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American Socialist Pedagogy and Experimentation in the Progressive Era: The Socialist Sunday School*

KENNETH TEITELBAUM and WILLIAM J. REESE

Described by one unsympathetic observer in Buffalo as “Schools of Nonsense” and by one ardent participant in Milwaukee as “rebel factories,” the movement to establish Socialist Sunday schools (S.S.S.) in the United States during the early twentieth century is perhaps one of the best kept secrets of American socialist and educational historiography.¹ This essay attempts to rectify that situation by analyzing an educational movement that falls outside of the traditional and progressive educational camps of the early 1900s. During these years numerous working-class radicals provided their children with a formal, weekend education that lacked the strong capitalistic biases dominant in the public schools.

The Socialist Sunday schools represent the most obvious, formal, and widespread educational activity for children ever undertaken by American Socialists. The development of these schools testified to the activism of grass-roots radicals who flourished during an era of progressive change. Moreover, their efforts are particularly noteworthy in light of the theoretical writings of Antonio Gramsci, in particular his *Prison Notebooks* of 1929 to 1935. Gramsci’s formulation of the “war of position,” in which working-class institutions and culture gradually surround the bourgeois State apparatus with a counter hegemony, and of the importance of the working-class creating its own “organic intellectuals,” gives to this fledgling, ultimately unsuccessful Sunday school movement added historical and theoretical significance.² Whichever view one takes—that they taught “nonsense” or “rebellion”—the Socialist Sunday schools deserve serious attention as “among the

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first definitely organized attempts to counteract the influence of capitalist State education” in American history.³

Background

At the turn of the century, Americans from all walks of life were shocked by the inequalities produced by industrial capitalism. A significant number of individuals embraced some form of socialism as a viable alternative to the prevailing system.⁴ Different paths led many people into the Socialist camp. Some had travelled with the Populist crusaders of the Nineties; others had carefully perused the works of authors as diverse as Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Karl Kautsky, and Karl Marx. Numerous ministers, such as George D. Herron and Roland Sawyer, joined the Socialist Party because they believed that the Kingdom of God could never be established in a competitive economic system. Many of the nation’s dissatisfied intelligentsia, such as Charles Edward Russell and Upton Sinclair, aimed to expose industrial abuses and political corruption and found themselves increasingly endorsing radical political stands.⁵

However, as James Weinstein and James R. Green have pointed out, the “Jimmy Higginsons” of the Socialist movement—those “amateur agitators” who linked the party leadership with the rank and file—were working people, either skilled trade unionists or the most exploited and unorganized members of the great mass of unskilled.⁶ These people formed the backbone of Socialist political agitation on the grass-roots level. These were the men and women who distributed party leaflets at the factory gate, who met in meeting after meeting in taverns and labor meeting halls, and who knew the abuses of the capitalist system first hand. They experienced what others only vicariously felt through the muckraking, sometimes socialistic tracts of the day. It was among this segment of the Socialist movement, by and large, that one could find the most active supporters of the Socialist Sunday schools. They taught, arranged fund-raising entertainments, served on school committees, and urged radical working-class parents to send their children to learn the ABC’s of a new political ideology.

Whether or not they supported these radical Sunday school experiments, most turn-of-the-century Socialists recognized that the public schools were undergoing change in response to the emergence of corporate capitalism. Movements toward centralization, professionalization, and the segmentation of the curriculum occurred rapidly in Progressive America, particularly in the cities where Socialists often had their greatest visibility. As large, ward-based school boards were increasingly replaced by smaller at-large, “non partisan” boards Socialists, ethnic minorities, and working people generally found it difficult to gain election to local policy making bodies. In responding to the latest corporate phase of economic development, the public schools seemed more and more capitalist-controlled and unrepresentative of the poor, of various ethnic populations, and of organized and unorganized labor. Radicals also noted that this situation was aggravated when local school

boards, reflecting a “board of directors” mentality, hired superintendents who were trained in the values of “scientific” Taylorism in the nation’s leading graduate schools. Once proud of the public school as an evolving socialistic institution, increasing numbers of Socialists denounced the “tendency among educators to attempt to make the interest of society identical with the interest of the property owning class. . . .”⁷ For example, the new vocational programs in the high school served a clientele that roughly matched the class structure.⁸

As will soon become clear, American Socialists disagreed on the merits of organizing Socialist Sunday schools. But most activists in the larger movement believed that working-class controlled institutions, even those operated on a part-time basis, helped counteract the social values promoted in the public school, the media, and the church. American Socialists at the turn of the century lacked the modern, sophisticated sociological evidence of how the schools help recreate the inequalities of the larger society, but they believed that every contemporary social institution in large part supported the capitalist system and undermined any Socialist alternative. Their approach may have been somewhat reductive and undialectical, at times, but it was free from the rather myopic vision of many other contemporary observers.

Overt in their political affiliation, and sometimes joining with liberal progressives and other radicals, American Socialists continually tried to make the public schools more desirable institutions. They engaged in countless and occasionally successful battles to win seats on local school boards, taught and administered in various public school systems, and helped to establish numerous social welfare programs such as school lunches and playgrounds.⁹ Socialists also criticized the policies and practices of public schooling, suggested alternative educational perspectives, debated the possible role of education in political struggle, and developed their own schooling practices. The Socialist Sunday school was but one example of their efforts.¹⁰ Additionally, most Socialists believed that the “education” of the masses, both children and adults, occurred in many ways: through family and neighborhood interaction, through union and party activities, through shop floor struggles, and through the Socialist press, literary circles, debating societies, dramatic and music clubs, correspondence courses, study classes, young people’s leagues, and so forth. Formal schooling, in the State form or in the S.S.S. form, was only one of several serious educational efforts pursued by turn-of-the-century Socialists.¹¹

Precursors and Related Schools

Throughout the nineteenth century, Sunday schools were deliberately utilized on both sides of the Atlantic to encourage greater literacy as well as to nurture learning, civility, and Protestantism. After the 1780s, for example, Protestant Sunday schools flourished in England. Although historians dispute whether these schools were imposed on the English working class, these Protestant innovations touched the lives of most working-class children,

who learned basic reading, writing, and Protestant morality on the Sabbath during a few of their formative years.¹²

Protestant Sunday schools also became an integral aspect of evangelical religious movements in ante-bellum America. These schools reached millions of people and became a paramount means of religious education. Lyman Beecher, Edward Eggleston, and other religious and educational luminaries promoted the schools as a way to civilize and to uplift morals on the Western frontier. Sunday school teachers brought the word of God into many citizens' lives, placed bibles and religious tracts in the hands of countless children, and established basic libraries for those who were starved for new reading material. In America, the Protestant Sunday school was largely a Whig and then Republican-sponsored innovation, enjoying its heyday in the nineteenth century. By the turn of the century, major corporate figures such as John D. Rockefeller, H. J. Heinz, and John Wanamaker continued to fund Protestant Sunday schools, while radical workers and Socialist activists tried to build their own, smaller-scale educational alternatives.¹³

By the late nineteenth century, Great Britain witnessed the beginnings of a well-organized Socialist Sunday school movement. Drawing upon earlier experiments, such as the Owenite and Chartist Sunday schools, the British Socialist Sunday school movement began in London in 1892 and in Glasgow in 1896. By 1901 the movement produced its own specialized journal, and by 1907 dozens of schools were founded across Great Britain. By 1909 these schools united in the National Council of British Socialist Sunday Schools. Throughout these years, new radical schools "were being opened everywhere and old ones were increasing their membership in spite of bitter attacks from anti-Socialists."¹⁴ Abundant evidence exists that, like other reformers during the Progressive era, those involved in the American Socialist Sunday schools were influenced by their European counterparts.

