

Organized Labor, Housing Issues, and Politics: Another Look at the 1886 Henry George Mayoral Campaign in New York City

This essay presents an alternative interpretation of the labor-sponsored campaign of Henry George for mayor of New York in 1886 by emphasizing labor-backed housing issues as essential to the election campaign.

Although a large historical literature exists on the labor-sponsored campaign of Henry George for the office of mayor of New York City in 1886, much of the election's complexity still escapes us. The narrative is by now well known. It begins in the summer of 1886 with the jailing of several Knights of Labor leaders over the boycott of a local music hall. For the leaders of the Central Labor Union, New York City's labor federation, already embroiled in a summer of labor agitation and legal repression, and angered over pervasive municipal corruption, the sentencing presented an intolerable situation. They then decided to contest the upcoming mayoral election with their own independent candidate. The faction-ridden workers fused together behind the famous intellectual, Henry George, and ran a vigorous campaign on a shoestring. The two rival factions of the Democratic party, corrupt Tammany Hall and reformist County Democrat, put their differences aside and united behind the latter's candidate, industrialist and Congressman, Abram Hewitt, and the Republicans, in turn, nominated Theodore Roosevelt. Henry George lost to Hewitt, though polling more votes than Roosevelt. In 1887, the labor/George coalition self-destructed as its component parts feuded over the direction that the party should follow. With the party's demise vanished a potential alternative to the political economy of nineteenth century New York City.

However, these analyses suffer from focusing only on the events immediately preceding the election itself. This historiographical state appears due to the sensationalism of the campaign that the new labor party sponsored which seemingly erupted out of nowhere to play havoc for a year with the city's established political system. Some accounts concentrate on political analyses,

often stressing the ethnic and religious mobilization of votes for George. Another group of writers emphasize a labor perspective of the election and have accepted the image of a unified labor campaign that the quarrelsome federation presented to the public. By doing so they have not paid attention to how the internal politics of organized labor in New York City influenced the structure and the development of the campaign and how in turn the campaign influenced the evolution of the American labor movement in the 1880s. In concentrating only on workers' immediate economic and political grievances, historians have neglected the great attraction that George's social theory of land use held for many New Yorkers, some even denying the ability of the average person to comprehend George's ideas.¹

The accepted picture of a fractious labor coalition seemingly united behind the candidacy of Henry George is illusory. As this paper will show, George's race played a crucial role in the ongoing struggle between the Knights of Labor and the trade unions (of the soon to be formed American Federation of Labor) for hegemony over America's organized labor movement. Many of New York organized workers had adopted Henry George's singletax theory, to them meant the replacement of their tenement housing with private homes. The New York Knights, who

1. On political analyses, see Thomas Condon, "Politics, Reform, and the New York City Election of 1886," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 44(1960): 363-394; David Hammack, *Power and Society: Greater New York at the Turn of the Century*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987; reprint of 1982 edition): part III, both of which analyze the 1886 election as part of their study of the growth of the Tammany political machine. Martin Shefter, in "The Electoral Foundations of the Political Machine: New York City, 1884-1897," in *The History of American Electoral Behavior*, edited by Joel H. Silbey, et al., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978) takes a similar position but emphasizes Tammany's ethnic mobilization of voters. James Donnelly, in "Catholic New Yorkers and New York Socialists, 1870-1920" (Ph.D. diss.: New York University, 1982), places the election within the context of a lengthy struggle between the Catholic Church and the Socialist Labor Party for the hearts and minds of New York workers. For the lack of an integrated political and labor history analysis, see such classics as John Rodgers Commons et al., *History of Labor in the United States*, vol. 2 (New York: MacMillan, 1924); Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, vol. 2 (New York: International Publishers, 1955); and Norman Ware, *The Labor Movement in the United States, 1860-1895: A Study in Democracy* (New York: D. Appleton, 1929), all of which analyze the election and the fight between the Knights and the trade unions in separate sections. Explaining the election's results as the result of the growth of a homogenous working-class political culture that subsequently disintegrates *after* the election is David Scobey's, "Boycotting the Politics Factory: Labor Radicalism and the New York Mayoral Election of 1886," *Radical History Review* 28-30(1984): 280-325. An early work that still provides much useful information (most of the writers mentioned above still rely on it heavily for their discussions of post-electoral activity) is Peter Speck's, *The Singletax and the Labor Movement* (Madison: Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin Economics and Political Science Series. Volume 8, no. 3, 1917). Speck, however, assumed that New York workers were incapable of understanding George's theory, a bias picked up by subsequent writers, such as Selig Perlman, who wrote the chapters on late nineteenth-century labor history found in Commons's work.

recognized George as a mentor, exploited his popularity as part of their struggle with the shop-oriented trade unionists, many of whom were wary of George's social philosophy, for control of the city's labor movement.

This essay will combine elements of the new labor history--in this case, working-class living conditions--with one of the oldest themes of traditional labor history--the ascension to primacy of the AFL--to advance another interpretation of the 1886 election that will complement and extend previous analyses. This paper will first review the structure of the city's labor movement and then the condition of workers' housing in the 1880s. Next, the paper will sketch the development of labor's relationship with Henry George in the five years preceding the election, and to conclude, it will analyze the interrelation between internal labor politics and the mayoral campaign. It will be shown that if the singletax rhetoric of the campaign is taken seriously and placed within the context of the political struggle within New York's organized labor movement that much of the puzzle of George's sudden appearance and role in the mayoral campaign can be explained. A subsidiary theme of this paper will be the reclamation of labor's role in the housing reform movement of late nineteenth century New York City. Progressive housing reformers ignored the labor movement in their writings, and this omission unfortunately has been repeated by recent scholars of the subject.²

2 . For examples of the former, see: Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Sagamore Press, 1957; reprint of 1890 edition); Robert DeForest and Lawrence Veiller, eds., *The Tenement House Problem*, 2 volumes (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1903. For examples of the latter, see: Roy Lubove, *The Progressives and the Slums: Tenement House Reform in New York City, 1890-1917* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1974; reprint of 1962 edition); David Ward, *Poverty, Ethnicity, and the American City, 1840-1925: Changing Conceptions of the Slum and Ghetto* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

I

In order to understand the popularity of Henry George's singletax for New York's organized workers it is necessary to understand their living and working conditions. In the 1880s the inhabited portion of the city³ was an extremely dense area experiencing a rapid growth in population, increasing almost by half, from 1,200,000 to 1,700,000, during those ten years. This decade marked the onset of the so-called "new" immigration, as immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, especially Italians, and Russian and Polish Jews, began to replace the Irish and Germans as tenants in lower Manhattan. As commentators of the day often pointed out, New York was the most crowded industrial city on earth, with the population density in a neighborhood like the Lower East Side over 250,000 people per square mile.⁴ This compactness was not due to a lack of land however. Census data show that in 1890, on Manhattan, approximately eighty-nine percent of the people lived on fifty percent of the land (see Map I). Including the Annexed District, eighty-four percent squeezed into twenty-five percent of the city's territory.⁵ In this decade most New Yorkers still lived below 59th Street, but in response to the population pressure Manhattanites in those ten years moved up the shore of the East River into the Upper East Side and eastern Harlem, increasing the population of the Twelfth Ward, Manhattan north of

3 . At the time, it consisted of the island of Manhattan and the Annexed District (that portion of the Bronx lying west of the Bronx River).

4 . Both contemporaries and a recent scholar have seen the official census tally for 1890 of 1,500,000 as a gross undercount and claim that the number given in the text as much closer to the actual count. Ira Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 55-89. Other material drawn from: Riis, *Other Half*, throughout; U. S. Industrial Commission, *Reports on Immigration*, vol. 15 (Washington: G.P.O., 1901), 42-48.

5. These percentages represent the number of New Yorkers living on land with population densities above the average for the city as a whole. The figures were calculated from a table of acreage (excluding park land and cemeteries) and population densities of the city's sanitary districts in 1890 found in: U. S. Census Office, *Vital Statistics of New York City and Brooklyn for the Six Year Period Ending May 30, 1890*, edited by John S. Billings (Washington: Department of Labor, 1894), 76-78. Hereafter referred to as *Billings Report*. The hatched area in the south Bronx in Map I represents an approximation of density. The *Billings Report* divided the Annexed District into only two sanitary districts making a direct mapping impossible.

86th Street, from 80,000 to over 200,000. The remainder of Manhattan remained vacant or inhabited by squatters and small pockets of the wealthy. Outside of a sizable city of 50,000 in its southernmost portion, the recently acquired Annexed District was rural and suburban. On the island, a spine of middle- and upper-class people lived along Fifth Avenue from Washington Square to about 86th Street. Surrounding them on all sides of the island lay the crowded tenement districts in which lived the working class, the great majority of the city's people.⁶

As to their occupations, state and federal data show that in the 1880s about 400,000 men and 200,000 women toiled in New York City in over one hundred fifty different trades. A look at contemporary accounts, government reports, and the composition of labor organizations reveals a widely varied economy composed mostly of small work sites, lacking only the heaviest of heavy industry. Printing, clothing, cigar-making, and iron manufactures employed a large number of people as did the building trades which flourished in the growing city. Unskilled workers found jobs such as domestics, street-car drivers, or servicing ships in port and transporting goods across the Hudson and East Rivers. The food business thrived as did a host of secondary industries, from piano-making to fresco painting, and, in the 1880s a new and vital industry emerged with the development of electric power.⁷

Approximately ten to fifteen percent of these workers belonged to New York City's organized labor movement, a complex, almost anarchic, entity in the 1880s, with various

6. *Billings Report*, 76-78. City election district boundaries, which were redrawn in 1885, increasing in number from 712 to 812, give a good mapping of the population distribution. New York Police Department, *Election Districts of the Several Assembly Districts of the City and County of New York* (New York, 1881); New York City, *City Record* 11 October 1887, 2766-2773. For a map of city land use, see U. S. Census Office, *Report on the Social Statistics of Cities, Part I* (Washington: G.P.O., 1886), 563.

