 and 1920.

The strategy had some success. Old world immigrants and some blacks did join the unions. Some of these did vote for Fitzpatrick in 1919. However, the gains made by workers in terms of organization and confidence were rapidly lost. Fitzpatrick's strategy of creating a type of industrial unionism, by drawing unskilled workers into "federated unions", had been unable to overcome the conservatism of some of the national unions in the steel and packinghouse industries. The employers were strong and the AFL was handicapped by craft organization which it would not or could not change. This led Fitzpatrick away from his old concept of federated unionism and for a time he pursued the aim of amalgamation.

By 1922, beset by defeats, the CFL passed a resolution asking the AFL to call a conference of international unions to discuss amalgamating all unions in the respective industries into one organization. It is hard to believe that Fitzpatrick and the CFL had any illusions that the AFL would help. It was more indicative of despair, or an attempt to shift the blame for failure to where they believed it really lay. Gompers was infuriated by the resolution; it angered him far more than the CFL's attempt to form a labour party. Whether Fitzpatrick was serious in pursuing the resolution or not, he had to face a vitriolic onslaught from the AFL executive. He dropped

⁴⁸David A. Shannon, The Socialist Party of America, (New York: MacMillan, 1955), pp. 18-21.

the idea within a few months, accepting the decision of that year's AFL annual convention.⁴⁹

However the damage had been done, Fitzpatrick was lumped in with the Communists, who were actively campaigning on the issue. It hardened Gompers' resolve to finally break Fitzpatrick's power. Keiser believes that Fitzpatrick's support for the resolution, and his subsequent dropping of it, stemmed from his experiences in the stockyards and steel mills. Since campaigns were not pending in those industries, and recent defeats made the possibilities for success unlikely, even with AFL support, he was not prepared to carry on fighting for the concept. Though Fitzpatrick abandoned the issue, it did not deter Gompers from intensifying his attack on the CFL leader. No doubt sensing the weaknesses of the CFL, he pushed on with his attack. The Communists continued with the amalgamation campaign without the support of the CFL.⁵⁰

Fitzpatrick was caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. If he supported issues advocated by the Communists, the AFL attacks on him intensified. If he distanced himself from the Communists, he had to drop principles he believed in, confuse his own supporters, and strengthen the conservatives. In the end, deciding he could not survive without AFL sanction, he chose the latter course. Thus he surrendered his opposition to non-partisan politics. In the past he had even rejected the CPPA as too conservative; unlike the Socialists of New York he refused to work from within to change it. It was a cause of major tension between the two cities' left-wing movements. Ironically the reason for polarization became meaningless in 1924, as both the Socialists and the CFL joined the La Follette campaign.

Yet at the time of the election of 1924, the FLP activists of the CFL remained isolated in every sense. They had broken with the Communists and Socialists and their own political organization had disintegrated. Their only possible source of strength, the CFL, had also deserted them. The CFL had suffered at the hands of the bosses on the one hand, and the conservatism of the AFL at the other. No longer

⁴⁹Majority, 25 March, April 22 1922; Executive Council Minutes, 10 May 1922, AFL Records, Executive Council Records Minutes, reel 7; Keiser, p.66.

⁵⁰Keiser, p. 66; Johanningsmeier, pp. 182, 218-219.

the strong confident organization of 1919, it capitulated to the orthodox politics of the AFL.⁵¹

There was a massive gap between the early impulse for La Follette and the actual outcome. Any explanation of that gap must take into account the collective weakness of the Chicago working class and the concomitant weakening of the CFL. Of course ethnic divisions and loyalties to the established party machines also played a role. But nothing is static or determined in advance, for in 1919 a sizeable minority of ethnic voters broke with their community leaders. Even in 1924 the difference between Polish workers and the rest of Chicago was not that enormous. Nor was the ethnic vote solidified into hard voting blocks by 1924. It is true that a majority of the black vote was Republican, but this would begin to shift towards the Democrats in the next decade. Patterns may have been emerging but they were not fixed.

During the 1924 election the situation was volatile, with opinions changing rapidly. How can the dramatic shift in support between the candidates be explained? Local and ethnic considerations cannot be ignored, and the national situation cannot be translated uniformly into the local one. But there was one national trend, and that was early support for La Follette followed by decline. This was accompanied by an increase in support for Coolidge. Moreover, early predictions that the Democrats were going to be humiliated began to be revised. La Follette was squeezed between a solid Republican vote and a recovering Democratic one. With some regional variations, it was these later predictions that became the reality. The same straw polls that predicted success for La Follette correctly predicted Coolidge's landslide victory.

The impulse for La Follette turned out to be far greater than the outcome. I have argued that the Chicago working class and its unions were far weaker in 1924 than in 1919. At the same time, the political impulse was far stronger in 1924, as of course was the outcome. Yet if the AFL had supported the move for a third party in 1919, and a stronger presidential candidate had been stood in 1920, the vote might have been considerably higher. The experience of Seattle, where well-known candidates did well in 1920, would appear to support this contention. However, the reality was that the 1924 result was more

⁵¹Keiser, p.104

substantial than that of 1920. This may appear to contradict the argument outlined above. But the correlation between working-class militancy and the desire for political change is a complex one. Defeat as well as victory can affect workers' political consciousness. There are no simple equations that can explain workers' political actions. Each situation has to be studied in relation to its specificity and conjuncture. The working class was stronger in 1919, yet the political outcome weaker. With working-class organization weaker in 1924, the political outcome was stronger. Though generalizations can be made from these conjunctures, it does not follow that hard and fast rules follow.

When workers are engaged in collective action they may be less interested in political activity. It was in fact the defeat of workers, a feeling that collective action could not work, especially on the part of those working on the railroads in 1922, that led to the political radicalization of the rail brotherhoods. The radicalization of the conservative brotherhoods led to the eventual endorsement of La Follette by the labour movement. Thus it was the weakness of labour that led to the AFL breaking with its own policy of pure non-partisanship. This was true on the local level as well as the national, in other words the weakness of the CFL made it dependent on the AFL and its form of politics. As the AFL moved in a more radical direction, the CFL moved in a less radical one. What was a radical move for the AFL was a conservative one for the CFL. Thus the CFL and AFL moved to backing a third candidate on the basis of non-partisan politics, not on the basis of party politics.

Although the unions provided support, they did not provide a party. The problem for the La Follette campaign was that it had no party machine. La Follette rejected any move towards a third party before the result of the election was known. Thus he depended, in the main, on interest groups to carry his campaign. The most important of these interest groups were the unions, but they lacked a party machine as well.⁵²

The CFL had tried to build one but failed for a variety of reasons. By the time of the La Follette campaign it had given up the attempt altogether. There was no organization left that could present a credible focus for a third party. Of course the attempt to build a

⁵²For a general assessment of La Follette's campaign see Thelan, Chaps 8 and 9.

party had suffered from hostile conditions. Perhaps if the AFL had supported it, there might have been a small but credible party in existence. Such a party might have been able to organize and consolidate the La Follette impulse in its early stages. But the AFL leadership had only been content with the complete elimination of the FLP. Thus the unions campaigned as a diverse group without a party for the election; although the AFL leadership called on the unions to provide full-time officials for the campaign. Some unions provided officials. Others were either against doing that, or were in no condition to do so.⁵³

Without a party machine, or an effective national press, the La Follette impulse was at the mercy of those who did. Arguments that La Follette meant chaos and an end to prosperity began to find a resonance amongst a working class that had come through the 1920 depression. Having suffered defeats, workers were not ready for conflict. That is why many looked to the third candidate. They wanted Congress to improve their lot, not strikes. But now they were being told that such a solution would lead to conflict and an end to prosperity. It was clear that La Follette faced formidable opposition, but he was only an individual without a party. How could he carry out his programme? Thus it was not just a matter of the opposition to La Follette, but the perceived weakness of his ability to affect change. A vote for La Follette was a vote for an individual and nothing more. As arguments and scares against La Follette intensified, the absence of an organized party, rooted in the localities, that could argue back, took its toll. In such a vacuum, geographical, ethnic and individual loyalties become more central than collective ones.

Given this situation it is remarkable that so many workers nationally, and in Chicago, kept to their original impulse and voted for La Follette. No doubt the fact of the campaigning by the CFL and its activists ensured a vote of one in five. Without them it would have been far less. But for the most part unions are most active in the workplace, and least effective in the community. Therefore at a time when workers were lacking in confidence, fearing a return of depression, they retreated even from reformist aspirations at the ballot-box. Without a party to provide the arguments required to refute

⁵³Appeal from AFL Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee, 5 August 1924, AFL Records, Conferences, reel 119.

the scaremongering of the press, and with a weakened union movement, they took the line of least resistance. At the same time the CFL's abandonment of third-party politics ensured that those votes for change were nothing more than empty protest votes with nowhere to go. The CFL was no different to the central labour bodies in this study in abandoning third party politics. The New York body had not even made it to the 1920 election. Only the Seattle body maintained its commitment to the FLP as long as Chicago. There are many similarities in the circumstances that led to the two bodies surrendering to the AFL leadership. However there was one major difference: James Duncan's personal refusal to abandon his belief in independent political action. This difference, and the reasons behind it, will be dealt with in the following chapter on Seattle.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DUNCAN'S LAST STAND: SEATTLE 1921-1924

By the end of 1920 the Washington Farmer Labor Party (FLP) had become the second party both in the state and in Seattle itself. This distinguished Seattle from the other two cities, where electoral success had not been forthcoming. However, second place had delivered very little in concrete terms. Facing a Republican landslide the FLP had only returned three members to the state legislature, none of them from Seattle. William Short believed that supporting the FLP had cost the Washington State Federation of Labor (WSFL) every ounce of its political prestige. As the new year approached the prospects did not look good for the new party. This was not entirely due to the party's failure to win electoral office, but also to the growing hostility of the Washington State Federation of Labor (WSFL). The WSFL's endorsement had been an important factor in the FLP's electoral success. But, after the 1920 general election, the conservatives in the WSFL were determined to remove its support of the FLP.¹

The main barrier to abandoning the FLP was the Seattle Central Labor Council (SCLC). James Duncan and his allies remained in control of the SCLC, and had no intention of abandoning the FLP. Driving the progressives out of positions of influence in the central body proved to be far more difficult than in New York. Duncan in particular, proved to be as resolute as John Fitzpatrick in Chicago. Duncan had widespread support in the SCLC and in the city of Seattle itself. However, his support and resolution were not enough to stop the determined assault of the conservatives. Short, in particular, had been wary of opposing Duncan and his allies head on. It was not until early 1921 that he began hostilities. Duncan and his supporters did not surrender without

¹William Short's annual report, Washington State Federation of Labor: Proceedings of the 20th National Convention, (Vancouver Washington, 11-14 July 1921), pp. 5-7.

a powerful struggle. Ironically, their defeat came just before the launching of the La Follette campaign. It meant that Seattle's workers entered the campaign without their own independent organization.

This chapter will outline the civil war between the SCLC and the WSFL, and demonstrate why the progressives were defeated. It will also evaluate the consequences of this defeat for independent political action. Since in terms of the FLP and the La Follette campaign, Seattle was electorally the most effective of the three cities, this chapter will try to identify the factors that explain the difference in results achieved. But, as discussed above, it is necessary to start with the reasons for the defeat of the progressives.

Nineteen twenty-one saw the SCLC badly prepared for the conservatives' attack. Rather than concentrate on defending themselves from the WSFL, council members spent their time attacking each other. This lack of unity convinced the conservatives that the time to strike had come. Although it seems irrational that the body should have disintegrated into factions at such a crucial time, the cause of the in-fighting was not an outbreak of insanity, but the hostile environment that Seattle's trade unionists operated within.

Though the defeat of the Seattle trade-union movement occurred almost a year earlier, the progressive and radical factions had remained united. Perhaps it was the excitement of the electoral campaigning of the SCLC and the FLP that had kept the various elements together. However, by the end of 1920, in spite of gaining an impressive vote, labour had little to show for its efforts. With William Short biding his time, waiting to get his revenge on the progressives and their allies, it was hardly the right time for them to start fighting amongst themselves. Perhaps the radicals who started the bickering had overestimated their own strength, or perhaps they thought the progressives would support them. The actual outcome of the internecine battle was the weakening of both progressives and radicals.