Various related schools were also operated in the United States by other political activists and radical organizations. Sometimes these individuals and groups espoused socialistic beliefs but were not formally aligned with the Socialist or Socialist Labor parties.¹⁵ Still, their schools were often favorably mentioned by S.S.S. proponents throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century as historical forbears or as contemporary allies in the struggle against capitalist domination. For example, the Freie Deutsche Schule was established in 1884 in the Yorkville section of New York City. It operated throughout the early 1900s, with about one hundred children of Socialist (and non-Socialist) parents in regular attendance. Like other German Free schools, schoolwork was conducted both in German and English. In 1918, the *Young Socialists' Magazine*, a journal devoted to the Socialist youth movement and the successor to the *Little Socialist Magazine for Boys and Girls*, referred to the Yorkville school as "the oldest S.S.S."¹⁶ Until June, 1917, every issue of the journal gave two to four pages to German language articles.

Schools associated with the anarchistic Ferrer Modern School movement also began in the United States at the turn of the century. The Home Colony School in Lakeby, Washington, opened its doors in 1896, while the Children's Playhouse School began in New Rochelle, New York, in 1901. More closely allied with Ferrer's teachings was the first Ferrer Modern School established in New York City in 1911.¹⁷ Many of the early teachers in the American Ferrer schools considered themselves Socialists. Not surprisingly, therefore, several of them taught in the Socialist schools. For example, Josef Jülich organized and taught at the Ferrer Sunday School in Manhattan and at the Socialist Sunday schools that met at the Brooklyn Labor Lyceum, and at the Newark Labor Lyceum in New Jersey. Henry Schnittkind taught in a Socialist Sunday school in Boston before serving briefly as the principal of the Ferrer Modern School in Stelton, New Jersey.¹⁸ Early Socialist Sunday school participants themselves occasionally differed on whether their principal allegiance was to the Russian anarchist, Peter Kropotkin, or to Karl Marx. (A reading of Kropotkin's *An Appeal to the Young* makes such a situation quite comprehensible, since he strongly advocated "socialism" in the pamphlet.)¹⁹ Moreover, Socialist journals like the *Young Socialists' Magazine* and daily newspapers like the *New York Call* regularly published information regarding Modern School activities, while scholarly publications such as the *International Socialist Review* published articles praising the work of Francisco Ferrer in Spain.²⁰

The Workmen's Circle, a fraternal body of Jewish workers who organized nationally in 1900, also established "Socialist Sunday schools" conducted in English.²¹ These schools were attended by the children of Jewish immigrants, especially those who had developed a particularly strong socialistic identification in Eastern Europe. By roughly 1918, sentiment within the Workmen's Circle shifted and the organization began to establish and support their own *Yiddish* Socialist schools, attended both Sunday and daily. But until that time, local S.S.S. participants openly and frequently praised Workmen's Circle branches for their financial and physical assistance in furthering Socialist schools whose curriculum was consciously devoid of ethnic and religious influences. Indeed, sometimes an early Workmen's Circle initiative retained its original affiliation even as it became simultaneously affiliated with the Socialist Party. S.S.S. activists commonly viewed both the Workmen's Circle and the Ferrer schools as helpmates in the movement to contest the capitalist messages of the public schools. Unlike the Ferrer schools in the United States, however, the Workmen's Circle initiatives lacked anarchistic underpinnings and never sought to attract radical intelligentsia.

Even such a brief examination of the political and educational context in which the S.S.S. movement emerged reveals that different radical configurations of schooling arose in Europe and in America by the early 1900s. Socialist Sunday school advocates could hardly ignore these efforts to undermine even in a small way the teachings of the public schools. Moreover, especially in

terms of specific educational methodologies and classroom materials, S.S.S. organizers also borrowed from John Dewey and other progressive educators because of a lack of Socialist classroom materials. However, the borrowing was selective: stories, lesson plans, and other materials were generally edited to remove nationalistic, non-working class, and competitive themes.²² After all, the S.S.S. movement was unashamedly socialist. Not only did it aim to free the child from the conformist, anti-democratic teachings of the public schools but also it sought to teach “the value of the Socialist spirit and cooperative effort.”²³ The children were encouraged to be intelligent and broadminded “good rebels” and to support the Socialist cause. This was an overtly political and radical aim that Dewey and his associates never embraced.²⁴

Divisions Within the Socialist Movement and Other Problems

In various American cities and towns during the early 1900s, especially in eastern urban areas, small groups of American radicals organized Socialist Sunday schools. Contrary to one historian’s claim that “the Party initiated the Socialist Sunday school movement in 1909,” the schools existed earlier and many Party leaders had deep reservations about their establishment.²⁵ For almost all of their existence, the schools actually functioned without the formal endorsement of the Socialist Party of America; in fact, several state Socialist Party organizations formally endorsed the schools before the national office followed their example.²⁶ During the 1900–1918 period, the Party’s national and sometimes even local leadership offered little tangible support to the S.S.S. movement despite repeated requests from local activists for financial, curricular, and organizational assistance. The attitude of many Party officials toward the Socialist schools resembled their basic position toward the Young People’s Socialist League before World War I: “at best hesitant and at worst completely indifferent.”²⁷

As mentioned earlier, many members of the Socialist Party believed that the public school was an enterprise that would ultimately embrace Socialist doctrine. The schools were seen as evolving from a private system into an increasingly socialistic institution that welcomed people from all social strata. At the same time, most of these Socialists recognized that capitalism had spread its influence just as schooling had become free, tax-supported, and universal. They struggled to elect Socialist school board members, to improve the physical and material conditions of the schools, and to persuade school teachers to present a more socialistic viewpoint in their classes.

By no means did all Socialists, especially S.S.S. activists, view public schooling in such a “constructive” or benevolent light.²⁸ Likewise, many of those who viewed public schooling as a viable arena for radical change also supported the Socialist Sunday schools. Some Socialists, therefore, fought on two fronts, supporting the efforts to establish weekend schools while also working for public school improvements. But the majority of Socialists believed that Sunday schools drained finances and energies needed for

struggles to democratize the public schools, elect Socialist officials to political office, recruit workers to the movement, and so forth. Weekend schools, they contended, could never serve as a serious alternative to institutions that educated the mass of working-class children. Thus, for instance, the Woman's National Committee of the Socialist Party adopted a resolution in 1913 that paralleled the report of the Party's State School Committee of New Jersey: "That these schools should assume rather the nature of social centers, and that greater energy should be expended toward capturing the public school system and using it for the benefit of the working class."²⁹

Several of the more moderate Socialists also questioned the establishment of Socialist Sunday schools because they seemed an unnecessary antagonism to the public school system and to local religious groups. In Milwaukee, as elsewhere, Catholics denounced Socialists as atheists and infidels and worked to undermine social democracy. So as not to further antagonize such groups, Emil Seidel, one-time Socialist mayor, remained neutral on the matter of the establishment of the schools in Milwaukee. In 1915, he told Kendrick P. Shedd, the current director of the Milwaukee schools, that he would neither oppose nor cooperate with Shedd's efforts.³⁰ Still other Socialists were suspicious of any youth work within the Socialist Party. Older members in particular sometimes argued that if young people progressed along a Socialist path too early and too quickly, they might become too radical and undisciplined, which would threaten the gradualist approach of the Party. One Milwaukee Socialist mother told Shedd that she would not send her sons to the Socialist schools because she feared that if they imbibed Socialism at too early of an age, they might become anarchists.³¹

Some Socialists worried that it was improper and perhaps counterproductive for weekend, inexperienced teachers to attempt to educate children in the basics of Socialism. At the National Socialist Party Congress in 1910, for example, Morris Hillquit of New York, a leading Socialist theorist, stated: "The mind of the child is too sacred to be made the object of rough experiments, and Socialist Sunday schools conducted with insufficient skill or method often do more harm than good."³² Besides, the older comrades had obviously become "good rebels" without such schools, and it was only in the experience of working—being exploited each day by the capitalist class—that one developed a true appreciation for the merits of Socialist agitation. Hence, a proper Socialist education for children would follow, not precede, the creation of the Cooperative Commonwealth. Until then, Socialists should work for industrial and political changes that would help usher in a Socialist society. After all, neither Marx nor Engels urged the formation of such working-class schools for children in any of their writings.

