THE DEVELOPMENT OF SYNDICALISM IN AMERICA

IN a general way, "syndicalism" has become familiar to American readers. It is understood to be a revolutionary labor movement, which aims at the abolition of the wage system through "direct action" culminating in the "general strike." Its activities are guided by the vision of a new society, in which the management of socialized industry will be in the hands of the workers themselves. Although defective in detail, this conception is correct enough to serve as an Ariadne thread by which to trace the evolution of the movement through the labyrinth of facts and events.

The strike fever in England a year ago and the Lawrence strike in this country awakened both England and America to a realization of the fact that a revolutionary labor movement formed part of their social life, and stimulated inquiry concerning the source from which the movement had sprung. With the naiveté of people awakening to a new fact, both Englishmen and Americans assumed that what was new to them was really new, and that what had been unknown to them had not before existed. They looked beyond themselves for the origin of the movement and thought they found it in France, whence the name had come. It did not occur to many to look into their own social past and to see whether the roots of the new growth did not lie in the soil of their own countries. The few who did make the attempt stopped half-way, satisfied to find the large ideas of the new movement lodged in the brain of some one more or less brilliant individual. These assumptions have been especially common in America. From the numerous articles on syndicalism in general and on American syndicalism in particular which have appeared during the past year, the reader would gather either that a few individuals had become inspired with a new idea, or that a number of American workingmen had suddenly decided to imitate French ideas and French methods. Yet syndicalist ideas appeared simultaneously in America and in France. Of course, there was inter-

change of views between those whose thoughts were moving in the same direction in the two countries. But this factor was of minor importance. A proper understanding of the syndicalist tendencies in America can be attained only by examining them in the light of economic and political developments in this country. In the labor movement of America itself will be found the record of persistent gropings and of painful efforts through which American workmen slowly arrived at the ideas and ideals now known by the French name. The forces which drove American toilers to blaze new paths, to forge new weapons and to reinterpret the meaning of life in new terms were the struggles and compromises, the adversities and successes, the exultation and the despair born of conditions of life in America.

American syndicalists do not object to being described as such, but they prefer to be called "revolutionary industrial unionists," or "industrialists." This name has been coined in their own mint; it is associated with their own experiences; and it conveys differences of opinion and of emphasis which the American syndicalists are always anxious to point out when comparing themselves with the French. In fact, the term syndicalism can be applied to American industrial unionists only with the understanding that it is generic and includes variant species.

The most effective organization of American syndicalism today is the Industrial Workers of the World, with headquarters in Chicago. The I. W. W., however, does not embrace all the syndicalist groups of America. Within the last year "syndicalist leagues," similar to the Syndicalist Educational Leagues of England, have sprung up, and other groups have been formed which in all respects follow French syndicalism. These are entirely independent of the I. W. W.; they are even somewhat hostile to it. At present, however, they are insignificant rivals. The I. W. W. is the revolutionary organization most directly connected with the labor movement, outside of which syndicalism has little if any meaning. In it the revolutionary tendencies that have been developing in the American labor movement have finally found active expression, and it is this organization which today is persistently and aggressively forcing syndicalist

ideas upon the country. It is therefore both logical and convenient to consider the development of syndicalism in America in connection with the evolution of the I. W. W.

I

The most significant facts in the history of the American labor movement between 1885 and 1900 were the decline of the Knights of Labor and the gradual rise and development of the American Federation of Labor. The struggle between the two organizations, though at times disguised, was incessant. The Knights represented a broad and correspondingly vague humanitarianism; the Federation a narrow trade-group egoism. The organization of the Knights was based on the local assembly, that is, on a geographical subdivision which seldom if ever coincided with the local limits of a trade; and the membership of each assembly, as of the entire organization, was a heterogeneous conglomeration, ill adapted to effective coöperation. The Federation, on the other hand, was comprised of trade unions, which of course were fairly homogeneous bodies.

The history of the two organizations shows that the Federation was better able to cope with the conditions of the period. In the later decades of the nineteenth century the industries of the country relied largely on the skilled workmen, whose functions were modified but not superseded by the introduction of machinery. The concentration of industrial enterprise was just beginning, and it did not affect to any considerable extent the condition of the workers in the most important trades. Under these conditions, compact trade unions, with large treasuries fed by heavy initiation fees and high dues, could contend on the whole more efficiently for higher wages and better terms than could industrial associations formed on broader lines. By the middle of the nineties the policy of the Federation had become fairly definite. It emphasized craft autonomy, or the entire independence of each trade group to shape its own destiny; it inculcated strict loyalty to contracts made with employers; it was averse to strikes and advocated conciliation and arbitration whenever possible; it was indifferent if not hostile to socialism and, in general, to any ultimate social ideal; it was opposed to

independent political action through a separate party organization. It was to remain a loose federation of strong and independent trade groups, relying on the economic self-support and the economic self-interest of the craft unions. It was to further the interests of each group as much as possible, but without exacting too much exertion or too great sacrifices from the other groups. Following such a policy, the Federation did little, if anything, to foster the spirit of common aspiration on the part of all the workers—the spirit which the Knights of Labor so persistently emphasized in their motto: "An injury to one is the concern of all."

But while the Federation was slowly growing and its ideas and policies were taking definite form, other forces were at work in direct opposition to its tendencies. There were a number of industries in which craft unions could not be established on a secure and permanent basis, notable instances being the brewing and the mining industries. Trade unions were at a peculiar disadvantage in the brewing industry, because the brewers had been among the first employers to band themselves together in a national association—at first for protection against excessive taxation, later also for the purpose of resisting the demands of their workmen. The isolated efforts of scattered craft unions in these industries met with determined and systematic resistance from the united employers. Before long the workmen saw the situation clearly and understood that in order to win they must adopt new tactics. In 1887, at the suggestion of its national secretary, the Brewers' Union changed its name to "National Union of United Brewery Workmen of the United States" and admitted to its membership brewers, drivers, malsters, engineers and firemen—in fact all workmen employed in and around the breweries—thus adopting what later became known as the "industrial" form of organization. This organization the brewery workers retained when they joined the American Federation of Labor. Under the stress of similar conditions, the mine workers formed a similar association; and their example was soon followed by the workmen in several other industries.

