

## **Boycotting the Politics Factory: Labor Radicalism and the New York City Mayoral Election of 1884**

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### **I. The Monster Parade**

On Saturday evening, October 30, 1886, three days before Election day, thirty thousand New York City workers marched by torchlight in a driving rainstorm to support labor's candidate for Mayor, Henry George. From Cooper Union around Union Square to Tompkins Square—the landmarks of working-class resistance in the city—the parade retraced much the same route taken seven weeks earlier on “labor’s holiday,” the first Monday in September. This was no mere coincidence. Labor Day had been founded in New York in 1882, the brainchild of the Central Labor Union, a

citywide assembly of trade unions and labor organizations. The same CLU now spearheaded the labor canvass: it had called the conference that nominated Henry George for Mayor, and it had organized this pre-election "monster parade." To many of the ten thousand spectators around Union Square, then, the sight of organized labor streaming past the review stand, carrying banners that celebrated union ("You-Knighted We Stand") and trade ("We are striving to elevate our craft"), must have held familiar associations. Of course both types of event—the labor demonstration and the campaign parade—shared a common ancestry in the artisanal republican festivals of pre-industrial America. Such festivals linked political ritual with the cultural identity of the laboring classes. By the 1880s, however, the spheres of mainstream politics and organized labor had grown steadily apart. Republicanism had shed its defining connection to the rights of workingmen (I use the gender advisedly); and conversely, the labor movement, after many defeats, had lost a measure of its faith in politics as an arena of militancy. What the monster parade dramatized was the possibility of reintegrating these two realms. With their Chinese lanterns and fireworks, their eye-catching transparencies and marching chants ("Hi—ho—the leeches must go!"), the George cadres had appropriated much of the culture of the parties they were seeking to overthrow. Symbolically they elided labor radicalism and civic participation.<sup>1</sup>

In connecting the rituals of class resistance with those of mainstream political action, the parade made a fitting climax to the George campaign as a whole. New York's organized workers turned to third-party politics in 1886 when they found that their customary activities in defense of labor depended on the gaining of state power. The ideology, organization, and cultural practices of their party in turn implied new conceptions of both electoral and labor insurgency. On the one hand, the campaign proposed a newly class-divided picture of the republican polity; on the other, it offered organized labor as the new locus of civic virtue, the institutional embodiment of the popular will. Although workers in New York and elsewhere had turned to politics before, no previous campaign had managed to attract so broad a following behind so militant a party. Moreover the Henry George campaign was only the most dramatic instance of a wider political insurgency that swept the United States in 1886. With labor tickets running in 189 municipalities and all but four of the thirty-eight states, both polity and class relations appeared to be on the verge of radical transformation.<sup>2</sup>

The New York mayoral election of 1886 thus provides a rich opportunity to give what *Radical History Review* has called a "social

history of politics." It provokes us to ask what social relations, organizational resources, and ideologies make possible the emergence of labor politics in America over the opposition of the dominant parties, press, and culture. This essay will focus on four particular aspects of the career of radical labor politics in 1880s New York: what economic and social conflicts made the formation of the labor party necessary? What organizational, ideological, and communal resources of working-class life made possible its surprising strength? What sort of political culture did the campaign construct from these resources, in opposition to the dominant political cultures of the urban machine and genteel reform? And finally, why, a scant year after its triumphant emergence, was New York's labor party nearly dead, the victim of factional bickering and organizational disintegration?

The story of New York labor's turn to politics must begin with the Central Labor union. During the mid-eighties, the CLU grew from the collection of some dozen militant unions it had remained since its founding in 1882, to a veritable "Parliament of Labor," comprising in July of 1886 over two hundred labor organizations.<sup>3</sup> As it became the ecumenical body for New York's organized labor, the CLU perfected tactics commensurate with its new power, in particular the boycott. By the spring of 1886, the union could wield the boycott with such discipline and reliability that it provoked not only fierce attacks from businessmen, the pulpit, and the bourgeois press, but also a repressive counterreaction from the state. In a series of criminal prosecutions during May and June, New York courts interpreted the conspiracy statutes to prohibit boycotting; indictments were brought against over one hundred tailors, bakers, musicians, and waiters. The most notorious of these cases, against the organizers of a boycott on Theiss' Music Hall, sent five unionists to Sing Sing with excessive prison sentences for extortion.<sup>4</sup>

This "grand legal round-up of boycotters" coincided with a wave of governmental action against labor activism throughout the United States during the spring of 1886: grand jury indictments, police and militia suppression of strikes, and the murder trial of Chicago anarchists after the Haymarket bombing.<sup>5</sup>

In New York the Theiss trial turned out to be a spark which ignited long-smoldering grievances against government for police strike-breaking, municipal corruption, judicial hostility to labor legislation, and the major parties' subservience to "the Money-Power." Political action to change the laws, control the police, and neutralize the courts seemed necessary—both to continue labor's work of self-protection and to preserve the Republic from despoi-

lation by a moneyed elite. Therefore two weeks after the sentencing of the Theiss boycotters on July 2, the Central Labor Union issued an invitation to all New York labor and radical groups to convene at Clarendon Hall on August 5 for the purpose of organizing an independent political movement. Over the next seven weeks the four hundred delegates of the Clarendon Hall conference, representing some 100 to 175 organizations and 60,000 affiliated workers, met five times. They drew up a platform which called for the abolition of private property rights in land; public ownership of the means of transit; an end to class legislation and "the officious meddling of the police with peaceful assemblages"; direct state employment of labor in public works; and election law reforms against bribery and intimidation. They began to lay the groundwork for citywide district organizations. And on September 28 they nominated Henry George for mayor—the sole nomination by the "united labor party" for the 1886 election in New York City.<sup>6</sup>

Labor's choice of Henry George made eminently good political sense. Precisely because he was not primarily a labor activist, he belonged to no faction among New York workers, yet he was the most widely known, popular, and charismatic figure in the city's reform circles. Since 1881 his views on land reform, labor, and Irish national struggles had appeared regularly in New York's leading working-class papers, Patrick Ford's *Irish World and Industrial Liberator* and John Swinton's *Paper*. George's support for the Irish National Land League, his scathing attacks on English landlordism, and his subsequent arrest during an Irish speaking tour in 1881–82 had won him a wide following among New York's workers; upon his return to America in late 1882, the Central Labor Union had even honored him with a rally at Cooper Union. Although George's *Progress and Poverty* argued against a fundamental antagonism between labor and capital—he believed rather that the private appropriation of land-values and hence the landlord/tenant conflict were the root of all social ills—his attack on bourgeois political economy and his practical criticisms of existing conditions found a sympathetic hearing among workers. Moreover his proposal that government confiscate all land-values through a "single tax" on ground rents made sense to the organized labor of a city plagued by rent-gouging, overcrowding, and the speculative control of land development.<sup>7</sup>

To a solicitation from the secretary of the Clarendon Hall conference George replied with a qualified assent: he would run for Mayor if the new movement could obtain thirty thousand pledges of votes for him. The condition was a stroke of brilliance. It forced the conference to transform itself from a labor convention into a citywide political organization, and it centered that organi-

zation around George's personal power. As the pledge petitions circulated in workplaces, union halls, and fraternal lodges, Henry George Clubs sprang up in every Assembly District in New York. Several of the city's most powerful unions, including those in the building trades, printers, and cigar manufacturing, formed Henry George Trade Legions. Black and immigrant workers formed thirty national campaign clubs of their own. Meanwhile, on October 2, a group of single-taxers, clergymen, and radical intellectuals (among them Daniel DeLeon, James Redpath, and Father McGlynn) organized a "citizens' meeting" in Chickering Hall to second labor's nomination and mobilize a middle-class reform constituency behind the "George boom." On October 5, a ratification meeting in Cooper Union presented the candidate with a petition containing some thirty-four thousand pledges.<sup>8</sup>

What followed was a month of extraordinary energy and astonishing discipline. In contrast to the major parties' reliance on an invisible canvass of patronage and ward heeling, the United Labor Party held literally hundreds of street-corner rallies to mobilize support for George and the Clarendon Hall platform. Samuel Gompers headed a speakers' bureau which placed as many as a dozen people a night around New York, speaking to the crowds from open carts. In addition to this "tailboard campaign," the Central Labor Union and several individual unions financed an independent daily newspaper, *The Leader*, to contest the anti-George bias of the mainstream press. Meanwhile, a few of the larger unions organized cadres of poll-watchers for every district in the city, and a dissident faction of Democrats defected to the ULP, bringing with it indispensable technical expertise in the arcane nineteenth-century science of bringing out the vote on election day.<sup>9</sup>

The mainstream parties and their press, at first amused by the "New Political Forces," grew increasingly alarmed at the unexpected strength of the George campaign. The pivotal importance of New York State in Gilded Age presidential politics, and of New York City in state politics, placed a high premium on the control of City Hall.<sup>10</sup> Not only did the United Labor Party threaten to undermine the influence over patronage and election oversight which came with the mayoralty; Henry George's reputation for integrity also forced the parties to spotlight the "clean" factions within their own machines. The Republicans nominated Theodore Roosevelt, a blustering twenty-seven-year-old reformer with no hopes of victory; party bosses hoped to use Roosevelt's candidacy to horsetrade for patronage with the dominant Democrats.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, after a decade of bitter dissension, the two principal factions of the Democratic party, Tammany Hall and a somewhat more reform-

minded machine called the County Democracy, agreed to unite to turn back the labor insurgency. The Tammany sachems held out the olive branch by nominating for Mayor Abram Hewitt, an iron manufacturer, a Congressman, and a County Democrat with impeccable reform credentials. Hewitt, a liberal defender of trade unionism with a liberal's animus against class-conscious politics, lashed out at the labor party's "attempt . . . to organize one class of our citizens against all other classes . . ." Henry George's supporters were, he argued, "enemies of civilization and social order," who sought "the submersion of Democratic principle" and "the popular indorsement of doctrines which must lead to a repetition of the horrors of the French Revolution and the atrocities of the Commune." As for the candidate himself, George's doctrines concerning land ownership constituted "a system of downright robbery, which would reduce society to a state of chaos."<sup>12</sup> Despite such red-baiting, the predictions of George's vote crept steadily upward in the Democratic press. And on October 9, Governor David Hill, a Democrat, commuted the sentences of the Theiss boycotters.<sup>13</sup>

Which brings us back to our "monster parade" on the rainy night of October 30. Even such a brief sketch of the campaign's history helps us understand why the workers of New York might have felt themselves in the presence of something new that night. The Henry George coalition had achieved a degree of unity and power unlike anything in the experience of the city's working class. It cut across racial, ethnic, craft, political, and even class lines, bringing together revolutionary German socialists, genteel reformers, Irish land radicals and "pure and simple" unionists. In a year otherwise marred by terrible factionalism among New York's socialists, Knights of Labor, and trade union federationists, one Knight wrote KL leader Terence Powderly that with the campaign, "all discord has ceased and as one man all are working shoulder to shoulder."<sup>14</sup> Democratic regulars, of course, expected this bridge between labor solidarity and partisan politics to collapse. Organized labor had run candidates for city office before, both in 1874 and 1882; each time it had been deserted by all but a handful of New York's workers. No matter how strong and autonomous the city-wide labor movement had grown in its own areas of concern, the experts argued, no matter how much it could turn the rhetoric of republicanism to its own ends, when workers came to the polls, the primordial ties of the party would exercise their pull. "Will this enthusiasm, this exaltation . . . last until November comes in?" queried the *Sun*, a Democratic daily: ". . . there is yet to be aroused the old party spirit which is so powerful in its influence on men . . .

They will see the old standards raised again, hear the old battle

cries, and catch the sound of the voices or leaders whom they have been wont to follow, and will they not again fall into line almost as a matter of habit?"<sup>15</sup>

They did not fall into line. Three days after the parade, labor's candidate received over 68,000 votes—8000 more than Roosevelt and only 22,000 fewer than the combined total of these two Democratic factions. Even in defeat, it was clear, the "New Political Forces" had emerged the heroes of the contest. "It is an extraordinary thing," commented the *New York World*, "for a man without political backing, without a machine, without money or newspaper support . . . to have polled [so many] votes for Mayor of this city." John Swinton was positively orgiastic:

The New Political Forces, largely made up of raw recruits, struck a blow truly astounding under the circumstances. They were confronted by the huge 'machines' of both old parties,—by the monopolies that shadow the city,—by Wall Street and all that the term implies,—by the press that enters every mind,—by the City, State, and National governments,—by hundreds of hostile pulpits,—by the clubs of millionaires that despise the 'rabble,'—by the garrison of police . . .,—by the gangs of 'heelers' . . .,—by the organized array of liquor dealers . . .<sup>16</sup>

For all its hyperbole, Swinton's point is well taken. Even to get as far as it did, the labor party had to resist the whole array of hegemonic institutions in New York politics and to replace these, at least provisionally, with parallel institutions of its own. It took politics out of the clubhouse and the saloon and placed it in the union hall and the street; it created an alternative press and enlisted its own cadres of intellectual and clerical allies; it financed a citywide campaign out of the pockets of working-class constituents rather than the bank accounts of wealthy candidates. In short it succeeded in creating an alternative political culture, a culture which could at once detach male workers from their traditional partisan loyalties and make organized labor their agency for gaining state power.

This essay aims to sketch the alternative political culture of the 1886 campaign and to reconstruct something of its social foundations. Such a perspective provides a somewhat different picture of the Henry George campaign than that usually given by either labor or political historians. Labor historiography has generally treated the campaign with the institutional bias that dominated older histories of unionism and left politics alike.<sup>17</sup> While this essay too will be concerned with unions and parties, it seeks to place these organizations in a cultural and ideological milieu which they both drew on and transformed. For conventional political historio-

graphy, on the other hand, the story of the Henry George campaign has been the story of Henry George, an episode of reform leadership rather than of class politics.<sup>18</sup> It is not hard to see why. With its high personal drama and charismatic hero, at the 1886 election positively invites the view that, to quote McGlynn, it was “the reputation of the candidate, his high genius and exalted character, his practical wisdom and masterly leadership, his tireless energy, the strange fascination his personality exerts” that guaranteed the movement’s success.<sup>19</sup> As I hope this piece will show, however, George was simply one among many voices helping to articulate—and disagreeing over—the shape of an alternative political movement. The “Henry George campaign” could become his story only when less visible figures had made it theirs to begin with. In the first instance it is the story of the Central Labor Union.