These diverse reasons for not encouraging S.S.S. activists is a reflection of the entire Socialist movement at the time. Differing opinions on principles, strategies, and the like were common. At various times, the disputes splintered the movement, most notably in 1912–1913 and 1919–1920. In fact, S.S.S.

participants also found themselves criticized by those Socialists who endorsed such weekend schools but who opposed the specific teaching that was (allegedly) taking place within them. Arguments proceeded from opposite directions. In articles, published letters, and private correspondence, some Socialists complained bitterly about the prevalence of “soft” teaching. They argued that, because of unsystematic instruction, children would fail to develop into “good Socialists.” Children spent too much time playing games, singing songs, going on picnics, and engaging in other frivolous distractions. Others similarly charged the schools with “bourgeois sentimentalism” and with failing to provide a clear and realistic focus on class struggle. On the other hand, especially during the early years, other advocates of the Sunday school idea condemned the fruitless and possibly alienating attempts in the schools to cram abstract economic concepts into the heads of the children. There was a feeling among these critics that many of the teachers understood Socialism but not children, that they were “enthusiasts [who] ultimately succumb to lack of information in pedagogy and psychology.”³³

This tension mirrored some of the traditional versus progressive education arguments then raging outside Socialist circles and continued throughout the life of the American S.S.S. movement. S.S.S. teachers were cautioned not to teach “above the heads” of their students while not simplifying matters to the point of triviality. In 1920, a sympathetic Socialist educator described the problem in this way:

Some have sought to teach ‘Socialism’ to immature children, entirely overlooking the fact that ‘Socialism’ as a system of political thought presupposes a great deal of historical knowledge, and requires a thorough understanding of economics. Other schools, in an endeavor to avoid the dogmatic teaching of Socialism, have taught a watery reformism or a stupid and incorrect version of evolution and anthropology, totally unrelated to Socialism.³⁴

Such a pedagogical dilemma was not unique to the Socialists. What is important here is that it further lessened support for a movement that for most of this period lacked the formal endorsement, let alone active assistance, of the national Party.

Besides this absence of strong support from a number of fellow Socialists, additional practical problems also bedeviled the movement throughout its lifetime. For example, the very organization of the schools produced particular problems. Unlike their church-related counterparts, finding school facilities was itself often a difficult matter. The Washington D.C. school held its first meetings in an organizer’s living room. In Rochester, New York, the S.S.S. began in an upstairs loft at Party headquarters.³⁵ During the Red Scare, when the owners of halls in New York City, for example, were pressured by various segments of the populace not to rent to radical organizations, this problem became particularly acute for a few schools. More fortunate schools held their classes in the local Workmen’s Circle building, a Labor Lyceum, or a roomy Socialist party headquarters. A Philadelphia school and one of the

Bronx schools avoided the problem of rent when the local Workmen's Circle branches generously donated their buildings to the cause.³⁶ Less fortunate schools were forced to pay rent, sometimes even when utilizing the same building as the Socialist Party local.

Students were usually divided by age and separated into classes for part of the time spent in the school. If separate classrooms were unavailable, Socialist teachers often had to gather their classes in different corners of a large room. At other times during the school morning (or, in a few instances, the afternoon), the entire student body assembled for common exercises, a crowded affair in many instances. Transportation to school was also an occasional problem. One Brooklyn father told the local Socialist newspaper that his daughters "should like to go very much" to a Socialist Sunday school. Unfortunately, they were not within walking distance of a school and he "absolutely refuses to pay every Sunday the 20 cents for car fare . . ."³⁷ And, of course, some children were not overly enthusiastic about spending yet another day at school—even a Socialist one. A young "scholar" at the Branch One school in Buffalo thoroughly enjoyed her Socialist education but wondered why more children failed to attend. She believed that it was partly because "they are in love with their beds, most of them."³⁸ The staffs of noncompulsory, underfinanced, Sunday morning Socialist schools certainly had to contend with numerous everyday problems.

Two particularly significant problems were cited over and over again by S.S.S. participants in their newspaper reports and personal correspondence. The realities of working-class life during the early 1900s included the six-day work week, long hours, fatigue, illness, and the fear of being blacklisted. Teaching positions in all Socialist Sunday schools were voluntary, or at best of token payment; hence, it is hardly surprising that organizers attracted and retained good teachers only with the greatest difficulty. Staff turnover was excessive in some schools, which undoubtedly undermined the quality of instruction and limited their effectiveness. Actually, organizers often found it easier to attract children than to retain a sufficient corps of qualified teachers. In 1912, for example, "the lack of teachers was keenly felt" at a Bronx Sunday school. At the same time in Philadelphia, "the school has more applicants than it has room for." Six years later, the Pittsburgh school reported over one hundred children enrolled but the usual dilemma of attracting qualified teachers, and the Queen S.S.S. in New York City reported being "badly crippled at present for the lack of teachers."³⁹

Compounding this problem was the lack of suitable teaching materials. Professors of education were not developing them for the Socialist Sunday schools. Their preparation and distribution meant sometimes burdensome additional expenses as well as an additional commitment of time and energy for these Socialist activists. Benefits were held to raise the necessary funds, a temporary but hardly permanent economic solution. Also, since many teachers worked full-time during the week and/or had their own family responsibilities, they were hardly in a position to develop exhaustive lesson

plans and classroom readings. One Baltimore Socialist bitterly attacked the national office of the Party for the demise of the five year old Maryland school in 1919. Socialist teachers, he argued, needed “actual TEXT BOOKS” and “not indexes of books” suggested by some national leader. Despite all the Olympian dreams of activists, “Those who are willing to teach have neither the time nor the inclination to handle stuffy volumes in preparing lessons every week, they are workers who must earn their living.”⁴⁰ Suitable lessons were produced by some particularly active participants while other teachers adopted the work of progressive educators like Katherine Dopp (see note 22). Yet the dilemma of finding interesting, detailed classroom materials from a socialistic perspective was constant.

It was only in 1918 that the national Party gave direct aid to the S.S.S. movement. It was perhaps a case of too little and too late. The Party appropriated one hundred dollars for curricular work and initiated a national organization of Socialist schools. But the money only stretched so far, apparently producing but one songbook and one organizational manual.⁴¹ Within a year, the Party faced severe government repression and internal strife and the fate of the S.S.S. movement became a minor concern for most Party members.

The Socialist Sunday Schools

S.S.A. activists encountered a plethora of serious problems: the Socialist movement itself was divided, working-class people faced immediate economic problems tied to capitalist consolidation, few benefactors emerged to finance the schools’ efforts and, of course, Socialists lived in a capitalist nation that occasionally baited and blatantly suppressed radical groups. The S.S.S. movement was largely a grass-roots effort and many of those involved in organizing and teaching in the weekend schools, especially outside New York City, were neither experts on Socialism nor professionally trained educators. They compensated for this through their abiding commitment to building a Socialist society and in their quest to build alternative networks outside of the public schools. They believed fervently in the old saying, “As the twig is bent, the tree inclineth.” For these Socialists, the future of the movement depended a great deal on teaching the children of the present—the adults of tomorrow—an appreciation for the principles and ethics of Socialism.