With the mine workers, as with the brewery workers, the in-

dustrial form of organization was a purely practical matter. It appeared to them a question of life or death in the economic struggle. They did not philosophize about it; they simply recognized it as necessary. But among the labor leaders were a number of individuals who perceived a larger significance in the movement. They saw in the industrial form of organization a means of breaking down the barriers between craft and craft and of bringing the workers into closer coöperation. They felt that the industrial principle could be so extended as to embrace workmen as a class and to emphasize their common interests. These persons became theoretical as well as practical defenders of the industrial union. Some of them were in the American Federation of Labor, some in the Knights of Labor, while others were members of industrial unions which had sprung up in various parts of the country and which were not affiliated with either of these bodies.

In the American Federation of Labor, which was essentially a federation of craft unions, the new industrial unions formed a disturbing element. No less antagonistic to the policy of the Federation was the socialistic movement. In the American labor movement, as in the labor movement in other countries, the socialists were active from an early period, and in America as elsewhere they aimed from the beginning to capture the unions. During the earlier stages of the movement the American socialists were organized as the Socialist Labor Party, which was steadily though slowly growing from year to year. This party represented "orthodox" Marxism. The relations between this party and the American Federation of Labor were strained from the beginning. They came to a complete break in 1891, when the convention of the Federation refused to seat Lucien Sànial, a member of the party. The socialists then tried to obtain control of the weakened Knights of Labor, but they were baffled in their efforts by the officers of that organization. In December, 1895, they launched a new labor organization, described as the "Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance," in opposition both to the Federation and to the Knights of Labor. In its constitution, adopted early in 1896, the Alliance declared itself in favor of socialism and of political action. The

by-laws made it clear that the new organization was to work hand in hand with the Socialist Labor Party. The leaders of the Socialist Labor Party and of its annex, the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, were indefatigable in their criticism of the American Federation of Labor. They denounced its "narrow" spirit and called attention to its failures, which were ascribed to wrong methods and to lack of solidarity.

After a short period of growth, the Trade and Labor Alliance declined in numbers. Even after its formation a number of socialists remained members of the American Federation of Labor. These men were opposed to the trade-union policy of the Socialist Labor Party. They did not believe in organizing dual unions nor in separating from the general body of organized workingmen. Their idea was to "bore from within" until conditions should make their ideas acceptable to the majority of organized workers. Then, of course, the Federation would come to accept their point of view. These socialists within the Federation displayed no less activity than did those outside. At every convention of the Federation they introduced declarations in favor of socialism and resolutions for independent political action. Their resolutions were defeated year after year, but that did not discourage them. Whenever a big strike was lost, they pointed out that the defeat was the result of a narrow craft spirit and of a lack of solidarity among the workers. Whenever the militia interfered in a strike, they triumphantly declared that, until the workers resorted to independent political action and elected their own representatives, they would be at the mercy of the "capitalist" authorities.

Slowly indeed, but still appreciably, the propaganda of the socialists made progress. The Homestead strike in 1892, the Pullman strike in 1894 and a number of lesser strikes gave point to what they were saying. The growth of big business combinations and the concentration of economic power in the hands of a decreasing minority brought home to the workmen the fact of their industrial insecurity. The increasingly frequent use of the injunction, after the middle of the nineties, irritated them and awakened in them a feeling of bitterness toward the courts. The limitations placed upon the

use of the boycott, the attitude of the courts toward labor legislation, the use of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act as a weapon against labor organizations and disappointing experiences with a number of politicians of the old parties—all these circumstances disposed the workmen to listen to the preachers of political action.

The forces described above were exerting their influence here and there, with more or less effect according to circumstances. But they did not result in the formation of a new type of unionism in America until they were all concentrated in certain western labor organizations, of which the Western Federation of Miners was the most important. This Federation sprang into existence in May, 1893, as a result of the disastrous strike in the Cœur D'Alene district. The idea of the organization was conceived within the walls of the county jail, where a number of the strike leaders found themselves incarcerated for their activities during the struggle. Reviewing the campaign, they discovered the cause of their failure in the lack of close ties between the various local unions. They determined to bring about a combination of all miners' unions as soon as they should be out of jail. On May 15, 1893, forty-seven delegates from various miners' locals assembled in Butte, Montana, and there laid the foundation of the Western Federation of Miners. This organization developed slowly up to 1896 but grew rapidly from 1896 to 1900. It not only welded the existing unions together in a strong central federation but it also promoted the organization of new locals. Spreading from state to state, by the end of the century it had a large following in Colorado, Montana, Nevada, Arizona and other mining states of the West.

Many circumstances combined to impart to the Western Federation of Miners that spirit which made it at the same time the bugbear of corporations and employers and the advance guard of revolutionary unionism in America. The men were pioneers, hardy and self-assertive. They had gone into the West as independent fortune-seekers. The introduction of machine processes had reduced them to the position of wage-workers. The extractive nature of the industry helped to crystallize their resentment; their hands were drawing directly from

the earth wealth that enriched others. All these circumstances bred bitter feelings against their employers. The strikes in the mining districts of the West came nearer to real warfare than did any other contests in the history of the American labor movement. Armed bodies of strikers, fights with the state militia and with federal troops, barricades, dead and wounded, bull-pens—such has been the regular course of strikes in the mining districts of the Rockies.