Dissension broke out over "labor capitalism". By labor capitalism the radicals referred to those business enterprises run and managed by members of the trade-union movement. These included a labor run laundry, a finance company, a property company and a deep salvage company. At the centre of the controversy stood the Union Record. Since the defeat of the General Strike and the subsequent rise in unemployment, sales of the Record had declined. Big business also ran an advertising boycott against it. The Record welcomed the new "labor

capitalists" as a ready source of advertising revenue. The radicals led by Phil J. Pearl saw things differently. They believed that these concerns were exploiting workers and diverting trade-union money into the pockets of the directors. Matters were brought to a head when the Record, desperate for funding, announced it would raise \$10,000 in stock. Labour had little capital, and the radicals and some of the progressives refused to give. The issue drove the SCLC into a serious crisis and completely changed the alignment of forces inside the SCLC. Both sides began to recall delegates to the SCLC in the struggle for control. Conservatives got several radicals recalled, and Duncan himself was recalled by radicals in his own union. Duncan obtained credentials from the Auto Mechanics Union and continued attending the SCLC.²

The ferocity of the conflict saw Duncan and the moderate progressives enter into alliance with the conservatives. Duncan was now depending on the conservatives to keep control of the SCLC. This dependence was to become his undoing. Increasingly the dispute strengthened the conservatives. Short seized the opportunity to weaken the progressives in the WSFL. He sent out a referendum to all affiliated unions which called for the election of the Federation's officials by balloting through the locals rather than at the annual convention. He also proposed, on the grounds of economy, to combine the offices of President and Secretary-Treasurer. Short's proposals were passed by a vote of 4,763 to 926. This ended the traditional compromise of electing Short as President, and a progressive as Secretary-Treasurer.³ Buck, who had been able to give the FLP much support from this position in 1920, was defeated by 7,179 to 1,854. Phil J. Pearl lost his position as First District Vice-President. Besieged Duncan had turned to the conservatives of the WSFL to help him beat the left. But he paid a heavy price. The conservatives gained

²Union Record, 15 July 1921; Hamilton Cravens, "A History of The Washington Farmer Labour Party 1918-1924", (MA, University of Washington, 1962), pp. 145-148; Harvey O'Connor, Revolution In Seattle, (Seattle: Left Bank Books, 1981; orig. 1964), pp. 207-209.

³Cravens, pp. 148-150.

total dominance of the State Federation. Even more seriously, the balance of power changed in the SCLC.⁴

The radicals tried to recoup their losses. During July they campaigned furiously against the incumbent officers of the SCLC. A coalition of conservatives and progressives defeated the radicals by a margin of twenty per cent. This demoralized the radicals and their ranks dwindled. Not content with having beaten the left electorally, the conservatives also secured passage of a resolution that required every delegate to the SCLC to sign a loyalty oath, declaring that they did not belong to any organization that conflicted with the American Federation of Labor. Resolutions were also passed that made business meetings of the council private, restricting the number of visitors that could attend open meetings, and requiring sessions to adjourn by 11:00 P.M. The radicals had been well and truly crushed. It was the end of the progressive-radical alliance and would have serious consequences for the Seattle Farmer Labor Party.⁵

However, in 1921 this was not immediately obvious. Short did not make a major attack on the FLP at the 1921 WSFL convention, but restricted himself to a report critical of independent political action. The convention was taken up for the most part with the labour capitalist controversy. One major controversy was more than enough at the convention, and an attack on the FLP might have split the conservative-progressive alliance. Besides, 1921 was not an important election year in either Seattle or Washington State. Short was a shrewd tactician who preferred to wait for the right moment. The Union Record noted that although the conservatives were in control, no political action had been taken. The Record was probably too relieved at its vindication at the convention to bother about the possible consequences for the FLP.⁶

THE STATE OF THE PARTY

Unlike the situation in New York and Chicago, the Seattle FLP was not in dire straits after the 1920 election. Immediately after the

⁴Cravens p. 150; Jonathan Dembo, Unions and Politics in Washington State 1885-1935, (New York: Garland Publishing Co, 1983), pp. 293-294.

⁵Cravens, p. 152; Dembo, pp. 294-5.

⁶Short, Annual Report, Washington State Federation of Labor, Report of the Proceedings 20th Annual Convention; Union Record, 15 July 1921.

contest, state chairman David Coates declared his belief that the FLP could win in 1922. If the election figures are taken in isolation from the factors that served to undermine the FLP, this was not an unrealistic forecast. Coates' optimism was based on the fact that during a six-week election campaign the FLP had become the second party in the state. If every supporter for their ticket got a second person to vote with them the party would sweep the state. Perhaps this explains the emphasis that Coates put on education and propaganda as the way forward; he also proposed producing a Farmer Labor newspaper. The only concrete legislative proposal put forward was for a Marketing Bill, which would cut out the middlemen in the sale of farm produce, reduce prices to the consumer, and increase profits for the farmer. It would not be unfair to say that the main thrust of Coates' strategy was propaganda. Apart from petitioning for the Marketing Bill there was no mention of any other issue to campaign around. However, if all that was required was one more push at the polls, then it was not an unrealistic strategy. There was no portent of the impending problems of maintaining the WSFL's support.⁷

Duncan endorsed this strategy, and there was little sign that the King County FLP thought it inadequate. Later, however, Duncan opposed the idea of a party newspaper, believing that a separate organ would undermine the Union Record. The Washington FLP never established a newspaper for public consumption, which is unfortunate, as the Union Record grew increasingly fickle, and less partisan. King's County did make one innovation. They formed a "Women's Farmer Labor Club"- mainly an education circle designed to promote women's educational, political and social interests. Apart from this there was little variance in perspective between the King County FLP and that of the state organization. Indeed, a few days later the women's clubs became state policy.⁸

The first election campaign after the Fall contest demonstrated the party's commitment to Coates' strategy. As 1920 came to a close the opportunity arose to put the strategy to the test when, due to a resignation, the Thirty-Seventh Senatorial seat became vacant. The King County Labor Party swung into action. The Union Record was very enthusiastic about the campaign, carrying major articles on the

⁷Union Record, 18 November 1920.

⁸Union Record, 13 and 16 January 1921.

labour candidate, Joe Smith, who was well-known in Seattle political circles not as a labour activist, but as a progressive. It seems strange that a local election was used to push a moderate like Smith, rather than a better known union activist. However, the Union Record was clear about the benefits of the candidate, depicting him as a hero of the Spanish War, cruelly denied a place in the First World War due to old age. The Union Record stressed it was all-important to get Smith to the legislature; if they failed it would mean the end of the Municipal Markets Bill. The election of Smith would mean cheaper food. It was a straight Republican-FLP fight; the Democrats did not even bother to stand a candidate. Though the Union Record gave much prominence to the campaign, and stressed the Municipal Markets Bill, it did not manage to fire the imagination of the public in District 37. The poll was low, and the Republican won by 2,672 to 982. Smith took the eight precincts where the FLP had done well in 1920, but all other precincts went Republican. It was not a disastrous vote, but it did not confirm the Coates' "one more shove" strategy.⁹

Concern about the progress of the party was not reflected in the report of the County Convention which took place at the end of January. Though it declared there would be a membership drive, the report was completely taken up with constitutional changes. As the convention only lasted a day, and the constitution was long and detailed, it is unlikely there was much time for discussing political strategy. The aim of the convention was to solidify county FLP organisation and integrate it into the state and national bodies. Much emphasis was placed on selecting and nominating suitable candidates for elections. The Record believed that by adopting a new constitution, and electing the appropriate committees to carry out the work of forming locals out of the various precincts, the party could be put on a healthy basis.¹⁰

The King County FLP enthusiastically carried out reorganization, and by 22 February 1921, it reported that it had amalgamated city locals into districts. In practice, this meant joining numbered voting precincts into geographical formations relating to well-known centres of the community. This rationalization would enable activists in various precincts to get together. It was also an attempt to paper over the weakness of areas where there were few members. Subsequent meetings

⁹Union Record, 13, 14, 20, 22 December 1920.

¹⁰Union Record, 31 January 1921.

were held so that members could be informed as to which district they were in, or where the boundaries were drawn. It all appeared very top-down, with the committees telling members where to go, rather than with initiatives arising from the grass-roots. It must also be kept in mind that there would be no voting activity until late 1922, since municipal elections were non-partisan in Seattle, and parties could not be involved. To some extent the party was all dressed up with nowhere to go.¹¹

During the spring 'councilmanic' elections the party had to content itself with petitioning for cheaper streetcar fares. Meanwhile the SCLC had endorsed Charles W. Doyle as labour's champion in the municipal elections.¹² The plan had not been thought up by the SCLC, Doyle or the FLP, but by Oliver T. Erickson, a conservative labour maverick. Of course it was not out of keeping with FLP principles to support such a plan, and though Doyle made no mention of the FLP in his campaign, he did join in on the low car-fares bandwagon. Ironically Doyle's moderate attempt to win favour blew up in his face. Councillor T. H. Bolton, who considered himself a labour candidate though the SCLC refused to back him, was obviously worried about losing his seat. Rather than jump on what must have by now appeared a rather overcrowded bandwagon, he decided to attack Doyle for using the streetcar fares as a political issue. On 6 March Bolton's resentment boiled over as he classed Doyle, the other trade-union candidate, with the SCLC "reds". He denounced the 1919 General Strike as a disgrace, which he had opposed at the SCLC, and which Doyle had urged on. The attack was obvious nonsense. Even William Short came to Doyle's aid. However the damage had already been done; Doyle came last with a substantial 15,017 votes; Bolton got even more at 19,073, but he had lost his seat.¹³ There is no doubt that he had damaged Doyle with his red smear, but it is most likely that he alienated enough union men for his own vote to drop.

Independent political action had gained little out of the election. The streetcar issue had been overshadowed by the split between union men. The SCLC's nominee had come last. The FLP had not

¹¹Union Record, 25, 26 February 1921.

¹²Doyle, a painter, had been elected business agent by the conservative wing of the council to balance Duncan. O'Connor, p. 111.

¹³Union Record, 5,6,7, 9 March 1921

been able to intervene effectively because of the non-partisan nature of Seattle elections. It appeared to many as if labour was divided politically and unable to achieve positive results at the ballot-box. The 1920 election result was losing its lustre. Short's claim that the FLP was causing labour to lose political power was beginning to find resonance. The SCLC had suffered badly on the industrial battle field in the preceding two years; however defeat was mitigated by the excitement and success of electoral activity. In early 1921, this activity no longer looked exciting. Nor did it seem to offer a quick cure for the troubles the movement faced. It was this desolate scenario that led to the bitter faction fighting discussed above. Increasingly, support for independent political action and the FLP declined.

However, even after the failure to push ahead in 1921 and the resulting infighting, the Seattle FLP remained active and enjoyed the support of the SCLC. At the beginning of 1922, the Seattle party continued to petition on streetcar fares and workmen's compensation. In the summer the King County FLP organised a picnic attended by an estimated 30,000 men, women and children. Yet, in spite of the optimism and reorganisation, the FLP and the SCLC made no attempt to stand their own candidate for Mayor in the spring municipal election. An even more dramatic indication of the decline in labour's political activity was the fact that the SCLC did not endorse a single 'councilmanic' candidate, something unheard of since at least 1910. Instead the SCLC concentrated on defeating Walter F. Meir, an anti-union mayoral candidate. The winner was a candidate sympathetic to labour, Dr. Edwin Brown, who was not endorsed by the SCLC, or by the Union Record (in which he advertised regularly). Some sections of Seattle labour lent him support, most notably the streetcar men, who gave him more votes than they had given Duncan in the mayoral election. The electricians backed Brown for Mayor, because of his efforts on behalf of women workers. When criticised at the council, they quoted Short in their defence. The election of Brown, who had not been endorsed officially by labour, encouraged those who believed in non-partisan action.¹⁴

¹⁴Union Record, 4 March, 24 April, 18 July 1922; SCLC Minutes, 3 May 1922; Dembo, p. 305; William John Dickson, "Labor in Municipal Politics: A Study of Labor's Political Policies and Activities in Seattle", (MA, University of Washington, 1928), p. 136; Mary Joan O'Connell, "The Seattle Union Record, 1918-1928 A Pioneer Labor Daily", (MA, University Of Washington, 1964), pp. 213-214; Denzil Cecil Cline, "The Streetcar Men of Seattle: A Sociological Study", (MA, University

A more accurate indication of labour's political influence was the result of the referendum on the Erickson streetcar fare plan. This was defeated by some 40,000 to 15,000 votes. The Record argued that with three newspapers opposing the plan they should not be downhearted. Twenty-seven per cent of those who had voted were prepared to see a change in city taxation. Though the Record believed the vote was quite an achievement, it is possible that many FLP activists saw it as yet another example of failure to defeat the establishment. The vote showed that there was still a substantial minority in Seattle who supported the reformist ideas of the FLP, but increasingly they had their backs against the wall.¹⁵

In this period of unrealized expectations and little progress, the phoney war between the SCLC and the WSFL over independent political action ended. It was replaced by Short conducting a war of attrition against the SCLC, as he tried to restore the AFL's policy of non-partisan action. Encouraged by a resolution from the Seattle Building Trades Council asking the SCLC to reconsider its political position, Short attacked the council for passing a resolution advocating a third party. He claimed that a number of unions had endorsed a Federation letter asking that action on political matters be deferred until after the state convention. He maintained that the fact that Duncan and the SCLC had sent out their resolution in spite of the Federation's letter was proof that the SCLC was trying to usurp the functions of the state body.¹⁶

In effect Short was warning Duncan that he did not want the FLP or the SCLC taking independent political action in the 1922 state elections. He had started the battle early to try and prevent the FLP deciding the course of action before the Federation met. He was determined to get rid of Republican Senator Poindexter, and to do this he wanted to involve the labour movement in the Republican primary. He feared that the FLP would nominate their candidate first, leaving the

of Washington, 1926),
pp. 133-135.