## II. The Central Labor Union

“In no city of the world are the trades so thoroughly organized as in New York and its suburbs,” reported the *Sun* in a May, 1886 portrait of the city’s labor leadership. “The position of New York . . . is due chiefly to the Central Labor Union.” The daily did not exaggerate: on May Day, when the CLU had sponsored a huge short-hours rally in Union Square, the assembly included some 160 member unions representing nearly two thirds of New York’s organized workers. It was, as Philip Foner has written, “the most important central labor organization in the country.” Indeed in its organizational base, its ideological commitments, and the strategies by which it asserted workers’ power, the Central Labor Union epitomized labor’s strengths and limitations during the epochal struggles of the 1880s.<sup>20</sup>

The career of the CLU began in early 1882, at a Cooper Union rally called by several dozen labor organizations to express support for the Irish Land League’s No-Rent Manifesto. Under a banner which proclaimed, “The No Rent battle of Ireland is the battle of the working men the world over,” the meeting resolved to support the creation of a militant trades assembly in New York; and two weeks later, on February 11, 1882, some twelve unions constituted themselves as the Central Labor Union of New York, Brooklyn, and Jersey City.<sup>21</sup> Although the CLU never represented, in its first years, more than a small fraction of New York’s several hundred thousand wage earners, from the start it intervened on behalf of the city labor movement with energy and sophistication. By the end of its first year, it had organized the first “labor day”; it had



run its first municipal electoral canvass; and it had provided the financial backbone for the protracted Jersey City freighthandlers' strike.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps more important, it had made itself the articulate voice of New York labor concerning "the social question." When Karl Marx died in early 1883, it was the Central Labor Union which sponsored a packed memorial meeting in Cooper Union. When, a few months later, the U.S. Senate Committee on Relations between Labor and Capital held special hearings in New York, a battery of CLU witnesses confronted committee members with an aggressively class-biased (and clearly stage-managed) picture of Manhattan's social relations. The union presented itself—and to a great extent, established itself—as *the* agency by which labor could realize "the idea of the solidarity of interests of all workingmen."<sup>23</sup>

The CLU was effective in part because it succeeded in being both ecumenical and militant. It managed to gather into its coalition the leadership of nearly all the radical and labor factions in New York: trade unionists and Knights of labor, land reformers and socialists, Marxists, Lasalleans, and sectarians of every stripe. In contrast to the unions and radical sects, the CLU sought to organize workers across lines of craft, skill, nationality, and ideology, taking as its constituency the wage-earning class as a whole. It was, type founder Edward King told the senators, "an effort to organize the day laborer with the skilled mechanic," to replace "the little-minded, narrow-minded view of the interests of a single occupation" with that of "the general interests of all bodies of wage-workers."<sup>24</sup> Like the Knights of Labor, the CLU embedded this call for solidarity in an organization form—the mixed trades assembly—which was peculiarly appropriate to the political economy of the 1880s. That economy had come to depend on a vastly expanded proletariat of dispossessed craft workers and unskilled (often immigrant) laborers. Yet it was a proletariat still often dispersed throughout highly differentiated, craft-dependent local economies, not one concentrated in mass production for a national market. In New York City especially, high land values, super-abundant labor, and a port economy tended to inhibit centralized production and to encourage the persistence of sweated out work and industrial crafts.<sup>25</sup> Only a local trades assembly could accommodate the emergent sense of class identity to this diverse and fragmentary—yet economically integrated—world of workshops, sweatshops, dockyards, factories, and building sites. The eclectic form of the CLU enabled it to draw together the whole range of labor organizations which grew out of such a world: traditional craft unions like those in the printing and building trades; industrial unions like the "progressive" cigar-makers, musicians, and brewers, which often challenged the older

craft bodies for control of a trade, the New York Knights of Labor, led by District Assembly 49, the largest and most militantly anti-trade union assembly in the Order; even unorganized bodies of day laborers, sales clerks, and the like, called by the CLU "amalgamated labor federations."<sup>26</sup>

Such a coalition was of course ideologically diverse, and the CLU became adept at mediating doctrinal tensions that otherwise provoked virulent labor factionalism throughout the 1880s. The union's Platform mixed producer republicanism with an affirmation of the necessity for autonomous trade unions; the Marxian commitment to economic struggle with the Lasallean call for a labor party; the Irish tradition of radical land reform with German workers' insistence on class struggle.<sup>27</sup> What held these ideological commitments together was not some unambiguous set of theoretical propositions, but rather the CLU's sweeping program of practical activity. The union claimed for itself an arena as broad and contradictory as the constituency it represented; it sought to assert workers' power in all the diverse spheres of working-class life: in the tenement, on the job, at the polls, and throughout the civic community. In practice, this meant intervening especially on three fronts.

First of all, the union battled for workers' control of production. As a trades assembly, it could bring to individual workplace struggles the resources and solidarity of its member organizations; and during the early eighties, it backed insurgencies in the building, silk-weaving, telegraph communications and other trades with boycotts, sympathy strikes, and often substantial amounts of money.<sup>28</sup> The CLU coupled such support, however, with a general effort to expand the scope of workers' control. It sought to locate the principle of control in class rather than craft, organizing non-skill-based unions among brewers, office clerks, day laborers, and others, and giving special support to strikes of the unskilled—such as the freighthandlers in 1882 or the cloakmakers three years later—whose workers lacked the craft knowledge and often the cultural bonds through which workplace battles were usually won. It sought to vest control in the trades assembly rather than a the individual union, establishing a board of arbitration that became especially busy after the 1883 depression and occasionally undertaking citywide negotiations on behalf of the more fragmented or sweated trades.<sup>29</sup> Finally, it sought to make the object of workers' control not merely the workplace but productive relations as a whole. The immiserating years after the Civil War—years of depression, currency contraction, mass immigration, the mechanization and deskilling of labor—had taught New York workers the

futility of pursuing shop floor struggles without also transforming general economic conditions. Like the labor movement nationally, the CLU linked immediate workplace battles to a broad set of demands aimed at freeing workers from the systematic caprice of the labor market and the business cycle: the prohibition of child labor, convict labor, and imported contract labor; equal pay for equal work for both sexes; the institution of a government-issued fiat currency; and the shortening of the work day to eight hours.<sup>30</sup>

Secondly, the Central Labor Union engaged in a general campaign to strengthen and radicalize working-class culture. Labor Day was only the most celebrated in a series of "public meetings, mass meetings, parades, and festivals" by which the CLU sought to dramatize labor's cultural and ideological autonomy. Such symbolic expressions of self-activity were part of a larger CLU project to create an institutional network—reading and lodging rooms, an assembly hall, a gymnasium, an employment bureau, and the like—by which to defend, educate, and mobilize the working-class community of New York.<sup>31</sup> The union's cultural interventions aimed first of all to reconnect the spheres of work and community, segregated by capitalist social relations. As Herbert Gutman and others have shown, labor insurgencies in the Gilded Age were won or lost in the streets, churches, saloons, and kitchens of working-class neighborhoods.<sup>32</sup> Trade floats on Labor Day, rallies honoring Karl Marx or the Irish Land League, lyceum lectures on the political economy of Henry George—all of these represented efforts to marshal ethnic loyalties, craft rituals, popular customs, and moral and ideological traditions on behalf of the labor movement. At the same time, however, such activities transformed the very cultural ties they drew on. By linking Irish tenants with sweated New York proletarians, or the symbols of traditional artisanal processions with Labor Day demands for the abolition of tenement-house manufacturing, the CLU redefined communal loyalties as aspects of class identity. In the same way that it enlarged workers' control of production into working-class control of productive relations, the union sought to incorporate a variety of "residual" cultures into the "emergent" culture of a unified and newly class-conscious labor movement.

Finally, and most importantly for the Henry George campaign, the Central Labor Union engaged in political agitation. Beyond its legislative proposals for short-hour laws, greenbackism, state-administered factory inspection, bureaus of labor statistics, and the like, the CLU was committed to independent class-based electoral politics. Union activists began organizing "workingmen's political clubs" as soon as the CLU itself was founded, and in the

election of 1882, they fielded candidates for mayor, city aldermen, state legislature, and U.S. Congress—only to be trounced with a mere four percent of the vote.<sup>33</sup> Not everyone in the labor movement shared the CLU's enthusiasm for independent electoral action. Such insurgencies could be debilitating and divisive without, as the 1882 defeat made clear, bringing workers any measure of power. Moreover many Gilded Age radicals shared what Leon Fink has called a deep "ambivalence regarding the role of the state and the proper political strategy for the labor movement." For many, the continual failure to enforce short-hours legislation on the books since the late 1860s pointed up the state's ineffectuality in combating the evils of capitalism. Some New York union leaders—most notably Samuel Gompers—viewed politics as a "cesspool of corruption" in which any effort by organized labor would be betrayed to the bribes of streetcar magnates, tenement-house owners, and Wall Street financiers. For CLU activists, however, this alliance between the politicians and "the ruling moneyed classes" was precisely what made independent political action so imperative: it was "the sacred duty of every honorable laboring man to sever his affiliations with the Republican and Democratic parties" and to return "the machinery of the State and municipality . . . to their rightful owners, the working men and working women."<sup>34</sup>

As such language suggests, the union's political agenda rested on the premise that state power was open to the organized working class through conventional means. It was not the state as such, but simply the mainstream parties, that subserved the owning classes. Labor's withdrawal into a third party would thus do more than simply secure workers' economic interests; it would purify popular rule itself of the usurpations of capital. "The emancipation of the working classes must be achieved the working classes themselves, as no other class has any interest in improving their condition," proclaimed the CLU Platform. "The combined wage-working class represents the great majority of the people . . . , and it is their destiny to replace the present political corruption by a government of the people, by the people, and for the people."<sup>35</sup> As this rhetorical mix of Lincoln and Marx makes clear, the union sought to combine labor insurgency with mainstream political participation, to make class politics the new version of republicanism. Radical social change was thus not only possible within the American polity, but necessary to its continuance. This brand of labor republicanism would come to be the basis for the political culture of the Henry George campaign.

In contrast to the "pure and simple" dichotomies of both Samuel Gompers and the Wisconsin School of labor historiography, then,

the CLU asserted the indivisibility of class militancy and mainstream electoral politics. The indivisibility of struggle was in fact the byword of CLU practice as a whole, whether on behalf of workers' control, a class-conscious movement culture, or a united labor party. The union sought to integrate economic insurgency with republican politics, workplace resistance with communal solidarity, trade union organizing with the fight against landlordism. What held these activities together was the pervasiveness of fundamentally new class relations in Gilded Age America. The CLU program recognized on the one hand, that the consolidation of a dependent, wage-earning class under capitalism had consolidated labor's powers of resistance as well; and on the other, that the resulting class conflict ran like a fault line through every region of social life. It was therefore the mission of the labor movement to intervene comprehensively for the working class as a whole, "organizing and concentrating the toiling class" into "one solid body," argued the union Platform, in order to pursue "all struggles—political or industrial—to resist every attempt of the ruling classes directed against our liberties."<sup>37</sup> And of course the CLU viewed itself as the key institutional means of "organizing and concentrating the toiling class." Only an organization which exploited the local economic and cultural interconnections within New York's working-class community could create a class-wide agency capable of contesting the authority of "the moneyed ruling classes" at every point of contact.

The CLU aimed to become, in short, a "counter-hegemonic" institution through which all important social relations could be channeled, resisted, and transformed. It would pose alternative productive relations to the marketplace, an alternative conception of the republican polity, even an alternative morality to "this present system [of] all for self."<sup>37</sup> Like the Knights of Labor, the CLU sought to make its "Parliament of Labor" a microcosm of the total producers' community it was working to create. Like the Knights also, the union's power and organizational discipline were circumscribed by a localism which defined class conflict throughout the Gilded Age; this is what made the trades-assembly form (as opposed to either national craft or industrial unions) the paradigmatic organizing unit of those years. Unlike the mainstream of the Knights, however, the CLU inflected its version of the "Co-operative Commonwealth" with a class consciousness learned in the shops and neighborhoods of New York. Thus the union embodied at once the most representative and most militant tendencies in the American labor movement during the decade of the 1880s.