Strikes carried on in this manner inevitably focussed upon one point the many influences mentioned above that were operating sporadically within the American labor movement. Facing strong and obstinate corporations, the miners could have no hope of success unless the workmen employed in and about the mines were welded into one organization and were ready to act as one man. This led the western miners to adopt the industrial form of organization and to make it the basic principle of their federation. The evident connection between the mining corporations and the state and city governments, the frequent use of the militia for the suppression of strikes and the abuse of the injunction forced the miners to turn their attention to political action along socialistic lines. Between 1896 and 1902 the Federation of Miners formulated in ever clearer terms its faith in a new unionism, industrial in form, political in method, socialistic in its ultimate aim.

The Federation of Miners gave impetus to the formation of other organizations similar in form and in character. In 1898 it helped to organize the Western Labor Union, which soon came to embrace a number of unskilled laborers, such as cooks, waiters, teamsters, brewery drivers, lumbermen *etc.* The Federation of Miners was interested in the organization of these unskilled and more or less migratory workingmen, because they could easily be and were actually used as strike-breakers by the mining corporations. The Western Labor Union kept in close touch with the Western Federation of Miners and advocated the same ideas and methods.

These new organizations kept aloof from the American Federation of Labor. From 1893 to 1896, indeed, the Western Federation of Miners had formed part of the American Feder-

ation of Labor, but in 1896 the connection was dissolved, partly because the western miners felt that the larger federation was not giving them due support, partly because of sectional jealousies. At first the western labor organizations regarded themselves simply as instruments for promoting the interests and welfare of the workmen of the West. But after 1900 this view began to give place to a broader outlook. The success of western unionism and the interest which it excited among eastern workmen suggested the idea of a wider organization which should transcend sectional limits. This idea gained strength as the western organizations became increasingly conscious of the fact that they represented a new type of unionism, in marked opposition to the principles of the American Federation of Labor. The western organizations were especially aroused by the formation of the Civic Federation in 1901 and by the prominent rôle which some of the leaders of the American Federation of Labor were playing in this attempt to bring capital and labor into friendly relations. The western unionists felt that the time had come for them to oppose this conciliatory attitude and to rally the entire working class of America to the standard of a "class-conscious" and aggressive unionism.

The result of this feeling was the formation of the American Labor Union. This new organization was launched in 1902, at a joint conference of the Western Labor Union and the Western Federation of Miners, which were holding their annual conventions in Denver at the same time. In its constitution and by-laws, the American Labor Union embodied the ideas which had been developed by the western organizations in the previous period. It emphasized the principle of industrial organization, declared itself in favor of independent political action and endorsed the platform of the Socialist party. It represented the culmination of the development thus far described; it may be regarded as the high-water mark of that industrial unionism which was essentially political in character and socialistic in ultimate aim. It viewed socialism as an end, which could and would be brought about by the political action of the Socialist party. It regarded unions merely as an aid and supplement to the great movement towards the coöperative commonwealth.

The American Labor Union of the West differed in essential points from the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance of the East. The latter emphasized exclusively the necessity of rallying to the Socialist Labor party, with which it stood in the most intimate relations and to which all its members belonged. It did not press the principle of industrial unionism and was sceptical about purely economic action. The American Labor Union, on the contrary, though officially endorsing socialism, admitted workmen of various political views and enthusiastically supported them in their economic struggles. What the two organizations, situated on opposite sides of the continent, had in common was their opposition to the American Federation of Labor and their desire to build up a revolutionary labor movement.

In the West between 1902 and 1905, a broader view of the social rôle of the labor union was developed. This came, in part from the experience of the western miners, in part from the constructive thought of some of the more intelligent leaders. From this point on, the history of the movement becomes more a story of the influence of dominating personalities than it had been before.

In 1902, William D. Haywood, then secretary of the Western Federation of Miners, advanced a plan which was to enlarge the scope of union activities. He proposed that the Federation invest some of its money in mines, to be operated by its members for the benefit of the unions. The plan was very attractive and seemed quite practicable; but it was not tried because the Federation soon had a fight on its hands which engaged all its attention. Still, the proposal and the discussion which it evoked had a most stimulating effect, for they served to thrust upon the attention of the workmen the idea that in their union they had an agency that could carry on and control production for their own benefit. What had previously been an abstract conception—the ownership and control of industry by the workers—became now a simple and apparently realizable plan.

A somewhat similar influence was exerted about the same time by proposals for coöperation. At the second annual convention of the Western Labor Union, in 1899, its president,

Daniel McDonald, urged its members to consider the possibility of productive and distributive coöperation in the West. He held up as an example the success of such undertakings in England, and emphasized the idea that coöperation might become the means of "emancipating the working class." A committee of investigation was appointed by the convention; and although no practical action followed, the discussion undoubtedly furthered socialistic ideas and sentiments among the workmen.

The influence, however, which was most effective in shaping the new conception of unionism was a purely intellectual one. The man who first formulated the conception of industrial unionism, and whose services are acknowledged by all, was Wm. E. Trautman, editor of the *Brauer-Zeitung*. Mr. Trautman was thoroughly familiar with the progress of the labor movement, and was well versed in the theory of socialism. Though his thought was guided mainly by the ideas of Marx and of German socialism in general, he was also familiar with French syndicalism, which was taking shape about this time. Combining the thoughts suggested to him by his experience in the labor movement with the general ideas of socialism, he hit upon the fundamental syndicalist idea—that the labor union was the seed which carried within itself all the socialist possibilities of the future. Though generally an obscure and awkward writer, he succeeded in formulating his idea in a fairly clear and readable article which appeared in the special Labor Day issue of the *American Labor Union Journal*, in September, 1903, under the title "The United Brewery Workers and Industrial Organization." A few sentences may be quoted:

> Socialists abroad, as well as here, perceive that the instruments for the management of the Socialist republic, now in process of formation, must be created, and they build the labor organizations according to this need. Who can judge how to regulate the required production of utilities in the various lines of industry in conformity with the necessities of the entire society better than those who are directly employed in a given industry? . . . Industrial organizations are the forerunners of the society established on Socialist foundations, and within them are

the elements preparing for a more scientific management of the implements of production and distribution.