7. New York State, Bureau of Statistics of Labor, *Annual Report, 1885*, 15-194; U. S. Census Office, *The Tenth Census, 1880*, Part 2 (Washington: G. P. O., 1883), 1070-1077; Richard Edwards, ed., *New York's Great Industries* (New York: Historical Publishing Company, 1884); Patricia Evelyn Malon, "The Growth of Manufacturing in Manhattan, 1860-1900," (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1981); New York Edison Company, *Thirty Years of New York, 1882-1912: Being a History of Electrical Development in Manhattan and the Bronx* (New York: The New York Edison Co., 1913).

organizations contending for worker loyalty.⁸ The component most well-known to us today, the trade unions, organized itself on a craft basis, concentrating in such occupations as construction, printing, and cigarmaking. It was a New York- based cigar-making International that was home to Adolph Strasser and Samuel Gompers, two leading proponents of the new craft unionism that originated in the 1870s. Nationally, the Federation of Trades and Labor Unions, founded in 1881, linked American craft unions, but little attention had been paid to its development and by the mid-1880s it was functionally moribund.⁹

Less understood by us today is the New York City branch of the Knights of Labor. Embracing a more encompassing social vision than did the craft unions, the Knights as a national movement opposed the wage system, favoring an economy based on co-operatives. While they contained a core of craft assemblies (their name for locals), they were most well known for their organizing of the unskilled workers traditionally ignored by the trade unions, admitting almost anyone to their ranks, excepting only bankers, lawyers, liquor dealers, and the clergy. Any ten people, at least three-quarters of whom had to be wage workers, could form a Local Assembly, making organization, at least on paper, relatively easy. A local assembly might be trade oriented, but more commonly, was of mixed composition. As such, many local assemblies proved to be little more than debating or political clubs. Local assemblies were organized into regional jurisdictional units called District Assemblies. Although several small craft district assemblies existed in New York City, the largest and most commanding was District Assembly 49. Founded

8 . Gerald N. Grob, *Workers and Utopia: A Study of Ideological Conflict in the American Labor Movement, 1865-1900* (n. p.: Northwestern University Press, 1961), 99-118; Morris Hillquit, *History of Socialism in the United States*, rev ed. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1910), 260-278. See note 15 for a discussion of enrollment figures.

9. For contemporary overviews see: *The Sun*, 3 May 1886; Bureau of Labor, 1885, 539-555. Full descriptions of the trade union movement, as well as other labor organizations, can be found in: Ware, *Labor Movement*; Commons, *History of Labor*; Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vols. 1 (1949), 2 (1955).

in 1882 as a mixed-trades organization, it claimed over 60,000 members in 366 local assemblies throughout the metropolitan area by 1886.¹⁰

Various factions of the Socialistic Labor Party further complicated the labor picture in New York. Its largest segment, the Marxists, drew members from the city's East European Jewish and German population and also from New York's liberal and radical intellectual community, including such people as Daniel DeLeon and John Swinton, the publisher of a labor newspaper. Part of the international Marxist community centered in London around Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, it saw itself more as an educational group than as a political party like the Democrats or Republicans. While several German SLP unions existed in the city, most party members worked in trade or Knight locals, adopting a working-from-within strategy. These socialists found the Knights' ideology complementary to their own. Whether the Knights knew it or not, the Marxians claimed that the Knights' ideal of industrial co-operatives was in fact "pure and unadulterated socialism."¹¹

The Knights' organizational structure allowed another division of the Socialistic Labor Party, the Lassalleans, to establish themselves. Of an intellectual bent, they favored political action and displayed hostility to the trade unions. Throughout the 1880s DA49 was alleged to be ruled by an inner clique of these Lassalleans, called the Home Club, who made common cause with the non-socialist Knights in their struggles with both the trade unions and the Marxists. But

10. George E. McNeill, ed., *The Labor Movement: The Problem of To-Day* (New York: The M. W. Hagen Co., 1887), 483-496; Terence V. Powderly, *Thirty Years of Labor, 1859-1889* (New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1967; reprint of 1890 edition), 99-157, 326-346; Bureau of Statistics of Labor, *Annual Report, 1885*, 547; Knights of Labor, General Assembly, *Proceedings, 1886*, 326. Also, see Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 3-37.

11. Hillquit, *History of Socialism*, 193-208; Edward and Eleanor Marx Aveling, *The Working-Class Movement in America*, 2nd ed. (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1891), 137. On the growth of socialism in New York City in this period, see P. Foner, *History*, vol. 2, 32-46.

they often clashed on policy issues with the national Knights which led to the latter instigating an investigation of their influence within the national body in May 1886.¹²

DA49 had a strong radical reputation and often took up unpopular causes, such as attempting to organize Chinese workers. The New York Knights created an uproar at the Knights' 1886 General Assembly in Richmond, Virginia, when they challenged Southern racial strictures by first attempting to have Frank Farrell, a black engineer, introduce the Governor of Virginia to the opening night session, then staying with him in a black boarding house when Farrell was denied admission to a white one, and finally having him sit with other New York Knights in the orchestra seats of a local playhouse. Such actions created a national uproar and gained for DA49 a unique kind of fame.¹³

Mention also needs to be made of another extremely aggressive competitor for the loyalty of New York's working class in the 1880s, the notorious faction of the Democratic Party known as Tammany Hall. At street level Tammany exhibited a rough and tumble democracy that merged into an autocratic leadership relying on patronage for its ultimate source of power. The organization served as an Americanizing agent for immigrants such as the Irish and the Italians, meeting them at the dock, providing them with housing and jobs, halting evictions and solving work grievances, all in return for their votes. But Tammany's support came at a cost. While it performed services for individuals, it did very little for the poor as a class. As an organization Tammany served the interests of the city's elites, who may not have openly acknowledged that support and who often contested their hold on power, but who nonetheless found Tammany's ability to block political, housing, and health reforms most convenient. Further, Tammany was in a position to back up its authority with its street gangs. As the secret ballot was not introduced

12. For the result of this investigation, see page 34. On the Home Club, see: Ware, *Labor Movement*, 111-115; Foner, *History*, vol. 2, 78-79; Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor: An Autobiography* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1925): 253-256; Knights of Labor, *Proceedings, 1886*, 154-157; *New-York Times*, 31 May-2 June 1886.

13. Powderly, *Thirty Years*, 218, 330; *The Sun*, *The New-York Times*, *The New-York Daily Tribune*, 4-10 October 1886. Louis F. Post, "The United Labor Party: Recollections," *The Public*, 14(3 November 1911): 1128.

into New York City until 1897, voting for another candidate in a strong Tammany district could prove to be a most dangerous exercise of one's voting's rights.¹⁴ What is important is that Tammany performed many of a union's duties, and performed them for those whom the trade unions traditionally ignored, but whom the Knights courted, hence provoking competition between the two organizations in the 1880s.

In 1882, a small number of unions convened to show their support for the struggles of the Irish Land League. Out of this meeting emerged the Central Labor Union of New York and Vicinity, which quickly grew to encompass most of New York's organized labor of whatever faction, claiming from 50,000 to 60,000 active members by the mid-1880s. Prodded on by DA49 and the socialists, the labor federation quickly acquired a militant reputation for organizing, leading strikes, and promoting labor solidarity and consciousness. In its first year it sponsored America's first Labor Day and a labor ticket for municipal offices that fall, an event in which however, it did poorly. After that experience the Union reverted to economic concerns as its primary focus, although it never abandoned debating the merits of political involvement.¹⁵

The Central Labor Union also had a reputation for internal strife. During the early 1880s no one component of the labor movement dominated. While the various leaders could present an united front to the public during strikes and boycotts, behind the scenes disputes over organiza-

14. Material drawn from: Daniel G. Thompson, *Politics in a Democracy: An Essay* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1893); Gustavus Myers, *The History of Tammany Hall* (New York: the author, 1917); M. R. Werner, *Tammany Hall* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1928); Lothrop Stoddard, *Master of Manhattan: The Life of Richard Croker* (New York: Langmans, Green and Co., 1931); Leonard Dinnerstein, "The Impact of Tammany Hall on State and National Politics in the Eighteen-Eighties," *New York History* 59(July 1961): 237-352; Edward K. Spann, *The New Metropolis: New York City, 1840-1857* (New York: Sage Foundation, 1984), 313-400; Hammack, *Power and Society*, 159-171.