Socialists never believed their Sunday schools would seriously threaten the monopolistic State system of schooling. Rather, the intent was to provide “supplemental” education for working class children. As one observer put it:

The system of public instruction prevalent in this country glorifies the competitive idea as applied to industry and all other walks of life. To prevent their children from being prejudiced against Socialism, to make their children realize the class struggle and their own part in that struggle, Socialists are beginning to supplement the work of the public schools.⁴²

Such efforts amounted to the establishment of Socialist Sunday schools⁴³ for some period of time between 1900 and 1920 in *at least* the following locations:

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| California: | Los Angeles, Pasadena, Prather, San Francisco, San Jose |
| Connecticut: | Bristol, Hartford, Meriden, Mystic, New Britain, New Haven, Stamford, Stonington |
| Delaware: | Wilmington |
| Illinois: | Chicago, Oak Park, Rockford |
| Indiana: | Mishawaka |
| Kentucky: | Newport |
| Maryland: | Baltimore |
| Massachusetts: | Boston, Brockton, Fitchburg, Haverhill, Lynn, Malden, Montello, New Bedford, Ware |
| Michigan: | Detroit, South Haven |
| Minnesota: | Minneapolis |
| Missouri: | Bolivar, St. Louis |
| Nebraska: | Omaha |
| New Jersey: | Garfield, Jersey City, Newark, Passaic, Paterson, Stelton, Trenton, West Hoboken |
| New York: | Auburn, Buffalo, Jamestown, New York, Rochester, Schenectady, Syracuse, Troy, Yonkers |
| Ohio: | Bellaire, Cincinnati, Cleveland |
| Oklahoma: | Unidentified town (Ada?) |
| Oregon: | Portland |
| Pennsylvania: | Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Pottstown Providence |
| Washington D.C. | |
| Wisconsin: | Kenosha, Milwaukee, Racine |

Additionally, we are aware of more than one Socialist Sunday school existing in the following cities during the years shown:

| | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Boston: | 3 in 1918 |
| Buffalo: | 2 in 1918 |
| Chicago: | 2 in 1907 and 8 others in 1919 |
| Cleveland: | 3 in 1912 |
| Milwaukee: | 3 in 1915 |
| New York: | 12 in 1911 |
| Philadelphia: | 2 in 1912 |
| Pittsburgh: | 2 in 1916 |

During this twenty year period, therefore, there were at least ninety-four English-speaking Socialist Sunday schools in sixty-five cities and towns in the United States.⁴⁴

One prominent feature of the Socialist schools was their lack of uniformity. The problem of finding classroom materials and qualified teachers probably plagued Socialists everywhere. Yet even within the Greater New York area, a writer observed "the schools vary a great deal in the way children are taught."⁴⁵ Some schools employed didactic methods; others did not. Some

emphasized the notion of class struggle more or offered a broader curriculum than the other schools. The number of years a school was in existence, its organization, and the specific composition of its staff also varied, partially in response to local conditions.

Still, certain general historical developments and characteristics emerged with clarity. The earliest schools existed in San Jose in 1902, and Chicago, Boston and Omaha in 1903.⁴⁶ The Paterson, New Jersey, school began in 1907 through the efforts of several New York City teachers and a small group of local Socialist parents. Within three years this school had enrolled 150 students. Paterson was not unique in helping out in neighboring communities. Sensing a rather unwelcome attitude in their own community, the Garfield, New Jersey, organizers held their first classes with some comrades in Passaic. In the Williamsbridge section of the Bronx, a group of Italian Socialists requested help from the State Committee on Socialist Schools, located in Manhattan. Soon, fifty children regularly attended their new school, despite the intense opposition from the neighborhood Catholic Church. The Socialist schools in Kenosha and Racine, Wisconsin, flourished for a short time due to the aid of comrades from Milwaukee.⁴⁷

Hartford, Connecticut's experience is probably more characteristic, however, of the origins of many of the Socialist schools. No school existed there until a woman joined the local Socialist party and popularized the need to teach children "the fundamentals of scientific socialism so that when they grow up they may be able to face and overcome the social problems of the day with intelligence and broadmindedness." Joined by a small group of local activists, she then set out to organize the school, which opened in 1911. Thirty-five children enrolled at first; by the beginning of the next term, sixty students enrolled in three separate classes. The school was still meeting at the end of the decade in the Labor Educational Alliance Building.⁴⁸

The Rochester, New York, Socialist Sunday school had one of the largest and most successful operations, from 1910 to 1916, and had similar origins to schools elsewhere. Some local Party members, primarily women, initiated the organization of its Sunday school. After contacting the Rand School of Social Science, the Socialist "institution for higher learning" in New York City, they received some advice from its educational director, Bertha Maily, who had been an enthusiastic supporter of socialist education and who had been involved in the S.S.S. movement in New York City. A Rochester "School Club" formed to nurture the idea of a weekend school for children. Kendrick P. Shedd, then professor of German at the University of Rochester and recently active in Socialist agitation, agreed to help organize the school. The first session was on October 2, 1910, with about thirty children and twenty-two adults present. In outlining the goals of the school, Shedd stressed brotherhood, solidarity, good citizenship, and the formation of "good Socialists." Attendance in the Rochester school grew slowly but steadily. By the end of 1912, the average attendance was over 200. Within two years, attendance fluctuated between 300 and over 400 pupils.⁴⁹

One of the first schools in New York City specifically labelled as a Socialist Sunday school and associated with the Socialist Party was the Borough Park S.S.S. in Brooklyn. On Sunday morning, December 19, 1907, twenty-nine children attended the first school session. Six months later, attendance grew to 65-70 students, ages six to fourteen. Soon after, other schools formed in New York City so that by 1911 an estimated fourteen Socialist Sunday schools existed in the Greater New York area that educated a total of 2,000 "scholars." (These figures, incidentally, only include the English-speaking schools, not the German, Lettish, Finnish, Hungarian, and Bohemian schools.) The Bronx S.S.S. had 140 students in 1912 and over double that figure the next year. The East Harlem school had roughly 250 children. The East Side Socialist school on East Broadway in Manhattan reported having 400 children and 50 adults attending on an average Sunday. The Brownsville school opened in 1912, headed by Abraham I. Shiplacoff, who also served in the New York State Assembly from 1915 to 1918. It soon had over 500 children regularly attending classes in the Labor Lyceum in Brownsville and at one time boasted an attendance of over 1,000. Although the Socialist Sunday schools of New York City varied in size and the students experienced different educational methods, all of the schools tried to introduce children to "a new social ethic founded upon the conception of a society in which profit and wage slavery are to be removed." In 1911, nine school representatives organized a Socialist Sunday School Union of Greater New York to help coordinate and publicize their efforts.⁵⁰

The governance of the schools varied slightly from place to place. In Pittsburgh, for example, parents of children in attendance elected a Superintendent, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, Librarian, and Board of Trustees.⁵¹ The seven-member board met monthly and were responsible for the finances, conduct, and curriculum of the school, while the Superintendent served as the board's executive officer. The Los Angeles school was run by a board of education composed of the Superintendent, teachers, and two members from each Socialist local. Students were represented on this board by two delegates, usually from the older grades. The Rockford, Illinois S.S.S. had about 60 children and six teachers in 1919. The school was run by a committee of three delegates, one from the Swedish branch of the Party (whose children made up a majority of the school), one from the Woman's Socialist Club, and the third from the Young People's Socialist League. Finances were raised by charging each student five cents for each quarter of the school year, holding benefits, and soliciting contributions from various organizations.⁵²

In 1918, Chicago's eight schools formed a Central Organization to help govern the schools and to encourage more uniform and systematic instruction. Three delegates from each local S.S.S. organization served on the central body. The Central Organization selected and paid the seventeen teachers and provided for the songbooks, lesson materials, and hall rent through membership dues, donations, and benefits. Funding was equalized so that the smallest schools had a minimum of proper materials, staffing, and the like.