Once clearly formulated, the idea soon became common property. It was enthusiastically greeted and accepted by some of the most prominent leaders in the socialist and labor movements, such as Debs, Haywood and Vincent St. John. It became the theme of numerous articles in the socialist and labor press, undergoing slight variations and modifications but emerging in ever clearer form. In the period between 1902 and 1905 the new idea of revolutionary industrial unionism, which regarded the union as the growing cell of the socialist society, was firmly established in the American labor movement.

By 1904 conditions seemed to justify the attempt to unite the scattered revolutionary elements into a coherent movement. The United Brewery Workers were embittered by attacks on their industrial organization and by the threat of the American Federation of Labor to revoke their charter. Among the United Mine Workers there was dissatisfaction with the leaders of the union and with the results of the famous strike-settlement of 1902. The United Metal Workers—an industrial organization not affiliated with the American Federation of Labor—were casting about for some central labor organization which would strengthen the forces of industrial unionism. The United Brotherhood of Railway Employees, weakened by bitter struggles and by the persistent persecution suffered from the hands of the railroad companies, was anxious to renew its strength by combination with other labor organizations. The Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance in the East, though steadily losing ground, still had several thousand workmen too revolutionary for the American Federation of Labor but desirous of closer contact with the labor movement of the country. And towering above all in numbers and organization was the Western Federation of Miners, the pioneer and standard-bearer of revolutionary industrial unionism, desirous to extend its influence and to advance its cause.

II

The feeling that the time was ripe for a new labor movement of national scope prompted a number of industrial unionists to call a conference for January 2, 1905, to discuss ways and means of launching such a movement. In the letter of invitation, which was sent to forty-two labor organizations and labor leaders, it was stated that "craft division and political ignorance were doomed to speedily end;" that the working class, "if correctly organized on both industrial and political lines, could take possession of and operate successfully for their own interest the industries of the country;" and that "working-class political expression, through the Socialist ballot, in order to be sound, must have its economic counterpart in a labor organization built as the structure of Socialist Society." The invitation to the conference was accepted by twenty-two persons; others who could not be present sent communications expressing their sympathy with its purpose.

The conference, which was in session for several days, drew up an "Industrial Unionist Manifesto"—a remarkably clear and concise document—which laid down the fundamental principle of the new movement. A committee was appointed to call a convention, and on June 27, 1905, the industrial unionists of America met in Chicago and laid the foundations of the now famous Industrial Workers of the World. The convention lasted twelve days. It was attended by 186 delegates from 34 organizations, state, district, national and local. The most important organizations represented by delegates were the Western Federation of Miners, the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, the American Labor Union, the United Metal Workers, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, the Illinois locals of the United Mine Workers of America, the Journeymen Tailors' Union, the Journeymen Tailors' Protective and Benevolent Union of San Francisco and the Punch Press Operators' Union of Schenectady. Of these organizations, not all were ready to join the new industrial union at once; some had sent delegates to watch the proceedings and to report on them. Under the rule of representation adopted by the convention such organizations were entitled to one vote only; the

other organizations were allowed as many votes as they had members. Thus the Western Federation of Miners was allowed 27,000 votes; the American Labor Union, 16,780; the United Metal Workers, 3000; the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, 1450; and the Journeymen Tailors' Union of San Francisco, 400. The Western Federation of Miners controlled the situation through the overwhelming majority of votes. And this was only just, for it was the support of this organization which really gave significance and strength to the proceedings. Haywood, secretary and treasurer of the Western Federation of Miners, was elected permanent chairman of the convention.

The task before the convention was not an easy one. It had to draw up a statement of principles and purposes, to adopt a constitution and to lay the material foundations of the new organization. The difficulties of the task were enhanced by the fact, which soon became evident, that the convention was not a homogeneous body. In fact, it was made up of three distinct elements. These must be distinguished and characterized; for their differences have been perpetuated in the I. W. W., and their struggles form a large part of its history.

The most important element was probably that which regarded the organization about to be formed as the economic backbone of the political socialist movement. This element was composed of labor-unionists who had come to the conclusion that the most effective weapon in the hands of labor was the ballot, and that the only party through which the workingmen could use their political power was the Socialist party. At the time, however, this element was embarrassed by the fact that there were in existence two Socialist parties. In 1899 a number of the members of the Socialist Labor party, discontented with its policy, had seceded; and in 1901 they and others had formed the so-called Socialist party. In 1904 this new organization polled 402,283 votes, while the older Socialist Labor party polled only 31,249. Still, in 1905 the two Socialist parties were contending for supremacy in the American socialist movement, and the delegates in the Chicago convention felt that, under the circumstances, they could not endorse either.

A second element in the convention, although socialist in its

opinion, was inclined to ascribe less importance to the political movement and to make it subordinate to the economic organization of the working class. This element consisted of the men who had developed the idea of the social rôle of the labor union, and who were guided by the vision of the socialist society evolving out of the labor unions. In the convention these men admitted the necessity of united action on the political field, but they did not care to make the new organization the tail of a political party's kite.

These two elements formed the majority in the convention and stamped it as distinctly socialistic in character. But among the delegates there were also a few anarchists, who deprecated or wholly rejected political action, and who saw the only hope of the working class in united class action in the economic field. These delegates were familiar with the revolutionary syndicalism of France, and hoped to impart to the American movement a similar character.

A convention thus divided could not well agree upon an explicit declaration of principles. The preamble which was adopted was particularly vague in its clause on political action, which was worded as follows:

> Between these two classes [the working class and the employing class] a struggle must go on until all the toilers come together on the political as well as the industrial field, and take and hold that which they produce by their labor through an economic organization of the working class without affiliation with any political party.

In general, however, the preamble emphasized the points on which the various elements in the convention were united.