15. *John Swinton's Paper*, 14 October 1883, 1; 28 February 1886, 1; *New-York Daily Tribune*, 20 October 1890, 20. For the debate on political action, see "Notes, Central Labor Union," 20 October 1884 - 2 March 1885, Edward King Papers, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University. On the development of a working-class political culture by the CLU see, Scobey, "Boycotting the Politics Factory," 287-295. Membership figures for this period are difficult to calculate due to double-carding, vagueness of the region defined, and what actually constituted a labor organization. *The Sun* on 3 May 1886 reported 180,000 unionists, one-third in the Knights and 100,000 in the CLU. These figures seem highly inflated. They could derive from including Brooklyn and New Jersey members, or from adding in large numbers of unskilled laborers and street railway workers who were loosely organized into Knights assemblies (16,000 and 21,000 respectively). However, in the Central Labor Union political convention meetings of the fall delegates represented what the Union itself called a "bona-fide" membership of 50,000 to 60,000 workers. Speek, *The Singletax*, 27-28.

tional strategies and jurisdictional boundaries consistently threatened their tenuous unity. Its mere existence was an affront to many trade unionists. The Union had supplanted an earlier city-wide Amalgamated Trade and Labor Union and Gompers always thought the Union's interests inimical to those of the trades. The Union's weekly Sunday meetings were open to delegates from any recognized local or assembly and when an important issue came up for debate, over three hundred delegates might attend, causing chaos and sometimes, violence.¹⁶

The Central Labor Union and its constituents had strong reasons to organize. Wages were low and even in the skilled trades work was seasonal. Hours were long; some trades, like the car drivers and bakers, worked twelve- to sixteen-hour days. The competition of child and prison labor was a particularly sore point for the Union, and many in the organized labor movement resented that so many women had to work, usually under harsher conditions and at lower wages than men. These conditions have been reported upon often and it will not be a part of this paper to discuss them at length.¹⁷ What this essay will discuss in some detail is a topic of major concern to the city's organized labor: their tenement housing.

Four- to six-story brick buildings designed specifically to house working-class people, tenements evolved in the 1840s as an economic response to a housing crisis brought on by depression and the first wave of Irish and German immigration. Legally defined as a building in which four families lived independently of one another while sharing common facilities such as hallways and water-closets, it filled up most, if not all, of a 25-by-100 foot lot. It contained small rooms and often had no interior windows or utilities. These buildings provided an acceptable rate of return to their owners, and in order to keep profits high the nineteenth-century housing

16. Gompers, *Seventy Years*, 127, 243; Gregory Weinstein, *The Ardent Eighties* (New York: Arno Press, 1975; New York: International Press, 1928), 170-171. For coverage of Central Labor Union meetings see *John Swinton's Paper*, 1882 - 1886.

17. A good summary of working conditions can be found in Howard Hurwitz, *Theodore Roosevelt and Labor in New York State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), chapter 1. Also, see the sources listed in note 1. For an example of working women's grievances, see the letter from "Rebecca" in *John Swinton's Paper*, 3 January 1886, 2.

supply was deliberately kept below demand.¹⁸ As early as 1864 the Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor, a leading private New York welfare organization, conducted a comprehensive survey of the tenement districts, partly in response to the draft riots of the previous year. The Association found most of these buildings, home to over one-half of the city's population, poorly ventilated and lacking adequate water supplies.¹⁹

A generation later the situation had worsened. In 1894, John Billings, a doctor employed by the Census Bureau, published an exhaustive survey of the health conditions of New Yorkers in the second half of the 1880s. Based upon 1890 census data and information drawn from the city's Board of Health, particularly, death certificates, his findings, as well as those of other contemporary observers, revealed a grim situation that led to massive agitation for tenement house reform, eventually resulting in the major tenement reform law of 1901. Most noticeable was the city's death rate, at 27.66 per 1000 (1884-1890 average) higher than that of any major American or European city. The horrendous infant and child mortality rate drew much attention: over ten percent for the city as a whole, and in some of the poorest quarters of the Lower East Side, such as the infamous Mulberry Street "Bend," over sixty percent. Disease claimed the lives of many New Yorkers in the 1880s: consumption and pneumonia in the winter, and diarrheal diseases in the summer being the most common.²⁰ (Statistics were not yet kept on work-related deaths--such deaths were attributed to other causes.)

18. Riis, *Other Half*, 5-10; Elizabeth Blackmar, *Manhattan For Rent, 1785-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 183-212; Lubove, *Progressives and the Slums*, 26, 38-39.

19. Gordon Atkins, *Health, Housing, and Poverty in New York City, 1865-1898* (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, 1947), 53-58.

20. For the years 1894-1890, Brooklyn reported a death rate of 23.75/1000 and Newark 27.07. Minneapolis by contrast had a death rate of 13.48/1000. In 1890 London's death rate was 17.4/1000. See *Billings Report*, 2, 10-40; Riis, *Other Half*, appendix. On conditions in the "Bend," Mulberry Street between Bayard and Park Streets, see Riis, *Other Half*, 41-51. For a brief, contemporary history of tenement house reform, see Robert DeForest and Lawrence Veiller, *The Tenement House Problem*, 2 volumes (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1903), chapter two.

Billings and others found these rates directly related to the tenements' crowdedness, and their occupants' lack of access to air, light, water, sanitary toilet facilities, and nutritious food. A large tenement, such as the "Big Flat," at Canal and Mott Streets, housed almost five hundred people, its inhabitants living in dirty conditions compounded by the refuse of apartment sweatshops. Investigators established that vendors routinely adulterated staples such as bread and milk and scientists discovered high levels of bacteria in ice drawn from river water. As the landfill below many tenements had often been poorly constructed, some tenants living near the shore found their basements flooded at high tide. In addition, the difficulties the city faced disposing of the excrement of the thousands of horses in the city, and the indiscriminate placing of stench-producing industries such as slaughterhouses and tanneries in residential areas plagued tenement dwellers.²¹

Not only were the tenements a health hazard but in this period their existence threatened the viability of many trade unions. In New York City, work and residence had never been completely divorced from one another, but instead, had been combined in the sweating system, where poor men and women worked for local businesses in tenement housing which their employers often owned. With each apartment room a possible work site, inspection and regulation, as well as traditional work-site union organizing, became practically impossible.

Unorganized tenement labor competed with organized factory labor, especially in clothing and cigarmaking, prompting unions like Gompers's Cigarmakers' International Union to cry loudly for relief. These unreachable tenement workers threatened the union's economic stability and many unionists saw them as an enemy distinct from capital. To counteract the threat, the International issued calls for boycotting tenement products, demanded a halt to further

21. *Billings Report*, 2-50, 81-82; On the "Big Flat," see New York Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor, *Forty-Third Annual Report for 1886*, 43-72. Also see: George E. Waring, "Sanitary Drainage," *North American Review* 137(July 1883): 57-67; Cyrus Edsom, "Poisons in Food and Drink," *The Forum*, August 1886: 572-582; *New-York Times*, 23 July 1882, 3: Atkins, *Health*, 200-213.

immigration, and petitioned for the legal prohibition of tenement cigar-making.²² Twice, in 1882 and again in 1884, the city's cigar locals pushed long and hard in Albany to outlaw tenement cigarmaking, twice succeeding, only to have the state courts, widely believed to working in concert with the manufacturers, rule the law unconstitutional both times on technical grounds. To Gompers this episode demonstrated the futility of relying upon political action alone to achieve organized labor's goals. While never abandoning lobbying, he resolved that labor's primary locus of struggle should be on the shop floor and in the streets.²³

It is not remarkable that living conditions were as important to most working-class people as were their working conditions. However, while they complained about their housing a sense of frustration prevailed throughout the nineteenth century among workers and reformers as to what remedies could be invoked as tenement reform interfered with the most basic of property rights. Landlords made the most of their situation. They kept rents notoriously high and ruthlessly collected them. Owners could evict as soon as two or three days after a missed rent payment and commonly did so. What legal protection existed was not enforced and renters who complained to the Board of Health often found themselves out on the street for their trouble. The organized housing reform movement of the late nineteenth century had not yet evolved.²⁴

22. For an overview, see Melech Epstein, *Jewish Labor in the U. S. A., 1882-1914* (New York: Trades Union Sponsoring Committee, 1950), chapter 4. *John Swinton's Paper* carried advertisements for the International's union label, part of which copy read, "This certifies, That the cigars contained in this box have been made by a FIRST-CLASS WORKMAN, . . . opposed to inferior rat-shop, COOLY, PRISON, or FILTHY TENEMENT-HOUSE WORKMANSHIP." An example can be found in the issue for 11 April 1886. Adolph Strasser, the International's president, often referred to the rival cigar makers as "those tenement house scum." Commons et al., *History*, vol. 2, 400. Jacob Riis claimed that German (male unionists)/Czech (tenement workers of both sexes) ethnic and gender tensions also played a role in this fight. Riis, *Other Half*, 100-109.

23. Gompers, *Seventy Years*, 183-198. In 1886, Gompers served as president of the State's Workingmen Assembly, a lobbying organization based in Albany.

24. Atkins, *Health*, 213; Blackmar, *Manhattan*, 212-218; Lubove, *Progressives and the Slums*, 40-41.

Such were the conditions of living and labor for working-class New Yorkers, organized or otherwise, when Henry George, the famous western intellectual, moved east to New York City in 1881.

II

Henry George had spent much of his adult life up to then in California. There, he had observed the position of Western farmers, miners, mechanics, and small businessmen fall into one of dependence upon the large business and financial interests of the region, most noticeably, the railroads. Out of his personal experience, combined with radical English economic doctrines and American republican theorizing on land, George developed his social theory, which he published as *Progress and Poverty* in 1879.²⁵

George saw land monopoly as the greatest evil of American society. According to him, the value of land was socially determined. That urban property proved more valuable than rural land, for instance, derived from its populous setting, not from anything the individual owner had done with it; hence the unearned profits from the increasing value of urban land were a form of theft of value from the public at large. In addition, private control of land made landowners the masters of those they rented to or hired. George's remedy for this situation, the basis for his theory of social change, was the *land tax*, also popularly known as the *single tax*.²⁶

Practically, then, the greatest, the most fundamental of all reforms, the reform which will make all other reforms easier, and without which no other reform will avail, is to be reached by concentrating all taxation into a tax upon the value of land, and making that heavy enough to take as near as may be the whole ground-rent for common purposes.²⁷

Market value was to determine a land's tax, regardless of what was on it, whether factory, farm, or tenement. Those unwilling or unable to pay the tax would be forced to sell the land to

25. For biographical material on Henry George see: Henry George, Jr., *The Life of Henry George* (New York: Doubleday and McClure Co., 1900); Charles Albro Barker, *Henry George*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

26. Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, vol.1, *Complete Works*, (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1906; 1879), throughout.