For both the CLU and the labor movement nationally, however,

ambitions outstripped actual effect in the early eighties. The depression of 1883–84 and the defeat of major workplace conflicts such as the New York-area freighthandlers' and nation-wide telegraphers' strikes helped dampen militancy. Electoral defeats such as the New York municipal election of 1882 and Ben Butler's feeble Greenback-Labor candidacy in the presidential election two years later persuaded labor radicals that they could not yet make inroads into the dominant parties' claims on working-class voters; for three years the CLU, amid constant internal debate and against the prodding of its Lassalean wing, refused to again become involved in third-party politics.<sup>38</sup> With the end of depression in 1885, however, a tidal wave of labor organizing hit the country. The Knights of Labor grew from 110,000 to over 700,000 members in the eighteen months following its stunning defeat of Jay Gould in the Southwest Railroad Strike of March, 1885. On May 1, 1886, some 950,000 workers, answering the call of Samuel Gompers' Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, went on strike for the eight-hour day. "The year 1886 will be known as the year of the great uprising of labor," exulted Massachusetts reformer George McNeill. "It was the very dawning of the day when the term 'dignity of labor' meant something . . . The skilled and the unskilled, the high-paid and the low-paid, all joined hands." For labor radicals, the co-operative commonwealth seemed on the verge of arriving; for the bourgeois press, especially after the Haymarket bombing of May 4, 1886, the prospect was one of horrific anarchy.<sup>39</sup>

The "great uprising of labor" swept through New York as well. The state Bureau of the Statistics of Labor reported that city workers engaged in almost twelve hundred strikes in 1886, and "during this time all the labor organizations of the metropolis were very active and some of them were exceedingly aggressive." The Central Labor Union expanded from a vanguard of some few dozen radical unions in mid-1884 to over two hundred affiliated organizations two years later; at the time of the eight-hour demonstrations it contained perhaps 180,000 members. CLU business grew so voluminous that the assembly created within itself ten intermediate trade sections. Paradoxically the restructuring helped mediate endemic feuding between trade unionists and the anti-union Knights of D.A. 49: it at once strengthened the independence of trade organizations from the central labor body, enforced cooperation between unions within each section, and freed the central body to target more militantly the unresolved conflicts which did reach it.<sup>40</sup>

This city-wide consolidation of organized labor began to make possible the CLU's goal of a working class unified in support of

workers' control. Inter-craft alliances and sympathy strikes enforced shorter hours and control of work rules for skilled workers in the building, printing, and other trades. CLU boycotts, publicity, and arbitration committees helped traditionally unorganized and over-worked trades—bakers, store clerks, garment workers, and unskilled cigarmakers—to win short-hour and union recognition for the first time.<sup>41</sup> But perhaps the most dramatic confirmation of the CLU's approach came in the mobilization behind the New York street-car strikes of 1886. The strikes, which began in February and repeatedly shut down the city's surface transit during the spring and summer, sought a reduction of the working from fourteen to twelve hours. Support for the car workers was widespread and aggressive—not only within the labor movement, which raised money, laid boycotts and backed sympathy strikes against recalcitrant lines, but also throughout the working-class community. In the poor neighborhoods of Manhattan, crowds battled the police, put up barricades, laid wagons and rubbish on the tracks, and occasionally beat up strikebreakers, to prevent scab cars from going through: "The streets were thronged with a mob that groaned, hissed, and jeered from the sidewalks, while from every window there were angry jabbering and shaking of fists," reported a scandalized *Harper's Weekly* of one strike. "Before long a pile of lumber was encountered, which the police escort removed. Soon the obstructions multiplied—cobblestones, heaps of ashes, loads of sand, bales and rags, barrels, and boxes, and even big baggage trucks, wheels uppermost. . . . At Sullivan and Thompson streets showers of eggs fell on the policemen, with an occasional cup or bottle."<sup>42</sup>

Nothing could have more forcefully demonstrated workers' everyday linkage of labor struggle, community solidarity, and opposition to the abuses of state power. Here quite literally the community *was* the capitalist workplace: street-car corporations, backed by the police, had turned apparently public space into private property. The defense of workers' interests on the job required the working-class community in turn to reclaim the streets as social property. The barricades and battles with the police represented attempts to expose and remap the class relations that structured civic space in New York—attempts to establish working-class hegemony over at least parts of the cityscape. This is why the strikes so horrified bourgeois observers in publications like *Harper's Weekly*, and why they became the epitome of social warfare in William Dean Howells' New York Novel, *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, published four years later. They raised the specter of Paris in 1870, of an outright civic struggle over work, space, and movement in which labor would array itself openly against property and the

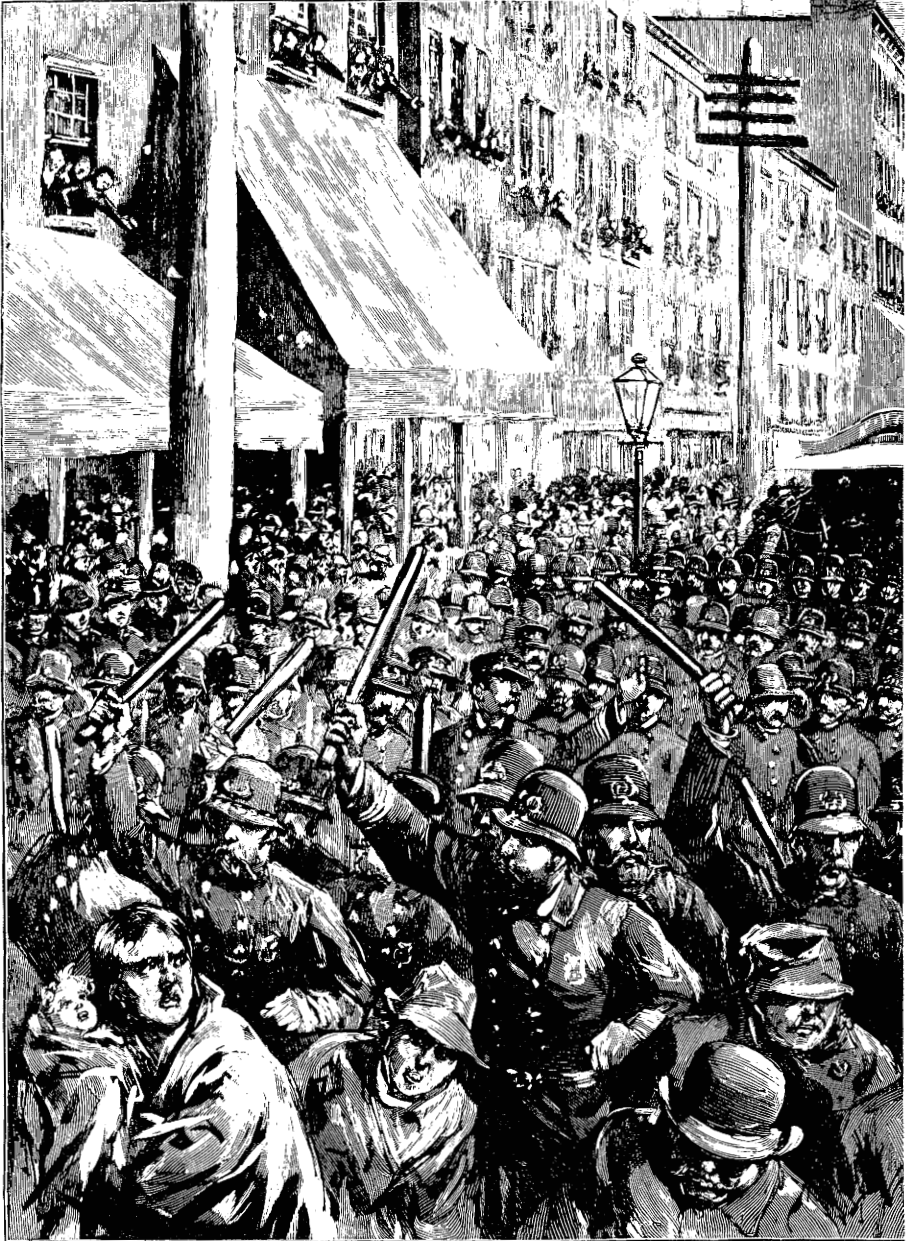
agencies of the state. Labor radicals did not disagree. For John Swinton, the street-car wars adunbrated the "formidable growth of other governing forces." Besides the state, forces which would create a "free industrial Administration, under the control of the producing classes."<sup>43</sup>

If the strikes embodied certain CLU aims at the flashpoint of conflict, the union itself created more general means of linking the labor question to the re-mapping of community power. The boom in its membership enabled the CLU finally to develop mass practices commensurate with its program of worker self-organization. In particular it perfected a tactic which gave substance to its ambition of becoming the oppositional voice for the New York working-class as a whole: the boycott. The boycott perfectly suited the aims and organizational possibilities of a citywide trades assembly. It took workers; struggles out of the the isolated workplace and diffused them throughtout the local community. At the same time it transformed or clarified social relationships within the community according to the responses given the labor question; it re-mapped the city along class lines. A web of both economic self-interest and collective self-definition, it made possible, for the agency legislating it, the sort of integrative counter-authority sought by the Parliament of Labor. It was through the boycott, as we shall see, that the Central Labor Union was able to assume the role it had set forth for itself, to reach the height of its power, and after a three years' detour or preparation, to return finally to politics.

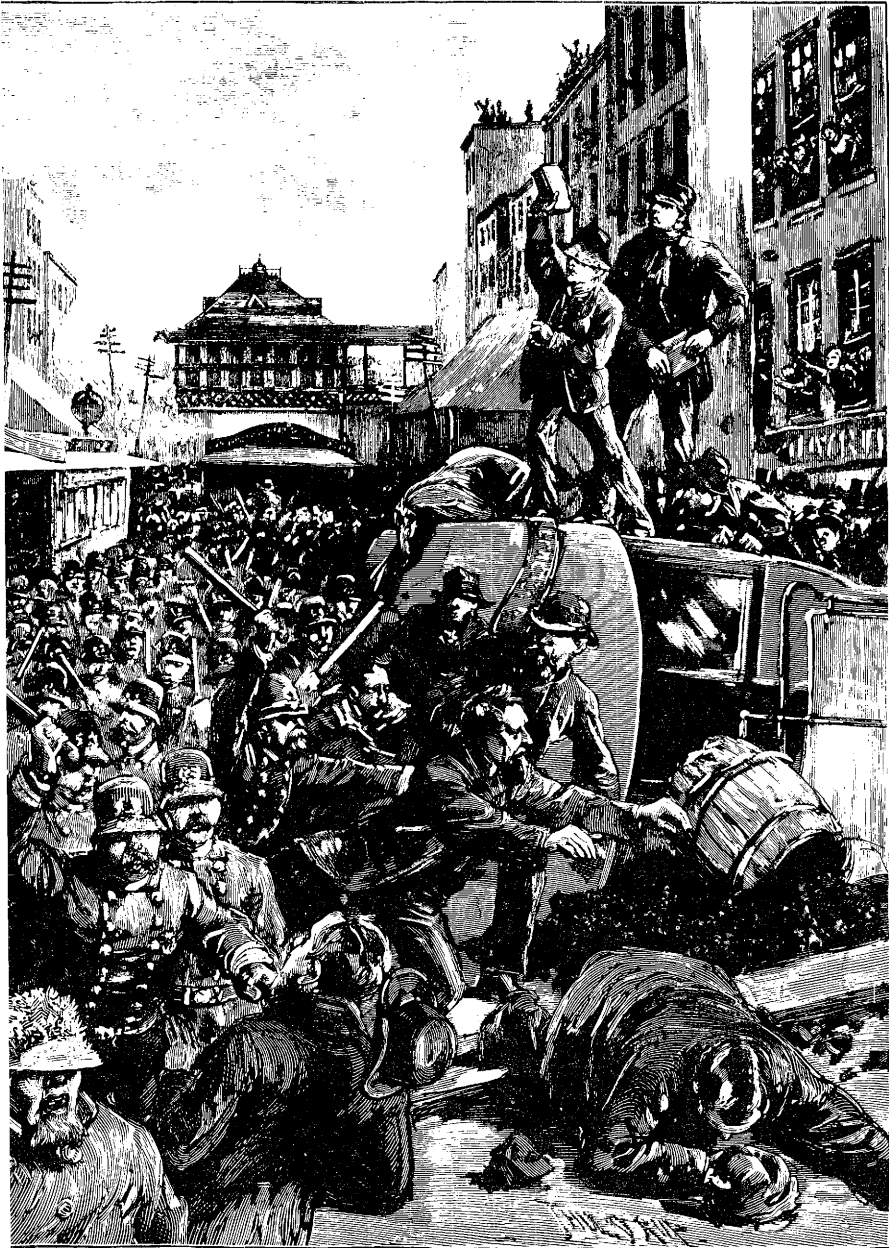
### III. Boycotts

If any form of labor insurgency may be said to typify the "great uprising" of the mid-1880s, it is the boycott.<sup>44</sup> John Swinton thought the tactic "more effective than any other in use" in "the industrial war now being waged between capaital and labor." On the other side of the barricades, *Bradstreet's* reported in late 1885 that the boycott's "growth in the hands of the developing trade unions and organizations . . . has been prodigious with the two years past"; from almost total disuse before the depression of 1883-84, the business journal now surveyed literally hundreds of instances. New York was the scene of much boycotting activity. Although city workers had only turned to the tactic in 1883, during a Typographical Union conflict with the *New York Tribune*, about one fifth of the boycotts reported in *Bradstreet's* took place in Manhattan, Brooklyn, or surrounding cities. Not surprisingly, the CLU was the principal agency through which boycotting was organized,





*A streetcar on the Lower East Side in March, 1886. Working class residents use curbstones, coal, and invective to block the streets in support of strikers' demand for a twelve-hour day; New*



*York police battle to keep the horsecar lines open. T. de Thulstrup, Harper's Weekly, 13 March 1886.*

publicized, and regulated in the metropolis. "The great weapon of the boycott has been popularized by the Central Labor Union," wrote Swinton in the spring of 1886, and each week he advertised the campaigns in which the union was currently engaged: Brennan and White's shoes, Adams Brothers hats, Fuller and Warren's stoves, the Fifth Avenue Hotel, People's Lines of Steamboats to Albany, and "Stephen Rogers, the employer of cheap painters," to name a few.