Kendrick Shedd, the dynamic director of the Rochester, New York, school until he left to organize the Milwaukee schools in 1915, believed that Socialist Sunday schools should be operated by all “those who actually work in the school,” that is, the teachers, officers, and various “helpers.”⁵³

Although extensive biographical information is unavailable for most of the teachers, they generally came from working-class backgrounds. Shedd’s involvement in university teaching was unusual, yet he was quite influential in the movement as a whole. He was fired (or “resigned under pressure”) from the University of Rochester after a twenty-year career, primarily for his Socialist activities in the community. Like all S.S.S. advocates, he expressed a strong allegiance and identification with the working class. He outlined his ideas about the qualifications of a good S.S.S. teacher in an article in the *New York Call* in 1912. A warm personality, enthusiasm, and loving and tactful ways were especially needed, along with a sincere interest in learning about socialism. “Learning may be alright in its place,” he claimed, “but it must be thoroughly mixed with a passion for human souls or it will reap no great harvest.”⁵⁴ Despite the stereotype that could be conjured up about “Socialist” schools, few of those involved regarded them as places in which to dogmatically indoctrinate youth about the evils of capitalism and the wonders of socialism. Shedd and other prominent S.S.S. proponents stressed the need to engage loving, energetic, and creative teachers whenever possible, and to offer interesting and enjoyable lessons and other activities that involved the learning (of Socialism) process.

From Shedd’s perspective, a college degree was not a prerequisite to teach in the Socialist Sunday school, although in some places, such as New York City, some of the S.S.S. teachers were trained as school teachers. After spending two decades in university teaching, Shedd believed that “fishing in those waters doesn’t as yet seem to yield great returns.”⁵⁵ Much more important to him was that the teachers feel a strong allegiance to the working class and that they love their children in and out of school. “Slummers”—those who were condescending and felt or acted superior to working people—were specifically not to be utilized. Apparently, there was some problem with sexist attitudes, that is, with the view that Sunday school teaching was “woman’s work.” Shedd repeatedly called for male as well as female teachers: “Get over the idea, if you ever have it, that Sunday school work (especially Socialist Sunday school work) is a thing for the women only . . . Let no man think it beneath his dignity to teach Socialism!”⁵⁶

From all indications, the children who attended the schools were exclusively from the working class. Socialists never appealed to other segments of society to attend. The students ranged in age from five to fourteen years, and they were broadly viewed as fellow Socialists. They were referred to as “little comrades,” “good little rebels,” and “kiddie Socialists.” In some schools, students were encouraged to play an active role in running meetings, to select current topics to study, to help resolve disciplinary procedures, and to prepare

recitations or plays for upcoming special events. For example, in 1918 the Buffalo "kid comrades" chose a fellow student each week as the chairperson of the regular business meeting. At one particular meeting, the school superintendent suggested the adoption of a new disciplinary rule, but it was rejected by the students. Similarly, the organizer of one of the Cleveland schools brought charges against three students who he thought were being "unruly." The general assemblage of the school, mostly students, voted "not guilty" in the case.⁵⁷

In theory, these Socialist educators stressed the need for students to engage in democratic practices as much as possible. Doing so in the classroom would help make children intolerant of anti-democratic practices elsewhere in society. More specifically, the Socialist Sunday schools emphatically did not seek to socialize children to the inequalities of the existing workplace. On the contrary, children were encouraged to believe in Socialist ideals and to prepare for participation as adults in the struggle for a better future. Thus, promoting democracy within the school was not viewed as an isolated activity or as a process without a clear end in view, but rather as one tangible way in which Socialist values would be learned and later extended in all social spheres. Of course, as mentioned earlier, the S.S.S. movement, with no national coordinating effort and no single body of work or individual to guide it, lacked uniformity. It was clearly a grass-roots movement, and it is unclear whether most schools actually followed in practice these progressive pronouncements.

Shedd and most of the other influential Socialist educators made a concerted attempt to encourage the use of materials that the children would find interesting and fun at the same time that they were being oriented toward a Socialist perspective. "Make things interesting every minute," Shedd argued. "Don't lecture the children to death! . . . Make them feel that they are loved . . . Get live comrades to supervise and teach. Tell your dead ones to take a long vacation."⁵⁸ Many of the schools became a kind of social center as well as a place to formally learn Socialist tenets. Children informally learned the principles and ethics of Socialism while participating in school festivals, entertainments, and picnics. They participated in parades (e.g. on May Day), performed plays for the community, corresponded with other "kiddie rebels," and visited other radical schools. Some of the participants corresponded with schools in other countries, including Canada, Scotland, England, and New Zealand, a reflection of a general emphasis on internationalism in the schools. Since the Socialist Sunday schools were non-compulsory, activists in the cause diligently wanted to make attendance enjoyable and attractive without forgetting that the teaching of a Socialist perspective was the pre-eminent goal.

In general, the methodologies and materials employed in the Socialist schools reflected the concern with making education enjoyable. Songs, plays, stories and games were extensively utilized, particularly in the lower grades.

But these activities always conveyed a Socialist message, however broadly defined. Shedd in particular emphasized the value of singing in Socialist education, and he published a songbook toward that end. He believed that "You can't talk Marxian economics to a 'kid,' but you can make an excellent rebel out of him by the right use of song and story."⁵⁹ Shedd was never at a loss for words when describing the merits of "good singing". "A Sunday school without singing is like a child without joy, or a garden without flowers, or a nest without birds. By all means let there be singing and a good deal of it."⁶⁰ The children in the Rochester school and in others sang songs like "I'm One of the Anti-Army," "The Socialist Lassie," "The Red Flag," "The Marseillaise," "Song of the Capitalist Squeezer," "We Are Comrades Ever," "When Socialism Comes," "Yours for the Revolution," and "The Internationale."

Many of the selections borrowed the tunes of other songs and merely inserted new lyrics. For instance, "Bring Back My Money" was sung to the tune of "My Bonnie Lives Over the Ocean":

The Capit'lists over the ocean
 The Capit'lists this side the sea
 The Capit'lists in ev'ry nation
 Are taking my money from me.
 (Chorus)
 Bring back, bring back, bring back
 my money to me, to me,
 Bring back, bring back, oh! bring back
 my money to me.
 The Socialists over the ocean
 The Socialists this side of the sea
 The Socialists in ev'ry nation
 Will bring back my money to me.
 (Repeat chorus.)

.....⁶¹

Shedd and other S.S.S. organizers also favored the extensive use of plays. These plays were sometimes written by the teachers themselves or occasionally by older students. One play that was performed in Milwaukee was "The Strike of Santa Claus." In it, Santa announces a shocking fact: he has gone on strike, so there will be no presents at Christmas. He explains to a few concerned children that, before, all of the parents and relatives helped him bring goodies to all the children. Now, however, "big business and the Trusts have got it fixed so that none but the rich can help me at all. The poor are so busy working long and hard to get enough to eat and wear that they have no time left to do a single thing about Christmas." To protest this situation, Santa had to strike. The only way to give Christmas back to the poor and end the strike was to vote for the Socialist ticket in future elections.⁶²

Object lessons and role playing flourished in the Socialist schools as well. At the West Hoboken, New Jersey school, the children learned about a

“panic” without being lectured about it directly. The boys in the class were instructed to make paper hats. The teacher played the role of boss and the girls became the buyers. Each boy was told to make three hats, with the teacher keeping two of them and giving one back to the boy. Each girl proceeded to buy one hat, so that the teacher (boss) had one left over. The teacher then declared that there was overproduction and he turned the boys out of work. A discussion followed that presumably made the connection between this situation and the capitalist system.⁶³ Games were also used in the schools, especially in the lower grades. Simple games were played with the younger children in which there was no outcome to be won or lost, although a way to “take turns” was built into the games.