27. Henry George, *Social Problems*, vol. 2, *Complete Works* (Doubleday, Page & Co., 1911; reprint of 1883 edition), 209.

someone who could pay, or in default, to the government. In theory the tax would destroy the speculative value of, and hence monopoly in, land while not hindering its legitimate use. As buildings and other developments would not be appraised, the land tax would stimulate overall economic development. The revenue raised could then be used for the general welfare by creating schools, parks, and free public transportation.²⁸

George wrote in simple, direct language, with a vivid imagery that appealed to working-class people. Professor Richard Ely, a labor scholar of the time, claimed that thousands of workers had read *Progress and Poverty* and accepted its principles. Even Gompers, who would later warily support George's run for mayor, recalled that his cigar shopmates discussed George's book at work. However, the book drew much criticism from both the right and the left. Most newspapers castigated the landtax as socialistic, believing it would effectively nationalize land over time. For its part, the Socialistic Labor Party saw it as a radical kind of government capitalism. As they said, they supported George, "not on account of the singletax theory, but in spite of it."²⁹

In New York George quickly made himself a part of the city's leftist intelligentsia, which included such people as John Swinton, then an editor with *The Sun*, and Patrick Ford, editor of the *Irish World and Industrial Liberator*, who commissioned him to travel to Ireland in 1881 to report on living conditions there. The tour established his reputation on both sides of the Atlantic and *Progress and Poverty* became an international best-seller.³⁰

28. Henry George, "The Land Question," in George E., ed. *The Labor Movement: The Problem of To-Day* (New York: The M. W. Hazen Company, 1897): 561-574.

29. Steven J. Ross, "The Culture of Political Economy: Henry George and the American Working Class," *Southern California Quarterly* 65(1983): 145-166. Gompers, *Seventy Years*, 82. Hillquit, *Socialism*, 250-254. The quote is from the *New-Yorker Volkszeitung*, cited in Hillquit, *Socialism*, 254.

30. Barker, *Henry George*, 307-340.

Irish-American workers quickly adopted Henry George as a champion of their cause and he often spoke at their rallies on land reform.³¹ By the 1880s Irish-American workers had assumed a prominent role in New York's labor movement and had introduced a new form of social protest, the boycott, as an addition to labor's traditional weapon, the strike.³² Irish radicals held ideas similar to those of George on land reform and in New York many Irish-American militants also avowed some variety of socialism. Hence, Irish-American support of George gave him easy access to the other leaders of the Central Labor Union. From its inception, the Union developed a friendship with Henry George, hosting him after his first, and then later, after two other trips abroad in 1882 and 1884. At a meeting in Cooper Union after his second return from overseas the chairman declared that George's "name had become a household word to millions who recognized in him a leader whose teachings would yet lead labor out of the house of bondage in which it had so long sojourned." George thanked his audience for their support and he urged them to take the labor question into politics, for "what was the use of democratic institutions to men who could not get a living without selling their manhood?"³³

George's vision for New York's future, the source of his popularity among workers, and his opinions on labor organizations, which made him popular at least among the radical members of the Central Labor Union is found in testimony compiled by the Senate Committee on Labor and Education in a report released in 1885.³⁴ As might be expected, George used the

31. For examples, see *New-York Times*, 13 April 1881, 5; 3 May 1881, 3; *The Sun*, 6 July 1886, 1. On the American-Irish relationship, see Eric Foner, "Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism in the Gilded Age: The Land League and Irish-America," *Marxist Perspectives* 1(Summer 1978): 6-55.

32. Michael Gordon, "The Labor Boycott in New York City, 1880-1886," *Labor History* 16(Spring 1975): 184-229.

33. *New-York Times*, 21 October 1882, 3; *New-York Times*, 29 April 1884, 4; Louis Post, *The Prophet of San Francisco* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1930), 62.

34. In August 1883 it came to New York to hold hearings on a strike by Knights of Labor telegraphers against Jay Gould's Western Union, as part of an overall investigation of the relations between labor and capital. The committee's mandate appeared to be a broad one, for the senators used the occasion to interview dozens of labor leaders and other related professionals who had no direct connection to the strike. U. S. Senate, Committee on

opportunity to publicize his views. At the witness table he lectured on how a land tax would solve New York's housing crisis. The tax would force urban landowners to either construct homes on their vacant land in order to obtain rent to pay the tax, or sell to those who would. This additional supply of housing would assure lower rents and promote employment. George then proceeded to criticize skilled labor unions saying that they could provide only limited gains to a small membership that had to be restricted in order to maintain those gains. Only by raising the wages of all the laboring classes in America, including the largest group, the unskilled, could wages be raised permanently. His program would help to accomplish this. George argued that only political action could change the present situation, and although he realized that his ideas called for a radical restructuring of the country's political economy, he nevertheless held to his belief that other proposed solutions for labor were of only limited value.³⁵

Following George was Louis Post, counsel for the Central Labor Union. He stated that it was the Union's position that landowners deliberately withheld their property off the market until the need for housing allowed them "to levy a tax for their own private purposes when the community had advanced far enough to need the lands which they have thus appropriated." Hence, according to Post, the Central Labor Union endorsed George's theory that a land tax would ease overcrowding and stimulate housing construction in the city. He insisted that there will be "no remedy for the suffering of the industrial classes short of taking ground-rents for public use." Post advised the Senators that they should read *Progress and Poverty* if they had any questions about how this should be accomplished.³⁶

Education and Labor, *Report of the Committee of the Senate Upon the Relations Between Labor and Capital*, 5 vols. (Washington: G. P. O., 1885). The New York testimony is in volumes one and two.

35. Committee on Education and Labor, *Report*, I, 467-525; *New-York Times*, 23 August 1883, 3.

36. Committee on Education and Labor, *Report*, I, 788, 790-795.

George became quite popular with the Knights of Labor during the mid-1880s, often lecturing to local assemblies throughout the country.³⁷ The Knights constitution's preamble already included land use planks inherited from an earlier labor group, the National Labor Union, and the land issue increasingly came to dominate General Assembly discussions during the 1880s. For instance, at the 1884 General Assembly, Terence Powderly said that land held speculatively should be taxed at its full value. The Knights' newspaper, the *Journal of United Labor*, often carried articles on various land issues such as cooperative urban building projects, an expose on the tenement-house management policy of New York City's Trinity Church, and even a report about a thwarted eviction of an Irish-American woman. The paper regularly advertised, and helped to distribute, copies of George's books and pamphlets.³⁸

George had many advocates in the labor press. John Swinton, in particular, took up his cause, and as early as 1883 was touting him for the Presidency in his new weekly journal. Swinton persistently agitated around land and housing issues in his paper. For example, in early 1886 he published a cross section of opinion, all of it unfavorable, about tenement housing, including George's comment that "every child born in [New York City has a] right to the land." In the following months the paper printed an article by an Irish MP on American landlordism and one on the efforts of the Land Office to restore millions of stolen acres in the West to the public. In that same issue a member of the Knights, voicing concerns similar to those of the trades, mournfully despaired of how tenement conditions affected the realization of their organization's social goals.

Any one who has lived in the tenements of this city, who has come in contact with poverty--mental, moral and physical, besides financial--of the denizens of the lower wards, who has seen the countless rum holes filled to

37. For instance, see Henry George, "The Crime of Poverty," An address delivered in the Opera House, Burlington, Iowa, April 1, 1885, under the auspices of Burlington Assembly, No. 3135, Knights of Labor (New York: The International Joseph Fels Commission, 1918).

38. Arthur Nichols Young, *The Singletax Movement on the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1916): 90-100; *Journal of United Labor*, 10 January 1886, 1176; 10 April 1886, 2042; 25 June 1886, 2104; 25 September 1886, 2174; 10 November 1886, 2193.

overflowing and the consequent drunkenness of men and women--shall anyone say that, under such circumstances, the people as a whole are ready for the Co-operative Commonwealth?³⁹

Labor and housing issues were intimately connected in the minds of many New York City workers and it was therefore not surprising that when the Central Labor Union once again turned to independent political action in the summer of 1886 they chose as their candidate a man who was as one editorial writer put it, "their old instructor and guiding star, Henry George."⁴⁰

39. *John Swinton's Paper*, 14 October 1883, 1. Swinton often printed articles or letters asking the unions to take up the housing issue; e.g., 23 August 1885, 2. The other citations are from: *John Swinton's Paper*, 3 January 1886, 2; 21 February 21 1886, 1; 21 March 1886, 1, 3.

40. *The Sun*, 18 October 1886.