There were both communal and economic reasons for the Central Labor Union to turn to the boycott as a weapon of workers' control. As a cultural form the tactic had emerged out of the same Irish land struggles, and interchange between Irish and American radicalism, that had spawned the CLU itself: it was named for a particularly detestable English land agent on whom Irish tenants—at the suggestion of visiting American reformer James Redpath—had imposed total ostracism in 1880. Yet although the boycott was, as Michael Gordon writes, "a pre-industrial mode of protection familiar to immigrant workers," we should not overstress the continuity between the American labor boycott of the 1880s and oppositional strategies in Ireland. This was a different weapon tailored to quite different circumstances. What Captain Boycott offered was a rupture of social intercourse, appropriate to a world where exploitation was embedded in personal relations of privilege and deference. What Theiss' Music Hall suffered was a rupture of commodity-exchange, appropriate to a world where exploitation was embedded in market relations of labor sold and subsistence bought. Boycotting may indeed have invoked "pre-industrial" bonds and customs as a way of controlling those relations, yet such a "moral economy" worked precisely because it acknowledged the market as *the* circumscribing institution in workers' lives. Whatever its sources, the boycott's pre-eminence during the labor struggles of the 1880s stemmed from its capacity to turn the marketplace against itself.<sup>46</sup>

The tactic suited the political economy of New York in particular. In such a shop-fragmented city, the boycott enabled the working-class community as a whole to absorb the risks and mobilize the resources for individual workplace struggles. It was at once cheaper, safer, and—except for the strongest of craft unions—more effective than a strike. "I never knew a boycott yet that was not successful," one construction engineer told the state Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1885, and while this was surely an exaggeration, the bureau reported that labor won well over half its boycotts that year. Unskilled or sweated laborers, the backbone of some of the city's key industries, were especially dependent on the tactic, since

they were generally so easily replaceable as to be virtually powerless to strike; bakers, transit workers, brewers, and cigarmakers used it to shorten their hours and increase wages.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps most important, boycotting drew on a localism that still characterized the consumer goods' economy in New York, and America generally, in the 1880s. The tactic worked best where there were as yet visible connections between the worlds of production and consumption, where buyers brought to the consumer market their personal experience of the work behind it. In such cases the market defined not only a point of exchange but a community in which the density of social relations exposed what it is the business of a market to obscure: the interdependence between the conditions of buying goods and the conditions of selling labor. Paradoxically, Gilded Age New York maintained this sort of localism—the small-scale, labor-intensive production and workplace/neighborhood ties stereotypically associated with the “walking city”—within a fully developed capitalism increasingly involved in world-wide movements of labor and capital. Boycotting used that localism to subvert the larger economy, subjecting market imperatives of “free labor” and “free trade” to the moral code of the working-class community.

In short the same conditions which gave rise to the CLU itself—conditions which at once consolidated and fragmented the city's working class—made the boycott the union's most powerful weapon. The tactic was the natural vehicle for a labor movement of local trades assemblies and for the ideology of workers' power which those assemblies embodied. Like the eight-hour drive or CLU demands for legislative regulation of the labor market, boycotting represented a way of extending workers' control into market relations as such. Like the rubbish heaped on the Third Avenue rail, it did so by breaching the boundary between private property and the public sphere. Moreover, as with the street-car strikes, the diffusion of labor struggles into the community enabled labor to redefine the community as well. The CLU used the boycott to alter the border between the local “us” and the alien “them.” In the Theiss boycott, for instance, it proscribed George Ehret's brewery because Theiss served his beer; and the Progressive Cigarmakers moved their 1886 picnic from Jones' Wood because it too sold Ehret's beer. The union summoned communal loyalties to the aid of its constituents, but in doing so, revised or clarified those loyalties by refracting them through conflicts over work.<sup>48</sup>

Thus boycotting had the effect of dynamically engaging economic relations and cultural identity in a way which transformed both. Historians often freeze the cultural side of this dynamic of labor conflict, treating working-class community as a static

resource, prior to the (economic) world of change and conflict. In reality the localism invoked by boycotters changed with the market relations which that localism was contesting. It is telling, for example, to compare the social effect of the boycott in New York with that of labor insurgency in smaller cities studied by Herbert Gutman and other historians of Gilded Age communities. In localities such as Paterson, New Jersey or Sedalia, Missouri, workers fought a fairly circumscribed, often absentee industrial elite and at the same time shared a more tight-knit world of commercial/personal relationships with merchants and middle-class consumers. Boycotts and strike support drew on customary bonds which set an alien plutocracy against a local alliance of labor and the dominant middle-class institutions: press, pulpit, merchants' groups, and political parties.<sup>49</sup> Labor conflict did not *necessarily* threaten to redistribute power among these groups.

In New York, however, the boycott confronted a much more highly class-segmented market. On the one hand, this limited the tactic's efficacy: only those sectors of the middle class connected to the provision of working-class commodities felt its threat. Thus the CLU won actions against brewers, bakers, saloons, cigar manufacturers, shoemakers, and cheap retailers, but lost against high-brow hotels, clothiers, and newspapers.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, however, this social distance itself endowed boycotting with a new, potentially more subversive meaning. The boycott subjected the market to community sanctions, but it also made explicit that the community was divided by, and organized through, capitalist class relations. It was intended to relocate hegemony over work conditions in a workers' organization, the CLU. In contrast to the cross-class alliances of smaller localities, then, it necessarily set labor against the dominant institutions which exercised that hegemony: bourgeois politics, the law, the commercial press, the genteel ministry. Such a strategy did not merely seek to right workplace grievances: it implied a wholesale redistribution of civic power. To place market relations under workers' sanctions was to subvert every bourgeois value on which *free* market relations depended: the sanctity of the labor contract, the dominant legal conception of private right, even (as we shall see) the ethos of machine politics.

Those dominant institutions well understood the nature of the threat, and they reacted accordingly. The mainstream press poured out a stream of invective against the wave of boycotts that hit not only New York, but the whole United States in the spring of 1886. *Harper's Weekly* excoriated the tactic as "a new form of terrorism" and "an outrage upon the American principle" which would lead to "the annihilation of individual freedom." In contrast

to the boycott's implicit claim of communal authority, genteel editors found it "an un-American and anti-American offence" which recalled all that was villainous and therefore foreign in the nation's history: "King George was never half the tyrant that King Boycott would be if permitted to have his way," wrote a Rochester paper, and another observer compared "the Central Labor Union and other Unions opposed to the public good" to "the Algerine pirates who extorted money and tributes without reason."<sup>51</sup>

A kernel of truth underlay this hysteria. The boycott *did* threaten the cornerstone of bourgeois conceptions of liberty: private property rights. Since "a firm's income from its business was as much property as machinery or buildings," no moral economy, no redefinition of communal loyalties, could legitimately restrain commerce. One could compete with a business, or refuse as a free individual to deal with it, or even associate in unions with other employees to seek new terms for a labor contract, but "to prevent people from patronizing the firm was an injury to its property." Thus the boycott violated not only the moral sensibility of middle-class editors, but the central tenet of bourgeois political economy and law: the notion that ownership was the defining instance of personal right and freedom. This was a far more serious matter. It made the boycott, or any other "interference with the lawful control of [property] by its owners," a "fundamental crime against society," the toleration of which represented "social dissolution."<sup>52</sup> To contest the primacy of individual property rights was to challenge the legal system which guaranteed them and the liberal conception of state power which legitimized them.

The legal system and the state struck back. As use of the boycott reached epidemic proportions in the spring of 1886, local governments and judges throughout the United States cracked down on it, making it a violation of the conspiracy statutes. In New York City a grand jury indicted for "conspiracy and coercion" forty-seven journeymen tailors, thirty-one bakers, several street-car drivers, and the leaders of the Theiss strike. The boycott was "an accursed exotic," commented the jury foreman, "and we urge every effort of our legislators, the Bench, the Bar, the Press of the land and every American citizen to aid in exterminating this hydra-headed monster, dragging its loathsome length across the continent, sucking the very life blood from our trade and commerce."<sup>53</sup> Such rhetoric measures just how high the tactic had helped to raise the ante of class conflict. To the bench, the bar and the press of the land, boycotting and the other battles of the spring had made labor insurgency indistinguishable from political subversion. The labor movement sought to "be recognized as a state within the State,"

insisted *The Nation*, and to "enforce submission to it not by means of open warfare, but by a vast number of . . . isolated acts of violence and disorder directed against persons and property." With the Haymarket bombing of May 4, this Gramscian "war of movement" appeared to erupt into outright class revolt. The response of the liberal polity was a wave of repression that supplemented the conspiracy trials with police-supported strike-breaking, municipal curbs on labor demonstrations, and the judicial murder of the Haymarket defendants.<sup>54</sup>

For organized labor, in turn, the boycott trials and the general climate of repression declared once and for all the major parties' alliance with "an anti-democratic Money Power." The lesson of the spring seemed clear to one correspondent in *John Swinton's Paper*: "The strike that will do away with all other strikes is the strike for self-government. . . . No matter what we may temporarily accomplish, we will fail unless we wrest the law-making and judge-creating power from the few." All over the country, workers were mobilizing to do just that: labor tickets were organized in 189 localities from Maine to California during the election of 1886, putting up candidates for every elective office from Congressman to city judge.<sup>55</sup> The impetus toward labor politics was especially strong in New York. Besides the suppression of the boycotts, street-car strikes, and other labor demonstrations, city workers were outraged at the courts' invalidation of a state law prohibiting tenement-house cigar manufacture, as well as at disclosures that nearly every member of the New York Board of Aldermen had accepted bribes for the granting of a railway franchise on Broadway.<sup>56</sup> The draconian prison sentences meted out to the Theiss boycotters were the straw that broke the camel's back. The CLU organized the Clarendon Hall conference, and the George campaign began.

Thus the Central Labor Union finally returned to the independent labor politics it had preached and abandoned three years earlier. The logic of its program and the social milieu in which it worked had conspired to enlarge the terrain of class conflict from the workplace to the marketplace to the state itself. Just as the CLU's agitation on the shopfloor led it to organize the community through boycotting, so its attempt to redefine communal authority made a challenge to state authority at once necessary and possible: ". . . the strikes and boycotts have served to discipline laboring men for the great political struggle which students of history foresee," wrote one sympathetic New York journalist. "There could have been no better preparation entry into politics."<sup>57</sup> When the union re-entered the field of third-party action, it came with resources that three years of class-wide organization, new tactics, and an

expanded conception of the role and aims of a mass labor movement. Such resources laid the groundwork for an alternative political culture of impressive vigor.

The boycott in particular brought organized labor to the verge of independent political action, to the point where a spark like the Theiss conspiracy trial could ignite a new movement. With its uniting of workplace militancy and communal solidarity, its subversion of the ideology and institutions of the liberal state, the tactic already represented a sort of nascent politics. Its capacity to integrate economic, cultural, and implicitly political claims was in fact what made the boycott so characteristic of organized labor in the 1880s. Perhaps this is why it became for the "New Political Forces" a rhetorical figure for electoral politics itself. In July a Brooklyn meeting protesting the Theiss convictions resolved "to boycott at the ballot-boxes all the political parties." *John Swinton's Paper* took up the refrain in its very next issue: "Boycott at the polls," opened the lead article: "You can't be sent to the penitentiary for it—not yet." And Robert Blissert elaborated the same metaphor at a Knights of Labor rally; just prior to the Clarendon Hall conference:

If there is maladministration by Judges you are to blame for it. The time for retribution is at the next election will you do it? The politics factory is the factory you want to boycott. It is the factory of the Judges. . . .Every man here must make himself a committee of one to boycott them at the next election.<sup>58</sup>

Nothing could demonstrate more forcefully than such an image the refusal of labor in the 1880s to separate "economic" and "political" agitation. In contrast to the views of the emerging leadership of the AFL, the Progressive era labor historians, and (in a different way) New Left scholars like Alan Dawley, the mainstream of New York's organized workers simply refused to see a tension between the two realms.<sup>59</sup> Quite to the contrary: politics was simply boycotting carried on by other means.

#### IV. The New Political Forces

Non-political activities bequeathed to the Henry George campaign a wide array of networks, rituals, rhetoric, social theory, and organizing skills which provided the basis for the United Labor



Party's organizational strength. Yet the party could never have built this movement culture into a partisan political culture if labor's new found brand of militancy had not had explicitly political precedents of the previous twenty years and a longer-standing tradition of artisanal or lower-class republicanism.<sup>60</sup> Stump speeches and the labor press lionized the campaign as "the beginning of a struggle for the full vindication of the principles asserted in the great Declaration" of independence, a "second and great revolution" which would expel "the gangs of political Hessians" from City Hall, a "Gettysburg of Labor" which would emancipate the producing classes from "industrial slaver"<sup>61</sup> Such rhetoric, however, transformed the meaning of republican community in the very act of appealing to it. It mobilized the traditional values of republicanism against the new productive and power relations of Gilded Age America. Labor "declared. . .an inevitable and irresistible conflict between the wage-system of labor and the republican system of government" and used the filio-pietistic celebration of liberty, civic-mindedness, and personal independence to launch a critique of the bosses, both industrial and political, who undermined these orthodox national virtues. "Where one citizen is so rich that it makes no difference to him how public affairs are conducted," said candidate George, "and others are so poor that a dollar or two on election, or the promise of some paltry job, becomes more important to them than any general consideration, republican government at last becomes impossible." At the same time, such a critique cast labor insurgencies like the George campaign as the heir and guarantor of the republican tradition: "The Republic is dead," cried one ULP street orator, "and it can only be revived by this great movement of organized labor."<sup>62</sup>

Labor republicanism thus enabled the George campaign, and similar efforts throughout the country, to interject into the pieties of mainstream politics a recognition of class conflict. This redefinition of republican community was possible only because changes in actual class relations had in fact eroded the social basis of traditional republicanism. Whether it took the form of Jefferson's celebration of a citizen-yeomanry, Paine's praise for artisanal independence, or Lincoln's belief in a fluid society of mobile and acquisitive free laborers—and these were of course fundamentally different—republican ideology traditionally rested on the faith in America's freedom from a system of fixed and permanent social distinctions. Whatever accidental inequalities in wealth remained, the universal availability of property would prevent the emergence of economically-dependent classes incapable of the responsibilities of citizenship. Even in the insurgent forms of republicanism which

periodically arose to contest existing economic arrangements, artisans, wage-earners, and farmers accepted the renewal of independent proprietorship as the ideal of reform, thus as late as the 1870s, workers' organizations like the National Labor Union agitated primarily for homesteading and currency policies which would fulfill the free-labor promise of a society of abundant land, cheap money, and upward mobility.<sup>63</sup>