> The rapid gathering of wealth and the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands make the trade unions unable to cope with the ever growing power of the employing class, because the trade unions foster a state of things which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in wage wars. The trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

To change these conditions the workers must have an organiza-

tion "formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry or in all industries, if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all." [1]

Faith in the industrial union was clearly the rallying point of the convention. In the interpretation of this point, however, the convention was divided into several groups. Some delegates insisted that an industrial union should embrace all members using a particular tool, no matter where they happened to work. Others thought an industrial union was one which united all those who worked on a certain material; for instance, metal workers, woodworkers *etc.* Others again conceived the industrial union as a combination of all workers in a given industry, regardless of the tools handled or the materials used. The last view prevailed, and in the constitution which was adopted by the convention it was carried to an extreme. The new organization was to consist of thirteen industrial divisions, corresponding to thirteen kinds of industry, such as the division of agricultural land and water products, the division of mining, the division of building *etc.* It was claimed that these thirteen divisions correctly represented the industrial life of today and would form the basis of the industrial system of the future. The theoretical, not to say doctrinaire, character of this system is too evident to need emphasis. It reflected at once the intellectual preoccupations of its authors and the centralizing tendencies of the convention.

The desire for a highly centralized organization found expression in many other provisions of the constitution. Extensive powers were conferred upon the president. The execu-

[1] The preamble was the work of Thomas J. Hagerty, an interesting figure in the American labor movement. Hagerty was a Catholic priest of Chicago who took an interest in the labor movement and in socialism. Having obtained leave of absence, he traveled throughout the West, lecturing for labor unions and socialist organizations. He came in contact with the Western Federation of Miners and with the leaders of revolutionary industrial unionism, and was impressed by their point of view. He developed it further when he became editor of the *Voice of Labor*. He was a member of the conference which issued the call for the convention, and at the convention he was entrusted with the task of drafting the preamble. The conspicuous part played by Mr. Hagerty at the convention gave rise to the legend that he was the originator of the new ideas.

tive board was authorized to call strikes and to approve all agreements between the constituent unions and employers. Although the unions were to manage their internal affairs, they were made "subordinate" to the president and the executive board. The control of the membership over its officers was to be exercised through the annual conventions and through the referendum, for which a complicated machinery was devised. This centralization of authority was deemed necessary in order to secure coherent and united action on the part of the American working class. The failure of the American Federation of Labor to secure such action was ascribed largely to its decentralized organization.

Besides defining the principles and determining the form of the new organization, the convention outlined some methods not in use in the American Federation of Labor. Of these, the "universal label" and the free interchange of membership cards were the most significant. The craft label, the industrial unionists claimed, instead of being used for the purpose for which it was originally intended, had degenerated in the hands of the craft unionists into a means of corruption and of advancement of capitalist interests. A trade union would sell its label to manufacturers, who would use it to drive out competitors. It was often used also as a means of destroying undesirable labor organizations. A universal label would make abuses impossible and would constantly keep before the workmen the idea of working-class solidarity.

The I. W. W., as constituted at Chicago in 1905, included the following organizations: the Western Federation of Miners, the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, several industrial workers' clubs of Chicago, the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees, the American Labor Union, the United Metal Workers and the Journeymen Tailors' Union of Pueblo, Colorado. Charles O. Sherman of the United Metal Workers was elected president. Wm. E. Trautman was elected secretary-treasurer. An executive board of five members was installed. Three of these, Charles H. Moyer, Frank McCabe and Charles Kirkpatrick, represented the three industrial organizations which had joined the new movement, namely, the Western Federation

of Miners, the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees and the United Metal Workers. The two other members, elected at large, were John Riordan and F. W. Cronin of Butte, Montana.

The growth of the I. W. W. during the first year of its existence exceeded the most optimistic expectations. Including the 30,000 members of the Western Federation of Miners, it counted in the summer of 1906 about 100,000 members. It had a number of organizers in the field and a weekly paper of its own, *The Industrial Union Bulletin*. But in the summer of 1906, on the eve of its second annual convention, signs of disruption were already visible. In February, 1906, Haywood, Moyer and Pettibone of the Western Federation of Miners had been arrested on the charge of having instigated the murder of ex-Governor Steunenberg. The forced retirement of Haywood from active participation in the labor movement was a severe blow, not only to the Western Federation of Miners, but to the I. W. W. as well. Haywood had been a leading spirit in organizing the I. W. W., and the support it received from the Western Federation of Miners was due chiefly to him. His arrest weakened the element in the Western Federation of Miners which was backing the I. W. W. and brought to the front leaders who were apprehensive of the extreme tendencies of the new organization.

The struggle within the I. W. W. came to a climax at the second annual convention, which was held in September, 1906. The issue was in the main a personal one. The president, Charles O. Sherman, was accused of inefficiency, extravagance and disloyalty to the principles of industrial unionism. The convention deposed him, abolished the office of president and made a number of other changes in the constitution. Mr. Sherman refused to recognize the regularity of the proceedings of the convention and continued for a time to hold the documents and other property of the organization. He was supported in this attitude by the Western Federation of Miners. Early in 1907, however, Mr. Sherman abandoned his resistance, leaving the I. W. W. in the control of his opponents. The Western Federation of Miners, at its convention in the same year, withdrew from the I. W. W.

This first struggle was followed by a second, which turned not so much on personalities as on principles. The declaration adopted by the constituent convention of 1905, concerning the political attitude of the working class, had been the cause of much friction. Any discussion of politics in any I. W. W. local was apt to raise the question whether the working class should favor the Socialist party or the Socialist Labor party. As the I. W. W. included members of each party, such discussions led to quarrels. Workmen who were chiefly interested in the economic functions of the organization became impatient of both factions. The anarchistic elements were of course anti-political, and they utilized the opportunity afforded by such quarrels to point out the disruptive effect of politics. Attacks upon the I. W. W. by prominent political socialists aroused resentment and drove the leaders of the movement further in the direction of opposition to politics.