III

Labor organizations across the country turned to political action in the summer and fall of 1886 in response to the state and business repression that followed the Knights' strike against Gould's Southwest railroads, the Haymarket riot, and the national eight-hour day strikes of early May. Across the country labor organizations put forward candidates in local contests that fall, either through independent parties or on captured local Democratic and Republican tickets. A general impression prevailed among labor activists that all these contests marked the beginning of a national political movement of labor, whether socialist, anarchist, Knights, or trades oriented in its individual setting. As John Swinton fondly editorialized, the "new political forces" were emerging.⁴¹

In New York City the Central Labor Union sponsored strikes for what it called the short-hour movement, since in many industries eight-hour days were beyond contemplation. (That spring, the federation hailed as a major victory a streetcar strike that successfully lowered drivers' hours to twelve per day.) The strikes achieved some initial gains but in New York, as elsewhere across the country, the drive faded during the summer, partly due to the hysteria generated by the press over the alleged anarchist bombing in Chicago. But the failure of the economic program only helped spur on the new political momentum. In New York City, the increasing police and judicial repression against strikers and boycotters, at the same time that practically all of the city's aldermen found themselves indicted for bribery over the awarding of a street car contract, convinced workers and their leaders to again take independent political action.⁴² It should be

41. Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy*, 18-37; Richard T. Ely, *The Labor Movement in America*, 2nd ed. (New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1890), 295-332; Phillips Thompson, *The Politics of Labor* (New York: Belford, Clarke and Co., 1887), 91-111; Richard J. Hinton, "American Labor Organizations," *North American Review* 140(January 1885): 48-62; Henry George did his part in furthering agitation by investigating the plight of coal mine workers in Pennsylvania for the *North American Review*. "Labor in Pennsylvania," 143(August 1886): 165-181; (September 1886): 268-277; (October 1886): 360-370; 144(January 1887): 86-95.

42. On short-hour activities in New York, see *John Swinton's Paper*, May through June 1886. On the turn of labor to political action, see *John Swinton's Paper*, July through September 1886.

remembered that it was July, the hottest time of the year, when the tenements were almost unbearable to live in, when they stank the most, when they posed a health and safety hazard to their inhabitants⁴³, that the workers renewed independent political action.

On 2 July a state judge sentenced five members of the Central Labor Union to jail terms of up to three and one-half years for their role in arbitrating the end of a boycott of a local music hall.⁴⁴ This final outrage convinced the Central Labor Union that only their control of government would alleviate their grievances and they quickly voted to convene a political convention in order to select a candidate for mayor in the upcoming election. The labor leaders appointed a coordinating committee that included four Knights and three trade unionists, with one additional member from each group as chairman and secretary.⁴⁵ By mid-August the committee produced a platform based on the Union constitution's preamble, a carefully written document embodying its constituents' philosophies and goals, and which included an advocacy of "free soil."⁴⁶

From the beginning it was clear that Henry George would be their nominee. He had already sent a letter of support to the political committee on July 7 and by July 26 *The Sun* was reporting him as the Union's candidate. John Swinton "nominated" George in his newspaper on

43. "With the first hot nights in June police despatches, that record the killing of men and women by rolling off roofs and window-sills while asleep, announce that the time of greatest suffering among the poor is at hand. . . . Life in the tenements in July and August spells death to an army of little ones whom the doctor's skill is powerless to save." Riis, *Other Half*, 124.

44. Musicians, bartenders, and waiters had first struck and then boycotted the Theiss music hall over working conditions and the use of non-union labor. Speck, *The Singletax*, 58-61.

45. Names and organizations listed in Louis Post and Fred C. Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign: An Account of the George-Hewitt Campaign in the New York Municipal Election of 1886* (New York: Henry George School, 1961; reprint of 1887 edition): 6. This book is a collection of campaign documents and election results connected by a narrative of the campaign written by the editors. Speck, *The Singletax*, 64;

46. Items included in the platform were: prohibition of the employment of children under the age of fourteen; enforcement of the eight hour law where applicable; equal pay for equal work for both sexes; repeal of conspiracy laws; criminalization of speculation in food products; abolition of property qualifications for jurors; and the abolition of tenement-house cigarmaking. *New-York Times*, 20 August 1886; Central Labor Union of New York and Vicinity, "Constitution and By-Laws," 1886 edition, 3-5.

August 1 and on August 3, George wrote a friend about being informally contacted as to his availability. When later that month at a meeting of the political labor committee, James Archibald, secretary of the political committee, officially mentioned George as a possible candidate for the first time, it was to overwhelming applause.⁴⁷

However, Henry George had entered a most volatile situation and it is necessary to outline the political maneuverings within the Central Labor Union in order to understand the dynamics of the campaign. In the mid-1880s, trade union leaders across the country confronted the Knights over many issues, but especially over jurisdiction. The seeming unity of the labor campaign in New York would prove unable to overcome the growing national rift between the leadership of the Knights and the trade unions; in fact, it appears to have exacerbated the discord and to have contributed to the ultimate breach between the two groups. For it was during the mayoral campaign that a feud between DA49 and the Cigarmakers' International Union climaxed, prompting the formation of a new national trade union organization, the American Federation of Labor.

In the decade before 1886, Strasser and Gompers had resolutely pushed forward their craft agenda, fighting socialists and Knights along the way. In 1882, socialist cigarmakers broke off from the International, in a dispute over the latter's decision to pursue political means instead of street agitation as a recourse to the problem of tenement cigarmaking, and formed their own unit, the Progressive Cigarmakers Union. DA49 supported the dual union, thereby contributing to the ongoing dissension at Central Labor Union meetings. But, due to persistent attacks from cigar factory owners on both their unions and the failure of Gompers's lobbying activities, the Progressives and the International reconciled in early 1886 and by mid-summer merged. This act aggrieved DA49, and in response they sent their own organizers out onto the streets in an attempt to capture the cigar locals or set up rival locals of their own. In a session of the Union on August

47. *The Sun*, 8 July 1886; *The Sun*, 26 July 1886; Letter, Henry George to Thomas Walker, 3 August 1886, Henry George Papers, New York Public Library; *John Swinton's Paper*, 1 August 1886, 1; *New-York Times*, 20 August 1886, 5.

1, at which DA49 members were absent, a motion was passed supporting the Progressives against the Knights.⁴⁸ This Union civil war was occurring simultaneously as the Union's labor political committee held its initial meetings.

The Knights lost another round to the trade unions that summer when the Central Labor Union reorganized itself. The Union had grown so large that at its Sunday meetings hundreds of delegates could be in attendance, creating an unwieldy administrative structure. Early in 1886 the Union proposed a plan to restructure itself into trade sections and enacted the plan that August. The new Central Labor Union contained ten sections: nine trade-oriented; the tenth, and in numbers of units the largest, a miscellaneous section that included all the Knights' mixed locals. Each section met on its own, while electing delegates to a smaller, central Union board that continued to meet on Sundays. Even though many of the sections contained Knights trade assemblies, the principle of trade organizing as opposed to mixed organizing had been won. But DA49 did not give up without a fight, literally. At the last meeting of the old Union on August 8 DA49 packed the hall in an attempt to have the previous week's resolution condemning it rescinded. When the motion was made the meeting broke down into a brawl. The police had to be called in to break it up.⁴⁹ Tensions remained so high among the two competing factions that the local typographer's union threatened to boycott the Labor Day parade when the Union announced that Archibald, a Home Club member, was to serve as marshal.⁵⁰

Henry George's entrance into this evolving situation brought the trade unionists' ascendancy to a temporary halt. His popularity presented something of a quandary for trade unionist

48. Gompers, *Seventy Years*, 247-248; Ware, *The Labor Movement*, 258-279. Also, see the coverage given to the fight in *The Sun* during the first week of August. DA 49 was meeting separately to elect delegates to the upcoming Richmond General Assembly.

49. *John Swinton's Paper*, 25 July 1886, 4; 22 August 1886, 4; *The Sun*, 9 August 1886. On the mechanics of the restructuring, see Speck, *Singletax*, 27. The motion was recalled at a later meeting.

50. *The Sun*, 16 August 1886.

leaders. While a few of them jumped at the opportunity⁵¹, according to Samuel Gompers, most of them hesitated at first to renew political action. Remembering the disastrous Central Labor Union campaign of 1882 as well as his own lobbying experience, and being aware of the anti-trade union beliefs of Henry George, he initially advised against resuming such activity. But he changed his mind when it quickly became apparent to him and to other trade leaders that as organized workers of all factions supported not only the idea of an independent political party but one with George as its leader that they had to respond accordingly or risk losing their members' support. Gompers went on to become chairman of George's campaign speaker bureau and spent a month stumping for George alongside the Knights.⁵²

What perhaps convinced the trades to support George, even though it was apparent that he was about to reorient the focus of the campaign, was the popular response to the condition that George placed on his nomination. In a letter, he agreed to run provided that the labor committee present him with a petition having the signatures of at least 30,000 men pledged to vote for him. However, his message mentioned no specific labor grievances; instead it called for political action as a means of abolishing "injustice."⁵³ Nevertheless, the resulting petition drive proved an effective organizing tool, activating George clubs across the city as well as appearing to mark the entrance of large numbers of working-class women into New York's political scene. Louis Post later noted that women played an important role in collecting over 40,000 signatures by the end of September. Near the end of the campaign a reporter for *The Sun* was allowed access to the

51. John McMackin, a member of the painter's union, was appointed the labor committee's chairman and later helped lead the resultant labor party throughout 1887.

52. Gompers, *Seventy Years*, 311-321. For some examples of Gompers's campaigning and public acknowledgement of his earlier opposition to independent political activity, see *New York Star*, 11 October 1886; *New-York Morning Journal*, 11 October 1886. These two citations are found in *The Samuel Gompers Papers*, vol. 1, ed. Stuart B. Kaufman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 431-434.