The economic transformations of the decade following the Panic of 1873 undermined labor's acceptance of traditional republicanism, however. American workers underwent a process of deskilling and immiseration in which the old solutions of petty property accumulation, social fluidity, and westward migration, and with them the ideal of a republic of small landholders, lost their credibility. In New York City particularly, as the CLU testimony in the 1883 Senate hearings made clear, the experience of proletarianization made it "almost, if not quite an impossibility, for a workman going into the mechanical trades to ever become the employer of himself." Out of these changes emerged not only the class-conscious city labor movement of the 1880s, but a labor republicanism which viewed the polity as irrevocably cleaved along, and defined by, class lines.<sup>64</sup>

The result in 1886 was a new kind of labor politics. The rhetoric of the Henry George campaign inserted the new reality of capitalist social relations into the concept of republican citizenship, recasting the Jeffersonian yeoman and the Painite artisan as a citizen-proletarian rooted in the industrial city and the wage economy: "We are wage-workers and tenants," said the campaign's daily organ, *The Leader*, and therefore "we should vote for a man who proposes to use his best endeavors to bring about legislation by which wage-slavery and land monopoly shall be abolished." Similarly the platform of the United Labor Party invoked the "sacred right of property" and the "self-evident truths proclaimed by the founders of this Republic" in support of measures inimical to traditional ideals of individual proprietorship and social mobility: the public confiscation of rent, municipal ownership of mass transit, and direct state employment of labor on public works.<sup>65</sup>

Thus the Henry George campaign defined itself by engaging the ideas of class and republican community in a dialectic which identified the assertion of workers' interests with the fulfillment of civic responsibilities. This dialectic provided the "New Political Forces" with an enormously valuable weapon: an indigenous radical discourse which could be used to rechart the boundaries of the democratic polity. It enabled the labor party to claim for itself the mantle of "the people" and displace the stigma of class partiality

onto its plutocratic opponents: “. . . ‘the working-class’ is in reality not a class, but *the mass*,” wrote Henry George in response to an attack by Hewitt. “The men who earn their bread by manual toil are, in this as in every community at large.”<sup>66</sup> Of course, as George’s language here intimates, the tensions within labor republicanism made the rhetoric of the new party fundamentally ambiguous. The need to have it both ways between class and community occasionally obscured the party’s actual material interests under a halo of republican legitimacy. Yet such ideological ambiguity was itself a valuable resource for the George campaign: it created a forum where divisions within the campaign’s social base could be acknowledged and resolved.

Despite its institutional roots, the canvass attracted support from a variety of different class constituencies: not merely the mechanics and skilled workers of the organized working class, but unskilled laborers, clerical workers, and a small but significant minority of merchants and professionals. Henry George’s thought, with its synthesis of producerism, free-labor rhetoric, evangelical piety, and radical political economy, helped in particular to draw the “old middle class” and its new white-collar employees into a coalition with organized labor. The ambiguities of labor republicanism helped articulate the contradictions of this cross-class alliance. The ideology functioned as a sort of ‘open site’ where the other elements of the alliance, especially middle-class reformers, could both find a common ground with working-class militants and contest it. Often ardent single-taxers for whom Henry George was a “conservative and careful” man who would “keep [the government] out of the hand of the Socialists,” such supporters held to a milder version of the republican legacy—one which stressed the harmony of “all classes of men who earn their living by the exertion of hand or head,” and which posed “barriers of privilege and monopoly,” rather than capitalism *per se* as the adversary.<sup>67</sup>

However they defined the interplay of class and community, all of Henry George’s supporters were agreed on one thing: the need for the United Labor Party to break the corrupt rule of the the major-party machines. “Independent political action affords the only hope of exposing and breaking the extortion and speculation by which a standing army of professional politicians corrupt the public whom they plunder,” asserted the Clarendon Hall platform, and it “called on all citizens who desire honest government to join us.” This willingness to define the campaign as “not only a war of labor for its rights, but also against the rottenness of [Democratic] ring-rule” should not surprise us.<sup>68</sup> Unlike the casualized labor whom machine politicians counted on for electoral support and

rewarded with public works patronage, New York's organized workers tended to be outraged by the endemic graft which had made the city a byword for municipal misrule. Loyal to a republican morality of self-mastery and personal independence, they saw in the 1886 Broadway street-car "boodle" scandals "a pitch of corruption that, the world over, throws a slur and a doubt upon free institutions."<sup>69</sup> Moreover, as the coincidence between the scandals and the street-car strikes makes clear, New York workers had their own reasons for linking the issues of labor and municipal reform. Just as they appropriated a common republican inheritance in class-specific ways, so they developed their own distinctively "laborist" critique of machine politics. This working-class brand of anti-bossism diverged greatly from the genteel variety so often studied by historians of the Gilded Age urban reform. Yet it formed one of the dominant notes of the Henry George campaign, and I suspect that it ran through both the reform and labor politics of the period.

The United Labor Party's attack on machine rule was more than simply 'mugwump' disgust with the moral corruption of the major parties. What exercised labor was rather the parties' fealty to the propertied classes. The vast sums of money needed to grease the machine's electoral apparatus and maintain its patronage and constituent services made the "command of money. . . an indispensable qualification for high office" and ensured that the dominant organizations in both parties were "controlled. . . by the monopolist, the capitalist, and the millionaire." Not only did this plutocratic control lead to the class legislation and abuses of state power—the police strike-breaking, suppression of street activity restriction of grand juries to property-owners, lax enforcement of the housing and health codes—which had provoked labor to independent electoral action in the first place. It also degraded politics itself into a species of economic exploitation. "Politics has become a trade, and the management of elections a business." Henry George proclaimed to the Clarendon Hall conference. "The organizations that call themselves political parties are little better than joint-stock companies for assessing candidates and dividing public plunder." Of course genteel reformers also castigated party bosses for commercializing the public sphere. Yet when the United Labor Party compared machine rule to the realm of the marketplace, it invoked as well labor's special experience with, and struggle against, that realm. Where middle-class reformers looked on graft as a squandering of (their) tax moneys, labor tended to see it as an expropriation of (its) work. Like the rent which paid the landlord's property taxes, bribery, kickbacks, and sweetheart contracts were simply different

forms of the unearned increment extracted from "the class whose labor provides for Murray Hill its luxury, for Wall Street what it gambles for, and for the [ward] healers' all the spoils they get."<sup>71</sup> Party organizations such as Tammany Hall and the County Democracy replicated elements of the speculative marketplace whose profits they lived on. The machine's constitutive principle was that the party acted as a broker, giving various kinds of service (Christmas turkeys, patronage jobs, subsidies for a newspaper, tips to land speculators) for various kinds of currency (votes, ward healing, favorable press coverage, campaign contributions). Power relations were articulated quite literally through commodity-exchanges, so that the machine was characterized by the same distorted self-representation as the free market in bourgeois social theory. It masked the distribution of power built into the party structure by treating all its clients as free-floating individuals in need of customized services. Of course the service which clients could command depended on the resources which they brought to market. This is not to say that the party simply reproduced the existing hierarchy of power in the community-at-large. Its very entrepreneurial character *did* empower the new constituencies—unskilled immigrants, petty-bourgeois neighborhood leaders, organized criminals, and the new rich—whom historians and political scientists have seen as the prime beneficiaries of boss rule. Nonetheless the overall flow of "exchange value" in the machines was one in which working-class voters, renters, street-car riders footed the bill for the boodle accumulated by politicians and their allies among landlords, speculators, and businessmen. Of course the inequalities which such a system inevitably generated posed a grave problem for an agency whose power depended on mass support. It was to overcome or disguise this problem that the machine—notably Tammany Hall—developed its characteristic political culture: the clubhouse rituals; the cultivation of ethnic, as opposed to class, solidarity through the incorporation or creation of political elites within different ethnic neighborhoods; the alliance with the saloon as a way of turning masculine popular culture into partisan loyalty. In effect, the machine offered liquor, rituals of participation, the rhetoric of Americanism, and genuine protection and patronage in exchange for the trickling-upward of work, votes, and money.

The "New Political Forces" tried to offer an alternative to this conception of the political party as a mixture of brokerage house and padrone. First of all, they sought to purge politics of its links to the marketplace, not only by calling for electoral reform which would "lessen the need of money in elections and discourage bribery," but by circumscribing the effects of financial power within

their own campaign. In contrast to assessments of \$12,000 which each of the Democratic machines levied on Abram Hewitt, the United Labor Party refused to accept even a nominal contribution from George; its treasury was raised by a per capita tax on the constituent unions of the Clarendon Hall conference and by nationwide appeals to the labor movement.<sup>72</sup> Secondly, and more important, the George campaign forged an alternative political culture to the "machine culture" of party loyalty, party patronage, and party-line voting. Like the proponents of genteel reform, George's supporters saw the necessity of subverting the communal bonds through which the major parties incorporated masses of working-class voters. Yet whereas reformers called for the suppression of partisanship and mass participation altogether—in favor of a 'non-partisan' politics of elite stewardship—the United Labor Party aimed rather to reinvent these by grounding them in class identity: "There should be no 'Republicanism' and 'Democracy' to our contests," instructed John Swinton. "We ought to come together as laboring men . . ."<sup>73</sup>

It was here that the "emergent culture" of 1880s labor radicalism, as well as the more general communal culture of the New York working class, proved so valuable to the George campaign. The campaign inherited from these worlds an array of customs, institutions, organizational loyalties, and modes of language and communication which could be mobilized against the hegemonic culture of the party machines. Thus union locals, ethnic or "ethnic political" fraternities such as the Turn Verein, the reform element of the Catholic hierarchy led by Father McGlynn, the ward organizations of certain dissident Democratic politicians, and (least visible but perhaps most important) informal networks in the workplace and the neighborhood — all acted as bases for the campaign clubs assemble-district organizations, and trade legions of the George movement.<sup>74</sup> Beginning with the catalyst of the pledge petition drive, a local party organization was consolidated along different lines from, and in opposition to, the war structure of the major parties. The labor movement was of course the key resource in this counter-organization. It was the unions' logistical experience with Labor Day and other mass demonstrations, for instance, as well as their command of an older tradition of artisanal festivals, which enabled the party to mix electoral and class ritual in the street processions and parades of the campaign. On Election Day, the city's largest unions provided an army of volunteer pollworkers to match the "hirelings" of the ward bosses. Most of all, the tacit communal discipline of workplace and union bound organized workers to vote for "labor's candidate": ". . . upon a word from its

leaders [the Knights of Labor] will pour out its members like a swarm of bees with ballots in their hands," proclaimed George. "They dare not shirk their bounden duty, for if they do, ever afterwards they will be tabooed from working men's society."<sup>75</sup>

This consolidation of alternative lines of loyalty necessitated an actual remapping of the geography of party politics as well. As with the street-car strike and boycotts, labor used the control of space as a medium for contesting power. The George campaign relocated party activity from the clubhouse and saloon to the union hall, shopfloor, and street, places where pledge petitions could be circulated and neighborhood meetings called: "If we have not the money to hire halls," proclaimed George at one "tailboard" rally, "we have at least the men to fill the streets."<sup>76</sup> Such a change in venue enabled the "new Political Forces" to challenge the class relations which structure partisan organizing. The machine situated political activity in spaces where the *padrone*/client relationship held sway, binding working-class constituents to a petty-bourgeois elite of ward healers, grocers, and saloon keepers who were often their sources of credit and casual employment. Labor party organizing in contrast took place where economic struggle, labor's movement culture, and neighborhood life had demarcated space as working class.

These oppositional loyalties and spaces made possible the creation of alternative institutions of political discourse. The George campaign spread its message through both a radicalized version of the conventional party press and a novel network of informal, class based 'discursive bonds.' New media of communication were sorely needed. The commercial dailies of New York, controlled by one or the other of the major-party organizations or by genteel "independents," covered the "George boom" with a hostility that grew with George's strength: "The same centers of power that have seized the reins of government and appropriated labor's natural opportunities to work, have also grasped the press by the throat," complained labor party supporters. "A hundred thousand workingmen in New York. . . are without a daily paper in English to express their sentiments and defend their cause in this momentous conflict." To fill this gap, the George campaign not only drew on the support of the New York radical and labor press—*John Swinton's Paper*, Patrick Ford's *Irish World*, the Typographical Union's *Boycotter*, and the socialist *New Yorker Volkezeitung*—but also began publishing its own daily, *The Leader*, in mid-October. The daily quickly attained a readership of some forty thousand and remained in circulation until late 1887, the whole period of the United Labor Party's existence. Funded principally by the Central Labor Union

and several constituent unions, and edited during the campaign by Louis Post, an ardent single-taxer and lawyer for the CLU, *The Leader* combined the often raucous polemics and satire of partisan journalism with the social theory, labor-movement news and correspondence, and accent on solidarity characteristic of the working-class press.<sup>77</sup>

But of equal importance to the press was the labor party's development of non-print forms of oppositional discourse: the pledge drives, neighborhood meetings, and street-corner rallies which were the distinctive mark of the George campaign. Such gatherings occurred by the dozen each night during the election; supported by informal social networks within the working-class community and by the rhetorical traditions of organized labor, they represented a sort of invisible counter-medium to the major-party press. Street oratory was particularly central to this alternative discourse. Labor's experience with both public demonstrations and the internal discussion of "the social question" made the stump a natural forum from which to challenge the political culture of the machine. "There will be no lack of good speakers during the George campaign," wrote *The Boycotter*. "The unions and assemblies of the Knights of Labor have been developing the erstwhile uncouth labor 'talkers' into forcible and logical, if not eloquent, speakers. . . The hosts today understand the live questions better, and can discuss them more exhaustively in a practical sense than any 'deestic' healer."<sup>78</sup> The "tailboard campaign" placed scores of these little-known shop-floor and neighborhood activists on the same podium with the leading reformers of New York. It transformed public oratory from the decorative custom it had become under boss rule into a discourse which at once democratized political activity and associated it with labor agitation.