¹⁵Union Record, 4 May 1922.

¹⁶Union Record, 24 April 1922

convention with a fait accompli. This is exactly what the FLP did by nominating Duncan before the convention took place.¹⁷

Not easily frightened, Duncan immediately sprang to the defence of the SCLC's resolution. He refuted Short's claim that the resolution was unrepresentative, arguing that the SCLC had numerous new delegates and therefore adequately represented the rank and file. He also accused Short of trying to undemocratically destroy the policy agreed at Yakima in 1920 without consulting the rank and file. Rushing to reply, Short claimed that far more locals supported his position than Duncan's. He had letters from three times as many locals supporting the Federation's position as from those who had voted for the resolution. As for the accusation that a few officials were undemocratically blocking the rank and file from deciding the Federation's policy, he maintained that the exact opposite was the case. He wanted the rank and file to be given a chance to discuss and vote on the issue at the convention. Disquiet over the present policy threatened division. Therefore he was not changing the policy, but enabling a discussion to take place so that the membership could decide. The dispute became increasingly acrimonious.¹⁸

Short issued a circular entitled "Answering the Bunk of Jimmy the Dunc." The controversy spilled back into the SCLC. The conservatives and the moderates had combined to defeat the radicals. Now Short's attack on Duncan was seen as a signal to rid the council of its political policy. The Boilermakers suggested they should divorce economic and political affairs, and stick to the former. Duncan offered to debate Short in public. The Barbers, Blacksmiths and Bakers all supported Duncan. In fact the Bakers held a joint meeting, with their drivers, supporting the Council's case, and opposing Short. The attempts by the Building Trades Council, supported by the Teamsters and the Culinary Crafts Councils, to reverse the policy failed.¹⁹

Although Duncan's rearguard action stopped Short's onslaught, the problems it created lingered. Short's offensive not only caused a stir

¹⁷Union Record, 24 April 1922.

¹⁸Letter from Duncan to Short, 29 April 1922, reproduced in Union Record, 2 May 1922. Undated letter from Short to Duncan, reproduced in Union Record, 4 May 1922.

¹⁹SCLC Minutes, 10, 17, 24, 31 May 1922; Dembo, p. 316; Union Record, 1 June 1922.

in the SCLC, but in the very heart of the Labour Party itself. His arguments were beginning to affect even those close to Duncan and the FLP. Harry Ault, editor of the Union Record, and David Coates, who had been secretary of the State Farmer Labor Party, proposed that the FLP move closer to organized labour and wait until the State Federation met before taking any decision on political activity. For Duncan, this smacked of Short's policy; he opposed it, proposing instead that the FLP's program be presented to the conventions of the various organizations. Duncan prevailed, with the help of many of the old enemies of the Record. But although he had the majority, Ault had the newspaper.²⁰

The tension between Duncan and Short put pressure on the relationship between Ault and Duncan. Ault tried to keep both men happy, but the effect of this was less and less real support for the FLP from the Record. It also meant that Duncan was dependent on the radicals in the FLP, but on the conservatives in the SCLC. Nor would Short allow any attempt to pour oil on troubled waters. In a report on the state convention, the Record claimed that Short had not attended due to ill-health. Short retorted that he had deliberately boycotted the meeting. His belligerence suggests that he was confident of winning his position.²¹

The stage was now set for a serious blow to independent political action. As Duncan was unprepared to offer any compromise to Short, or to change his political policy, it is fair to surmise that he had underestimated the opposition. The moment of truth came in early July at the WSFL's Annual Convention at Bremerton. Short, in his opening address to the convention, urged all labour and progressive groups to unite behind the one political policy. On 13 July a resolution was moved that the WSFL should adopt the AFL's non-partisan policy in the coming election. It is not the case that everyone who spoke for the motion was overtly hostile to the FLP. George Maston, that state chairman of the Railwaymen's Political Club, stated he was not opposed to the FLP but he would like them to "lay off" the senatorial race.²²

²⁰Union Record, 5 June 1922.

²¹Union Record, 5, 6, June 1922.

²²Union Record, 10, 13 July 1922.

FLP supporters at the convention put up such a fierce defence of their party that the resolution could not be put to a vote until the following day. When it came it was a heavy defeat for the farmer labourites. Short won by 110 to 48, with the majority of the pro-FLP vote coming from Seattle delegates. Delegates from Seattle also voted 49 to 25 in favour of non-partisanship and against the standing policy of the SCLC. A majority of these anti-FLP delegates represented non-SCLC locals. The convention endorsed Short's plan to unite all labour and progressives to defeat incumbent senator Miles Poindexter inside the Republican primary. The extent to which Duncan was taken by surprise by this decision is measured by the fact that he immediately offered cooperation. Even though two-thirds of the convention had rejected affiliation with the FLP, he believed that such cooperation was possible. Short, however, refused to meet with Duncan or any other FLP representative.²³

During the state convention the SCLC delegates returned to Seattle for a council meeting, where they decided, by a two-thirds majority, to give preference to union business of a distinctly local character. It was charged that too much time was spent on "matters extraneous" to the interests of Seattle organized labour. The new by-law passed with very little opposition. It is likely that it was not just supported by conservatives, but also by syndicalists, who complained that too much time was spent on political rather than economic matters. If it was meant to be a conservative measure it backfired. The WSFL provided details of its non-partisan campaign which the council promptly filed and ignored. Short and his supporters discovered that Duncan had tricked them, as the new by-law was used to block WSFL policy. Of course Duncan and his supporters were now a minority in state, and perhaps even in city, terms. Short must have imagined that he had sorted out the SCLC for good. But Duncan and his supporters were fighting on from their isolated and besieged position. It was a problem for Short that the most well known central city labour body in the state was still opposing non-partisan action. He turned to Gompers to enforce his policy.²⁴

²³Union Record, 14 July 1922; Dembo, pp. 321-322.

²⁴Union Record, 13 July 1922; SCLC Minutes, 26 July 1922; Agent 106 Report, 4 May 1919, Conan Broussain Beck Papers, (Industrial Espionage Papers), box 1, folder 1-2.

Gompers wrote to the SCLC asking it why it was not lining up with the State Federation over election policy. He requested that a special meeting be devoted to the issue, and that Short address it. The CPPA also urged the SCLC to unite to defeat Poindexter. Instead of complying with Gompers, the SCLC appointed a committee of three to present the facts to Washington labour. Duncan believed that the Council was not in breach of the non partisan ruling, it had simply placed the FLP on the same footing as the Republican and Democratic Parties. Duncan had carefully waited until polling for Secretary-Treasurer of the SCLC was finished, before announcing that he was standing as an FLP candidate for Senator. Emphasising that he had been reluctant to agree to run, Duncan claimed he was responding to statewide demand. Duncan argued that the FLP was still the second party in Washington, and that more producers supported it than in any other state. The Democrats were the third party; Poindexter would undoubtedly win the Republican primary. Therefore he believed the best-placed party to challenge Poindexter was the FLP. Duncan was proved right about the former but wrong on the latter.²⁵

Meanwhile Short carried on trying to pull the SCLC into line with Federation policy. The continuing dispute between Short and Duncan put the Union Record in an embarrassing position. It depended on both the WSFL and the SCLC for support, yet it enthusiastically supported the FLP. However, Ault was worried about the increasing isolation of the FLP. With Duncan unopposed, his primary was a mere formality and all attention focused on the Republican contest. This gave Ault an excuse; he was not arguing against support for the FLP, but merely saying that it was Short's campaign to defeat Poindexter that mattered most. The Record concentrated on the Republican primary, almost to the exclusion of all else. The problem with Ault's position was that the FLP lost its entire profile in the pages of the Record. To all intents and purposes it appeared that the Record was supporting the non-partisan policy of Short.²⁶

Well aware of the consternation the paper's position was causing, Ault published an editorial by an unnamed FLP member. The logic of the article was convoluted, not only arguing the need for an independent

²⁵SCLC Minutes, 16 August 1922; Union Record, 27 July 1922.

²⁶SCLC Minutes, 23 August, 6 September 1922; Union Record, 8 September 1922.

party, but also the need to understand that so long as the old parties governed, labour's officials had no choice but to work with them. The editorial agreed this might make it appear that the officials were working against their own members, but they could only maintain their usefulness to the organizations they served by maintaining this incompatible attitude. This "have your cake and eat it" attitude was Ault's attempt to bridge the increasingly hostile divide between Short and Duncan. Unfortunately for Ault and Short, Poindexter won the primary, and therefore the issue was whether to support the FLP or the Democrats.²⁷

The Democrats were extremely weak in Washington State, and this fact explains why Short's plan had been to defeat Poindexter inside the Republican Party rather than outside it. Completely opposed to independent political action, the WSFL had no choice but to switch its support to the Democrats. Most progressive support also went to the Democratic candidate Clarence C. Dill. Unable to carry on with his previous ambivalent attitude, Ault returned to the FLP fold. He had received many uncomplimentary letters over the paper's stand in the primaries, but he made it clear that he was still committed to independent political action, stating that the Union Record would make every effort to secure the election of FLP candidates in the coming elections. For a few months Ault had had the luxury of being on the same side as Short. Now he was back in the opposing camp. Ault was saved from further embarrassment when Short declared that he wished to avoid further controversy in the ranks of labour. Therefore the Executive Council of the State Federation would not make any recommendation for the senatorial race.²⁸

This was not a victory for the FLP since the State Federation had withheld its endorsement. Short officially remained neutral, but behind the scenes he worked for Dill. Towards the end of October most of the locals in the state were supporting Dill. However, the SCLC remained loyal to Duncan, as did several of its affiliated branches. Duncan was allowed to take his two weeks annual holiday in order to campaign. Two Carpenters locals deplored the action of the Building Trades' Council in endorsing the Democrat candidate for Senate. Boilermakers' Local 104, which earlier had been critical of the SCLC's

²⁷Union Record, 15, 30 September 1922.

²⁸Union Record, 2, 17 October 1922; Dembo, p. 330.

political policy, made a donation and deplored those trying to nullify the action. Meat Cutters Local 81, claiming they had received an insulting letter from the State Federation over the FLP, confirmed support for the FLP, and declared they would leave the Federation if similar letters followed. To create some atmosphere in what was proving a divided and difficult campaign, FLP posters were hung each side of the SCLC's Chairman's rostrum. Martin Flyzik, District President of the United Mine Workers, claimed that Duncan had the support of miners throughout the whole state. He stated that miners were raising money for the campaign and holding mass meetings in the various camps. He also scorned press reports that the miners were supporting the WSFL's policy.²⁹

The day before the election, the Union Record ran a front page editorial urging support for the FLP. But unlike in previous elections, labour and progressive votes were divided. Most progressives supported Dill and the Democrats, and the SCLC no longer could claim support of the State Federation, or even of some of its own affiliates. Dill's victory and the overall results confirmed that the FLP had fallen from second party to third. Even in King County, where Duncan polled best, the FLP ran behind the Democrats. This was a serious setback for Duncan and the FLP. In 1920 he had won 33,727 votes in Seattle; in 1922 he received only 12,034 in King County.³⁰

The right wing were overjoyed at the FLP's failure. One union secretary wrote to Short to congratulate him on his success and good judgement in the past election. He realized it took a great deal of backbone and courage to carry on a campaign with the Labor Party also in the field. This was not a very astute assessment of the outcome. No doubt he was blinded by the fact that his union, a brewery local, had suffered grievously at the hands of Prohibition, which Duncan supported. But the insistence of the FLP in standing against the wishes of the WSFL provided Short's campaign its victory. Dill's majority over the Republican had been only a few thousand. It could be argued that without Duncan standing it would have been larger. If Duncan had not stood, much of the anti-red abuse might well have been thrown at Dill who, after all, had the official support of labour, the CPPA and other

²⁹SCLC Minutes, 11, 18 October 1922; Union Record, 1 November 1922; Cravens, p. 181.

³⁰Union Record, 9 November 1922; O'Connell, p. 217.

progressive organizations. Moreover Dill had the support of many prohibitionists; it was Poindexter, the Republican, who was known for being lax on Prohibition, conservative and opposed to labour. In a straight fight it would have been conservative against radical reformer.³¹

Duncan's stand meant that Dill could be considered the moderates' choice. The "reds" were in the FLP camp, not the Democrats' and the Federation's. It is also likely that Duncan pulled some Republican progressives and hard-line prohibitionists, who would not consider voting Democrat, but who admired Duncan's stance on Prohibition. Short admitted in private correspondence that the Duncan campaign had proven to be an asset. It had kept the hue and cry of "red Bolshevik" from being thrown at Dill. Of course Short had not planned any of this; his intention had been to stop Duncan standing. Nor was it Duncan's plan to be a stalking-horse for the Democrats. Whatever the intentions, the result was a boon for Short and a blow for Duncan. It meant the conservatives now had the upper hand, and Short could return to his war on Duncan and his followers. Duncan's defiance of Short was based on very weak ground. Perhaps Duncan was not fully aware of how much his union base had disintegrated. Even before the election result that support was haemorrhaging. For example, Carpenters Local 131 was a founding affiliate of the Seattle FLP and had enthusiastically backed all initiatives. Yet by the spring of 1922 it was no longer supporting the FLP. As a matter of fact, the local ignored all political activity, including the Federation's non-partisan political campaigns.³²

This shift away from politics may not have signalled any ideological commitment to a more conservative form of politics. It possibly reflected the difficulties that the Carpenters faced holding their union organization together in the face of the imposition of wage cuts. Local 131 had been keen FLP activists; now they were quiescent.