53. Henry George to James P. Archibald, 26 August 1886, reprinted in Post and Leubuscher, *George-Hewitt Campaign*, 7-11.

petitions and he listed the count by Assembly District in his paper. The petitions showed city-wide support for George, especially in the Tammany-dominated tenement districts.⁵⁴

After George had unofficially accepted the nomination, he met with the labor committee and they drew up a second platform. On September 23 the labor convention met to officially nominate George and at that assembly the new platform was read by Frank Farrell and approved.⁵⁵ This new platform marked a change in the relations between the Knights and other segments of New York's labor movement in the former's favor. District Assembly 49 had already announced its intention to make housing an issue in the campaign. On July 31 it had held a large rally in Union Square to explain its position. While not expounding an exact singletax philosophy many of the speakers called land monopolization the root cause of poverty, and they advocated the non-payment of rent. "Society should be the landlord.... [E]very month's rent [should go] to the payment for [a] home for the wife and little ones."⁵⁶

The new platform paralleled the earlier one, but now contained some important omissions; gone was its socialist declaration that "[t]he emancipation of the working classes must be achieved by the working classes themselves," and gone were such essential trade union demands as those for an eight-hour day and the abolition of tenement-house cigarmaking. Singletax doctrine dominated the ideology of the new platform whereas it had been less stressed in the previous document. For instance, one plank declared

... the crowding of so many people into narrow tenements at enormous rents, while half the area of the city is yet unbuilt upon to be a scandalous evil[.] ... Taxes should be levied on land irrespective of improvements, so that those who are now holding land vacant shall be compelled either to build on it themselves, or give up the land to those who will.

54. Post, "Recollections," 1128; *The Sun*, 22 October 1886, 3.

55. Post, "The United Labor Party," 1128.

56. *The Sun*, 1 August 1886.

The resulting tax revenue would be used for the "promotion of the health, comfort, education and recreation of its people, and to the providing of means [for a publicly owned] transit commensurate with the needs of a great metropolis." Recognizing the revolutionary scope of its goals the platform called for home rule and the convening of a state constitutional convention to implement both these changes and to legislate to prevent future political corruption.⁵⁷ Henry George's election was to be the necessary first step towards beginning this ambitious social reconstruction.

On October 5, Henry George officially accepted the nomination for mayor from the labor committee and also from a group of radical liberals who had their own separate organization. This second group included people such as Daniel DeLeon of Columbia College and Reverend Edward McGlynn, pastor of St. Stephen's, the largest Catholic working-class church in New York City.⁵⁸ Late in the campaign George picked up the support of the smallest of the city's three Democratic factions, Irving Hall. They gave him the aid of their political machine in return for their running under his banner a full set of candidates for all other city offices open that fall. Not to leave the field solely to George, the city chapter of the New York State Workingmen's Association, of which Gompers was then president, endorsed nine Democratic and Republican candidates for Assemblymen from New York City, eight of whom later won.⁵⁹ They would make their influence felt in the state legislature in 1887.

In response to this labor and radical upsurge the heretofore antagonistic plebeian Tammany Hall and patrician County Democratic factions of the Democratic Party united to

57. The platform is reprinted in Post and Leubuscher, *George-Hewitt Campaign*, 13-15.

58. Post and Leubuscher, *George-Hewitt Campaign*, 17, 31-44, 124-127. But McGlynn's support came at great personal sacrifice. In New York the Church allied itself closely with Tammany Hall and shortly after the campaign the Church excommunicated McGlynn for his political activities. See Stephen Bell, *Rebel, Priest and Prophet: A Biography of Dr. Edward McGlynn* (New York: The Devin-Adair Co., 1937), 45-63.

59. Other material drawn from: Allen Nevins, *Abram S. Hewitt, With Some Account of Peter Cooper* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935), 463; "Statement of the New York State Workingmen's Assembly," 31 October 1886, in *Gompers Papers*, 446-447. The literature on the election (see note 1) has ignored the other offices contested in November, an omission that needs correction in order to understand the political dynamics of the time.

nominate Congressman Abram S. Hewitt for mayor, while the Republicans turned to Theodore Roosevelt. Both parties concentrated on George's advocacy of the singletax as the focus of their campaign attacks. For his part, George refused to disavow it despite his opponents' relentless assaults on its revolutionary implications. George denied that his platform was radical. For him it was a matter of simple justice.

Sticking to form, in speeches and editorials George continued to assert that the landtax would create more housing in New York, thereby helping to curb the appalling infant mortality in such places as the "Bend." The resulting construction boom would energize the economy, reduce unemployment ("Who would be the builders of houses? Bricklayers, carpenters, masons."), raise wages for all workers, and elevate the general moral level of all working people.⁶⁰ It was a comprehensive social platform, designed to eventually restructure the society and economy of a large and crowded metropolis. It was understood by George and his supporters that the achievement of his goals would not happen simply with his election as mayor. Enactment of the singletax would require a fundamental revision of the laws of New York state. But with George both as mayor and the leader of a new political party the process would begin.⁶¹

The labor campaign was exceptional in the promotion that ordinary workers gave it. As Post and Leubuscher later noted, many "mechanics, clerks, and 'common' laborers" spoke at rallies for George. "These men, who are supposed to know nothing but the techniques of their trades, exhibited a knowledge of political economy . . . that would put to shame the newspaper proprietors and politicians who stigmatized them as ignorant agitators." Gompers, too, recalled that the campaign issues "were read and discussed in practically every home and public meeting

60. George's major speeches are collected in Post and Leubuscher, *George-Hewitt Campaign*. The quotation is on page 90. Some representative editorials are in: *New-Yorker Volkszeitung*, 7 October 1886, 4 (English editorial); *The Leader* (the labor campaign's daily newspaper), 19 October 1886, 4. Hammack is the only recent author who has appreciated the importance of the singletax to George's campaigning. See *Power and Society*, 175.

61. When George and his followers were questioned about what legal actions they could undertake if he were elected they mentioned modifying building laws to provide pure air and cheaper rents and an abolition of political corruption. *The Leader* (the CLU's campaign newspaper), 19 October 1886; *The Sun*, 3 October 1886.

in New York."⁶² But unfortunately, the excitement of the campaign did nothing to relieve the tensions between the trades and the Knights.

Shortly after George was nominated on September 23, DA49's leadership travelled south for the Knights' General Assembly in Richmond.⁶³ During the two weeks of the convention DA49 consolidated its influence within the national body. The General Assembly accepted a report exonerating the Home Club of conspiring to take over leadership of the Knights and the New York contingent took full advantage of its situation. During the two weeks of the Assembly the D49 delegates first defeated a proposal to make state assemblies--as opposed to district assemblies--mandatory, and then, apparently feeling quite sure of themselves and riding high on the George nomination, convinced the national body on October 19 to adopt their struggle against the New York cigar locals by having the General Assembly issue an ultimatum: cigarmakers had either to leave the Knights or leave the International--dual membership would no longer be permitted.⁶⁴

The trade unions picked up the gauntlet and acted accordingly and swiftly. Some New York labor activists, such as James Sullivan of the Typographers Union, which held dual trades and Knights members, hoped that the fight could be confined to the Cigarmakers International and DA49⁶⁵, but it was not to be. Within a few days of the Knights' declaration both P. J. McGuire, of the Carpenters' Union, and Gompers issued letters to their trade union colleagues across the country, most of whom had their own set of grievances against the Knights, to meet in

62. Post and Leubuscher, *George-Hewitt Campaign*, 104-105; Gompers, *Seventy Years*, 315-316.

63. See page 7.

64. On the Richmond convention, see Joseph R. Buchanan, "Report to DA 89, Colorado," n.d. (probably 1886) in Terence V. Powderly Papers, Series A, part 1B (microfilm, reel 19, Tamiment Institute, New York University Library); Knights of Labor, General Assembly, *Proceedings, 1886*, 154-157, 200, 282-285; Buchanan, *The Story of a Labor Agitator* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1970; reprint of 1905 edition), 313-318; *The Sun*, 17 October 1886; *John Swinton's Paper*, 17 October 1886, 2 *The New-York Times*, 20 October 1886.

65. *The World*, 22 October 1886.

Columbus, Ohio, on 7 December. There, they disbanded the obsolete Federation of Trade and Labor Unions and established the American Federation of Labor, with Samuel Gompers as its president. The new organization in its turn declared jurisdictional war on the Knights. However, not immune to the fervor of the times, the AFL convention also passed a resolution in favor of political action, the last time it would pass such a resolution for a generation.⁶⁶

Back in New York, the campaign reached a crescendo in the last few days of October. The Central Labor Union sponsored what it called a "monster" parade of the trades and other supporters three nights before the election. In the demonstration's announcement, which went out over Gompers's and William McCabe's (a Knights typographer) signatures, a vision of society was extolled wherein workers lived in the suburbs on city-owned land paying cheap prices for fuel and food and traveling on public transportation to jobs that would not be threatened by capitalists introducing new machinery.⁶⁷ However, despite the unity displayed in the parade, as Gompers later recalled, at a meeting held afterwards, the "Knights of Labor cheered loudly when James E. Quinn, the Home Club leader, took his seat on the platform [and t]he trade unionists cheered me when I appeared."⁶⁸

66. For an overview, see Gompers, *Seventy Years*, 259-269. On the call to action, see Letter, P. J. McGuire to Samuel Gompers, 21 October 1886, and Letter, Samuel Gompers to the Legislative Committee of the FOTLU, 25 October 1886. The two letters are in Gompers, *Papers*, 436-437, 440. On the political resolution, see American Federation of Labor, *Proceedings*, 1886, 15-16.