These resources enabled the United Labor Party to create an oppositional political culture fusing republican ideology with a class-based conception of community forged in economic struggle. The result was an insurgent, bottom-up form of campaign which made productive labor the moral basis for civic-participation and partisan allegiance. Such a campaign was inimical to the customs and material interests of mainstream politics, and representatives of the dominant parties, press, and church attacked it vociferously. Abram Hewitt lashed out at the George canvass as a class movement at war with the fundamental principles upon which our Government was organized" and "a radical departure from existing methods of free government by political parties composed of citizens from every walk of life." The mass-circulation press portrayed it as a "con-



spiracy to assassinate order by "oath-bound" labor agitators who would "bring up to the rack on election day the enslaved vote of [their] terrorized underlings." Conservative Catholic prelates sought to curb Father McGlynn's participation and circulated word that Henry George's theories were "contrary to the teachings of the Church." Even genteel liberals like E.L. Godkin chose to close ranks with the hated Tammany Hall and endorse the Democratic candidate rather than give tacit support for the "legalization of the boycott" and "the securing of impunity for the use of violence and coercion in support of strikes."<sup>79</sup>

The vehemence of such rhetoric makes clear that more was at stake here than simply the dominance of certain political organizations. At least implicitly, the culture of the labor party represented an alternative definition of the polity itself. The major-party machines treated the polity as a marketplace: power was a kind of currency which constituents exchanged for services, and it was the function of the party to broker these exchanges. Genteel reformers, on the other hand, conceptualized the polity as public property; the function of "good government" was to provide the public with elite fiduciaries who would safeguard its proprietary rights. The George campaign countered both views with yet a third: it represented the polity as a producers' community, in which citizenship was not to be understood as market-power or proprietorship, but as a moral entitlement resembling labor's right to the full value of its product. Such a conception implied that the polity had been undermined by the class inequities of the Gilded Age. Party bosses had usurped the power of producer/citizens in the same way that industrial bosses had expropriated their labor, by turning it into a commodity. A new brand of party politics was therefore needed to restore the producing classes to power on the one hand, and to recreate the democratic polity on the other. The culture of the United Labor Party, with its mix of civic and class rituals, was built around the conviction that these two aims were one—that labor solidarity had to become the new version of republican community for there to be any community, anything besides the wage-system and the marketplace, at all.

This is not to say that the United Labor Party possessed a cogent, self-conscious definition of the alternative politics implicit in its campaign. Yet its adherents recognized that, however muted by republicanism or free-labor pieties, they were proposing a radically new basis for partisan organizing. They believed that the New York mayoral election signalled "the beginning of a national political movement" involving not merely the emergence of a new party, but a historic reorganization of party politics as a whole.

Henry George told interviewers that "a process of disintegration has been going on among the old parties" and that "this movement of workingmen of New York" presaged "a new division of parties . . . soon to take place" which would do for the question of industrial slavery what the Republican Party did for the question of chattel slavery."<sup>80</sup> The results of the 1886 elections seemed to confirm his confidence. Throughout the country, third-party or labor-supported tickets showed astonishing strength at the polls, with "workingmen's candidates" victorious in state and municipal elections in such cities as Newark, Fort Worth, Milwaukee, Lynn and Richmond. Wisconsin and Virginia sent laborites to Washington in the Congressional delegations and Chicago's Labor Party candidate for Congress missed winning by the narrow margin of sixty-four votes.<sup>81</sup>

These victories notwithstanding, Henry George's defeat remained the most electrifying result of all. Friedrich Engels hailed labor's 60,000-vote showing in New York as "an epoch-making day" in the development of a worker's party in America, and *Harper's Weekly* anxiously agreed that George's surprising strength "introduced a new force into our politics" which betokened "a serious change in the composition and relation of parties." United Labor Party activists insisted that they had been counted out of the mayor's office by vote fraud—a charge which is as plausible as it is undocumented—and the candidate exultantly (and predictably) compared his defeat to that of the colonial army in the early days of the American Revolution: "The future, the future is ours. This is the Bunker Hill . . . If [the Continental troops] won no technical victory, they . . . won a victory that made this Republic a reality, and, thank God, men of New York, we in this fight have won a victory that makes the true Republic of the future certain."<sup>82</sup>

The future was not, however, theirs. For all this brave rhetoric about the redivision of the parties based on the class question, the United Labor Party was moribund within two years, undermined by sectarian strife. The party did manage to consolidate a state-wide organization for the next election, in which Henry George ran for New York Secretary of State; yet the 1887 campaign simply consummated a schism between the single-tax and socialist factions of the coalition which left each considerably weakened and the New York labor movement, itself riven by organizational conflicts, without a unified political voice. Similar results attended national efforts to gather the local insurgencies of the '86 election into a single labor party. By the presidential campaign of 1888, two rival organizations had been formed, one dominated by Henry George's single-tax disciples, the other a proto-populist coalition of western Knights and farmers, neither very hardy.<sup>83</sup> Thus the "great uprising

of labor" fell apart as swiftly in the three years following 1886 as it had come together in the three years before. Working-class resistance did not subside, of course, but never again would it be predominantly organized through the mixed trade assemblies, local eight-hour campaigns, and municipal electoral coalitions of the mid-1880s. Labor republicanism gave way to a Gompersite trade union movement which shunned party politics as a "cesspool of corruption" and to the sectarian tactics of De Leon's revolutionary socialism. Why did such an apparently fierce and unified challenge to class domination in America punctuate the close of a period of insurgency rather than the inauguration of a new one? Here again the experience of New York's labor radicals may be instructive. Let us briefly sketch the aftermath of the mayoral campaign to see why Henry George's "Republican of the future" was stillborn.

### V. The Decline of the Republic of Labor

Several 'overdetermining' reasons conspired to undermine the United Labor Party. The most evident factor, and the one on which historians have laid greatest stress, was a crippling factionalism. The very success of the 1886 mayoral campaign made the new coalition increasingly difficult to hold together. George's strong showing won for labor a series of victories—among them, the pardon of the Theiss boycotters, legal proclamation of Labor Day, and child labor, tenement, and short-hours legislation—gains which heightened the value of controlling the ULP at the same time that they removed some of the impetus for third-party unity.<sup>84</sup> A "land reform" faction of single-taxers and Irish land radicals sought in particular to redirect the party away from its class and institutional origins in the labor movement: organizationally by founding a network of cross-class "Land and Labor Clubs" led by single-tax adherents; ideologically by muting demands for labor legislation in favor of land, transportation, and currency reform. Indeed Henry George proposed (unsuccessfully) to rename the party Free Soil or Free Land on the grounds that the term "labor. . . has narrowed associations [which] would handicap the new party with the notion that it is merely a class movement."<sup>85</sup>

Such moves exposed a nexus of conflicts within the ULP leadership which the ambiguities of labor republicanism had covered over: conflicts that pitted middle-class reformers against working-class radicals, an Irish-based ideology of anti-landlordism against German scientific socialism, a "reform club" against a "vanguard party" mode of insurgency. Matters came to a head in the summer of 1887, when the reform faction, led by Henry George, sought to

exclude from the ULP any member of a rival political party, a transparent strategy for purging the coalition of socialists. After bitter infighting among the party locals, a statewide convention approved the purge—and proceeded to nominate not a single wage-earner for the fall elections. The sequel was as sordid as it was predictable. The expelled radicals organized a rival Progressive Labor Party, and CLU-affiliated unions split in their support for the two slates of nominees. On Election Day, Henry George received a mere seven percent of the tally for Secretary of State, with only half the New York City votes he had won the year before; PLP nominees of course fared much worse. The United Labor Party lingered on as a single-tax mouthpiece, suffered ultimately the defection of George himself, and died peacefully in its sleep after the 1888 presidential canvass.<sup>86</sup>

Such factional bickering might not have been so corrosive, had not other, larger pressures exacerbated divisions within the “New Political Forces.” First of all, a climate of repression followed the class battles in the spring of 1884, and the Haymarket bombing in particular, which did much to silence labor radicalism in New York City and elsewhere. The United Labor Party came under attack in the bourgeois press for “endorsing socialistic doctrines . . . which led in Chicago to the Haymarket massacre,” and such sentiments at once coerced and legitimated Henry George’s own red-baiting tactics.<sup>87</sup> Secondly and more important, organizational strife in the labor movement itself undermined the unity of the ULP. Bitter infighting between trade unionists and KL “progressives” committed to mixed-craft assemblies accompanied the rise of labor insurgency in New York: D.A. 49 engaged in an active campaign of sabotage against trade-based organizations, and throughout 1886 the city’s tobacco industry was the scene of a pitched jurisdictional battle between craft and industrial unionists. Such factionalism robbed the labor movement of the ecumenical bent which had made it politically effective in the first place; the Central Labor Union turned into a theater of organizational (and occasionally physical) conflict that ran parallel to, and reinforced, the schism in the United Labor Party. This did more than simply divide the unions in the election of 1887; in the long run it deflected them away from politics altogether. The ULP purge and CLU jurisdictional fights ended in defeat for the single constituency most supportive of local electoral insurgency: the “progressives” of the Socialist Labor Party and D.A. 49. In their stead emerged a more disciplined, skill-based, and politically skeptical movement rooted in the city’s building trades and spearheaded by the leadership of the new AFL. For these trade unionists—Samuel Gompers,

P.J. McGuire, and the like—the experience of the George campaign became a long-remembered object lesson in the futility and destructiveness of independent partisan activity.<sup>88</sup>

Thus the fracturing of the United Labor Party was a symptom—and a proximate cause—of the recomposition of the American labor movement as a whole in the late 1880s. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that both the ascendance of “pure and simple” unionism and the demise of the Knights of Labor began with the collapse of the “New Political Forces” in New York. The sea-change in labor’s organization and strategy hastened the decline of third-party politics nationally. For Samuel Gompers and his allies, the mixed-trades assemblies which were the institutional base for the “great uprising” represented a challenge to the hegemony of a federationist labor movement. In the twenty-five years following 1886, the AFL did its best to curb these “labor parliaments” by excluding from them any group unaffiliated with the Federation and by bringing their often volatile use of boycotting, sympathy strikes, and local arbitration power under the discipline of national unions.<sup>89</sup> Structural developments in the American economy reinforced this “delocalization” of labor struggle. The dispersed yet highly integrated shop economy of the 1870s and 1880s was evolving into a corporate system of mass production geared toward national markets, and in the process many workers lost the craft knowledge, work traditions, cultural unity, and trade interdependence on which the community-based class struggles of the Gilded Age had depended. The New York City working class in particular underwent changes between 1890 and 1910 which rendered the solidary localism of the CLU anachronistic: a growing dependence on ununionized clerical employment in gigantic financial, corporate, and retailing institutions on the one hand; a growing social fragmentation, exacerbated by the “new immigration,” by sweated production in the needle trades, and by the spatial expansion of the metropolis on the other.<sup>90</sup>

In short, structural developments in the labor movement and the labor market disengaged workers from the communal bonds and moral economies in which the electoral revolt of 1866 had been rooted. It was these long-term pressures, more than factionalism *per se*, which made the collapse of the “great uprising” all but inevitable. Boycotts, street demonstrations, and municipal “workmen’s tickets” lost their effectiveness in a social order which marketed standardized goods, circulated deskilled labor, and organized state power on a national scale. New forms of class militancy emerged in their stead. Within a decade, industrial struggle at the point of mass production (or its extension, the company town) had pre-empted boycotting as the most militant strategy of workers’

control.<sup>91</sup> The political vision of 1886 declined even more swiftly. Labor republicanism, with its faith in the openness of the polity and therefore its essentially defensive conception of political insurgency, gave way to a more class-conscious, adversarial view of the state. As the use of Federal troops and Federal court injunctions in the Pullman Strike made clear, capital had not merely usurped political power, but transformed it into an agency for consolidating the corporate economy and preserving "industrial peace."<sup>92</sup> For some working-class radicals—unionists of both the "pure and simple" and syndicalist variety—politics came to be rejected as an arena of capitalist domination; for others—socialists of both the revolutionary and parliamentary variety—it was embraced as a means of transforming class relations in America. For both camps, however, what David Montgomery has called the "moral universality" of nineteenth-century labor protest—the linking of workers' control, the culture of producer solidarity, and the redemption of the republican polity—was broken.<sup>93</sup>

Ironically, then, the "great uprising" brought Gilded Age labor radicalism to a heroic but decisive end. Henry George's "Republic of the future" proved unable to meet the future. To say this is not to blame the insurgents of 1886 for their defeat—or to engage in that particularly ugly form of left teleology which would attribute their decline to their lack of socialism. As Sean Wilentz has written of an earlier period of New York labor history, radical historians should "abandon the search for an idealized 'Marxist' class conflict" and "accept the very real class perceptions and struggles" of the actors themselves. In the case of the Henry George campaign, New York workers forged a powerful, articulate, but short-lived brand of labor politics in an attempt to master a contradictory and rapidly-changing set of social circumstances. Nor, on the other hand, should we exaggerate the legacy of the "New Political Forces." What the revolts of 1886 offered was neither revolutionary class consciousness, nor the Co-operative Commonwealth, but the more modest possibility of a national labor party which might yoke an emergent class identity to mainstream politics—a party not unlike that being built by British workers during the same era. There is no need to romanticize this prospect. Had the "New Political Forces" succeeded in developing a national organization, we can quite easily imagine it with the sort of "defensive" and "inward-looking" culture which Gareth Stedman Jones has attributed to British labourism—a culture which might simply have replaced that of machine politics as a means of mediating class conflict and incorporating the industrial working class into the bourgeois polity. It is a shame we will never know.<sup>94</sup> □

## Notes

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1. For descriptions of the "monster parade," see *The Leader*, Oct. 30, 1886, and Nov. 1, 1866; *New York World*, Oct. 31, 1886; and Louis F. Post and Fred C. Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign* (New York, 1886), 150-54. Many, though not all, of the daily press accounts of the George campaign cited in this article are to be found in Scrapbooks 17-19, Henry George Papers, Economics and Public Affairs Division, New York Public Library. On artisanal culture in New York earlier in the nineteenth century, see Sean Wilentz, "Artisanal Republic Festivals and the Rise of Class Conflict in New York City, 1788-1837," in *Working-Class America: Essays on Labor, Community and American Society*, eds. Michael H. Frisch and Daniel J. Walkowitz (Urbana, 1983), 37-77.