³¹Letter, 11 November 1922, Henry Braine Secretary of Local 142 to William Short, Washington State Federation of Labor Records, Correspondence, box 13 folder 7-48; Robert Leslie Cole, "The Democratic Party in Washington State, 1919-1933: Barometer of Social Change", (PhD, University of Washington, 1972), pp.78-79; M. L. Krause, "Prohibition and Reform Tradition in the Washington State Senatorial Election of 1922", (MA, University of Washington, 1963), pp. 1, 40-47, 62.

³²Dembo, p. 331; Minutes of Carpenters 131, 14, 28 March, 16 May 16, 3 October 1922, Carpenters and Joiners Seattle Local 131 Collection, box 1, University of Washington, Seattle.

This suggests that Duncan's support was increasingly removed from the grass-roots to the meetings of the SCLC. However, as there was a direct relationship between union activists and the SCLC, he would not be able to ignore the lack of support permanently. Nevertheless, immediately after the election Duncan had no intention of giving up. He called on the members of the FLP to keep up the fight. The FLP had got more than the ten per cent required to keep it in primaries. Unfortunately for Duncan, the main fight in the coming months was not that of spreading the influence of the FLP, but of survival against the onslaught of Gompers and Short.³³

Almost immediately after the election, the AFL executive council acted on a complaint from the President of the United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters. He claimed that several of his locals in Seattle had protested at the SCLC's refusal to go along with the AFL's non-partisan political policy. Gompers was empowered to turn the Seattle Central Body into a 'bona fide' trade union organization, "complying with the constitution and principles of the AFL." He ordered the SCLC to pledge loyalty to the constitution, the laws, and the policy of the AFL. Unless the SCLC complied with the AFL's instructions it would lose its charter. The SCLC discussed the AFL's ultimatum on 18 April 1923; it had sixty days to comply or have its charter removed.³⁴

Duncan suggested they should reply with a mild, but firmly worded letter, denying the charges and putting the record straight. However, rather than take Duncan's advice, the SCLC appointed a committee to draft a reply. The committee's reply led to further friction between Duncan and the AFL executive. Gompers wrote to the SCLC informing the council that since its reply admitted the charges against it, there was no need for further investigation. He demanded that the SCLC abide by the laws and principles of the AFL and adhere to its policies. His letter was to be read before the full SCLC. It was not considered necessary to take further action, and the AFL executive council would

³³Union Record, 11 November 1922; Dana Frank, Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919 - 1929, (New York: Cambridge University Press 1994), pp. 101-102.

³⁴Executive Council Minutes, 24 November 1922, 20 February 1923, American Federation of Labor Records: The Samuel Gompers Era, reel 7, (Microfilming Corporation of America: Published by The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 1981), (cited hereafter as AFL Records); SCLC Minutes, 18 April 1923.

ignore Duncan's attempt to "dissemble". The executive was gratified that the SCLC professed that it intended to obey the laws, constitution and principles of the AFL. Copies of the letter were sent to President William Short and to the executive officers of the International Unions.³⁵

It is hard to imagine a more humiliating letter. To all intents and purposes Duncan had been called a liar. The threat of the removal of the SCLC's charter was implicit. Although Duncan did not resign for another two months, and the SCLC did not purge itself of third partyism until the Fall, the SCLC immediately became more cautious in its political activity. A request that delegates attend the FLP convention in Chicago, to relaunch the third party, was filed without any action taken. This decision denied Fitzpatrick and his project support from the official Seattle union movement.³⁶

Although they had acted cautiously, and despite the draconian letter from the AFL, the third party supporters refused to surrender. This made Short determined to see the Charter removed immediately. He did not want to wait sixty days to see if the SCLC would comply; he believed 75 per cent of unions would re-affiliate. Anything else would be a victory for the "reds". Short's proposal for immediate revocation polarized the executive between those such as Daniel Tobin, of the Teamsters, who wanted to wait for Duncan's reply, and Frank Duffy, of the Carpenters, who agreed with Short's proposal. The SCLC protested its loyalty, offering to comply on all issues except one. It believed that the only political organisation which embodied the principles and the full demands of the AFL was the Farmer Labor Party. The Washington State labour movement had backed it in 1920, and the SCLC was still on record as supporting it. The SCLC also believed that the demand to repeal its Prohibition policy "would split our movement wide open".³⁷

Short immediately rejected the SCLC's response, stating that it was tacitly complying, but in reality not carrying out its

³⁵SCLC Minutes, 18 April 1923; Executive Council Minutes, 9 May, 14 May 1923, AFL Records, reel 7.

³⁶SCLC Minutes, 6 June 1923.

³⁷Short to Gompers, 25 May 1923; Reply to Gompers written endorsed by SCLC on 6 June 1923. In correspondence supplied by Gompers on 14 June 1923 to the Executive Council, AFL Records, The Vote Books, reel 18.

responsibilities. He claimed that SCLC meetings had become smaller; whereas 250 delegates used to attend now only 95 gathered (yet for the most part the meetings were run by procedures determined by the conservatives). Short believed it would be easy to defeat Duncan and his supporters. As proof he pointed to the result of the State Federation election of officers the previous week, in which he had run unopposed and his entire slate had won. Duncan had even failed to win election as a teller. However Duncan was not completely without support; some races were close. In King County, Short's candidate for Vice-President, had received 1383 votes to 937 for Duncan's candidate, William McGuern. Short's vote for President was 4749; Duncan's vote for teller was 2141. The top vote for teller was 3754. Thus Duncan still enjoyed substantial support in Seattle and through the state. For several years Short had trod carefully in dealing with Duncan and the SCLC. Now he wanted nothing less than their complete crushing.³⁸

It is hard to imagine a more vitriolic atmosphere between a state federation and a city central body. Yet it never degenerated as far as the situation in New York, where Lefkowitz had sat with a gun in his back at the City Council. Nonetheless events deteriorated further. In a row over the purging of radicals from the SCLC, Short and Phillips the President of the SCLC, had got into a fist fight.³⁹

Well aware that Gompers and Short were determined to deal with them, the third-party supporters in the SCLC made an attempt to rally support to defend themselves from further blows, organizational or physical. In advance of the annual State Federation Convention they printed and published, in pamphlet form, the full correspondence between the SCLC and Gompers. Gompers received 25 copies; a further 5,000 were distributed to central labor bodies and state federations. They were also distributed to Seattle unions, and members of the SCLC visited other states to discuss the case. It is certainly the case that

³⁸Short's letter to AFL executive council, 7 June 1923, in correspondence supplied by Gompers on 14 June 1923 to the Executive Council, AFL Records, The Vote Books, reel 18.

³⁹The Seattle Daily Times of 10 June 1923, reported in correspondence distributed by Gompers on 16 June 1923, AFL Records, The Vote Books, reel 18.

the SCLC put up a far more vigorous fight inside the AFL than either the CFL or New York third-party activists had done.⁴⁰

Not to be hurried by Short, Duffy or Tobin, Gompers bided his time. No doubt he wanted to see the result of the AFL's and WSFL's conventions before acting. All attention now turned to the State Federation Convention where the controversy was expected to erupt. Boilermakers Local 104, introduced a resolution, calling on the Federation to back the stand the SCLC had taken in its dispute with the AFL. For fifteen minutes acrimonious debate ensued, but the explosion never came. Martin J. Flyzik of the Miners tried to rally support for the SCLC. When Robert Hesketh, a conservative city councillor, spoke against them, all was set for a major row. Then a delegate moved that the matter be postponed indefinitely without prejudice to anyone. This received vocal unanimous support, and the moment of crisis passed. This was not as even-handed as it appeared, for it meant that the SCLC would have to face the wrath of the AFL on its own.⁴¹

The next day Duncan announced his retirement from the SCLC; Short had got total victory.⁴² With nobody of Duncan's stature left to carry on the fight against Gompers and Short, there was no serious obstruction left to stop the AFL turning the SCLC into a "bona fide" trade union organization. In late September Gompers addressed a conference of presidents, secretaries and other officers of the Seattle unions, on the issue of the SCLC. He told them that in a few days the executive council would vote whether to revoke the SCLC's charter. He pledged that if he could help it no charter would be revoked. If the SCLC, like the Chicago Federation of Labor and the Illinois State Federation of Labor, disavowed its opposition to the principles of the AFL and declared for its policies, all would be well. However, to prevent the revocation of the charter, those present must attend the SCLC, and make sure delegates loyal to the AFL also attended, so that

⁴⁰Reports from C.O. Young and Short distributed in Gompers correspondence to AFL executive on 27 June 1923, AFL Records, The Vote Books, reel 18.

⁴¹Proceedings of 22nd WSFL Annual Convention, Bellingham 9-12 July 1923; Union Record, 11 July 1923.

⁴²See Cravens, p. 196 for a discussion of several possible reasons for Duncan's resignation. It is not important to this study exactly why Duncan resigned, except to note that he resigned within 24 hours of a disastrous decision for the labour progressives by the State Federation's convention.

it would be loyal to the AFL. He was quite clear that if this did not happen, a central body loyal to the AFL would be formed.⁴³

Several weeks later Gompers triumphantly wrote to the executive council that the SCLC had decided to unreservedly comply with the AFL and all its rulings. He enthused on the good relations between the two bodies and the splendid work the SCLC were doing. The council sent a letter to Gompers pledging its opposition to dual unionism, and loyalty to all aspects of AFL policy. The letter was signed, not just by the moderate C. W. Doyle, but by two of the FLP's firmest supporters, Martin Flyzik and Phil Pearl.⁴⁴

This was the end of the SCLC's affiliation to the FLP and to any form of militant independent political action. Duncan and a few others remained loyal to the FLP, but they had been forced into the margins of the organized labour. The conservatives who took control of the SCLC had little taste for any political action. This became evident in the subsequent campaign for La Follette in which the SCLC leadership played a passive role.⁴⁵

THE SCLC AND THE LA FOLLETTE CAMPAIGN

Neither the WSFL or the SCLC played a leading role in the La Follette campaign. One historian of the Seattle labour movement noted that only late in the race did the SCLC endorse the State Federation's political policy, but even then never granted it any active support. However, simply to outline the official response of the WSFL and the SCLC does not tell the full story. This section firstly describes the formal response of the two bodies and secondly, and more importantly, the activities of unions and individuals who actively campaigned irrespective of the actions of the bureaucracy.⁴⁶

The AFL's endorsement of La Follette came too late to be discussed at the WSFL's Annual Convention. For the first time in

⁴³Union Record, 12 July 1923; SCLC Minutes, 1 August 1923; Gompers' address to Seattle Trade Unions, 25 September 1923, AFL Records, Speeches and Writings, reel 118.

⁴⁴Gompers' reports to the Executive Council 19 October, 15 November 1923, AFL Records, the Vote Books, reel 18.

⁴⁵For further details of the FLP after this point see Cravens, p. 198-199 *passim*.

⁴⁶Dembo, p. 362.

several years the convention passed by without any controversy over independent political activity. Farmer Labor Party members were present, but kept silent on the issue of a national party. According to the Record, the more assertive of them were pinning their hopes on the La Follette candidacy, but made no effort to raise the issue of a third party at the convention. Duncan, though still supporting the FLP, had retired from union activity and was not there to raise it either. It was a matter of waiting for La Follette to do the job for them.⁴⁷

State leaders were determined not to endorse La Follette in advance of the AFL nationally. Therefore the convention discussed state candidates, not national ones. Leading FLP members Phil Pearl and Martin Flyzik did not challenge the non-partisan strategy of the Federation. Instead they complained that the record of one of the candidates had not been examined thoroughly. Due to disagreements over which state candidates to support, the WSFL concerned itself with activities in the state primaries to the exclusion of all else. Thus the state Federation was very late in turning its attention to the La Follette campaign. The executive finally found time to take its decision on 19 October 1924. Its endorsement for La Follette, when it finally came, was full and warm-hearted.⁴⁸

Short rushed into action, sending a circular to affiliates, demanding an active campaign. He was not opposed to La Follette and had already been involved in his campaign before the executive decision. The failure of the WSFL and SCLC in giving a lead should not be confused with Seattle labour's attitude as a whole. Although it was the case that labour and progressives were split over the various state and local candidates, most supported La Follette. The Railroad Brotherhoods supported some FLP candidates; and the FLP opposed some CPPA-sponsored candidates. When it came to the presidential race there was complete unity between the main forces of labour and the progressives. The FLP split between the Communists, who supported their own candidates, and the rest of the old SCLC third party activists who went with the La

⁴⁷The SCLC supported the AFL's non-partisan campaign and the CPPA. They agreed to send 10 delegates to the CPPA and appointed a committee to work with the AFL Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee; SCLC Minutes, 20, 27 August 1924; Proceedings of the 23rd Annual Convention of the Washington State Federation of Labor, Olympia, July 14-18 1924; Union Record, 15 July 1924.