67. On the parade, see *New-York Times*, 30 October 1886, 3; 2 November 1886, 2; *The World*, 31 October 1886; Scobey, "Boycotting the Politics Factory," 280-281. The announcement is in Gompers, *Papers*, 445-446. The listing of labor organizations expected to march is in *The Leader*, 30 October 1886, 2, and contains only trade unions and trade assemblies. All other groups, which presumably included the mixed locals, marched behind the trades in state district assembly organizations. Archibald, the secretary of the political committee, led one of these contingents.

68. Gompers, *Seventy Years*, 318. Quinn was actually being cheered as Master Workman, the leader, of District Assembly 49.

On election eve the Knights brought in Grand Master Workman, Terence Powderly, their president, to campaign. He spoke at Cooper Union to a large and enthusiastic crowd and spent the following morning touring the city with George. During his speech, while praising the candidate, he took the opportunity to let his audience know that he stood there "not merely the representative of one hundred thousand men, but as the representative of every man who handles a tool, whether he is in the Knights of Labor or any other organization." Powderly, who opposed striking on principle, further went on to claim that there were alternatives to striking and boycotting, namely "a proper regulation of the land system which will properly guarantee to every man that which is his, and no more."⁶⁹

The election was held on November 2nd: Hewitt received forty-one percent of the vote (90,552), George, thirty-one percent (68,110), and Roosevelt, twenty-eight percent (60,435). Approximately 219,000 of the 235,000 registered voters cast their ballots, a high percentage for an off-year election.⁷⁰ As one of its since many eulogizers has written, the campaign marked "one of the most spectacular and romantic epochs in the history of the labour movement in America."⁷¹ The campaign's message did not go unnoticed by George's enemies. An editorial in the staunchly Republican *New-York Times* said that the election proved that "workingmen and their families have genuine grievances," among which were corporate abuse of the legal system and unfair taxation, and that "'society' will have something to say to the capitalist who huddles a

69. *George-Hewitt Campaign*, 120. On Powderly's attitude towards strikes, see P. Foner, *History*, vol. 2., 82-88.

70. Post and Leubuscher, *George-Hewitt Campaign*, 169; Donnelly, "Catholic New Yorkers," 106. The accuracy of these results has been a topic of discussion ever since. Poll fraud was common throughout nineteenth century New York and charges of vote tampering, or "counting out" as it was then called, physical coercion, and bribery at the polls were made by George's supporters. Post and Leubuscher, *George-Hewitt Campaign*, 169-170; *New York World*, 7 November 1886, in Gompers, *Papers*, 449; *New-York Daily Tribune*, 18 October 1897, 5; Barker, *Henry George*, 480-481; Abram C. Bernheim, "The Ballot in New York," *Political Science Quarterly* 4(1889): 130-152. Other writers have found the gap between Hewitt and George too large to be explained by deceit and have suggested alternative explanations: Republicans voting for Hewitt as a way of guaranteeing George's loss; or, the inability of the George forces in the short time allowed them to expand beyond their base in organized labor. Allan Nevins, *Abram S. Hewitt: With Some Account of Peter Cooper* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935): 468-469; Donnelly, "Catholic New Yorkers," 106-122.

71. Selig Perlman, in Commons, *History of Labor*, vol. 2, 450.

hundred families into his tenement house in order that his rents may represent a 25 per cent profit."⁷²

72. *New-York Times*, 4 November 1886.

Although this essay has shown a close relationship between housing issues and George's support from organized labor, it would be helpful if demographic information existed to corroborate this relationship. Unfortunately, no statistical analysis exists that regresses labor group status and housing stock onto the 1886 electoral vote. Two writers have performed quantitative analyses of the election. One, Martin Shefter, studied late nineteenth-century New York City mayoral elections using ethnicity, generational status, and social class as his independent variables. The other, James Donnelly, has computed average population densities by assembly district. Both found inconclusive evidence to show "class" support for George (Shefter, "The Electoral Foundations," 263-298; James Donnelly, "Catholic New Yorkers and New York Socialists, 1870-1920," 108, appendix III.2). Such a conclusion would not be surprising for both organized workers and those poor and unskilled laborers who owed allegiance to Tammany can be categorized as "working class."

What can be done without conducting extensive archival research is to visually compare the geographical distribution of the votes with what information is available about the city's housing stock and demographics. There were 812 election districts in New York City (773 in Manhattan) in 1886, some as small as a city block grouped into twenty-four Assembly Districts. (For comparison, in Manhattan today, with about the same population of 1886 Manhattan but with over three times the number of registered voters, there are 1091 election districts and 285 voting sites. (New York City Board of Elections, telephone conversation with author, 25 February 1991.)) Henry George won four, the 10th, 14th, 15th, and 17th; Roosevelt, five, the 7th, 8th, 11th, 13th, and 21st; and Hewitt, the rest. George split the election districts of the East Side and the northern Lower East Side with Hewitt, while sweeping the island's West Side (then, roughly, Greenwich Village to Central Park). Hewitt won near entirely the southernmost and oldest areas of Manhattan, in addition to the suburban regions and most of the Annexed District. Roosevelt picked up the native and blue-blood Assembly Districts in the center of the island plus some of the wealthy pockets in the upper West Side (see Maps II and III). One major exception to the pattern was the heavily Jewish Eighth Assembly District in the heart of the Lower East Side whose inhabitants cast their votes for Roosevelt, George, and Hewitt in that order, the only District to return such a vote, partly in response to the Republicans' exploitation of then-prevalent Tammany anti-Semitism (The geographical pattern of voting results was drawn from: Post and Leubuscher, *George-Hewitt Campaign*, 155-168 (voting results), and *City Record*, 11 October 1887, 2766-2773 (election district boundaries). Also, see Shefter, "Electoral Foundation," 291. On Tammany anti-Semitism, see Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York Jews, 1870-1914*, (New York: Corinth Books, 1961), chapter five).

Looking at Map III one can see that the districts George won overlap the city's tenement districts (For a map and historical survey of tenement districts in New York City, see DeForest and Veillers, *Tenement Problems*, 193-219). In addition, in thirteen tenement-dominated Assembly Districts George received at least thirty-one percent of the vote, his city-wide average (Assembly Districts 1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, and 22. Post and Leubuscher, *George-Hewitt Campaign*, 155-168. It should be noted that the tenement district boundaries discussed date from 1900 and hence reflect an additional fourteen years of tenement growth. DeForest and Veillers's work show that certain wards, especially those in the 5th, 9th, and southern 19th Assembly Districts were new areas of tenement growth. *Tenement Problems*, 193-219). There is presently no atlas of nineteenth-century working-class New York that would allow us to see where skilled laborers lived but what evidence that does exist allows us to draw the conclusion that the areas where George ran strongest were home to organized workers. Many contemporary observers had roughly categorized the city's neighborhoods as to living conditions, residents' occupational status, and ethnicity (Riis, *Other Half*, throughout; Daniel G. Thompson, *Politics in a Democracy: An Essay* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.), 75-91; DeForest and Veillers, *Tenement House Problem*, 194-230; *The Sun*, 22 October 1886; *The Sun*, 22 October 1886, 3; *The Standard*, 3 March 1887; the quotation on page 21; Billings Report, 83-163. The latter document also gives precise figures on ethnicity based on the 1890 census). There is also some information in the 1885 Senate committee report mentioned above. Upon its arrival the committee spent two days touring the city's tenement districts. The members visited a wide range of buildings, from cheap lodging homes on Chatham Square, to old tenements on Mott Street inhabited by unskilled workers, to newer tenements on East 71st Street, where skilled workers of various trades lived (Senate Committee on Education and Labor, *Report*, vol. 1, 93-101. Also, see Hammack, *Power and Society*, 89-100).

Some of this evidence is inferential in that it tells us is where skilled workers did *not* live. Many contemporary studies of the time emphasized the social conditions of only the worst areas. For example, in his famous tour of Manhattan's tenement districts, Jacob Riis, with one exception in the East Side, surveyed only those areas to the south and west of George's supportive districts (His tour proceeded through the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 8th Assembly Districts. (*Other Half*, 37-118)). Hewitt ran strongest in this part of Manhattan, Tammany's traditional stronghold, an area inhabited mostly by unskilled workers and sweatshoppers, including many of the recent Italian immigrants, carrying many of the worst slum districts such as those containing the "Bend" and the "Big Flat."

Though the Central Labor Union and Henry George proclaimed their second-place finish a victory in a meeting on November 6⁷³ this "success" did nothing to alleviate the rivalry between the trade unionists and the Knights. Shortly thereafter, Powderly gave the Knights the credit for George's large turnout,⁷⁴ a statement that did not endear him with the trade unionists. DA49's immediate reaction was to strike out on its own, ordering its assemblies to withdraw from the Central Labor Union, leaving it in the hands of the trades. As Gompers gleefully recalled, he chaired the Union's first meeting in 1887, in which it endorsed the Cigar International's label over that of the Knights'.⁷⁵

But the civil war would ultimately be won in the shops and streets, and DA49, buoyed by their popular identification with George⁷⁶, looked to 1887 with confidence and put their new strength to a reckless test early that year. In the first week of January about eighty coal handlers on the New Jersey side of the Hudson River went on strike over a pay cut while on the New York

Donnelly's recent dissertation is also of help here. He found that George ran least well in areas where the population density was highest and where it was lowest (Donnelly, "Catholic New Yorkers," 108), the regions that Hewitt and Roosevelt carried. Hence, while we do not know the distribution of the skilled and unskilled population in the West and East Sides, by putting together the assembled bits and pieces we can surmise that organized workers by now lived further to the north in the newer, post-Civil War tenement districts and at least some of them commuted to work and union meetings. The Central Labor Union and DA49 had their offices in lower Manhattan and the major rallies of the George campaign were held in Cooper Union and the vicinity. Shefter's conclusion that ethnicity can explain much of the voting pattern in 1886 is not necessarily incompatible with the analysis of the election presented here. By 1886 Irish- and German-Americans had lived in New York for two to three generations and had become influential within the Central Labor Union. The question is whether we see these people as working Irish- and German-Americans, or whether we see them as Irish- and German-American workingmen. This paper has argued that at least for organized workers the latter perspective is the appropriate one.