In 1906 an effort was made to unite the two Socialist factions. It led to no result except an increase of suspicion and hostility. In the I. W. W. the difficulties caused by the division on politics was becoming intolerable. More and more members urged a change in the preamble which should emphasize the superior revolutionary value of the economic organization. The belief that the economic organization was supreme and all-sufficient to bring about the transformation of society grew stronger as confidence in political action diminished. The development of the non-political attitude may have been hastened at this time by the direct influence of the French syndicalists, with whom there was more or less contact and whose theory and practice were known to a number of men in the American labor movement.

The determination to put the I. W. W. on a non-political basis found expression in the convention of 1908, held at Chicago. As happens very often at conventions, the contest of principles was fought out on a personal issue—the admission of Mr. Daniel De Leon as a delegate. Mr. De Leon was the leader at once of the Socialist Labor party and of the political element in the I. W. W. By excluding him, the convention prepared the ground for a change in the preamble, which

brought the I. W. W. a step nearer the position of French syndicalism.[1]

After the convention of 1908 it was clear that the large vision which had guided the first efforts of the industrial unionists—the vision of a united revolutionary labor movement—was not likely to be realized. The Brewery Workers had rejoined the American Federation of Labor in 1907; the Western Federation of Miners was on the road to affiliation with the same organization; the Illinois Miners had thought it wiser to stay with the United Mine Workers; the United Metal Workers proved to be a very small body, which had bolted with Mr. Sherman from the International Association of Machinists and which had no chances of growth; the Brotherhood of Railway Employees had been disorganized. The enthusiasm which the I. W. W. at first awakened had been steadily subsiding during the first two years of its existence. The revolutionary elements in the labor and socialist movements now regarded it with disappointment and distrust. The I. W. W. had shrunk to a mere handful of leaders, revolutionary in spirit and ideals and persevering in action, with a small, scattered and shifting following and an unsatisfactory administrative machinery. Clearly, if the organization was to survive, new and different methods had to be adopted.

After 1908, what was left of the I. W. W. turned its attention mainly, if not exclusively, to the industries in which un-

[1] The preamble, as amended in 1908 and in following years, reads as follows: "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people, and the few who make up the employing class have all the good things of life. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production and abolish the wage system."

The next two clauses were left as quoted *supra*, p. 465. The closing sentences of the amended preamble read:

"Instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wages for a fair day's work,' we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wage system.' It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the every-day struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old."

skilled labor predominates. In the western states, where the field had already been ploughed by the American Labor Union, it succeeded in maintaining a considerable influence over the more or less migratory laborers engaged in railroad construction and in the lumber and fruit industries. It organized a number of important strikes—most of which were lost—and it carried on a revolutionary propaganda which often led it into bitter conflicts with the municipal authorities of the far western cities. "Free-speech fights" became frequent episodes in the activity of the Industrial Workers. They were forbidden to speak on the streets; they were arrested and imprisoned for violating the prohibition; they were often marched out of town with a hint not to return. It was during these free-speech fights that they developed their unique methods of struggle. They would march in bands of tens or of a hundred into the town in which the fight was on and get themselves arrested in order to fill the jails and tax the community. The San Diego contest was but one—though the most remarkable—of the free-speech fights which the I. W. W. has carried on. Another bitter fight for the right of free speech was fought by the I. W. W. in Spokane, Washington, in 1909.

In the East the I. W. W. had to break ground for itself, and at first its efforts met with less success. Its most important move, before the Lawrence strike, was probably the McKees Rocks strike in 1909. Here again it was active among the unorganized and unskilled—this time among the workmen in the steel plants. The strike was bitter and violent, complicated by racial animosities and aggravated by the stubborn resistance of the employers. Its success convinced the Industrial Workers that there was a field for them in the East. It was, however, the great strike in Lawrence, in the early part of 1912, which first brought the I. W. W. into national prominence. This strike revealed two things: that what has come to be known as "direct action" is especially effective in the case of unorganized and unskilled workers; and that the needs of these workers are best subserved by a new type of labor leader, who is inspired by revolutionary ideals. Besides the strikes at McKees Rocks and at Lawrence, the I. W. W. has carried on, during the past

three or four years, a number of strikes of varying magnitude. It is hardly worth while either to recite the incidents of these strikes or to recapitulate them in statistical tables. All these strikes bear the same general character; they are mostly sporadic uprisings of unskilled workers, hardly touched by organization.

The nature of the field in which the I. W. W. has been working has accentuated the aggressive methods towards which it leaned from the beginning. A camp of railroad workers on strike cannot follow the same diplomatic and slow procedure as can, for instance, an organization of printers. The lumber workers of the South, the fruit-workers of California, the textile workers of New England or the waiters in the hotels and restaurants of a city can rely neither on trained aptitude for their tasks nor on accumulated funds nor on any other means at the command of the more skilled workers. In the case of unskilled workingmen, a strike requires a swift and decisive move, a concerted attack all along the line, disorganizing the employers' plans and plants. The aim of a strike is realized as soon as the material demands are granted. The so-called "recognition of the union" is of minor importance when the union itself is unstable. Among unskilled workmen the union exists today, but tomorrow it may disintegrate with the dispersal of the laborers. These, however, carry with them to new places and disseminate among other workmen the germs of industrial unionism. The new methods adopted by the I. W. W. after 1908 found expression in new catch-words: "no recognition of the union," "swift attacks," "brief and aggressive strikes," "no arbitration." These phrases summed up the policy which was found suitable to the conditions under which the I. W. W. had to work. The theory, as usual, sprang from the facts.