2. Leon Fink, "The Uses of Political Power: Toward a Theory of the Labor Movement in the Era of the Knights of Labor," in *Working-Class America*, eds. Frisch and Walkowitz, 113.

3. *John Swinton's Paper*, Feb. 28, 1886; Peter Speek, "The Singletax and the Labor Movement" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1915), 273.

4. On the history of boycotting in New York City in the 1880s and of the conspiracy trials, see the Bureau of the Statistics of Labor for the State of New York, *Third Annual Report . . . for the Year 1885* (Albany, 1886), 133-44, hereafter cited as *Third Annual Report*; *Fourth Annual Report*, 713-87; *Fifth Annual Report*, 521-52; Speek, "The Singletax and the Labor Movement," 296-3007; and Michael Gordon, "The Labor Boycott in New York City, 1880-1886," *Labor History* 16 (1975), 184-229.

5. Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, (New York, 1975), II, 190-119, provides an overview of this governmental counter-offensive. For the Haymarket bombing and trial, see Henry David, *The History of the Haymarket Affair* (New York, 1936). The quoted phrase is from *Fourth Annual Report*, 751.

6. On the grievances of the labor movement, see, for example, *John Swinton's Paper*, Feb. 28, 1886, and Howard Lawrence Hurwitz, *Theodore Roosevelt and Labor in New York State, 1880-1900* (New York, 1943), 36-56, 79-95. For accounts of the Clarendon Hall Conference, see the *New York Sun* and *New York Times* for Aug. 8, 20, 27, Sept. 3 and 24, 1886; Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 3-16; Speek, "The Singletax and the Labor Movement," 308-17; and Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 119-22. The Clarendon Hall platform is reprinted in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 13-15. Although for simplicity's sake I have used the name "United Labor Party" freely throughout, this official label did not come into use until after the mayoral election of 1886; during the George canvass, the coalition was known informally, as "the labor party," the "CLU Political Organization," and the like.

7. For the most elaborate and influential of Henry George's many statements of the single-tax theory, see his *Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry Into the Cause of Industrial Depressions and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth* (San Francisco, 1897). Although the Clarendon Hall Conference, at George's insistence, agreed to revise its draft platform to lay primary emphasis on land reform, many labor radicals were skeptical of *Progress and Poverty* and its privileging of the fight against landlordism; on April 17, 1881, for instance, a socialist study group from Brooklyn, including many later leaders of District Assembly 49 of the Knights of Labor, wrote George critiquing the book: "We know very well that you are an individualist while we have placed ourselves on the side of Collectivism" (Quoted in Michael Gordon, "Studies in Irish and Irish-American Thought and Behavior in Gilded Age New York City" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1977), 525.

8. On the pledge campaign, the Chickering Hall "citizen's meeting," and the Cooper Union ratification meeting, see Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 7-30; and the *New York Sun*, Oct. 2 and 6, 1886. For the consolidation of

party district organizations, see the *New York Star*, Sept. 30, 1886, and *New York Tribune*, Oct. 4, 1886. Philip Foner reports that there were Henry George Trades Legions in seven trades—tobacco, printing, building trades, longshoremen, butchers, clerks, and salesmen—and he breaks down the nationality-based campaign clubs as follows: three Italian, four black, one French, seven Bohemian, six German, and nine German (*History of the Labor Movement*, II, 125).

9. For the "tailboard campaign," see Post and Lebuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 105–23; and Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor* (New York, 1957) I, 316–17. On *The Leader*, see Speek, "The Singletax and the Labor Movement," 73–74; on poll-watchers, *The Leader*, Oct. 21, 1886. On the Democratic dissidents of the "Irving Hall" organization, see Post and Lebuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 124–27.

10. See, for example, the *New York Star*, a Tammany-allied daily, Oct. 2 and 16, 1886. See also Thomas J. Condon, "Politics, Reform and the New York City Election of 1866," *New York Historical Society Quarterly*, 44, 4 (Oct. 1960), 363–93.

11. See editorials in *The Nation* 43 (Oct. 21, 1886), 324, and the *New York Herald*, Oct. 20, 1886, as well as Hurwitz, *Theodore Roosevelt and Labor*, 111–45.

12. Post and Lebuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 33, 42, 52, 54. Hewitt's attacks are from an exchange of five open letters between him and Henry George—three from George, two from Hewitt—published in the *New York press* on October 18, 20, 21, 22, and 25, 1886, and reprinted in full in Post and Lebuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 45–71. For more on Hewitt's views on labor and social class, see his oration, "The Mutual Relations Between Labor and Capital" (New York, 1878).

13. *Fourth Annual Report*, 774–81.

14. William Q. McDowell to Powderly, October 7, 1886, quoted in Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 123; Powderly spoke on behalf of George at an election evening rally in Cooper Union, reported in Post and Lebuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 118–120.

15. *New York Sun*, October 3, 1886. For accounts of the 1874 and 1882 labor candidacies, see Samuel Bernstein, *The First International in America* (New York, 1962) and Michael Gordon, "Studies in Irish. . . Thought," 489–99.

16. *New York World*, November 3, 1886; *John Swinton's Paper*, November 7, 1886. The election returns are broken down by election district in Post and Lebuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 156–168.

17. See, for example, Speek, "The Single Tax and the Labor Movement," 270–333; Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 441–454; and Nathan Fine, *Labor and Farmer Parties in the United States, 1828–1928* (New York, 1961), 35–55.

18. See Barker, *Henry George*; Nevins, *Abram S. Hewitt*; and Condon, "Politics, Reform, and the New York City Election."

19. Father Edward McGlynn, "Lessons of the New York City Election. III. The Labor Party View," *North American Review* 143 (December, 1886) 576.

20. *New York Sun*, May 2, 1886; Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 33. The Central Labor Union's May Day demonstration is reported in the *New York Times*, May 2, 1886. For a general introduction to the CLU, see the *New York Sun*, May 2, 1886. For a general introduction to the CLU, see the *New York Sun*, May 2, 1886; *John Swinton's Paper*, February 28, 1886; and Speek, "The Singletax and the Labor Movement," 270–85.

21. Gordon, "Studies in Irish. . . Thought," 463. Gordon discusses the New York support meeting for the Irish Land League in "The Labor Boycott," 194–8, and the general links between New York labor radicals and the Irish nationalist and tenant movements in "Studies in Irish. . . Thought," 451–86; see also Eric Foner, "Class, Ethnicity and Radicalism in the Gilded Age: The Land League and Irish-America," in *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (Oxford, 1980) 150–200. For other material on the founding and early period of the Central Labor Union, see US Senate, Committee on Education and Labor, *Report. . . Upon the Relations Between Labor and Capital*, hereafter, publishes testimony taken primarily in Washington, D.C., New York City, and Fall River, Massachusetts, in 1883.



22. Gordon, "Studies in Irish . . . Thought," 487-99; U.S. Senate, "Relations Between Labor and Capital," I, 808 (testimony of P.J. McGuire).

23. The quoted phrase is from the resolution adopted by the CLU-sponsored memorial meeting for Karl Marx, described in Philip Foner (ed.), *When Karl Marx Died*, 83-111. The CLU's organized presentation before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor, encompassing two days of testimony by nine witnesses, is recorded in U.S. Senate, *Relations Between Capital and Labor*, I, 740-813, 820-36, and summarized in the testimony of Louis Post (I, 784-806).

24. U.S. Senate, *Relations Between Labor and Capital*, I 559 (testimony of Edward King). For biographical and organizational information concerning the CLU leadership, see the *New York Sun*, May 2, 1886; *New York World*, October 10, 1886; Speek, "The Single Tax and the Labor Movement," 308-310; Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 33-4; and Gordon, "Studies in Irish . . . Thought," 465-71.

25. On the structure of outwork-dependent trades in New York, see Christine Stansell, "The Origins of the Sweatshop: Women and Early Industrialization in New York City," in Frisch and Walkowitz (eds.), *Working-Class America*, 78-103. On the effect of land competition and high ground-rents on the city's workers, see U.S. Senate, *Relations Between Labor and Capital*, I, 786-96 (testimony of Louis Post) and 842-7 (testimony of Robert Blissert).

26. For general material on the organizational constituencies within the CLU, see the *New York Sun*, May 2, 1886; and *John Swinton's Paper*, February 28, 1886; as well as Swinton's weekly reports of Central Labor Union activity throughout the mid-1880's. On New York City craft unions, see *Fourth Annual Report*, 460-83 (building trades); and Commons et al, *History of Labour*, II, 301-31. On the amalgamated labor federations, see U.S. Senate *Relations Between Labor and Capital*, I, 809 (testimony of P.J. McGuire).

27. The Platform of the CLU is printed in U.S. Senate, *Relations Between Labor and Capital*, I 812-3. For the leadership's support for trade unionism, see *ibid.*, I, 859 (testimony of Robert Blissert); for its attitudes toward landlordism and radical land reform, see *ibid.*, I, 843-6 (testimony of Robert Blissert) and 784-806 (testimony of Louis Post), as well as Gordon, "Studies in Irish . . . Thought," 481-6.

28. *New York Sun*, May 2, 1886 (building trades); *Third Annual Report*, 270-95 (silk-weavers); U.S. Senate *Relations Between Labor and Capital*, I, 808 (testimony of P. J. McGuire, telegraphers).

29. Ware, *The Labor Movement*, 222-23 (brewers); *New York Sun*, May 2, 1886 (office clerks and day laborers); U.S. Senate, *Relations Between Labor and Capital*, I, 808, 812 (testimony of P.J. McGuire, freighthandlers' strike); Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 34 (cloakmakers' strike). For CLU arbitration activities, see *Fourth Annual Report*, 531, 537 (tobacco workers), and 496 (brewery workers).

30. U.S. Senate, *Labor and Capital*, I, 813 (CLU Platform); I, 789-94 (testimony of Louis Post).

31. U.S. Senate, *Labor and Capital*, 808, 812 (testimony of P. J. McGuire. For descriptions of various CLU demonstrations, see Gordon, "Studies in Irish . . . Thought," 481-83, 493-95; *New York Times*, Sept. 6, 1882 (first Labor Day); Philip Foner, ed., *When Karl Marx Died*, 83-111; and *New York Times*, May 2, 1886. Although the New York labor movement had a variety of meeting rooms and offices throughout lower Manhattan, it did not succeed in building the network of alternative community institutions envisioned by P. J. McGuire in the quotation above.

32. See, for instance, Herbert Gutman, "Class, Status, and Community Power in Nineteenth-century American Industrial Cities. Paterson, New Jersey: A Case Study," in *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York, 1976), 234-92; Michael Cassity, "Modernization and Social Crisis: The Knights of Labor and a Midwestern Community, 1885-1886," *Journal of American History* 66 (June 1979), 41-61. See Gordon, "Studies in Irish . . . Thought," 545, for an account of community support in the New York-area freighthandlers' strike of 1882.

33. Gordon, "Studies," 468-71, 489-99.

34. Fink, "The Uses of Political Power," 110; Gompers, quoted in Bernard Mandel, *Samuel Gompers, A Biography* (Yellow Springs, Ohio, n.d.), 87; CLU Platform,

printed in U.S. Senate, *Labor and Capital*, I, 813; CLU circular, quoted in Gordon, "Studies," 469. For the question of whether the state could effectively enforce standing labor legislation, see *Fourth Annual Report*, 534 (testimony of Hermann Gutstadt), and Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, 296-334.

35. CLU Platform.

36. CLU Platform.

37. U.S. Senate, *Capital and Labor*, I, 777 (testimony of Thomas B. McGuire).

38. For the freighthandlers' strike, see Bureau of the Statistics of Labor for the State of New York, *First Annual Report . . . For the Year 1882* (Albany, N.Y., 1883). For the telegraphers' strike, see U.S. Senate, *Relations between Labor and Capital*, I 101+235, 385+402, 864 9. For the labor movement's retreat from independent labor politics, see *John Swinton's Paper*, November 1, 1885, and Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 115.

39. George McNeill, *The Labor Movement. The Problem of To-Day* (Boston, 1887), 170-1. For the growth of the Knights of Labor, see Ware, *The Labor Movement*, 65-72, 139-40, and Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 54. For the eight-hour demonstrations of May, 1886, see *ibid.*, II, 98-104, as well as *Bradstreet's*, May 22, 1886, 322.

40. *Fourth Annual Report*, 744. Eleven hundred ninety-five strikes, involving ;77,250 workers, were reported for New York County for the year 1886, with an additional 354 strikes involving 16,514 workers, in Kings County (the city of Brooklyn), *ibid.*, 460. For the growth and re-organization of the CLU, see *John Swinton's Paper*, February 28, 1886 and July 4, 1886; *New York Sun*, May 2, 1886; Speek, "The Single Tax and the Labor Movement," 271-3. As a way of gauging the magnitude of the CLU's expansion, we might note that its 180,000 constituents represented over ten percent of the total population of Manhattan in the mid-1880s.

41. *Fourth Annual Report*, 521-2, 648-50 (building trades), 485-8, 715-7, 748-51 (bakers), and 523-39 (cigarmakers). For a review of the results of the eight-hour movement in New York State, *Fourth Annual Report*, 654-61.

42. "The New York Car Strike," *Harper's Weekly*, 30 (March 13, 1886), 172. For general accounts of the street-car strikes, see *Fourth Annual Report*, 503-18, and McNeill, *The Labor Movement*, 383-6.

43. *John Swinton's Paper*, March 7, 1886. My analysis of spatial conflict and property relations in the street-car strikes owes much to a discussion with Josh Brown, for which my thanks.

44. For general material on the boycott during the 1880s, see *Third Annual Report*, 331-62; *Fourth Annual Report*, 713-87; *Fifth Annual Report*, 521-52; *Bradstreet's*, December 19, 1885, 394-6; Gordon, "The Labor Boycott."