73. Post and Leubuscher, *George-Hewitt Campaign*, 170-177.

74. *Journal of United Labor*, 25 November 1886, 2210.

75. On the withdrawal of DA49, see *John Swinton's Paper*, 5 December 1886, 26 December 1886; *The Sun*, 18 December 1886, 10 January 1887. On the Cigar Union triumph, see *New-York-Times*, 3 January 1887; Gompers, *Seventy Years*, 274-275.

76. Several times during the campaign George had explicitly praised the Knights: once saying they were "well disciplined," that "upon the word from the *leader* (italics added) it will pour out its members like a swarm of bees"; another time, applauding their actions in Richmond regarding Frank Farrell. *The Sun*, 22 October 1886; Post and Leubuscher, *George-Hewitt Campaign*, 89.

side freight handlers struck a shipping company. DA49 quickly stepped in to manage these efforts, encouraging dock workers and wagon drivers to join in with sympathy strikes, adding their own grievances to the list to be settled. By early February, anywhere from 30,000 to 40,000 workers from New Jersey, Manhattan, and Brooklyn were participating. At most, only 14,000 belonged to the Knights.⁷⁷

James E. Quinn, DA49's leader, made it clear he believed the strike a continuation of the agitation begun the previous fall. In a strike rally on 5 February he called on the crowd to struggle to seize political power, telling them that they "must double the 68,000 votes of [the] last election, and wipe out every office in the State of New York." When questioned by a State Assembly fact-finding committee investigating the strike Quinn replied that only national legislation could relieve the solution, that "all railroads, telegraph lines--in short, all carrying companies . . . should be put in the hands of the Government." He went on to advocate eventual government ownership of all means of production. When asked if this was the "Henry George theory," Quinn replied, "Improved."⁷⁸

In response to DA49's actions, the shipping companies involved united and brought in scab labor from across the Northeast and protected them with Pinkertons. The DA49 leadership attempted a counterattack by encouraging the railroad engineers on the Pennsylvania to Hudson River run to strike, but they refused; then the leadership sought to expand the strike in New York City into a general strike by asking such disparate unions as the brewers and the stationary engineers to strike, but they both refused to go out too. As for the Central Labor Union, it gave the strikers only moral and some financial support. Under great pressure by all social groups to settle a coal strike in the middle of winter, the coal company and DA49 reached an agreement

77. New York State, Bureau of Statistics of Labor, *Annual Report*, 1887, 327-385; Commons, *History*, vol. 2, 422; The strike was front page news for most of January and February 1887. Also see *John Swinton's Paper*, 9 January 1887 - 27 February 1887. For various figures of the number of strikers involved, see *The Sun*, 6 February 1887; *John Swinton's Paper*, 13 February 1887. The figure of 14,000 striking members is from *The Central Labor Union Review* (January 1888): 5.

78. Coverage of the rally and Quinn's testimony are found in separate articles in *The Sun*, 6 February 1887.

restoring the handlers' old pay rate. DA49 claimed victory and called the strike off on 11 February, leaving all the other strikers' grievances unsettled and the workers disgruntled. The mishandling of this strike contributed to a rapid decline in DA49's membership in 1887 and by July it had lost half its 1886 totals.⁷⁹ Within the next two years its assemblies re-merged with the Central Labor Union.⁸⁰

The political labor movement also suffered a similar decline in 1887. Despite their misgivings about the election results, the George forces felt confident for the future. Over the next three months they converted their ad hoc organization into a political party independent of Central Labor Union control, named it the United Labor Party, and set about organizing sections throughout New York State to contest state-wide elections in the upcoming fall. For reasons beyond the scope of this paper the party soon faltered. Briefly, George and his new party instigated a quarrel with the Catholic Church over its treatment of McGlynn, and then in an attempt to widen their public support they purged the Socialistic Labor Party from their ranks. These moves caused many Catholics and Marxists to reevaluate where their true interests lay, thereby costing George much of his 1886 support. And then on the eve of the 1887 election George made some inopportune remarks concerning the Chicago anarchists then due to be executed, stating that they were guilty of the murders charged to them. This statement lost him the endorsement of the Central Labor Union, who were actively campaigning for their pardon or retrial, and with it much of his grass roots organization. In the 1887 election Henry George, running for Secretary-of-State, received 72,000 votes, only 37,000 of which came from New

79. On the latter half of the strike, see *The Sun*, 7 February 1887, 12 February 1887. For the CLU resolution of support, see *The New-York Times*, 31 January 1886. DA49's incompetent and egotistic leadership of the strike was criticized by many otherwise supportive people. See *John Swinton's Paper*, 20 February 1887. *The Sun*, which covered the strike closely, identified the strike as a ploy on the part of DA49 to "gain control of all the laborers in a great city" (2 February), and that the strikers and Quinn were at cross purposes. The laborers wanted a higher wage, while Quinn was looking to "establish socialism" (11 February).

80. The process was already under way by that summer. See Quinn's call for unity in *The Leader* for 26 July 1887. By 1889 DA49 had recovered enough to help precipitate a three-way war between them, the trades, and the Socialist Labor Party. P. Foner, *History*, 279-299.

York City, a result paralleling the decline of the New York Knights that same year. Within another year the new party expired, as did other labor political parties nationally.⁸¹

There were some beneficial results from the 1886 election. As Samuel Gompers predicted⁸², one important issue was addressed immediately by the New York State legislature. In 1884 the state had commissioned a review of the city's tenements and the resulting report contained a long list of recommendations. However, nothing was done to implement them. In March 1887, the new state legislature, which now included several labor-sponsored members, returned to the report and enacted many of its recommendations, creating a permanent commission on tenement homes, increasing the size of the sanitary police force, mandating twice yearly tenement inspections by the Board of Health, requiring the registration of tenement owners, and increasing the number of water-closets needed per person. Charles Wingate, a sanitary engineer and ally of George, attributed the law's passage directly to the previous fall's agitation.⁸³ In addition, the first state labor legislation protecting adult male workers passed that year, Labor Day declared a legal state holiday, and the Theiss boycotters pardoned by the governor.⁸⁴

If anything, the 1886 election and its aftermath helped define the limits of possible political, economic, and social change in late nineteenth-century New York City. For one

81. On the fight with the Catholics, see Henry Browne, *The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1949), 70-104; Robert Emmett Curran, *Michael Augustine Corrigan and the Shaping of Conservative Catholicism in America, 1878-1902* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), 209-252. On the struggle with the socialists, see Speck, *Singletax*, 90-154. On George, the Central Labor Union, and the anarchists, see Henry David, *The History of the Haymarket Affair: A Study in the American Social-Revolutionary and Labor Movements* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1936), 400-403; *New-York Times*, 10 November 1887, 1; Post, "Recollections," 1199; *The Central Labor Union Review*, January 1888, 33-41. On the decline of labor parties, see Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy*, 219-233.

82. *New-York World*, 7 November 1886, in Gompers, *Papers*, 448.

83. New York State Senate, "Documents," 1885, vol. 5, no. 36; Bureau of Statistics of Labor, *Annual Report, 1887*, 703-776; Atkins, *Health*, 228-229. *John Swinton's Paper*, 3 March 1887, 1.

84. F. R. Fairchild, *Factory Regulation in the State of New York* (New York: American Economic Association, 1906), 47-69; Scobey, "Boycotting the Politics Factory," 314.

moment in time it did appear that an alternative had emerged to the corrupt, capitalistic two-party system, that average workers proved not to be mere dupes in the hands of a monolithic, urban political machine, responding overwhelmingly to a social theory for change that spoke to their and their families' most dire needs, not only for decent, living wages and working conditions, but also for decent, livable, and inexpensive homes, and that organized labor, especially the Knights of Labor, was the most visible manifestation of that alternative. But their vision proved to be utopian. The image of workers, producing goods through cooperatives, united under one all-encompassing labor organization, their families filling up northern Manhattan and the Bronx with single-family houses proved to be the mirage it was. Coupled with dogmatic and inexperienced leadership, which included Henry George, they proved incapable of instituting the social program they outlined in the fall of 1886.

By the 1880s in New York, a wage economy had been permanently established and now the fight would be over conditions of work, hours worked per day, and wages, mediated by trade unions that accepted capitalism's existence, but who in turn, abandoned unskilled laborers, as well as their own future political prospects, to Tammany to exploit for its own purposes. The Marxists went on to replace the Knights as the new radical alternative. While they too were hostile to capitalism, they sought to transcend it with a vision built upon its base, and they accepted craft or industrial jurisdiction as opposed to mixed trades for organizing the working class. As for the workers and their families they would continue to live in tenements, but with their agitation a growing reform movement moderated by elites and Tammany helped ameliorate their situation. It would take much time, but eventually their apartments became a more fitting place in which to raise their families.

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