⁴⁸Union Record, 16, July, 21 October 1924.

Follette campaign. The Communists bolted, but the original FLP members stayed, and offered their support to the CPPA. The Communists received a tiny vote, and had little effect on the campaign.⁴⁹

The Record campaigned hard for La Follette from the start. It did not wait to see which way the official union bodies jumped. Progressives, labour men, and the Railwaymen's political club in particular, started organizing unionists for La Follette in Seattle. They formed a Trade Union La Follette Club of King County whose officers and members were well-known in labor circles. They agreed not to endorse any other candidates and to concentrate on building support for "Fighting Bob" amongst trade unionists.⁵⁰

La Follette supporters inside the SCLC met and appointed a welcoming committee for Phil La Follette, the candidates youngest son. The committee included the President-elect and Vice-President-elect of the SCLC. The meeting passed a resolution calling on the AFL to endorse La Follette. It was almost unanimous, opposed only by three Communist delegates. It seemed that leading members of the SCLC preferred to operate outside of the council on all political matters, since at this stage the AFL had not endorsed the campaign. It is also possible that they had become very cautious about any political activity that was not endorsed by the WSFL.⁵¹

As well as the trade-union committees, there was a Seattle La Follette For President Club. A meeting of 250 appointed its committee, which in addition to local progressives had a member of the FLP as secretary. The FLP in Seattle not only played a prominent role in the La Follette campaign, but also stood its own candidates in the locality. As the campaign progressed, more and more local unions joined in. Though the SCLC was slow in acting, this did not stop local unions

⁴⁹Record, 21 October 1924; Cravens, pp. 230-231. Those supporting La Follette included individuals such as Duncan, Kennedy and Pearl, and others who wanted a revival of the Socialists. The Communists were of little importance or influence in Seattle during this period. It was not until the Great Depression that they became of any significance. O'Connor, p. 206.

⁵⁰Union Record, 23 July 1924. The founders included: L. W. Buck, former secretary of the State Federation; E. B. Ault of the Union Record; representatives from various unions, including the Timber Workers, Machinists, and Bricklayers. Local support came from branches of the Carpenters, Pattern Makers, Electricians, Barbers, and Iron Workers.

⁵¹Union Record, 31 July 1924.

from giving support. The Cooks and Assistants, Local 33 appointed a committee of three to raise money for La Follette. The streetcar men organized a public meeting to support La Follette. At a mass meeting the International President of Seattle Painters urged his members to support the campaign. The Railroad brotherhoods distributed 150,000 copies of a La Follette campaign special throughout the state of Washington. Carpenters 131, who had been founders of the Seattle Labor Party, sent money to the state campaign, as did a Millmen's local. In the absence of the SCLC's official presence the King County CPPA intervened to coordinate and extend union support.⁵²

Unlike New York, there was no major division between union officials over support for the campaign. At no time did the state or city bodies oppose it. There was only one serious opponent, Martin J. Flyzik, who came out for Coolidge. But his opposition may not have counted for much, for his miners' membership had been decimated by unemployment and a series of defeated strikes.⁵³

In spite of the local union's campaign, and La Follette's popularity amongst trade unionists and progressives, the SCLC remained passive. It was not until Frank Morrison, executive secretary of the AFL, visited the council that it agreed to act, finally calling a trade-union rally. A large crowd heard a diverse platform of Trade Union speakers, including Short and the maverick Robert Hesketh.⁵⁴

On the day before the election 3,000 attended Seattle's largest rally of the campaign. The platform included Democrat Thomas R. Horner, as well as John C. Kennedy of the FLP. Horner declared that he was not voting for Davis, as he did not have a chance. He also urged support for Democrat congressional candidate David J. Williams. The campaign ended on a high note and the Record was full of optimism for the result.⁵⁵

⁵²Union Record, 25 July, 8, 15, 17, 30, September, 8, 16, 22 October 1924; SCLC Minutes, 15, 22, October 1924.

⁵³Union Record, 4 November 1924.

⁵⁴Union Record, 16, 22 October 1924. Morrison's intervention at such a late stage of the campaign undermines the conventional historiography that the AFL did little for the campaign. For example see Kenneth Campbell MacKay, The Progressive Movement of 1924, (New York: Octagon Books, 1972; orig. 1947), p. 188.

⁵⁵Union Record, 4 November 1924.

THE ELECTION RESULT

La Follette garnered 30,102 votes in Seattle, 36.01 per cent of the total. This was double the national average. There was little difference between his vote in Seattle and in King County or Washington as a whole. His state average was 35.8 per cent compared to 37.75 per cent for King County. The slightly higher vote in King County may have reflected the fact that farmer organization was more radical there. Surprisingly, the urban bias towards La Follette which had occurred in New York State and Illinois was not apparent in Seattle. Support for La Follette was fairly even throughout the towns and countryside of Washington State (see Table A below)

Table A: 1924 Presidential Vote.⁵⁶

	Republican	Democrat	La Follette
Statewide	220,224	42,842	150,727 (35.8%)
King County	60,438	7,404	41,146 (37.75%)
Seattle	47,451	6,023	30,102 (36.01%)

However a comparison of the result with the 1920 Mayoral and General Elections reveals an interesting feature: La Follette was less popular in Seattle than Duncan had been (see Table B below). Duncan had got 40 per cent of the poll in 1920, four per cent more than La Follette's share (though it was a mayoral election).⁵⁷ Also if we compare the

⁵⁶NB. La Follette percentages are based on the main party vote only and do not include fringe parties. Figures for Washington State and King County from the Abstract of Votes: State of Washington, General Election 1924, (Published by the Secretary of State, Olympia). Figures for Seattle from the Union Record, 6 November 1924.

⁵⁷Results on a Seattle-wide basis for the 1920 General Election were not made available.

votes with King County in 1920, we see that La Follette received just 1.35 per cent more than the FLP vote for Governor. It is true that La Follette garnered 11 per cent more than the FLP presidential candidate of that year. But the little known Christensen had run well behind the whole of the FLP ticket in Seattle and Washington State as a whole (see Table B. below).

Table B: A Comparison of the 1920 Labour Vote With La Follette's Vote.⁵⁸

	Bridges FLP Gov. (1920)	Duncan Mayoralty (1920)	FLP Pres. (1920)	La Follette (1924)
Statewide	121,371 (30.48%)	-	77,068 (20.04%)	150,727 (35.8%)
King County	39,034 (36.04%)	(Seattle only)	26,768 (24.98%)	41,146 (37.75%)
Seattle	N\A	34,049 (40.1)	N\A	30,102 (36.01%)

Scholars have not noticed that Duncan did better than La Follette or, to put it another way, that the La Follette result was actually a sign of decline of third-party voting in Seattle. Duncan, the hard-nosed trade unionist and fervent prohibitionist, had done better than the "fiery" but more diplomatic La Follette. The comparison demonstrates that in Seattle, and to a lesser extent in King County, there was a solid trade union-progressive alliance that could win a substantial vote without La Follette. The poor performance of the 1920 presidential campaign was due to the fact that the candidate, Parley P. Christensen, who was not as well-known in the area as Duncan or Bridges. However, it is the case that in less urban areas that La Follette did far better than the 1920 FLP candidates. This is highlighted by the statewide figures in the table above.

⁵⁸NB. Percentages are based on main parties only. Figures from Abstract of Votes, (Washington), 1920, 1924; Union Record, 19 February 1920; 6 November 1924.

Nonetheless, the results of the comparison are surprising, because in both New York and Chicago, La Follette outperformed the FLP candidates of 1920. This raises some interesting questions. If the AFL had agreed to find and support a substantial candidate in 1920, would the campaign have been as successful, or even more so, than in 1924? After all, there was a massive backlash against the Democrats in 1920. Perhaps a serious third-party intervention could have taken advantage of it. The result in Seattle seems to suggest that 1920 was a peak year for launching a new party, not 1924. The Seattle experience demonstrates that well-known candidates are central to success. There is little difference between La Follette's, Duncan's, or Bridges' vote -- but they all polled well ahead of Christensen. Still, La Follette was a more substantial candidate than Duncan or Bridges, and therefore should have done better. It is probable that several years of AFL anti-third-party activity, plus the decline of the trade unions, meant that in Seattle the vote stagnated. In New York, and Chicago, the third-party vote started from such a low level that it was not difficult to improve on previous results.

How are we to find the answer to La Follette's failure to do better in Seattle? We could get lost in a number of complex tentative solutions. Perhaps Seattle's citizens preferred a hard-line prohibitionist, or maybe La Follette was not 'nativist' enough. Surely it could not be that he was more militant than Duncan, who was considered leader of the General Strike. The two men's stand on the First World War was identical. Duncan had faced a far more hostile press than La Follette; at least one more Seattle daily newspaper had supported the latter. There is one major difference between the two men: the nature of their campaigns. This is not a reference to the propaganda involved, but to the actual organization. Duncan's was more of a trade-union grass-roots campaign. The SCLC and its affiliates enthusiastically built support for it; far more than the alliance of progressives and a less centrally organized labour movement did in 1924 for La Follette. Five thousand had attended a pro-Duncan Rally in 1920; the largest La Follette rally reported was attended by 3000. Thousands had been locked out of the 1920 FLP presidential rally.

Of course the difference may not just be due to the attitude of trade-union organizers and their rank and file. It must be remembered that the trade-union movement was significantly weaker in 1924 than 1920. It had gone through several years of unemployment, wage cutting

and open-shop campaigns. Union membership had seriously declined. In 1920, the year Duncan stood, Seattle's claimed union membership had been over 21,000. This was probably an exaggeration, but even the next year the figure was still 15,335. However, by 1924 it was down to only 12,320. Membership losses had been heavy, strikes fewer and union leaders more conservative. Miners District No 10 had suffered several defeats and, in the 1924 election, its leader supported the Republicans. It was a far weaker Seattle labour movement that took part in the 1924 election.⁵⁹

It was also less radical, not just at the top, but also at the grass-root level. The more radical metal trade workers from the shipyards had been lost to the movement when the yards closed and their jobs vanished. Ironically, it was left to the more conservative rail brotherhoods to be the firmest adherents of independent political action. It was these railway workers and their comrades in the Machinists that put their backs into the La Follette campaign in the light of SCLC passivity. The Railroad Brotherhoods even insisted on standing their own candidate for Governor under the old FLP banner. It was in Washington State that the real FLP made its last and gallant stand. Though they only received 40,000 votes statewide, the 6,000 plus votes in Seattle was just over 8 per cent. Considering that the SCLC and the WSFL had refused to endorse the FLP, this was not a humiliating outcome. As a beginning it might have been a useful result, but for a party that had been in second place, third place meant its final attempt.⁶⁰

In 1922 Duncan had found consolation in the fact that the FLP had got over 10 per cent, a result which ensured an automatic place on the ballot. He had issued a rallying call to rebuild for 1924, but starved of official trade-union support the party declined rapidly. After 1924 it withdrew from all active political life. There is no doubt official trade-union support was the key. The conservative wing of the Seattle labor movement was well aware of that, hence its collaboration to break Duncan's grip on the SCLC. Brewery Workers were

⁵⁹Dembo, table 3, p. 627.

⁶⁰Union Record, 6 November 1924.

particularly hostile, and backed Short in his attempts to undermine Duncan and the SCLC.⁶¹

The SCLC's experiment with independent political action ended by 1923. They had not dared to involve themselves with Fitzpatrick in his 1923 convention, though the FLP did attend. Ironically the Seattle FLP went along with the Communists and the Federated Farmer Labor Party. Cast adrift from the official union movement there was no where else to go. But within the SCLC, Communists and the IWW had no influence. Those loyal to the AFL dominated the body. Even when Duncan and his allies dictated policy, they still remained loyal to the AFL. Seattle had the same kind of federated unionism as Chicago. Like Fitzpatrick, Duncan had tried to initiate a more formal industrial unionism, and like Fitzpatrick he was defeated. Unable to deliver industrial unionism within the AFL, Duncan had no alternative but to stay inside the AFL. This demoralized his more radical allies who became increasingly disruptive.