An emphasis on learning specific content was also decidedly present in many of the schools, particularly in the older grades (ages 10 to 15). Teachers utilized structured discussions and lectures for this end. Drills and recitations were common. Although the form of these exercises was traditional and similar to ones probably seen in contemporary public schools, their content was quite different. For instance, after lessons in the Rochester S.S.S., the children sometimes were expected to repeat the following: “I shall always remain a Red Rebel as long as there is any poverty in the world; and I will do all I can to abolish poverty and make this world a better place in which to live.”⁶⁴ Short essay tests were even given at this school (though students could choose not to take them). One of the tests for eleven to thirteen year olds in 1914 reveals the kind of factual information taught to the young. Among the short-answer questions were the following: “Name some things that are public property and other things that are private property. What is the difference?”; “Who said: ‘Workers of the world, unite.’? Was that all he said? What else? What did he mean?”; and “What is meant by a labor union? And why do they exist?”⁶⁵ One can safely presume that the treatment of such issues in the Socialist Sunday schools was quite unlike anything found in the official public school curriculum at the time, although it is probable that a few public school teachers, with radical sympathies, were introducing similar topics in their classrooms.

The subject matter covered in the Socialist schools varied but generally emphasized the following:

- 1) *Social and Individual Needs*: Food, clothing, shelter, health; what the working class possesses and lacks; what they do and do not control; how Socialism will lead to a progressive society.
- 2) *Nature Study*: Outings, stories, poems, music; an appreciation for the beauty of nature, fully safeguarded and enhanced only in a Cooperative Commonwealth.
- 3) *Evolution/Anthropology*: An evolutionary perspective with regard to the development of man and society; an appreciation for more primitive (socialistic) cultures.
- 4) *Political Economy/History*: Various features of socialism and capital-

ism; how and why they have developed; the issues of strikebreaking, private property, labor unions, public ownership; a "revisionist" view of United States and world history.

- 5) *Current Social Problems*: Child labor laws, poverty, factory conditions, and war; their causes and characteristics in a capitalist society.

Few of the Socialist Sunday schools integrated all of these concerns, but these general areas of study were prominent in the movement as a whole.

Occasionally, S.S.S. activists would compile lesson plans and publish them in socialist journals and newspapers. In Rochester, for instance, Shedd printed extensive lessons and sold them at cost.⁶⁶ Developed for three months at a time, Shedd's materials were easily adapted for local use in different grades and avoided arcane matters far removed from the everyday lives of children and parents. One series of lessons was titled "Home Destroyers" and examined topics such as unemployment, poverty, disease, gouging landlords, and alcohol consumption. Much like the social problems approach of later social reconstructionists, a particular area of study was chosen and lessons were developed that bridged all academic areas.

In 1918, the Cleveland S.S.S. reported on its program.⁶⁷ The school had approximately 85 students divided into five separate age groups. Its general outline of classes looked like this:

- K-1: simple lessons, drawing, playing
- 2-3: some elementary lessons on capitalism and socialism
- 4-6: continuation of stories on evolution: evolution of man, capitalism, and socialism
- 7-8: economics and American history
- H.S.: more advanced economics

The Pittsburgh school also had five classes in 1918 and was similarly divided into age groups. Here as elsewhere, music was an important part of its school morning, and considerable time was spent as a large group singing songs, listening to speakers and announcements, and so on. Class sessions comprised from thirty to sixty minutes of the usual two hour gathering.⁶⁸

The distinction some educators make today between intellectual and moral education was not made by these Socialists. Academic lessons were infused with moralistic teachings, just as, they claimed, the public schools were doing. In the Socialist schools, the overt and hidden messages stressed cooperation, social service, economic and political equality, and solidarity with the international working class. Of course, it is virtually impossible to document whether or not students actually internalized these ideas or in what specific forms. Many children did seem to enjoy attending the Socialist schools, as revealed in occasional letters to contemporary Socialist newspapers, private correspondence, and oral histories recently compiled of S.S.S. participants.⁶⁹ But the different ways in which these thousands of children learned different lessons on Socialism in the Socialist Sunday schools must remain an unsolved mystery.

By 1918 the Socialist Party increasingly acknowledged the work of the Socialist Sunday schools. Although its significance within the larger socialist movement should not be exaggerated, increased interest developed for three reasons. First, the continued success of some of the schools no doubt convinced some reluctant Socialists of the viability of such supplemental schooling. Second, some “graduates” of the Sunday schools now entered the Young People’s Socialist League and the Party structure; they were more favorably disposed to gather support for the schools than were their predecessors. And third, United States entrance into World War I, and specifically the reactions it provoked among some Socialists, might have persuaded some Party leaders to encourage weekend schooling for working-class children. During the previous few years, a good number of Party members and sympathizers had voted for Woodrow Wilson’s re-election bid and endorsed the preparedness campaign (which the Party was strongly opposed to). Perhaps these other Socialists who dissented from the Party had not received the kind of Socialist education as children needed to withstand nationalistic pressures for war.

Efforts to form a national organization were accelerated and journals like the *Young Socialists’ Magazine* reported on the schools more frequently.⁷⁰ The Young People’s Socialist League strongly endorsed the schools in a resolution at its first national convention in May, 1919: “We regard the S.S.S. as much a necessary adjunct of the Yipsel organization as the league is to the socialist movement as a whole. Yipsels can do not (sic) better work for the cause than to train themselves to act as teachers of (sic) this movement and then to take an active part in the work of the S.S.S.”⁷¹ Articles praised the efforts of S.S.S. organizers and stressed the need for additional teachers, as a network for Socialist youth was increasingly envisioned. It would connect cities through a national union of Socialist schools and would unite as well the Junior Yipsel organizations, the Young People’s Socialist League, the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, and the national Party.

At the same time, the Young People’s Department of the Socialist Party issued its own organizational manual.⁷² This pamphlet indicated that a change in the philosophy of the S.S.S. movement was also developing, or at least was being urged by the heretofore uninvolved National Office. William F. Kruse, the director of the Young People’s Department and author of the manual, stressed the schools’ purpose as helping the children “to become free, clear thinkers,” “to search for the truth, always,” and, through the use of appropriate songs and play, “to become good comrades.” The learning of a Socialist perspective, per se, was obviously downplayed. No doubt some supporters of the schools were being influenced to adopt more libertarian methods by the increasingly popular progressive education movement.

But these National Office efforts proved to be shortlived, for wartime actually had contradictory effects on the fortunes of the Socialist Sunday schools. The war increased interest in the schools among some Socialists at a time when the Party itself, perceived by disparate groups of pacifists and

radicals as the anti-war standard bearer, was experiencing a resurgence of its own. Yet, in the end, the war undermined the vitality and preservation of the S.S.S. movement. Many draft-age teachers and activists either submitted to conscription, went into hiding, or went to jail. Some of those involved in the work of the schools left the Party entirely, due to its continued strong anti-war stand. Kendrick Shedd was the most prominent example. Ensuing governmental repression crippled the financial and physical resources of the Party as a whole. Kruse was imprisoned for violating the Espionage Act. Frederick Krafft, one-time Party candidate for governor of New Jersey and at the time an organizer of the Newark S.S.S., also was arrested.

People whose commitment to radicalism wavered somewhat, no doubt including some S.S.S. teachers and parents of S.S.S. children, were especially intimidated as the Red Scare continued after the war. Physical violence against Socialists and other radicals at parades, rallies, and meetings increased markedly.⁷³ Some schools did continue to function and a few new ones did emerge at the end of the decade, but the impetus for the movement and for national organization showed signs of dissipating.

In the summer of 1919, another devastating blow struck the Party and its Sunday schools. Differences that had divided the Party for several decades exploded. A factionalized socialist movement emerged, including the original Socialist Party, the Communist Party, and other radical splinter groups. Many radicals retreated entirely from active participation, as Socialist Party membership dropped from 108,504 in 1919, to 26,766 in 1920, and 11,277 in 1922. (Communist Party membership in 1921-22 was about 10,000.)⁷⁴ The Young People's Socialist League, whose members had helped out in a number of schools, was shattered as a party organization, with many of the Socialist youth joining the more radical Communist movement.⁷⁵ The Socialist Sunday schools did not fare much better. Teachers and parents in Chicago, New York City, and elsewhere split ranks; many schools, struggling to survive anyway, were forced to disband. Favorable mention of the work of the S.S.S. movement continued to appear in journals such as the *Socialist World* and a few schools continued in existence during the early 1920s. But they did so on a smaller scale and with less hope for the future possibilities of the S.S.S. movement.⁷⁶ A Socialist Sunday school "revival" did occur in New York City from 1928 to 1934.⁷⁷ But, in large part, the heyday of the S.S.S. movement, as the larger Socialist movement, faded with the advent of the 1920s. The combination of the split in the Party and the effects of the war basically dealt the schools their death blow.