These methods, however, did not assure success at all times. All the other elements of solid organization lacking, the I. W. W. had to devise means of fighting which would not require the ordinary "sinews of war." Thus they were led to adopt the idea of the "passive strike" and of "sabotage." The leaders of course knew how the workers in other countries fought their battles; but their policies were determined mainly

by their own experiences, and it was the difficulties of their own struggles which led them to these new methods. A detailed description of these methods would require a separate study. The passive strike may be described as striking without throwing up the job. It consists of annoying the employer in all ways possible and in making it unprofitable for him to continue to refuse the demands of the workers. It is the initial form of sabotage, which, in its most acute form, may express itself in violent action.

While developing these methods, the I. W. W. formulated in ever clearer terms its social ideal and its conception of the social revolution. These were in large measure determined by the relations between the new movement and the Socialist party. After 1906 the political socialists began to antagonize the I. W. W. and became more favorable than ever towards the American Federation of Labor. A calmer and more generally accepted presentation of socialist aims and methods was in part the result and in part the cause of the increase in the Socialist vote and of the successes achieved by the Socialist party in the elections of 1908 and 1910. In opposition to this tamer socialism, the I. W. W. not only advocated revolutionary methods but emphasized in ever stronger terms its own conception of social evolution, according to which the industrial unions carried within themselves all the elements of the socialist society of the future. They minimized the importance of political organization and action and declared their faith in the economic organizations of the workmen, which at some future time would lock-out the capitalist class and assume the control and management of the industries of the country.

Thus in the interval between 1908 and 1912 the tendencies of revolutionary industrial unionism, first outlined in the organizations of western workmen, assumed increasingly definite form. When the Lawrence strike broke out and the I. W. W. commanded public attention, what struck almost all observers was the marked contrast between the socialism of the Socialist party, represented by such men as Victor Berger, Morris Hillquit and John Spargo, and the "industrial socialism" of the I. W. W., represented by such men as William D. Hay-

wood, J. J. Ettor, Giovanetti and Vincent St. John. Yet many of the Industrial Workers were members of the Socialist party; W. D. Haywood, indeed, was at that time a member of the national executive committee of the party.[1] This relation seemed rather strange. It is explained by the mixed character of the socialist movement, which in America as in other countries, attracts to the Socialist party people of all social classes, of varied social, moral and intellectual associations.

At present the situation is the same: there are still members of the Socialist party who belong to the I. W. W., and there are other members who agree in many respects with its views and who recognize the necessity of such an organization. In the Socialist party these men are described as "Industrial Socialists." They are bitterly opposed to the flirtation between their party and the American Federation of Labor. At the same time they are strongly convinced of the usefulness of political action and they try to coax the I. W. W. into a more friendly relationship with the political activities of the Socialist party. Some leading spirits of the I. W. W., however, regard the Industrial Socialists with suspicion as a faction within the Socialist party which is trying to use the industrial labor movement for the purpose of gaining control of that party. The constitution of the I. W. W., it is true, is not anti-political—it is merely non-political. The I. W. W. admits any workman regardless of creed, race or political opinion. But it is also true that the Industrial Workers have played and are playing the game of anti-politics. Their spokesmen ridicule the "politicians," severely criticize the Socialist party and insult its most prominent leaders. The non-political position of the I. W. W. is therefore practically anti-political.

This anti-political attitude has developed mainly as a result of friction with individual socialists and with the Socialist party. The present leaders of the I. W. W. have been recruited mainly from the ranks of the socialists. Their development towards their new position has been a gradual drifting away from the recognized political point of view. But they have not gone to

[1] Haywood has since been recalled from this position by a party referendum.

the extreme of anarchism. They have gone only half-way, rejecting both "doctrinaire" socialism and "doctrinaire" anarchism and proceeding on the basis of the belief that a strong militant industrial organization will prove sufficient to overthrow capitalistic society and to establish a new industrial society.

This element, which is predominant in the I. W. W., gains considerable support from the numerous anarchists who have joined the organization during the past few years. In the Far West and in the East many of the I. W. W. locals are dominated by anarchistic elements, who have come to regard the I. W. W. as the most promising agency for revolutionary propaganda and action. Though "doctrinaire" in their social ideas and disagreeing in some respects with the pure industrial unionists, the anarchists undoubtedly help to impart to the I. W. W. its present character.

III

The revolutionary aspects of the I. W. W. have given rise to the belief that its policies are simply an imitation of those of French syndicalism. It is true that since 1908 the contact of American industrial unionists with French syndicalists has been quite direct. In 1908 W. D. Haywood went abroad and came into intimate connection with the leaders of the General Confederation of Labor (*Confédération Generale du Travail*), as did also a number of others more or less active in the American labor movement. The French syndicalists have, indeed, claimed Haywood and others as their pupils. But this is an exaggeration. As has been shown above, revolutionary industrial unionism represented by the I. W. W. grew up on American soil. The intellectual influence of France, though a factor, was of subordinate importance. That is why the American and French movements, though agreeing in fundamentals, differ in some significant aspects.

The points of agreement between the French and American forms of syndicalism need not be dwelt upon. They are quite evident. The conception of the social rôle of the labor union, the idea of the "general strike," the emphasis upon direct action as opposed to political action, the revolutionary spirit—these

are elements common to both. The points of disagreement, however, merit fuller consideration, because they help us to appreciate the difference between French and American conditions.

The French revolutionary syndicalists do not believe in forming a separate organization, composed exclusively of their own partisans. They adhere to the General Federation of Labor, the central labor organization of France, to which all the important national and international unions of the country belong. In consequence of this fact, the General Confederation of Labor is composed of several elements, of which the revolutionary syndicalists form one. The syndicalists of course hope to bring all other elements in the labor movement to their point of view; but, meanwhile, though they are the leading element in the General Confederation, they are confronted with a strong opposition within the organization.