In reality Duncan, similarly to Fitzpatrick, had no powerful base outside of the SCLC itself. Necessarily he turned to the conservatives for support. They willingly gave it, and then turned on Duncan himself. In some ways Duncan remained truer to himself than Fitzpatrick did. He refused to go along with the disavowal of the FLP, remaining loyal to it even though this meant he was effectively ousted from the labour movement. Perhaps it was Duncan's Calvinist background that kept him from a complete recantation, and Fitzpatrick's Catholicism that led him to seek redemption in the fold of the AFL. However, religious ideology as an explanation for the differences between the two leaders is not a satisfactory reason. The trade-union aims of the two men had been almost identical. The main difference was

⁶¹The importance of WSFL support for the FLP is demonstrated in Henry Braine's letter to Short. It correctly ascribed the failure and decline of the FLP at the 1922 election to the withdrawal of WSFL support. However Braine was not offering expert analysis, but gloating over the defeat of his pro-prohibitionist enemies. "Mr Duncan and his clique should put this down in memory that while they may dominate the Central Labor Council, if they want to get anywhere in politics they must have the whole of organized labor behind them, instead of defying the American Federation of Labor--" Letter from Henry Braine, Secretary of International Union of United Brewery, Flour, Cereal And Soft Drink Workers of America, local 142, Seattle, to William Short, dated 11 November 1922 in Correspondence of Washington State Federation, box 13, folder 7-48.

the degree of integration into the AFL and its structures. Fitzpatrick had a good working relationship with the Illinois State Federation of Labor, and considered himself part of the national organization. The AFL's national office paid half his salary. When Fitzpatrick faced the abyss, rather than push him, state officials persuaded him to stay.

Duncan had always been at odds with his State Federation. The SCLC, unlike the CFL, rarely enjoyed the support of its state body. Even though the SCLC membership was always equal to at least half of the Federation's membership, it was never a major influence at its conventions.⁶² This was for two reasons. First Seattle was surrounded by a host of small unions, whose voting power outnumbered it because of the delegation system. Secondly, the SCLC delegation rarely acted as a united force at conventions. Duncan could not even count on full support from Seattle trade unionists. Fitzpatrick was surrounded by a broader range of like-minded officials and activists. It was Fitzpatrick's far deeper roots in the movement that kept him in the AFL, but it also meant that he disowned all he had ever fought for as a progressive trade unionist. When it came to dealing with the CFL and the SCLC, the AFL had played a waiting game. It was not until the progressives were isolated from their state federations, and to some extent their own central bodies, that the knife was put in.

⁶²For WSFL and SCLC membership see tables Nos. 2 and 3 in Dembo, pp. 625-628.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION: END OF A DREAM

There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyages of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.¹

While specifically concerned with three cities, this thesis has not ignored national events and trends. Indeed, the three cities were central to working-class politics in this period, if only for the fact that between them New York and Chicago contained 25 to 30 per cent of the AFL's entire membership. If the respective state federations' members are included, this figure is even higher. Seattle's membership did not make it a major centre. However its General Strike, and the fact that the FLP achieved second place in electoral terms, gave it a reputation and significance beyond its size within the labour movement. Chicago played the leading role nationally in founding and maintaining third-party activity.

National events were central to the decision to launch the labour parties that emerged in the three cities. As we saw in Chapter Two, "From Reconstruction to Labour Parties", the initiative flowed from the desire to participate in post-war reconstruction. Labour party activists wanted to maintain wartime legislative gains, and even extend them, believing the AFL's policy of non-partisanship could not achieve this. Woodrow Wilson's Democratic government had proven in office that it was just as hostile to workers as Republican administrations. Thus, discontent with the two national parties; combined with confidence gained due to increased membership, became the spur to independent political action. It is important to remember that though each locality responded in different ways, it was in relation to national events, and not in isolation from each other. The experience of the three cities is that of an interaction between local and national politics. The need for wartime production created a rising tide of trade-union growth and strike action. This forced the government to make concessions to workers' organizations.

¹Julius Caesar, Act IV, scene 3.

The rising tide was not restricted to the USA: nationalist uprisings as in Ireland, revolution in Russia and Germany, and the growing success of the British Labour Party, further encouraged the third-party activists. To them it appeared a very good time to start their project. Thus it was national and international events, as well as local conditions, that spurred independent political action.

It is hard to understand what motivated the participants in what proved to be a very difficult time, without stressing the above points. With hindsight it can be argued that it was the wrong time to start a labour party, but to do so misses the point. The participants did not have the benefit of hindsight; for them there were opportunities to be seized. As events turned against them, their project still made sense. The hostility of the two national parties and of the courts to labour proved more than ever the need for independent working-class politics.

Armed with the knowledge that state power could benefit workers, and that workers abroad had succeeded in building labour parties, a sizeable and important section of the AFL battled against not only the US electoral system, but their own union leadership to build an independent party. It was the spirit of the times, the encouragement of seeing AFL membership almost double, and the occurrence of industry-wide strikes, that gave these activists an impetus that sustained them through the lean years. They were not just isolated individuals. In Chicago and Seattle they controlled the local city central bodies and enjoyed substantial support from the state federations.

This fact is important to this thesis because it affects the perception of the AFL. Gwendolyn Mink's assumption that: "American Trade Unionism explicitly rejected the idea of independent labor politics" is undermined by the concrete experience of the three cities in this study.² The labour movements of these three cities seriously contested the AFL's political policy. They did not reject independent politics; rather they embraced them. The explicit rejection refers only to the national leadership. The claim that "rejection" applies to the AFL as a whole ignores the reality of the civil war that raged between reformists and conservatives. It took Gompers and his supporters six years before they could be certain they had defeated the idea of independent labour politics. Ironically, this idea was abandoned at a

²Gwendolyn Mink, Old Labor and New Immigrants in American Political Development, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 18.

time when the vote for La Follette showed the desire of a sizeable minority for an alternative to the two main parties. Therefore rather than accepting the notion that American labour explicitly rejected third-party politics, this thesis has established why those who advocated independent politics lost out.

A comparison of the three cities helps us answer this question, as the different experience of each case allows us to test different hypotheses. For example, if the answer is simply lack of electoral support, we face the problem that the Seattle party achieved a significant vote. Yet it was unable to maintain its organization any longer than Chicago or New York. Thus electoral results, though important, cannot on their own adequately explain the failure of those who advocated a labour party. To establish the key variables, it is necessary to systematically assess the various major factors that may have weakened or strengthened the labour party movement in each city.

Chapter Two considered the industrial structure of each city. Clearly each city was very different, but the difference in workplace sizes was not the most crucial factor in determining trade-union membership and militancy. If it is the case that large workplace and industry-wide unions are essential for militancy and radicalism, then Chicago certainly fitted this type of characterization. Seattle also fitted this model for a brief period with the growth of the shipyards. It is true that in both cities the progressives controlled their respective central labour bodies in a period of militancy and union growth. It is also true they lost control as union membership shrank, and industrial militancy declined. However, the leader of the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL), John Fitzpatrick, was a member of the tiny horseshoers' craft union. The Seattle Central Labor Council (SCLC) continued with its reformist policies long after decline of the mass unions in the shipyards. If the theory that large-scale industry is essential to unionization is correct, then New York should have been a weak-trade union centre. The recruiting of members would have proved difficult and a purely conservative craft-type trade unionism based on small workplaces would have predominated. However this was not the reality. First, as we saw in Chapter Two, unions recruited large numbers across small industries. Workers in small firms, such as printing or clothing, were organized on an industry-wide basis and created sizeable unions. They struck just as often as those in large workplaces like shipbuilding and the docks.

Nonetheless there was a problem in New York of the split between "progressive" and "craft" trade unionism. For a brief period in 1919, the reformists seized control of the AFL city body. The failure of the progressives inside the AFL to build lasting links with those outside of it had more to do with the political traditions of these activists than any structural foundation of New York industry. The undemocratic structure of the AFL also undermined them, as they suffered opposition from a state federation that represented fewer members than the city central bodies. The conservative nature of upstate unions was used to check, and then defeat, the city labour progressives. But the progressives also created problems for themselves, failing to relate to possible allies outside of the AFL. After all, in Chicago and Seattle, the central bodies enjoyed close working relations with those trade unions outside of the AFL.

However, the New York movement had the additional problem of competing with a substantial Socialist party. Neither the CFL or the SCLC faced the barrier of a sizeable bloc committed to the Socialist Party. In fairness to the Socialist Party it should also be added that neither Chicago or Seattle had a bloc of trade unionists so committed to the Democrats. Suspicion and distrust of a labour body with many leaders committed to Tammany was not easy to overcome. When the New York central body did make a turn to the left, it failed to make overtures to those it had ignored in the past. While the policies had changed, the methods of dealing with those outside of the AFL had not. This friction was not inevitable, but it was welcomed in an underhanded way by some Socialists who opposed unity at all costs.

It is also the case that Chicago and Seattle had a stronger tradition of "federated unionism". The differences between the cities should not be exaggerated. New York, as we saw in Chapters Two and Three, had several industry-wide organizations, including printers, marine workers, carpenters and clothing workers. A federated unionism, or proto-industrial type-unionism did exist in New York; therefore the political tradition of those who led these unions was as important as the structure of industry.

Perhaps a more important structural explanation is found in the nature of the AFL itself. New York's central body often had been more radical than the State Federation, but conservative leadership used the

predominance of small locals outside of the city to isolate and block the city body. Chicago and Seattle had the same problem, but to a lesser extent. For most of the period covered by this thesis the Chicago Labor Party activists enjoyed the support of their State Federation. The Seattle Labor Party also had a degree of state federation support in its first two years. However in both cases the opposition of the respective state federations proved decisive. All three city bodies were under represented at a state level. State officials could use the state organization as a barrier against the more radical city centres. Urban areas were more radical, irrespective of workplace size. Those locals outside the main urban areas often supported the state federation against the city bodies. In Illinois, however, upstate unions often proved to be a source of support. For example, the miners were major supporters of Fitzpatrick and the CFL's political policy. Yet none of the three cities' central bodies were able to dominate the state federations. They were well aware of the importance of state federation support. Once the state federations moved against the third parties in Chicago and Seattle, support for the FLP crumbled. The fact that the New York central body never secured state federation support for the FLP meant the initiative was stillborn. Conversely the support of the state federations had a beneficial effect: the Seattle FLP performed at its best when it enjoyed the support of the Washington State Federation.

Lingering doubts on the importance of AFL support should be put to rest by the outcome of the La Follette campaign. In Chicago and Seattle there was hardly any difference in state or city electoral support for La Follette. In New York, the La Follette vote in the city was higher than in the rest of the state. In Chicago and Seattle there was formal support from the city and state labour bodies. In New York both the State Federation and city labour officials opposed the campaign, even though both bodies officially supported it. However, in New York City the unions managed to run quite a powerful campaign for La Follette.

At the state level the Federations' opposition was more powerful. New York, with its more craft-based industry than Chicago, actually gathered more votes for La Follette. The difference here is surely that the Socialist Party had a strong political tradition in New York and a weak one in Chicago. This tradition was not restricted to the polls, but extended to influence inside a considerable number of

unions inside and outside of the AFL. This begs the question as to why the Socialists had more influence in New York than Chicago. One reason could be that the more industrial nature of Chicago gave nurture to syndicalist ideas that failed to take root in New York. Leading syndicalists such as W.Z. Foster put their energy into Chicago, not New York, and for the most part were disparaging of electoral politics. This also affected some of the Socialist Party membership who preferred direct action to political activity. Though I have already argued against an overdeterministic view of structural differences, it is true that New York did not have the great organizing campaigns around steel and meatpacking that attracted the syndicalists to Chicago. However if this is an important factor, it stands on its head the theory that industrial unionism was essential to creating a third party, for in 1924 it was New York that obtained the higher vote for La Follette.

It should not be assumed that all syndicalism is a barrier to building a third party. In Seattle, with its form of "federated unionism", Duncan's alliance with syndicalist activists helped the new party to achieve its best results. This brings us full circle. In other words, even though we cannot ignore the industrial structure of each city, it is the structure of the AFL, and the political tradition of its constituents, that is more important. This had a far more systematic effect on the outcome of events in all three cities than the nature of industry.

POLITICAL MACHINES

One factor clearly affecting the success of independent political action in each city was the local political tradition. It is important to avoid hindsight in considering this factor. Party machines could not automatically count on certain sections of the population for full support in this period, nor, with the state playing a smaller role, did they have many spoils to offer. In Chicago a majority of the black population was wedded to the Republican machine. However, this was an exception rather than the rule. As we saw with the Poles in Chicago, hard and fast party lines were not fully drawn. Ethnic factors will be discussed in greater detail below. The issue here is the party machine as a barrier to the growth of a new party.

In New York, Tammany held an entire section of trade-union officials in its grip. Even at the height of the Republican ascendancy it kept the loyalty of a substantial number of New York's voters. Neither of the two major parties in New York suffered major defections. In Chicago the two major parties dominated the political scene. Even when split, these were able to win elections. It was in Seattle, where progressivism crossed party lines, and the Democrats in 1920 all but collapsed, that the FLP faced the least severe opposition. But though the FLP could beat the Democrats, the Republicans proved to be far too hard a nut to crack. New York and Chicago in the negative, and Seattle in the positive, prove that the two-party system makes it very difficult for a new party to progress. This is not unique to the USA. The British Labour Party faced the same problem: it was only the rapid decline of the Liberal Party that catapulted it into second place. In a sense the same thing happened to the Seattle Labor Party with the collapse of the Democrats. The subsequent loss of trade-union support meant that the Seattle party was unable to maintain its position of second place.