Conclusion

"One need only go," remarked a gentile visitor, "to a Sunday morning Jewish Socialist Sunday school to get a glimpse of the leaven of socialism that is among all ages of Jewry. There over 100 children spend an hour in singing, and a second hour in classes, eagerly discussing questions as to the relation between the wages John Wanamaker pays his employees and moral

9. Socialists won school board seats in many places throughout the country, such as Syracuse, New York; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Butte, Montana.
In 1911, the Woman's National Committee of the Socialist Party established a National Socialist Teachers Bureau. Its purpose was to help place Socialist teachers in locations where there were Socialist or "sympathetic" school boards. See also William J. Reese, *Case Studies in the Schools of Selected Cities: Final Report to the National Institute of Education* (Washington, D.C., 1981).
10. For an analysis of the views held by Socialist leaders toward formal educational practices, see Joseyneyne Slade Tein, "The Educational Theories of American Socialist 1900-1920," Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1972. In part, she discusses their views of the work of Maria Montessori, John Dewey, and Francisco Ferrer.
Other examples of formal schooling practices by American Socialists during the 1900-1920 period include the Rand School of Social Science in New York City; the People's College in Fort Scott, Kansas; the Finnish Work People's College of Smithville, Minnesota; and countless summer schools, study classes, and the like.
11. For a provocative discussion of English radicalism and education, see Richard Johnson, "Really 'useful knowledge': radical education and working-class culture, 1790-1848," in John Clarke, Chas Critcher and Richard Johnson, eds., *Working Class Culture: Studies in history and theory* (London, 1979), pp. 75-102.
12. Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and English Working Class Culture* (New Haven, 1976).
13. On the history of the Protestant Sunday School on both sides of the Atlantic, see Edwin Wilbur Rice, *The Sunday School Movement and the American Sunday-School Union* (Philadelphia, 1917); Robert W. Lynn and Elliot Wright, *The Big Little School: Sunday Child of American Protestantism* (New York, 1971); Lawrence Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience* (New York, 1980); and Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability*.
14. F. Reid, "Socialist Sunday Schools in Britain 1892-1939," *International Review of Social History*, 11 (1966): 29. See also Brian Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement 1870-1920* (London, 1974), pp. 48-52. Socialist Sunday schools in New Zealand are briefly discussed in Roger Openshaw, "Lilliput Under Siege: New Zealand Society and Its Schools During the 'Red Scare,' 1919-1922," *History of Education Quarterly* 20 (Winter 1980): 403-424.
15. Marxian Socialism was first introduced in the United States by the German immigrants of the 1850s. Communist Clubs and sections of the International Working Men's Association were formed before 1870. A Working Men's Party was established in 1876, changing its name in the following year to the Socialist Labor Party. In 1898, dissidents within this party and other socialists formed the Social Democratic Party, which became the Socialist Party in 1901. Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement*.
16. *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 12 (December 1918): 2.
17. For an in-depth discussion of the Ferrer Modern School movement in the United States, see Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States* (Princeton, 1980); Laurence Veysey, *The Communal Experience: Anarchist and Mystical Counter-Cultures in America* (New York, 1973), Ch. 2; and Florence M. Tager, "A Radical Approach to Education: Anarchist Schooling—The Modern School of New York and Stelton," Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1979. Veysey claims that "the Ferrer movement tried to link cultural and educational radicalism with a spirit of class consciousness. For a long time it ran the only progressive school in America which deliberately sought a working-class clientele." (p. 78) This essay serves as a corrective to this view. Whatever the Socialist Sunday schools may have lacked in cultural and educational radicalism compared to the Ferrer schools, they generously compensated for in the militancy of their working-class consciousness.
18. Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement*, pp. 226-227; *New York Call* (28 September 1919); and *Little Socialist Magazine For Boys and Girls*, 3 (September 1910): 13. Such occasional collaboration should not obscure the very real and often strongly expressed differences between the radical camps.
19. Peter Kropotkin, *An Appeal to the Young* (Chicago, n.d.). His influence on American radicals at the turn of the century is discussed in Paul Avrich, "Kropotkin in America," *International Review of Social History*, 25 (1980): 1-34.
20. For example, Aristides Pratelle, "Resuming Ferrer's Work!" *International Socialist Review*, 14 (October 1913): 218-220.
21. Workmen's Circle, *Forty Years Workmen's Circle* (New York, 1940), pp. 19 and 35. See also Maximilian Hurwitz, *The Workmen's Circle: Its History, Ideals, Organizations and Institutions* (New York, 1936), pp. 154-177.
22. For example, Bertha H. Maily, Secretary of the Party's New York State Committee of Socialist Schools and associated with the Rand School of Social Science, recommended Dewey's *School and Society* to teachers of the Socialist Sunday schools. Also, a series of books authored by Katherine E. Dopp was utilized in

37. Letter from P. Willemse, *New York Call* (11 May 1912).
38. Letter from "A Reader of the Kid Comrade Column," *New Age* (16 March 1919).
39. *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 6 (December 1913): 14; *International Socialist Review*, 12 (May 1912): 794; *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 12 (December 1918): 2; and *New York Call* (8 January 1918).
40. "Baltimore S.S.S. Discontinued," *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 13 (March 1919): 18.
41. It is somewhat curious that the National Office of the Party compiled another songbook for use in the Sunday schools. We know of at least three songbooks that were already being utilized (before 1918): Harvey P. Moyer, ed., *Songs of Socialism* (Chicago, 1905); Charles H. Kerr, ed., *Socialist Songs With Music* (Chicago, 1908); and Kendrick P. Shedd, ed., *Some Songs for Socialist Singers* (Rochester, 1913). This may be indicative of our general sense that members of the party were not fully aware of the schools' activities. The absence of a successful national coordinating effort may have been partly to blame.
42. Quoted in the Rand School's *American Labor Year Book 1916* (New York, 1916), p. 153.
43. We refer to all of these schools as "Socialist Sunday schools" but several of them were actually known by other names. For example, the early Cincinnati school was called The Arm and Torch League. (The emblem of the Party was an arm holding a torch.) A school in Cleveland was referred to as the English Sunday School and one in Los Angeles was named the Children's Socialist Lyceum. The schools in Buffalo were named Schools of Social Science and the Syracuse school preferred the title of Social Science School. One short-lived school in New York City referred to itself as the Social School for Children and the Pasadena school reported its name as "The Boys and Girls of the Red Flag." No doubt local factors at particular times sometimes encouraged the use of different names. However, as far as we can tell, they were all, in essence, "Socialist Sunday schools."
44. On balance this is probably a conservative estimate of the number of Socialist Sunday schools in existence during the 1900-1920 period. In some locations anarchistic Ferrer schools might have been reported as though they were Socialist schools. This would tend to exaggerate the number of schools which were truly affiliated with the Socialist Party. (This is not the case for the Stelton school, however. The most famous Ferrer Modern School was established there in 1915 and lasted until 1953, but a S.S.S. also existed at the Stelton Fellowship Farm for a short period of time beginning in 1916. *New York Call* (25 June 1916).) Of course, there were more than a few such schools being run by the Socialist foreign language federations (e.g., Jewish, Finnish, Lettish, Bohemian). We have little information about them and have not attempted to group them with the schools that appear to be solely English-speaking. Also, other English-speaking schools no doubt lasted a very short time or failed to receive much publicity or attention outside of their local communities. Mention of such schools probably escaped our research efforts. We are also aware of the fact that in New York City, for instance, the ten schools in existence in the fall of 1915 were not all among the twelve schools in the fall of 1911. Although some schools remained stable for five or more years, many others came and went within a few years time span. Thus, there were more than twelve different schools begun (and ended) in New York City during this twenty-year period.
45. Bertha H. Mailly, "The Socialist Schools of Greater New York," *Little Socialist Magazine For Boys and Girls*, 4 (May 1911): 6. Of course, some S.S.S. participants welcomed the autonomy that this lack of coordination brought with it.
46. Within a few years, the Chicago, Boston, and Omaha (and New York City) schools were being "roasted" in the non-Socialist press. For example, see the account by a one-time prominent Socialist turned rabid anti-Socialist, Martha Moore Avery, in her "Socialist Sunday Schools," *National Civic Federation Review*, 3 (May 1908): 11.
47. *Little Socialist Magazine For Boys and Girls*, 3 (January 1910): 13; *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 4 (August 1911): 11; *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 5 (December 1912): 12; *Wisconsin Comrade*, 2 (July 1915): 3; and *Wisconsin Comrade*, 2 (January 1916): 3.
48. Esther Sussman, "Hartford S.S.S.," *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 4 (September 1911): 15; and *New York Call* (30 October 1919).
49. "History of the Rochester Socialist Sunday School," in "Miscellaneous Folder," the Shedd Papers.
50. *New York Call* (15 June 1908), (21 May 1911) and (28 November 1918); Bertha H. Mailly, "The Socialist Schools of Greater New York"; *Little Socialist Magazine For Boys and Girls*, 4 (May 1911): 6; and *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 5 (December 1912): 12.
51. Other schools utilized such titles as Director, Organizer, or Principal to describe someone in a position similar to that of the Superintendent of the Pittsburgh S.S.S.
52. Martin Weber, "The Pittsburgh Socialist Sunday School," *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 12 (June 1918): 11; Rasa A. Smith, "The Children's Socialist Lyceum, Los Angeles, California," *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 12 (October 1918): 17; and *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 13 (April 1919): 18.
53. *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 12 (July 1918): 16; and letter from Kendrick Shedd, *American Socialist* (27 March 1915).