The I. W. W., on the other hand, is a separate organization, and it does not believe in the advisability of merging with the American Federation of Labor. The I. W. W. can and does, therefore, insist upon adherence to its revolutionary program, though it cannot suppress differences of interpretation. The attitude of the I. W. W. is the result of the fact that it entered the field after the American Federation of Labor had developed into a large and strong organization. The existence of sectionalism in the American labor movement encouraged the independent development of the western organizations, which laid the foundation of the I. W. W., but every move on the part of the revolutionists to influence the policy of the American Federation of Labor has met with crushing defeat. French syndicalism, on the contrary, appeared on the stage at a time when the French *syndicats* were just beginning to grow, and the syndicalists found no strong labor organization in the field to oppose them.

In the French labor movement, during the last two decades, anarchistic ideas have played a greater rôle than in the American movement. Some of the most influential leaders of the General Confederation of Labor have come from the anarchist ranks. French syndicalism, therefore, though distinct from

anarchism, is nearer to it than is the I. W. W. The latter has been in closer contact with the socialist movement. Consequently the French syndicalists are more aggressive than the American in their anti-political campaign.

Other differences appear to be determined by the different political and economic conditions of the two countries. The direct-government methods of the American labor movement are incompatible with the principles of representation followed in the French movement. Proportional representation and the referendum are required in the constitution of the I. W. W. but have not been adopted by the French syndicalists. On the other hand, the I. W. W. has grown up in a country of "trusts," and the reasoning of its leaders is naturally influenced by this fact. The importance attached to industries as compared with single trades, the organization of the labor movement according to industrial departments, the belief that this organization will furnish the basis of the socialist state—all this is in harmony with American economic conditions. French syndicalism, developing in a less centralized economic system and reacting against a highly centralized political system, is inclined to lay more stress on the decentralizing tendencies in modern life. It consequently attaches more importance to the functions and possibilities of the *syndicat* and of the local federation of *syndicats* (*Bourse du Travail*).

The leaders of the I. W. W. are fully conscious of the differences which exist between them and the French syndicalists; they are even inclined to exaggerate the significance of these differences. On the other hand, within the last twelve months there have been efforts in America to organize a movement which shall identify itself completely, both in character and in name, with French syndicalism. The sponsors of this movement are mostly anarchists who disapprove of a separate revolutionary labor organization. They argue that in time the labor movement is bound to develop revolutionary ideas and a revolutionary spirit, and that it is the duty of the revolutionists, at present, to remain within the ranks of organized labor—in other words, within the American Federation of Labor—and to work for their ideas from within. To promote their propaganda, how-

ever, they deem it advisable to organize leagues, devoted to the spread of syndicalist ideas. The first meeting of the Syndicalist League of New York City was held in December, 1912. There are leagues in many other cities, and "The Syndicalist League of North America" exists at least on paper. A bi-weekly paper, *The Syndicalist*, is devoted to the advancement of the movement. In America, however, the syndicalist leagues are as yet of little importance. Both in numbers and in energy they are far behind the Syndicalist League of England, which seems to have inspired the movement.

IV

The only American organization, therefore, which embodies syndicalist tendencies—under the name of "industrial unionism"—is the I. W. W., and the future of American revolutionary unionists will for some time to come be bound up with the destinies of this organization. What these destinies may be, it is difficult to foretell. At present the I. W. W. is numerically and financially weak. According to Mr. Vincent St. John,[1] general secretary-treasurer of the organization, the paid-up membership is 70,000, distributed in the following manner: textile industry, 40,000; lumber industry, 15,000; railroad construction, 10,000; metal and machinery, 1000; and miscellaneous, 4000. The members in the textile industry are located in the eastern states; those in the lumber industry are in the states of Washington, Oregon, Louisiana and Texas; the railroad construction workers are in Washington, Oregon and British Columbia; the rest of the membership is scattered.

The figures given by Mr. Vincent St. John can hardly be taken as representing the full strength of the I. W. W. The membership of this organization is in its nature a fluid, shifting mass, largely migratory, subject to long periods of unemployment and disinclined to the regular payment of dues. While

[1] In a letter dated December 5, 1912. The writer takes this opportunity to acknowledge his indebtedness and to tender his thanks to Messrs. Vincent St. John, Clarence Smith, Daniel De Leon, Frank Bohn, Wm. D. Haywood, Wm. E. Trautmann, Franklin Jordan and all others who have assisted him by the loan of documents and by replies to queries, either in letters or in personal interviews.

this vitally affects the finances of the organization, its finances are not a fair test of its effective force. Its tactics are not those of a well appointed army, retarded in its movements by an elaborate commissariat, but rather those of a daring advance guard. The leading spirits of the I. W. W. realize the situation and frankly admit that their organization can grow only in proportion as it can fight. They seek, therefore, to utilize every opportunity for a clear-cut class struggle. That is why they have concentrated their attention on those industries in which unskilled labor predominates, and why they are bent upon fanning every little fire into a blaze of class war.

There can be little doubt that the I. W. W. is already exerting no slight influence on the economic life of the country. It terrifies employers. During the recent strike in New York city, many employers were so disturbed by the fear that the I. W. W. might assume the leadership of the strikers that they were ready to make concessions to escape this peril. They were willing to make terms with moderate and reasonable trade unions rather than run the risk of developing indirectly a revolutionary organization. The American Federation of Labor is undoubtedly feeling the pressure exercised by the I. W. W.; it has been spurred into more energetic action in fields which it had previously neglected. The recent invasion of the steel industry by the Federation illustrates the point. Whether the Federation will now succeed where it has previously failed is hard to predict. In certain industries it cannot compete with the I. W. W. It is therefore probable that the I. W. W. will achieve further success in the near future. It may build up an effective organization in a limited number of industries. It may then be in a position to exert a more extensive influence on the labor movement of the entire country.[1]

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NEW YORK CITY.

[1] Since this article was written, the strike of the silk operatives of Paterson, New Jersey, has taken place. During this strike, the attitudes of the employers, of the American Federation of Labor and of the Socialists towards the I. W. W. and their methods were conspicuous as never before. The feeling of hostility towards the I. W. W. is now deeper and more general than before and may lead to the accentuation of the tendencies described in this article.