Though it is idle to speculate what would have happened in New York or Chicago had the main party machines been weaker, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the FLP could have done better. This would not be an automatic outcome, as the vacuum created could also have provided an opportunity for a variety of progressive, liberal, or even populist-type parties. In Seattle, it was the tradition of the Union Record and the SCLC which enabled labour to win the leadership of the progressive movement and take the FLP to second place. New York did not have a similar tradition, apart from the more limited appeal of the radical Socialists. In Chicago, the relationship between progressives and labour was one of cooperation, but it did not have the same political outcome as in Seattle. Chicago labour did not have sole leadership of political progressivism. When political factors are taken into consideration, it is clearly the Seattle movement that faced the fewest obstacles. Unlike New York and Chicago, the Seattle Socialists had no presence at all. The Democrats did not have a reliable party organization, and the electoral system itself was more open to a new party.

However, it is also possible that the early benefits of a non-partisan system later became a barrier in itself. It allowed labour an easy entry into local politics, but at the same time blunted the edges

of party organization. In other words, reforms could be won by individuals or coalitions, as well as parties. This meant that at times the profile of the Seattle Party was difficult to discern in the maelstrom of municipal non-partisan politics. Thus, the very factor that allowed labour to do well was the same factor that made it difficult for a new party to establish roots. This did not matter as much to the main parties, who had national profiles to keep them in the voters' memory. However, once the FLP lost its official union support, many progressives made their way back to the Democratic fold. The recovery of the Democrats saw the immediate decline of the FLP. In the 1924 election the Democrats had still not managed to solidify their vote, which collapsed when many Democrats bolted and backed La Follette. The FLP did not benefit from this switch, as it did not extend to state and local positions.

RACE, ETHNICITY AND GENDER

If Seattle benefited from the weakness of the Democrat Party in comparison to Chicago and New York, it suffered from the strength of the Republican Party. The FLP was never able to secure enough votes to topple the Republicans from first place. Even if the FLP had completely won over the Democratic vote, in most cases it would not have been enough for electoral victory. Seattle was the most homogeneous of the three cities, with a majority Protestant native population. This may have given the FLP an advantage in that the other parties could not depend on ethnic voting enclaves. Some scholars have argued that Duncan's Calvinism, pro-Prohibitionism and opposition to Japanese immigration cost the party Catholic or ethnic support.³ If one of the causes of Republican dominance in Seattle was nativist sentiment, it could explain the attempt of the FLP to attempt to use similar sentiments in the pursuit of building a working-class party. Indeed, the SCLC on one occasion did run an extensive "Americanism" campaign. It is possible that this alienated Catholic and immigrant groupings, but they were not substantial enough to be a decisive factor in elections.

We should not assume that the FLP attracted the xenophobic vote. The FLP opposed racism, believing in equality for all Americans,

³See Chapters Five and Eight for a critique of the Dembo thesis which argues on these lines.

naturalized or native. It campaigned against voting regulations that made it difficult for naturalized or first-generation Americans to vote. It was internationalist in character, supporting the Russian Revolution, and opposed the deportation of militants. Its support for Prohibition was class-based, motivated by the belief that drink weakened working-class solidarity and militancy. It also complained that Prohibition did not apply equally to the rich.

It is true that the SCLC supported a ban on Japanese immigration. This was not couched in racial terms but on the grounds that labour was being deliberately imported to cut wages and militancy. Ironically, John C. Kennedy believed that one reason that the FLP did not do better in 1920 was that the party was characterised as the "Japanese Labor Party".⁴ It is interesting to note that the FLP candidate most closely associated with being pro-Japanese did far better at the polls than any other of the Party's candidates. It would appear that the commitment to reform was higher in the minds of the voters than press warnings that the FLP would let in the "yellow peril".

The situation in New York and Chicago was far different to that of Seattle due to the diversity of the population described in Chapter Two. There is clear evidence that racial and ethnic patterns affected the outcome of party politics. In Chicago a substantial section of the black community supported the Republicans, while the Democrats enjoyed substantial Irish support. In New York, Tammany and sections of the AFL leadership enjoyed Irish support. The Socialists had substantial Jewish support, and many immigrant groupings supported particular parties or candidates. It cannot be denied that there were political loyalties based on race and ethnicity.

However, where effort was put into unionizing workers from different backgrounds there were successes in breaking sectional loyalties. In Chicago, Polish workers joined the meatpacking unions in large numbers, as did a substantial minority of black workers. Italian workers and Jewish immigrants joined the clothing workers' unions in both New York and Chicago. Thus immigrant workers did not just relate to community organization, but also to the workplace. In some cases this undermined attempts to build political loyalty out of ethnic considerations. As detailed in the sections on Chicago, in some areas Polish workers ignored community calls to vote Democrat, instead voting

⁴ See Chapter Five for an account of this incident

Socialist and FLP. In New York, clothing workers supported the Socialist Party and later the American Labor Party. La Follette received a substantial portion of the Jewish vote in New York. The difference in this voting pattern was class. Jews in the sweated trades voted progressive or Socialist; those in better occupations or locales voted differently.

The Irish did not slavishly vote Democrat. In 1920 there was much dissatisfaction with the two main parties' refusal to oppose British foreign policy. In New York City Jeremiah O'Leary narrowly missed becoming an FLP congressman in a predominant Irish-German district. Ethnic voting patterns were not strictly defined in 1920, nor fully settled by 1924. Neither is it the case that the FLP suffered ferocious opposition from Catholic or Irish organizations. In Chicago, Fitzpatrick had good relations with a range of Irish organizations. The most important trends determining voting patterns were national and international ones. Thus, Poles did not behave that differently from the rest of the population; they also turned against the Wilson government.

Political allegiances were constantly changing in the opening years of the 1920s. In Chicago the FLP made considerable effort to convince ethnic groupings of the need to vote for it. It organized a black party branch, and stood a black candidate where African-American voters predominated. However, there is evidence that it did not do enough consistent work in this area. Perhaps the Party was daunted by black commitment to the Republicans, or feared a white backlash. Whatever the reason, it was not just the black vote it failed to win, but most votes. The reasons for different groupings failing to vote for the FLP in Chicago may not have been much different to the rest of its population. Potential voters saw it as too radical, or believed it was too powerless to achieve anything in the short term. It is unrealistic to expect a new party to achieve success at the polls at its very first attempt. Yet when we read the propaganda of its supporters, it often appeared as if success was just around the corner. Those who argued that they should sink roots before intervening at the polls were brushed aside. No doubt there was an impulse for a new party in 1919 and 1924 that went far beyond the actual vote delivered.⁵ However, in

⁵Frederick C. Howe, Confessions Of A Reformer, (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1988; orig.1925), p.338. Howe noted the massive enthusiasm for the La Follette campaign. He also observed that people

1920, a party with little experience and a presidential candidate unknown to most people was not able to turn enthusiasm into support. Thus the failure of the labour party to win immigrant or black voters should, for the most part, be seen as integral to its overall failure.

When it came to winning the support of women, those who supported independent political action were far more consistent. They supported women's suffrage and believed that women should be in unions. The latter belief often brought them into conflict with conservative elements in the AFL. For example, at the behest of the Barbers' International, the AFL ordered Duncan to refuse recognition to the Women Barbers. Duncan fought long and hard to keep these women in the AFL.

Progressive trade unionists in all three cities worked with women trade unionists and, in particular the WTUL. The labour parties, and the La Follette campaign directed propaganda specifically at women. In all three cities women stood as FLP candidates in prominent positions. In Chicago and New York women played a central role in organizing election campaigns. It is not always possible to break down the female vote, but we know that in Chicago proportionately fewer women than men voted for independent political action. Also, a higher percentage of women voted for the two main parties than the FLP. It is also the case that fewer women than men voted in the early years of extended suffrage. Given that the two main parties received fewer women's votes than men's, a newly-created party with limited resources had even less chance of winning women's votes. Therefore the failure to encourage women to vote was a general problem which created extra difficulties for the new party.

Although I have argued that the effects of workplace size on union organization should not be assessed deterministically, the structure of the workforce and the AFL did have an effect with regard to women and independent political action. Though the numbers of women in the workforce were increasing, the majority remained outside of the workplace. Most of those who did work were not organized by the AFL. There were some exceptions, as in the teachers' and clothing workers' unions. Overall union density was lower amongst women than men. In

do not always vote as they "shout", or even vote as they want to vote. He believed that fear was a factor in deciding the final way people voted. I have already argued elsewhere that the fear of economic instability undermined the La Follette campaign in its closing weeks.

Chicago and Seattle there was a clear correlation between membership of a union and voting for the FLP or La Follette. In other words, there was an organic link between membership and voting behaviour. In the case of women this link was far weaker, and it is not unreasonable to expect a lower vote. Women were a minority of the AFL, but they were not the only section of society outside of its orbit. The AFL did not organize the unskilled, or many black and foreign workers.

This derived from the AFL's policy of concentrating on recruiting skilled workmen. This was not a matter of simple prejudice, but a defensive strategy that unions adopted in response to hostile employers. This policy left many outside of the organized working class. The failure of the AFL to extend its membership to all sections of employees had implications for its ability to intervene politically. I have already observed that where AFL trade unionists campaigned for independent political action, there is clear evidence of a higher rate of support for the FLP and the La Follette campaign. Union membership influenced the way workers voted in their geographical communities. This was clearly seen with the streetcar men in Seattle, or Polish meatpacking workers in Chicago. Where the organic link was weak, for example with black workers, or women, then the response to independent political action was weaker. Therefore the density of the AFL affected its ability to influence workers' political preferences. Before the war union density was low, and many workers were untouched by unionization. The war and its aftermath saw AFL membership grow; in some areas the possibility of recruiting the unskilled became a possibility. It was this expansion of the AFL that convinced leaders like Duncan and Fitzpatrick that independent political action was possible. They were also visionaries, in that they believed it would be possible to extend trade unionism to the unskilled, to women and black workers.

The failure of industrial unionism was not their fault. Nor was it the case that workers did not respond. Thousands flooded into steel, meatpacking, clothing, telephone and other white-collar unions. Teachers' unions in New York and Chicago were the most fervent supporters of the new party. However, the employers deliberately set out to destroy the union shop. Fitzpatrick and Duncan were well aware that the structure of the AFL was inadequate to deal with such an offensive. They were also aware that without extending union membership they could not succeed in building a labour party. Unfortunately, it became increasingly difficult to extend union membership as the bosses

went on the offensive. Trade unionists often have to abandon inclusiveness and militant tactics when forced on to the defensive. Instead they retreat to a more conservative strategy of exclusiveness, restricting work to those of the trade or accepting wage cuts in return for union recognition. In such a situation it becomes difficult to keep workers involved in political activity. This was clearly the case in Chicago, where even those activists who agreed with political action had their time taken up with defending basic union organization.

The experience of American workers was different to that of European workers. However, their aspirations were not very dissimilar. American workers faced an intransigent ruling class, which was unwittingly aided by a union structure that failed to appreciate the need for change. The leadership of the AFL had developed at a time when defensive strategies were effective. They had the experience and the loyalty of a layer of officials and activists around them. Those that joined in the wartime upsurge had no such experience or base. However, there was a counterbalance to this conservatism provided by the layer of officials at a lower level in the city central bodies. Thus the battle to establish a labour party and extend the AFL was not only a fight against the employers and the established political system, but a battle between contending forces inside the AFL.

That being the case, one must next ask why did one side win rather than the other? Why was it that the politics of the craft-orientated and conservative wing prevailed over those who wanted to break down craft barriers and bring about reform? The argument that the right wing represented the ideology of the membership more closely than the left is not adequate. If the membership was always conservative then why, at times, did the conservatives speak in radical terms? In New York City there were times when the Tammany trade unionists supported the FLP or the Socialists. In Seattle and Chicago it was not until after 1922 that the conservatives dared to oppose the insurgents head on. If the left had no base for their politics it is unlikely that they could have held off the right for so long. This is proved in the negative by the New York experience, where the base of the reformers was far weaker than in the other cities. Here they were forced into isolation before the end of 1920.

There was also a sentiment for radical change in union structure amongst groups of workers who have been typified as conservative. Thus, railroad and marine workers built unofficial rank-and-file structures,

and went on industry-wide strikes against the wishes of their leaders. Even in New York this kind of action was commonplace. The problem for the insurgents was that these unofficial joint organizations did not become part of the power structures of the official AFL machine. Thus this informal move towards industrial unionism came up against the barrier of the more conservative state and national union structures. There were times when the membership went well to the left of its leadership. Railwaymen demanded election of their officials, and supported the labour party. Other groups of workers stayed on strike even when ordered back to work by their officials and the courts. This was reflected in all three cities of this study. In Chicago, New York and Seattle, political action was endorsed not just by the left, but by the right as well. The AFL was forced to relaunch its traditional non-partisan policy in a vigorous fashion. In 1924 it had no choice but to endorse the La Follette campaign. This was not a case of leading but of following, and then outflanking the radical impulses of sections of the membership. Nonetheless, the campaign took place on the terms of the right. Independent political action was rejected. Even before 1924 the left and their attempts to build parties were defeated.