54. Kendrick P. Shedd, "Socialist Sunday Schools: Chapter II," *New York Call* (14 April 1912).
55. *Ibid.*
56. Shedd, "Socialist Sunday Schools: Chapter II." Socialist men were involved in S.S.S. work, but not in equal proportion to women. Clearly, Socialist women activists were generally encouraged and sought to become involved in certain areas more than others. Like their non-Socialist counterparts, youth work was considered by national and local party leaders to be one "legitimate" field in which Socialist women could directly aid the movement. A number of Socialist women (and men) did actively seek to combat the party's sexism and to give feminist concerns a more prominent place within the movement. See Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920* (Urbana, 1981).
57. "Kid Comrade Column," *New Age* (16 March 1918); and Frank Wilt, "The Cleveland Socialist Sunday Schools," *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 12 (March 1918): 16.
58. Letter from Kendrick Shedd, *American Socialist* (27 March 1915).
59. Kendrick P. Shedd, "Foreward" *Some Songs for Socialist Singers*.
60. Shedd, "Socialist Sunday Schools: Chapter II."
61. "Bring Back My Money" appeared in Harvey P. Moyer, ed., *Songs of Socialism*.
62. A script of this play and a few others (e.g. "Mister Greed," "Mister Profits," and Upton Sinclair's "The Second Story Man") are contained in a collection of Milwaukee Socialist Sunday School dramatic scripts, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Library. They were donated to the library by Frank P. Zeidler, Socialist mayor of Milwaukee from 1948-1960. "The Strike of Santa Claus" was also published in *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 12 (February 1918): 11-12.
63. "A Panic in West Hoboken," *Little Socialist Magazine For Boys and Girls*, 3 (May 1910): 13.
64. From "Miscellaneous Folder," the Shedd Papers.
65. From "S.S.S. Scrapbook #3," the Shedd Papers. Twenty-seven of twenty-nine pupils taking the test passed, with a score of "55" considered to be a passing grade. One girl who took the test received a grade of "98" and gave these answers to the questions about labor unions: "a) A body of laborers or workers who unite and make certain plans. These plans are brought to the bosses who must agree to them or not the workers refuse to work for them (sic). This union protects them when they refuse to work and helps them if the bosses do not agree to the plans; b) They exist because of the unfair conditions the bosses would have the people work by."
66. Copies of these lessons are contained in the Shedd Papers. Their availability to be purchased at cost by other S.S.S. teachers was announced from time to time in various Socialist publications. At least one other school used them and found them to be "invaluable." Letter from Edward Perkins Clarke of Hartford, Connecticut, n.d., "S.S.S. Scrapbook #3," the Shedd Papers. (This letter was probably written in 1914.)
67. *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 13 (January 1919): 2.
68. Weber, "The Pittsburgh Socialist Sunday School": 11.
69. For example, letters from Mrs. Rachel Adler of Deerfield Beach, Florida (September 15, 1980), Mrs. Nora Linn of Bronx, New York (October 6, 1980), and Mr. Carl Winter of New York, New York (October 22, 1980); telephone conversations with Mrs. Bertha Tischler of Rochester, New York (July 16, 1980 and July 16, 1981) and Mr. Alex Paalu of Milwaukee, Wisconsin (October 11, 1980); interviews with Mrs. George Haberkorn in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (May 14, 1981), Mrs. Jennie Yavner Goldman in Putnam Valley, New York (July 4, 1981), and Mr. Joseph Friebert and Mr. Edward Friebert, Jr. in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (October 2, 1981); and correspondence from Bertha Vossler of Rochester, New York (November 12, 1969), contained in the "Correspondence Folder," the Shedd Papers.
70. This was not the first attempt to form a national S.S.S. organization. Shedd, in Rochester, tried to establish one in 1914-1915. T. J. Mead of Washington D.C. also made a similar attempt. *International Socialist Review*, 15 (March 1915): 573; and *International Socialist Review*, 17 (October 1916): 249. Also, in 1916, Bertha Vossler, Secretary of the Rochester S.S.S., suggested that the People's College at Fort Scott, Kansas was making some effort to be a centralized headquarters of S.S.S. materials. Letter to Gladys Dobson of Jamestown, New York (February 19, 1916), "S.S.S. Scrapbook #4," the Shedd Papers. As far as we know, these efforts did not produce significant results.
71. Reported in the *Young Socialists' Magazine*, 13 (June 1919): 11. The schools were referred to in this report as Socialist Schools of Science.
72. William F. Kruse, "How to Organize, Maintain and Conduct the 'S.S.S.,'" n.d., in *Socialist Party of America Papers*, Microfilm Edition (Glen Rock, 1975), Reel 137, located at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.
73. Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (New York, 1955).
74. David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America*, p. 163; and Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York, 1957), p. 451.

75. The Young People's Socialist League continued to exist as a Socialist organization, however. It rebounded in the late 1920s and reached the peak of its activity during the Depression years. See Patti M. Peterson, "The Young Socialist Movement in America," Ch. 4-6.
76. The Brownsville school, located in a strong Jewish Socialist community in Brooklyn, and two Milwaukee schools in a city with a Socialist mayor, continued in operation during the early 1920s. There is also some evidence of schools in Detroit and Pittsburgh in the mid-1920s.

In 1920, the Rand School of Social Science reported that it had been commissioned by the Socialist Party to prepare a textbook for the Sunday schools. It also offered courses on Education "which should be welcomed by those who are interested in the work of the Socialist Sunday Schools." *Rand School of Social Science Bulletin, 1920-1921*, pp. 2 and 5. We are not aware of any such textbook having been completed, however.
77. For more on this "revival," see Kenneth Teitelbaum, "Schooling for 'Good Rebels'."
78. Quoted in Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York, 1976), p. 311.