45. *John Swinton's Paper*, June 13, 1886; *Bradstreet's*, December 19, 1885, 394; *Third Annual Report*, 342; *John Swinton's Paper*, February 28, 1886. *Bradstreet's* found that labor had laid 237 boycotts nationally during the period 1883-85, the most frequently boycotted categories of employers being newspapers (45), employers of Chinese labor (41), cigar manufacturers (26), hat manufacturers and dealers (22), clothing manufacturers and dealers (14), and carpet manufacturers and dealers (13). The Bureau of the Statistics of Labor for the State of New York listed 163 boycotts in its jurisdiction for 1886, the first year in which it compiled a thorough record, and 250 for 1887.

46. Gordon, "The Labor Boycott," 207. Gordon's analysis of boycotting in the 1880s, stressing its origins in Irish rural resistance to English landlordism, is developed in "Studies in Irish . . . Thought," 354-75. I should make clear that although I disagree with the degree of Gordon's emphasis on the "pre-industrial" sources of the consumer boycotts of the "great uprising," he is surely right to point out immigrant workers' (less extensive) use of the social boycott—that is, personal ostracism—against strikebreakers, especially during the early 1880s.

47. *Third Annual Report*, 344 (testimony of John Cavanaugh). For the superiority of boycotting to striking, see *ibid.*, 212-6, 333-5; for the importance of the boycott to the unskilled, see *Fourth Annual Report*, 732-3, 485 (bakers), 514 (transit workers), 720-30 (cigarmakers); *Bradstreet's*, December 19, 1885, ;394 (brewers); as well as

"The Real Objection to the Candidacy of Henry George," *The Nation*, September 30, 1886, 264.

48. *John Swinton's Paper*, July 18, 1884. Such secondary boycotts occurred throughout the United States during this period; during the 1885 hatters' strike in Orange, New Jersey, for instance, KL pressure forced "brewers [to] refuse to furnish beer to saloon-keepers who sold drinks to strikebreakers employed in [the struck] factory" (Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 49).

49. See Herbert Gutman, "The Worker's Search for Power: Labor in the Gilded Age," in H. Wayne Morgan (ed.), *The Gilded Age: a Reappraisal* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1963), 38-68; Gutman, "Class, Status, and Community Power"; and Cassity, "Modernization and Social Crisis."

50. *Bradstreet's*, December 19, 1885, 394. My argument here follows Norman Ware's analysis of the boycott's dependence on class-specific, local markets for consumer goods, Ware, *The Labor Movement*, 336.

51. "The Boycott," *Harper's Weekly*, 30 (April 24, 1886), 258; *ibid.*, 30 (July 17, 1886), 450-1; "King George" passage quoted in *Public Opinion*, 1 (January-June 1886), 49; attack on CLU as "Algerine pirates" quoted in *John Swinton's Paper*, July 4, 1886. Against such criticisms of the boycott as un-American, supporters cited the use of "non-intercourse" against the British in 1770s; see "The Boycott—Is It Justifiable?" *John Swinton's Paper*, June 13, 1886.

52. *The Nation*, July 1, 1886, 2; *Harper's Weekly*, 30 (April 3, 1886), 210.

53. Jury foreman quoted in Gordon, "Studies in Irish . . . Thought," 575. For a summary of the legal suppression of the boycott and the use of conspiracy laws against labor during the 1870s and 1880s, see *Fourth Annual Report*, 744-87; *Fifth Annual Report*, 565-700; *John Swinton's Paper*, May 2, 1886; and Speck, "The Singletax and the Labor Movement," 296-307. The legal history of the Thiess boycott case is detailed in *Fourth Annual Report*, 752-82.

54. "The Strike in the Southwest," *The Nation*, April 15, 1886, 316. For a summary of governmental reaction to the labor upheaval of 1886, see Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 107-19. For Gramsci's concept of the "war of position," see his "State and Civil Society," in *Selections From the Prison Notebooks* (New York, 1971), 206-7, 229-39; see especially 229, where boycotting is described as a tactic of the war of position.

55. *John Swinton's Paper*, May 16, 1886; letter from "E.J. Paul, K. of L." to *ibid.*, May 9, 1886. For an examination of local labor politics throughout the United States in 1886, see Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana, Illinois, 1983).

56. On the invalidation of tenement-house manufacturing legislation, see Hurwitz, *Theodore Roosevelt and Labor*, 79-88; on the "Boodle Aldermen," see the daily press throughout the spring of 1886.

57. *Pomeroy's democrat*, October 2, 1886.

58. Brooklyn rally quoted in *John Swinton's Paper*, July 18, 1886; *John Swinton's Paper*, July 25, 1886; Blissert quoted in *New York Sun*, August 1, 1886.

59. See, for instance, Gerald N. Grob, *Workers and Utopia: A Study of Ideological Conflict in the American Labor Movement, 1865-1900* (Chicago, 1961); and Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), especially 194-219.

60. See Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," *New Left Review*, 82, 10-12. For general treatments of labor republicanism in the Gilded Age, see David Montgomery, "Labor and the Republic in Industrial America: 1860-1920," *Le Mouvement Social* 111 (avril-juin 1980), 201-15; and Fink, "The Uses of Political Power."

61. Henry George interview, quoted in *Pomeroy's democrat*, October 2, 1886; proclamation issued under the name of William McCabe, Grand Marshal, announcing "monster parade," in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 152; Henry George, public letter to Abram Hewitt, October 24, 1886, quoted in *ibid.*, 69; pro-George campaign song, printed in *John Swinton's Paper*, October 24, 1886; Henry George, letter to Clarendon Hall Conference, August 29, 1886, quoted in Post and

Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 8.

62. McNeill, *The Labor Movement*, 459; Henry George interview, quoted in *Pomeroy's Democrat*, October 2, 1886; Denis Donohue, speech at Wall Street rally, quoted in *The Leader*, October 22, 1886.

63. For earlier forms of insurgent or lower-class republicanism, see Wilentz, "Artisanal Republican Festivals"; *Dublin Women at Work*, especially 93–5; Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (Oxford, 1976); as well as the myriad of "alternative Declarations of Independence" issued by labor, agrarian, women's rights, and other reform groups throughout the nineteenth century, and collected by Philip Foner in *We the Other People* (Urbana, Illinois, 1976). For the influence of free labor ideology on the nineteenth-century labor movement, see Eric Foner, "Abolitionisms and the Labor Movement in Ante-Bellum America," in *Politics and Ideology*, 57–76; and Barry Goldberg, "Beyond Free Labor: Labor, Socialism, and the Idea of Wage Slavery, 1890–1920" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia, 1978), especially 233–5.

64. U.S. Senate, *Relations between Labor and Capital*, I, 784 (testimony of Louis Post). The testimony of Thomas B. McGuire (II, 771–83), Master Workman of District Assembly 49, also provides an especially clear statement of New York labor activists' disillusionment with the old free-labor solutions in the face of the growing poverty and propertylessness of the city's working class.

65. *The Leader*, October 22, 1886; Clarendon Hall platform, quoted in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 13.

66. Henry George, public letter to Abram Hewitt, October 18, 1886, quoted in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 48. See also Edward King's testimony to the Senate Committee on Education and Labor: ". . . the people known as workingmen are not a class, but are the body, the trunk the others being mere branches. Therefore . . . in forming a party upon such a platform, they are not properly to be charged with founding it on a class distinction." U.S. Senate, *Relations Between Labor and Capital*, I, 562.

67. Interviews with T.B. Wakeman, lawyer, and J.H. Lehman, importer, in the *New York World*, October 11, 1886; Henry George, public letter to Abram Hewitt, October 18, 1886, quoted in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 48; Thomas Davidson, speech at pro-George meeting, quoted in the *New York World*, October 2, 1886.

68. Clarendon Hall platform, quoted in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 15; *The Leader*, October 22, 1886.

69. Henry George, letter to Clarendon Hall Conference, August 26, 1886, quoted in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 9.

70. Henry George interview, quoted in *Pomeroy's Democrat*, October 2, 1886; *The Leader*, October 23, 1886; Henry George, letter to Clarendon Hall Conference, August 26, 1886, quoted in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 9; *The Leader*, October 21, 1886.

71. For two very different systemic analyses of machine politics, see Robert K. Merton, "Latent Functions of the Machine," in Alexander B. Callow (ed), *American Urban History: An Interpretive Reader with Commentaries* (Oxford, 1969), 291–300; and Seymour J. Mandelbaum, *Boss Tweed's New York* (New York, 1965). My own analysis owes much to conversations with William J. Cronon and Jean-Christophe Agnew.

72. Clarendon Hall Conference, quoted in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 15; William M. Ivins, *Machine Politics and Money in Elections in New York City* (New York, 1887 [1970 reprint]), 56; Henry George, public letter to Abram Hewitt, October 18, 1886, quoted in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 46; Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 125. The executive committee of the Clarendon Hall Conference issued a national circular "To All Trade and Labor Organizations, Knights of Labor and Friends of Good Government," asking them "to contribute their mite, to meet the onslaughts of the old parties." (quoted in the *New York Star*, October 1, 1886). Among those who responded were labor organizations in St. Louis, Newark, and Ontario; see *The Leader*, October 23, 1886, and Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 125.

73. *John Swinton's Paper*, September 26, 1886.

74. On the organizational role of union locals in the George campaign, see, for example, *The Leader*, October 22, 1886, for an account of a mid-town torchlight parade of street-car workers. On the support for Henry George in fraternal organizations and ethnically-identified workplaces, see the *New York World*, October 11, 1886, especially interviews with George Walter (Turn Verein), John Dedon (German brewery workers), and August Noval (French chefs); the *New York Times*, October 3, 1886, which reported that several black political clubs had decided to endorse labor's candidate; and the less savory comments of the *New York Mail and Express*, October 16, 1886, concerning George's popularity among the Chinese immigrants of the Lower East Side: "[W]ashee-washee is so much interrupted by the conversation as to [George's] chances that there has been a notable scarcity of clean shirts since the canvass began, which partly accounts for the odor of the atmosphere at Henry George rallies." On support for the labor party among New York's religious leadership—an important element of the campaign which I have scanted—see the *New York Star*, October 6, 1886, and an interview with Father McGlynn in *The Leader*, October 30, 1886.

75. *New York World*, October 23, 1886. For material on the usefulness of labor's organizing experience for the logistics of election campaigning, see Posat and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 150–4, and *The Leader*, October 21, 1886.

76. Henry George, speech to the "Henry George Bohemian Club," quoted in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 111.

77. *The Leader*, October 19, 1886. On *The Leader's* funding, circulation, and editorial board, see Speek, "The Singletax and the Labor Movement," 319–21.

78. *The Boycotter*, October 2, 1886, Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 105–23.

79. Abram Hewitt, letter of acceptance of the combined Democratic factions' nomination for mayor, quoted in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 33, 36; *New York Daily Graphic*, October 18, 1886; Monsignor Thomas Preston, letter to Joseph O'Donahue, a Tammany leader, quoted in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 133; [E.L. Godkin,] "The Real Objection to the Candidacy of Henry George," *The Nation*, September 30, 1886, 264. The Catholic hierarchy's efforts to discredit Henry George's land theories and to curb Father McGlynn was the most outspoken and burgeoning Catholic reform movement, of which McGlynn was the most outspoken and charismatic figure. For accounts of the conflict between the church and McGlynn, which led ultimately to his excommunication, as well as the Catholic hierarchy's efforts to contain pro-labor sentiment, see Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 128–49, and Henry J. Brown, *The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor* (1949).

80. Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, v; Henry George interview, *New York Star*, September 30, 1886; Henry George, letter to Clarendon Hall Conference, quoted in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 8.

81. Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 129.

82. Engels, letter to Friedrich Sorge, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Letters to Americans, 1848–1895* (New York, 1953), 162; "The Elections," *Harper's Weekly*, 30 (November 13, 1886), 726; "The Labor Vote," *ibid.*, 30 (November 20, 1886), 742; Henry George, speech at Election day celebration, quoted in Post and Leubuscher, *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*, 170. On accusations of Democratic vote fraud, see *ibid.*, 169.

83. For general accounts of the 1887 state elections in New York and the effort to forge a national labor party, see Commons *et al.*, *History of Labour*, II, 454–70; Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 145–56; Speek, "The Singletax and the Labor Movement," 336–403.

84. Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 145; Commons *et al.*, *History of Labour*, II, 454.

85. Henry George, *The Standard*, July 30, 1887, quoted in Speek, "The Singletax and the Labor Movement," 350. For general accounts of the land reformers' efforts to deflect the ULP away from labor radicalism, see *ibid.*, 336–44.

86. On the schism between the socialists and the single-taxers, the expulsion of Socialist Labor Party from the ULP, the formation of the rival "Progressive" party, and the 1887 elections, see Speek, "The Singletax and the Labor Movement," 351-88; Commons, *et al.*, *History of Labour*, II, 457-61; Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 148-54.

87. *New York Commercial Advertiser*, September 30, 1886.

88. *Fourth Annual Report*, 523-39, 720-30; and Commons *et al.*, *History of Labour*, II, 395-413 both give overviews of the battles between District Assembly 49 and the trade unions, and of the immensely complicated cigarmakers' wars in particular. For Gompers' response to the ULP's vicissitudes and his increasing disillusionment with independent political action, see his *Seventy Years of Life and Labor*, I, 312-3, 321-2.

89. For the AFL's imposition of national trade-union discipline on local trades assemblies, see David Montgomery, "New Tendencies in Union struggles," in James Cronin and Carmen Sirianni, *Work, Community, and Power: The Experience of Labor in Europe and America* (Philadelphia, 1983), 101. New York City was the scene in 1889-90 of one particularly important battle between the then-AFL-affiliated Central labor Union and its socialist rival, the Central Labor Federation; see Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, II, 281-4.

90. Montgomery, "Labor and the Republic," 211. Montgomery's article, as well as Fink, "The Uses of Political Power," have been particularly helpful to me in framing this argument on the global shift in labor strategy and ideology following the upheavals of the mid-1880s.

91. Wilentz, "Artisanal Republican Festivals," 64; Gareth Stedman Jones, "Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900: Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class," *Journal of Social History*, 7: 460-508.