This leaves unanswered the key question: why was the left defeated? The above argument discounts ideology on its own as a simplistic answer. Terms such as 'conservative' do not adequately describe the membership of the unions involved in this study. At times, as already stated, the membership went to the left of their leaders. It was involved in campaigns to unionize blacks and women. It attended mass rallies in support of the FLP and La Follette. At other times it was passive and gave little support to the reformers. The ideology of workers is not static. It is possible for workers to hold conflicting ideas, and those ideas can vary. The reasons for this are complex but must be simplified in creating a generalized assessment of which ideas dominated at any given time in the course of this study.

There is no doubt that the experience of the three cities shows that victory and defeat has an important effect on which ideas are likely to dominate at any given moment. In a period of militancy and state intervention in labour relations, third-party ideas enjoy wider currency than in periods of little struggle. This relationship between struggle and ideas is not a simple one. Defeats on a large scale, or aggressive action by employers and government can also have a radicalizing affect. Defeats in the industrial field, or anti-union

legislation, can turn workers' minds to political action. For example, in Seattle it took the defeat of the General Strike to create enthusiasm for political action. In Chicago the failure of political action saw an increase in union activity. However, the general trend between 1919 and 1920 of rising struggle saw the left in control of the three cities' labour movement. It was precisely when the high tide of militancy receded that the left's domination of the central labour bodies began to be undermined.

It was not simply a matter of ideas; in a period of economic recession, with the unions under attack from the employers, the left faced a conundrum. It wanted to oppose the leadership of Gompers and his supporters in its own localities, but at the same time it needed the support of the official AFL machine. Under attack from the employers, it needed the protection of the AFL trade card. A fight to the death against the conservatives in the reformers' own central bodies would have deprived them of this protection. Gompers made it quite clear to Duncan in Seattle that persistence with the third party would mean the revocation of the SCLC's charter. Fitzpatrick and the CFL faced a similar threat. Fitzpatrick had his salary withdrawn to demonstrate where real power lay.

The reformist left of the AFL was not prepared to break with craft unionism. They wanted to reform it, not be outside of it. Increasingly they began to modify their demands, dropping plans to industrialize the AFL. This found them under fire from the Communist and syndicalist left. Forced to choose between the radicals or the risk of losing AFL endorsement, they went into an alliance with the conservatives to defeat the former. The FLP had failed to build a sustainable party culture independent of the AFL. In the absence of an independent base they became prisoners of the right wing and were forced to drop their own reformist ideals. The key to this defeat was not just the left's lack of independent base, or of ideological consistency, but the conditions of retreat forced on the labour movement by recession and the employers' offensive.

This stark choice had not been forced on them when they were protected by the militancy of the membership. But from 1921 onwards the unions lost members, and found it harder to strike. With the defeat of major sections of workers, the loss of union income, and with many former members and activists unemployed, workers became increasingly indifferent to the activities of the party builders. However apathy

should not always be interpreted as conservatism. The fact that workers felt that strikes and independent political activity were unlikely to succeed does not mean they were reconciled to the situation. The events of 1924 demonstrated precisely this as millions of workers rejected both Democrats and Republicans.

Life is not as simple as the Shakespeare quote at the beginning of this chapter. Tides and the actions of men do not easily correlate. At the high tide of 1919 New York and Chicago reacted by announcing a third party, while Seattle let the moment pass. In New York the Socialist Party ignored the high tide and did little to support those who had embarked in response. When the tide receded the Socialist Party then decided to try and relaunch the third-party initiative in far less favourable conditions. At the end of 1923 the FLP was no longer a tenable proposition, due to the removal of any serious union support. Yet, in 1924, there was great feeling amongst workers of the need for independent political activity. It was the Conference for Progressive Political Action (CPPA) that became the focus for those dissatisfied with the main parties. Now, those who had been considered conservative in the past, most notably the railroad unions, launched a campaign of support for La Follette. The candidates of the two main parties were too conservative even for Gompers to stomach, and so the AFL joined in the campaign. This was not a break with non-partisanship, though many who supported La Follette longed for a new party.

Ironically those who had tried to create a third party in the past were to miss the tide yet again. Many had become demoralized, and allowed the La Follette campaign to pass them by. Others were uncritical of the campaign and dropped any demand for a third party. The worst culprits were the Socialists of New York City. They allowed their own party machine to disintegrate, and abandoned their own daily newspaper, in the hope that the AFL and the La Follette progressives would do the work of building a third party for them. The leaders of the CPPA and the AFL, along with their progressive allies, had no intention of building a third party. As soon as the result of the election was known, the majority of these activists made it clear they saw building a third party as a hopeless cause.

The La Follette campaign should not be seen in isolation from the activity of those who had advocated independent political action. There was a direct link. Many of the unions that had supported the FLP were involved in the campaign of 1924. They may not have attracted a

substantial vote, but they had established the idea of a third party in the minds of many trade unionists. It was partly as a concession to a growing desire for a new party that the CPPA, and even the AFL, broke with the presidential candidates of the two main parties.

The contention that the AFL leadership ditched the campaign, or provided it with few resources, cannot be sustained. The AFL never provided massive cash injections for political activity. Its resources were its officials, paid and unpaid, and its press. In all three cities these resources were put at the disposal of the campaign. As we saw in Seattle, only a few days before the actual election Frank Morrison attended the SCLC to urge more action. Gompers denounced the right-wing rebels of New York and reaffirmed the AFL's commitment in the dying days of the campaign. Labour newspapers such as the Seattle Union Record, the New Leader, New Majority, Labor, and the clothing workers' press all agitated for La Follette. None of this appears in national party balance sheets. Merely quoting national campaign accounts as proof of labour's inactivity is not sufficient. Studies at the local level contradict such an assessment.

Of course there was a problem with the AFL's support. It was not as fulsome as it might have been. This was not due to insincerity on the part of the AFL's leadership, but was the logical outcome of their non-partisan politics. They had spent the years covered by this study attacking independent political action. Always motivated by the needs of the immediate situation, they sacrificed the long term for alliances with Democrats and Republicans. Thus independent political action was opposed because it could not stop Prohibition, or deregulation of the railroads, or repeal a specific piece of legislation. Ironically these measures were not stopped by the AFL's non-partisan policy either. Nineteen-hundred and twenty would have been a far better year for the AFL to have supported a third party. The backlash against the Democrats was immense, and the Seattle labour movement proved that the FLP could benefit from it. It is unlikely that Chicago or New York would have done as well as Seattle but, as 1924 proved, they would have improved their performance. AFL support, and more substantial candidates in 1920, could have made a difference. It also means that a tradition and a party machine could have been built for the 1924 election.

Even though the AFL switched to supporting La Follette in 1924, this was yet another example of short-termism. Unable to gain effective support from the main parties it turned to an independent candidate.

This was only possible because there was broad sentiment for such action in the labour movement. But the AFL remained committed to its non-partisan policy and still opposed a third party. The contradictory nature of the AFL position made it difficult to discipline those who would not follow its lead. By insisting that the campaign did not support a new party, voters were being asked to back an individual without any possibility of achieving anything in Congress. In spite of all this, a large section of the AFL supported the campaign and many workers voted for La Follette. It is unlikely that La Follette could have stood at all without the pledge of the CPPA and the subsequent backing of the AFL. Organized labour was the only substantial force La Follette had behind him. Progressivism enjoyed a brief resurgence only because labour had acted.

La Follette attracted nearly five million voters, but after the election they had nowhere to go. There was no organization of any substance to which they could turn. The AFL leadership remained true to its short termism; and recoiled in horror at the fact that a lost campaign gave them no influence in Congress. It immediately repudiated its own actions and returned to a policy of supporting the main party presidential candidates. The progressives of the CPPA acted in the same manner, withdrawing all support from any proposed third party. Neither organization looked to the possibility of relating to the five million insurgent voters.

Sadly the left of the movement had nothing to offer either. The remnants of the old FLP and the Socialists had failed to warn of the treachery that would follow the election. Perhaps these activists had genuinely believed that La Follette's vote would be so large as not to allow any room for retreat. Whatever their reasons, their abandonment of their own organizations during the election left them in no position to salvage anything from the post-campaign wreckage. Millions were left stranded on the beach as the tide pulled out yet again.

LABOR'S FOURTEEN POINTS

FOURTEEN POINTS OF
LABOR SWEEP COUNTRY

Platform Adopted by Chicago Federation
Attracts Wide Attention and Wins
Many Endorsements

"Labor's fourteen points," which were unanimously endorsed by the Chicago Federation of Labor at its regular meeting November 17, 1918, have created a sensation in labor and liberal circles all over the country. They have been endorsed by numerous organizations and letters of commendation from societies and individuals have poured into the federation headquarters. This declaration of principles in full follows:

Right to Organize

1. The unqualified right of workers to organize and to deal collectively with employers through such representatives of their unions as they choose.

Democratic Control of Industry

2. Democratic control of industry and commerce for the general good by those who work with hand and brain, and the elimination of autocratic domination of the forces of production and distribution either by selfish private interests or bureaucratic agents of government.

8-Hour Day and Minimum Wage

3. An 8-hour day and a 44-hour week in all branches of industry, with minimum rates of pay which, without the labor of mothers and children, will maintain the worker and his family in health and comfort, and provide a competence for old age, with ample provision for recreation and good citizenship.

Abolition of Unemployment

4. Abolition of unemployment by the creation of opportunity for steady work at standard wages through the stabilization of industry and the establishment, during periods of depression, of government work on housing, road-building, reforestation, reclamation of desert and swamp, and the development of ports and waterways.

Equal Rights for Men and Women

5. Complete equality of men and women in government and industry, with the fullest enfranchisement of women, and equal pay for men and women doing similar work.

Stop Profiteering

6. Reduction of the cost of living to a just level, immediately and as a permanent policy, by the development of co-operation, and the elimination of wasteful methods, parasitical middlemen and all profiteering in the creation and distribution of the products of industry and agriculture, in order that the actual producers may enjoy the fruits of their toil.

Abolish Kaiserism in Education

7. Democratization of education in public schools and universities through the participation of labor and the organized teachers in the determination of methods, policies and programs in this fundamental field.

Soldiers' and Sailors' Insurance for All Workers

8. Continuation after the war of soldiers' and sailors' insurance; extension of such life insurance, by the government without profit, to all men and women; and the establishment of governmental insurance against accident and illness, and upon all insurable forms of property.

War Debt and Government Expenses

9. Liquidation of the national debt by the application of all inheritances above a hundred thousand dollars, supplemented as may be necessary by a direct capital tax upon all persons and corporations where riches have been gained by war or other profiteering; and payment of

the current expenses of government by graduated income taxes, public profits from nationally owned utilities and resources, and from a system of taxation of land values which will stimulate rather than retard production.

Public Ownership and Nationalization of Natural Resources

10. Public ownership and operation of railroads, steamships, stock yards, grain elevators, terminal markets, telegraphs, telephones, and all other public utilities; and the nationalization and development of basic natural resources, waterpower and unused land, with the repatriation of large holdings, to the end that returning soldiers and sailors and dislocated war workers may find an opportunity for an independent livelihood.

Free Speech, Free Press, Free Assemblage

11. Complete restoration, at the earliest possible moment, of all fundamental political rights—free speech, free press, and free assemblage; the removal of all war-time restraints upon the interchange of ideas and the movement of people among communities and nations; and the liberation of all persons held in prison or indicted under charges due to their championship of the rights of labor or their patriotic insistence upon the rights guaranteed to them by the constitution.

Labor Representation in the Government

12. Representation of labor, in proportion to its voting strength, in all departments of government and upon all governmental commissions and agencies of demobilization and reconstruction; and recognition of the principles of trade unionism in the relocation of soldiers, sailors and war workers in peace pursuits, with adequate provision for the support and extension of the Department of Labor as the principal agency therefor.

Labor in the Peace Conference

13. Representation of the workers, in proportion to their numbers in the armies, navies and workshops of the world, at the peace conference and upon whatever international tribunals may result therefrom, with the labor of this nation represented by the President of the American Federation of Labor and such other delegates as the workers may democratically designate.

An End to Kings and Wars

14. Supplementing the League of Nations, and to make that instrument of international democracy vitally effective for humanity, a league of the workers of all nations pledged and organized to enforce the destruction of autocracy, militarism and economic imperialism throughout the world, and to bring about world-wide disarmament and open diplomacy, to the end that there shall be no more kings and no more wars.

WANT TO JOIN THE NEW PARTY?

Join the Labor Party, fill out and sign this blank, cut it out and mail or bring it to headquarters of the party at 166 West Washington street.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

(Must be filled out by the applicant personally. Write plain and answer all questions.)

PLEDGE: I, the undersigned, recognizing the necessity of independent political action by the men and women who believe in political, social and industrial democracy, hereby apply for membership in the Labor Party of Cook County. In all my political actions while a member of the Labor Party I agree to be guided by the constitution and platform of that party.

Date 191....

Name

Address Ward.....

If member of Labor Union or Organization, so state:

Organization

Age Country of Birth Citizen?—Yes—No—

Proposed by

dues per annum, \$4.00. One dollar must accompany this application, 50 cents of which is for dues and 50 cents for subscription to the official party paper, THE NEW MAJORITY, for three months.

¹The New Majority, 4 January 1919.

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